Leopold Mozart's Violinschule and the performance of W.A. Mozart's violin music

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Clive Brown

Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* presents an account of mid eighteenth-century violin playing that is important not only for its insights into technical and stylistic aspects of performance, but also for the light it may shed upon his son's approach to the violin. There is no doubt that W. A. Mozart was, in his youth, an accomplished violinist, as the well known exchange between father and son about the younger Mozart's performance of the violin solo in his Divertimento in B flat K. 287 in 1777 illustrates. Wolfgang reported that 'They all opened their eyes! I played as though I were the finest fiddler in all Europe,' to which Leopold replied: 'You yourself do not know how well you play the violin.'[1] The principles expounded in Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* will undoubtedly have formed the basis of W. A. Mozart's training as a violinist, which took place under his father's direction. It is less certain, though, how much the *Violinschule* can tell us about the sound and style of violin playing as Leopold Mozart would have envisaged it, and even more uncertain what it might reveal to us about his son's conception of good violin playing in later years.

Although the *Violinschule* is exceptionally informative for its time, many essential aspects of performance are not explained in sufficient detail for us to be sure what was expected: for example, the way the bow should be handled to execute different types of bow stroke, or how the *tremolo* may have been intended to sound. Many of the subtler aspects of style, which are often the most important for differentiating the characteristics of performance at different periods and in different traditions, are notoriously difficult to convey in words, and are irretrievably lost to us. Furthermore, W. A. Mozart's development as a violinist will undoubtedly have paralleled his development as a composer, in which respect he quickly outgrew his father's teaching. He will have learned much from hearing violinists of various schools and will have absorbed and responded to aspects of their styles that appealed to him. A range of evidence suggests that Mozart's approach to violin playing and his treatment of the instrument will have evolved significantly during the last twenty years of his life; this may be drawn from contemporaneous comparisons of the performing styles of individual violinists, and from late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century documentary evidence of changing practices (and changing bows), as well as from Mozart's own letters.

1 *The Letters of Mozart and his Family Chronologically Arranged, Translated and Edited with an Introduction, Notes and Indices*, trans. Emily Anderson 3rd edn (London, 1985), 300–1

Some of what he learned in Salzburg during the 1760s and 1770s would probably have seemed distinctly old fashioned in the Vienna of 1790. Nevertheless, it seems likely that in a number of important respects, many of the fundamental precepts expounded in Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* remained valid for later violinists.

In recent times the *Violinschule* has been called upon by contemporary practitioners to inform the performance of Mozart's music on period instruments. It remains highly questionable, however, whether the implications of its instructions for the techniques and style of performance of late eighteenth-century string music have been adequately appreciated. Professional string players have certainly been very selective in responding to its precepts. Many of the factors that have moulded the current approach to period performance are only tenuously related to the historical evidence available in eighteenth-century sources, while others have no connection with it whatsoever. Few modern performers of Mozart's string music on period instruments have even attempted seriously to recreate important aspects of the style and technique that are described in the sources. We may therefore be negligently, or wilfully, ignoring the veiled messages that lie behind much of Mozart's notation.

If we compare recent recordings of a Mozart string quartet performed by, for instance, the Alban Berg Quartet on modern instruments and the Quatuor Mosaïque on period instruments, the differences seem entirely superficial; the style of both recordings clearly belongs to the present day. Comparison of these recordings with progressively older ones, going back through those of the Busch Quartet in the 1930s to the earliest string quartet recordings, by the Klingler or Rosé Quartets, in the early years of the last century, reveals an increasingly alien sound and style. It seems almost certain that in Mozart's time, more than a hundred years before the earliest recordings, performances would have sounded even less like our own. The manner in which the instrument was played, its tonal characteristics (not just a matter of the violin, strings and bow, but also a reflection of the player's conception of a beautiful sound), and the stylistic traits that characterised late eighteenth-century musicality will surely have resulted in something that would have seemed even more alien to us than recorded performances from the early twentieth century.

In order to evaluate the characteristics of Leopold Mozart's violin playing, it is crucial to appreciate the relationship of the instructions in his treatise with contemporaneous trends in European violin playing. It is clear that Mozart's *Violinschule* reflects broadly the influence of the North Italian style of Tartini; he undoubtedly had access to a manuscript of the unpublished Tartini treatise, from which he extracted much of his section on ornamentation, and there is persuasive evidence to suggest that his approach to bowing was substantially based upon Tartini's. It is important therefore to have a clear idea of the leading characteristics of Tartini's style. The evidence is far more equivocal than has often been suggested. Peter Walls, in his interesting article on 'Mozart and the Violin,' for instance, states that while Mozart 'was indebted to Tartini for his explanation of ornaments (including vibrato), on matters of tone production his approach is

quite distinctive.' He claims that 'Tartini's injunction "always to use the middle of the bow" and never to "play near the point or heel" runs counter to Mozart's instruction that "one must accustom oneself from the beginning to draw a long, uninterrupted, soft and flowing stroke".'[2] He does not go on to complete Mozart's instruction, which continues: 'One must not always play away at the point of the bow with a certain kind of quick stroke which scarcely touches the string, but must always play solidly'. There may, therefore, be no conflict between Tartini's and Mozart's instructions, since they are undoubtedly addressing different things in these remarks. Tartini's instruction, in a very cursory account of bowing, may well have had the aim of accustoming players generally to play in the middle of the bow because, especially in reading unfamiliar music, this ensures that the violinist is always in the position to execute a long note either up- or down-bow. A similar comment was made a century later by Charles de Bériot, when he taught: 'In the different combinations of slurred and detached bow-strokes one must be careful to keep to the middle of the bow. Thus one avoids being taken unawares, which would happen if one went to the point or the heel.'[3] As Bériot's detailed instructions and illustrations elsewhere in the *Méthode* indicate, however, he frequently required the violinist to use the whole length of the bow or to play at the point or heel as appropriate, and the same was surely true of Tartini. In his letter to Signora Madelena, for instance, Tartini comments that 'you should make yourself a perfect mistress in every situation and part of the bow, as well in the middle as at the extremities'.[4]

Whatever the implication of Tartini's ambiguous instruction, it seems unwarranted to infer from it that his style of bowing was not intended to produce the kind of 'honest and virile tone' that Leopold Mozart demanded.[5] Walls states that 'Tartini's pupils had a reputation for tidy but perhaps rather understated playing,' and notes that Burney as well as the Mozarts (in connection with Nardini) commented on the gentle or 'light' playing of Tartini's pupils. [6] He seems to extrapolate from this that Tartini himself played rather lightly. A contemporaneous source, however, reveals a more complicated picture. Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, who had apparently heard most of the great players of the day,[7]

2 Peter Walls, 'Mozart and the Violin', *Early Music* (1992), 23

3 Charles de Bériot, *Méthode de violon* (London, Paris, Brussels, c. 1858), ii, 90

4 Giuseppe Tartini, *Traité des agréments de la musique : Abhandlung über die Verzierungen in der Musik : Treatise on Ornaments in Music [...] unabridged, with explanatory text, an Appendix, several photographic reproductions and a Supplement containing a facsimile of the original Italian text*, ed. Erwin R. Jacobi, English trans. Cuthbert Girdlestone (Celle and New York, 1961), 133

5 Leopold Mozart, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (Augsburg, 1756), English translation by Editha Knocker as *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing* 2nd edition (Oxford, 1951), II, §5

6 Walls, 'Mozart and the Violin', 23

7 Schubart, an accomplished musician, was intimately acquainted with the violinist Wilhelm Cramer, whom he seems often to have accompanied, and undoubtedly heard many of the great players of the day. His comments about Tartini were probably, however, derived from

characterised Tartini's playing and that of his faithful disciples very differently, stating that Tartini's 'notes are really dragged out of the violin and the bow-stroke fully developed,' adding:

> The only thing to criticise about the Tartini school is that its majestic sustained bow-stroke inhibits velocity in performance and is certainly not suitable for winged passages. On the other hand, the pupils of this school are unsurpassably good in the church style, for their bowing has precisely the right degree of power and accent required for the pathetic church style.[8]

Considering some of Tartini's pupils, Schubart indicates that a number of the most famous of them played very differently from their master. Of Ferrari, for instance, whom he described as the 'creator of a new school', he wrote:

> The characteristic of this man is not the deeply-cutting bow-stroke of a Tartini, not the majestic and stately employment of the bow, not the pulling-out of the notes right down to their roots. Out of caprice he took precisely the opposite direction to Tartini. His bow-stroke is not straight, but curved. He does not bow with maximum power, but skates over the strings, avoiding the region of the bridge, daring to play up above the fingerboard and thereby brings out a tone that is rather like that produced by gently rubbing a glass until it vibrates audibly. This great master's fault was that, out of obstinacy, he did not adopt what was good about Tartini. The Tartinian sounds are all fully ripe, Ferrari's, however, unripe; he merely kisses the fruit on the bough but does not shake it so that the notes fall like Borstorf apples into our laps. His performance, therefore, was more echo than natural sound.[9]

And Schubart commented about Nardini:

> The tenderness of his performance is impossible to describe: every morsel of sound seems to be a declaration of love [...] His bow-stroke was slow and stately; but unlike Tartini he did not tear out the notes by the roots, but kissed only their tips. He played staccato very slowly and every note seemed to be a drop of blood, which flowed from the most feeling of souls.[10]

This corroborates Leopold Mozart's appraisal of Nardini in 1763, when he wrote: 'it would be impossible to hear a finer player for beauty, purity, evenness of tone and singing quality. But he plays rather lightly'.[11]

Schubart is unequivocal in his judgment that Leopold Mozart's approach to bowing, though not identical with Tartini's, was closer to that of the master than to these famous pupils. He remarked that Mozart 'certainly leans towards the

the accounts of others, and from his experience of players who were believed to represent the true style of the master.

8 Schubart, *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 5: *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (Stuttgart, 1839), 68 (all translations of Schubart by the present author)

9 Schubart, *Ideen*, 68–9

10 Schubart, *Ideen*, 70–71

11 *The Letters of Mozart*, 24

Tartini school, but allows the pupil more freedom in bowing'.[12] Later he commented: 'Mozart has best defined the theory of the violin; only his bow stroke is too Tartini-like, and not suitable enough for presto'.[13]

From the descriptions of other violinists in Schubart's account it seems clear that the great players of the second half of the eighteenth century were extremely varied in their approach to bowing. He remarked of Lolli: 'He does not merely combine the perfections of the Tartini and Ferrari schools, but also found a wholly new path. His bow-stroke is eternally inimitable'; of Cannabich: 'His bow stroke is wholly original. He has devised a wholly new manner of bowing';[14] and again of Wilhelm Cramer: 'his bow stroke is wholly original'.[15]

We have some idea of the kind of violin playing liked, or disliked by the Mozarts from their letters. A comment by Wolfgang that the violinist Rothfischer 'plays well in his way (a little bit in the old-fashioned Tartini manner)',[16] suggests that although the Tartini approach may have formed the basis of what they regarded as good playing, they considered that some elements of it, we cannot know which, were outdated by the late 1770s. It is probable that the strongest influence on W. A. Mozart's conception of violin playing at that time came from members of the Mannheim School.

A comparison of Schubart's and W. A. Mozart's appraisal of the Mannheim violinist Ignaz Fränzl shows a general similarity of judgment. Schubart commented:

> Fränzel, one of the most delightful violinists of our time – equally strong in accompaniment as in solo playing. His bow-stroke has so much delicacy and beguiling charm, that no one can hear him without being deeply moved. He is no slave of his own manner, but also warmly champions other people's works [...] His allegro flows so lightly and unconstrainedly that he seems to do nothing when he does everything. But perhaps his method of bowing is somewhat too artificial and forced; at least it is not as free as Lolli's.[17]

Mozart, who heard him in 1777, wrote:

> I liked his playing very much. You know that I am no great lover of difficulties. He plays difficult things, but his hearers are not aware that they are difficult; they think that they could at once do the same thing themselves. That is real playing. He has too a most beautiful, round tone. He never misses a note, you can hear everything. It is all clear cut. He has a beautiful staccato, played with a single bowing, up or down; and I have never heard anyone play a double trill as he does. In a word, in my opinion he is no wizard, but a very sound fiddler.[18]

12 Schubart, *Ideen*, 165
13 Schubart, *Ideen*, 304
14 Schubart, *Ideen*, 145
15 Schubart, *Ideen*, 147
16 *The Letters of Mozart*, 607
17 Schubart, *Ideen*, 152
18 *The Letters of Mozart*, 384

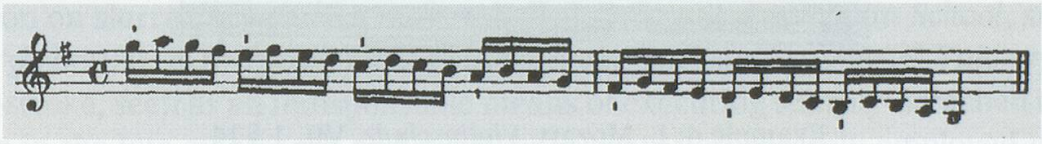
In March 1786 Mozart played with another Mannheim violinist, Friedrich Johann Eck, who arrived in Vienna fresh from supplementary studies with Viotti. Eck's own style of playing, like Rudolf Kreutzer's, seems to have derived from a synthesis of Viotti's approach with that of the Mannheim School. Although Mozart left no direct record of his response to Eck's playing, an account of their meeting, apparently derived directly from Eck's own recollections, was given by fellow violinist F. A. Ernst some fifteen years later. He reported Mozart's opinion that Eck was 'a violinist with a good tone, a good bow and a splendid legato, and so just to his taste'.[19] The reliability of the report is not certain, but in view of other evidence of Mozart's preferences it appears plausible. If the account has any validity it supports the idea that Mozart appreciated the broad bowing style and sonorous tone that was associated both with players of the Mannheim tradition and the rising Viotti School. Both these trends owed much to the bowing practices of such mid-century violinists as Tartini and Pugnani (Viotti's teacher). Writing to his son in 1778 Leopold Mozart praised the playing of Janitsch for 'facility and lightness of bowing', comparing it with Lolli's, which was well known for its fine cantabile quality; but his preference for a firm style of bowing is suggested by his remark: 'I am no lover of rapid passages where you have to produce the notes with the half tone of the violin and, so to speak, only touch the fiddle with the bow and almost play in the air.'[20]

Such reports may assist us in interpreting the instructions on bowing in Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule*. For the present purposes I shall confine myself to the bowing of a succession of moderate to moderately-fast detached notes, as explained in Mozart's Chapter VII, and to the meaning of his instructions for executing such notes with two or more notes in a single bow stroke. It is here that modern practice may be in the greatest conflict with what Leopold and W. A. Mozart would have expected. Violinists of the late eighteenth century would undoubtedly have been able to read between the lines of the rather sketchy instructions that accompany Mozart's exercises for 'varieties of bowing in equal notes'; they would have known from experience in which part of the bow such strokes were normally executed and would not have needed to puzzle over what Mozart meant by 'a quick lift of the bow' when he discussed the method of detaching notes in a single bow stroke. Modern violinists, however, having no direct connection with the playing styles of Mozart's time to inform their understanding, will inevitably try to relate what he writes to their own practices. The term 'lifting' is ambiguous here, implying to the modern violinist, who is so familiar with techniques in which the spring of the stick is used to obtain rebounding strokes, that the bow would be expected to leave the string completely. A genuine lift of the bow from the string between strokes (not a bounce) is certainly possible at slower speeds, and was, for instance, explicitly called for by Quantz where

19 Quoted in C. B. Oldman, 'Mozart's Violin Concerto in E flat', *Music and Letters* 12 (1931), 180
20 *The Letters of Mozart*, 455

time allowed, but it is not practicable beyond a certain speed. In a well-known passage of his treatise Quantz specifies that notes faster than quavers in Allegro and semiquavers in Allegretto would be too fast to allow a lifting of the bow and should be played 'with quite a short bow-stroke, but the bow is never lifted from the string.' He explained that if the player attempted to lift the bow at these speeds it 'would make the notes sound as if they were hacked or whipped.'[21] There is no suggestion that a rebounding stroke was intended.

It seems clear that Mozart's separate semiquavers in Chapter VII are of the non-lifted variety. He states that a succession of separate semiquavers (Example 1) should be played 'quite smoothly and easily',[22] certainly implying an on-string stroke, though he does not state explicitly where in the bow they should be performed, nor at what speed (which would clearly affect the extent and placing of the bow-stroke). At a speed of say crotchet = 60 the semiquaver stroke might appear as in Example 2i, whereas at crotchet = 100 it might be as in Example 2ii; other lengths and positioning would be possible, depending on the desired effect, but he will surely have intended these notes to be played in the upper half of the bow. The likelihood is that he expected a fairly extended stroke, perhaps similar to the classic *détaché* in which the separation of the notes depends on the articulation produced by the impetus of the bow change rather than by any deliberate stopping or springing of the bow between strokes. In this context it may be significant that Spohr, who deplored the growing mid nineteenth-century fashion for short, springing bow-strokes, was particularly horrified when he heard them used in the works of the 'Classical masters' (i.e. Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven) stating that they 'more than all others wished to have a free, well-nourished tone'.[23] Spohr's own experience went back to the 1790s and his study of bowing under Franz Eck (younger brother and pupil of Friedrich Johann Eck) suggests a close relationship with a style of playing reportedly admired by W. A. Mozart.

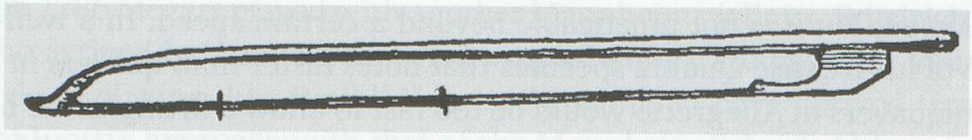


Example 1: Leopold Mozart, *Violinschule*, VII, 1 § 2

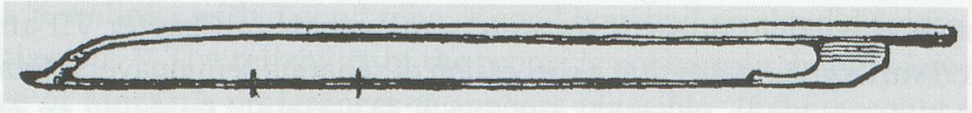
21 Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung, die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin, 1752), XVII, 2, § 27. It should be remembered, however, that Quantz was writing from the perspective of the French style of bowing.

22 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 1, § 2

23 Alexandre Malibran, *Louis Spohr* (Frankfurt am Main, 1860), 207–8

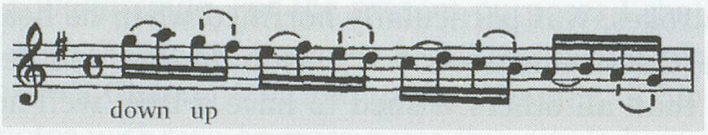


Example 2 i: Bow (as illustrated in Mozart *Violinschule* V § 4) marked by the present author with the extent of hair conjecturally used for semiquavers at crotchet=60

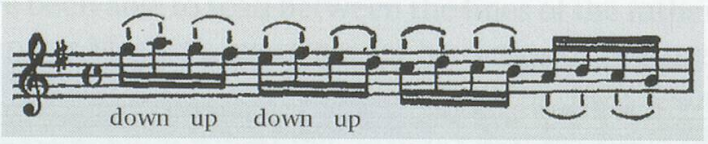


Example 2 ii: at crotchet=100

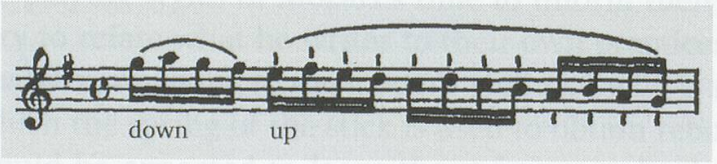
Leopold Mozart introduced the pattern in Example 3, with the instruction that the third and fourth notes should be 'separated by lifting the bow'.[24] Modern violinists almost automatically play such figures in the lower half of the bow, using a rebounding stroke for the two up-bows; this kind of stroke is frequently used in modern performances of Mozart on period instruments. It seems highly questionable, however, whether that was what either Leopold or Wolfgang Mozart would have envisaged.



Example 3: L. Mozart, *Violinschule*, VII, 1 § 7



Example 4: L. Mozart, *Violinschule*, VII, 1 § 14



Example 5: L. Mozart, *Violinschule*, VII, 1 § 17

24 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 1, § 7

This is confirmed by Mozart's later examples. It would be hard to conceive that a lower-half stroke could possibly be intended for Example 4, for which Mozart instructs that the pairs of notes, both in down- and up-bow, are to be 'detached by means of lifting the bow'.[25] His intention becomes increasingly clear in the following examples, illustrating three, four and finally twelve notes in a single up bow. The more detailed description of playing many notes in an up-bow (Example 5), 'separating them by a quick lift of the bow', makes clear that he is thinking of the classic slurred staccato. He explains that a 'certain control[26] of the right hand', and 'a retarding of the bow' are necessary, and that 'a heavier and longer bow must be used more lightly and retarded somewhat less', while a 'lighter and shorter bow must be pressed down more and retarded more'. From his final sentences, it is clear that the term 'lift' is misleading. He explains:

> Above all the right hand must here be made a little stiff, but the contracting and relaxing of the same must be regulated according to the weight and length, or the lightness and shortness of the bow. [...] But in particular you must know how to hold back and guide the bow in such fashion that towards the end of the second bar so much strength remains over, that the crotchet note (G) at the end of the passage in the same stroke can be distinguished by a noticeable accent.[27]

The execution of the bow stroke in this manner, beginning right at the point and ending before the middle of the bow is reached, alternating maximum pressure and complete release, results in a series of distinct, well separated, *martelé* notes, each one produced with a minute portion of the bow. This is undoubtedly the same stroke that Tartini calls *le Note pichettate*, for which he instructs: 'do not pass the middle of the bow, but try to play them at the point; to achieve perfect execution with up-bows, it is sufficient to practise with down-bows.'[28] The association of the term *pichettate* with this type of slurred staccato bowing (generally referred to by Spohr and other violinists of his time simply as staccato) seems to have survived well into the nineteenth century; as late as 1878 Henry Holmes, in the section on slurred staccato in his revised edition of Spohr's *Violin School*, stated that 'pichettato is the proper designation of the staccato bowing'.[29] This type of bow-stroke, seen as an indispensable means of executing sharply-detached short notes in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is rarely employed nowadays, except in very particular circumstances. The percussive staccato executed in the lower half of the bow in loud passages, or in soft passages in the middle

25 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 1, § 14

26 Editha Knocker misleadingly translates Leopold Mozart's 'Mässigung' as 'relaxing'.

27 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 1, § 17. His description, with its mention of the G at the end of the second bar, implies that not only does he envisage an up-bow staccato of 12 notes, but also one of 25 in which the up bow continues to the end of the second bar, although he does not illustrate this clearly in his music example.

28 Tartini, *Traité*, 57 (facsimile p. 3)

29 Henry Holmes, *Spohr's Violin School Revised and Edited, with Additional Text* (London, c. 1878), 127

of the bow, so completely ousted the old slurred staccato during the course of the twentieth century that Erwin Jacobi, in his translation of Tartini's *Rules on Bowing* implausibly interpreted Tartini's instructions as referring to a springing bow-stroke ('Springbogen').[30]

On the basis of this and other evidence about late eighteenth-century bowing,[31] it would be reasonable to assume that all the slurred staccato bowings indicated in Leopold Mozart's Chapter VII were fundamentally of the same kind: an on-the-string stroke in the upper half of the bow. The description of 'lifting' the bow was presumably meant to indicate the release of pressure of the bow on the string between percussions that is an aspect of this type of stroke. A slightly later writer, Johann Friedrich Reichardt, was more explicit about the part of the bow that was to be used for these typical separate and slurred staccato notes. He specified that the faster the separate notes, the nearer they should be played to the point, indicating the top quarter of the bow for the fastest notes, and he instructed that for pairs of slurred staccato notes the violinist should use 'at most an eighth part of the whole length of the bow in the region of the third quarter of the bow, reckoning from the hand'.[32] For semiquavers in groups of two slurred and two slurred staccato (Example 6) Reichardt explained that the down- and up-bow must be of equal length. For a succession of triplets of which the second and third were marked with dots under a slur (Example 7), he suggested an execution that created a kind of fake slurred staccato, instructing:

> The down-bow here must not be longer than half the up-bow in order to give the notes absolute equality, by which means a whole succession of notes can be made to seem as if they were all, in the most skilful manner, made with an up-bow, which would be far harder and bad for the hand, for this requires a somewhat stiff hand and therefore takes away its flexibility.

His description makes an interesting comparison with Leopold Mozart's,[33] which, in his reference to the stiffness of the hand, Reichardt may well have had in mind. The similarity of this bowing, skilfully executed, to the true slurred staccato is easily demonstrated.

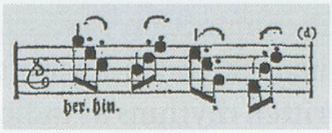
30 Tartini, *Traité*, 57

31 See Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750–1900* (Oxford, 1999), 259–81

32 Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Ueber die Pflichten des Ripien-Violinisten* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1776), 16–17

33 Mozart, *Versuch* VII, 1, § 17

Example 6: Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Ueber die Pflichten des Ripien-Violinisten*, 18



Example 7: Reichardt, *Ueber die Pflichten*, 17

Since the modern type of rebounding stroke in the middle or lower half of the bow was not a standard element of bowing at that time, it seems probable that slurred staccato in its various forms, although seldom marked by the composer, will routinely have been used in performances of late eighteenth-century repertoire where a sharply-detached effect was required. It certainly remained a standard stroke for much of the nineteenth century in such contexts. Editions of classical repertoire by Ferdinand David, for instance, provide numerous examples of this stroke in contexts where modern players are inclined to use an off-string stroke in the lower half of the bow.

In his chapter on bowing, Leopold Mozart also refers to discrepancies between notated rhythms and the manner in which, under particular circumstances, they were expected to be performed. He mentions more than once that in slurred figures the first note under the slur must be sustained longer than its written value. Of slurred pairs he remarks that the first note 'is accented more strongly and held slightly longer, while the second is slurred on to it quite quietly and rather late', adding that 'this style of performance promotes good taste in the playing of the melody'.[34] More explicitly, in his instructions about the performance of a series of musical examples given in the second part of the chapter, he remarks:

> The first of two, three, four, or even more notes, slurred together, must at all times be stressed more strongly and sustained a little longer; but those following must diminish in tone and be slurred on somewhat later, but this must be carried out with such good judgment that the bar-length is not altered in the smallest degree. The slight sustaining of the first note must not only be made agreeable to the ear by a nice apportioning of the slightly hurried notes slurred on to it, but must even be made truly pleasant to the listener.[35]

This statement is followed by a list of the examples in which these instructions are to be observed (Example 8 i-xii). For Example 8 ix he instructs that the sustaining should be applied to the second beat of both bars, thus apparently requiring a

34 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 1, §3
35 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 2, §5

sustaining of the fourth note *within* the slur in the third alternative bowing. He also remarked more generally about slurred figures: 'when uneven notes occur which are slurred together, the longer notes must not be made too short but rather sustained a little over-long',[36] and gave a list of examples (Example 9 i–vii; Examples 8 iv, c & d, and 8 ix, b & c, are also cited as examples of this treatment). The extent of the lingering required by Mozart, however, remains unclear. In relation to modern practice, the injunction to sustain the note a *little* longer suggests something very restrained. But such terminology is relative; in a culture where performers regarded written rhythms as indicative, rather then prescriptive, it seems likely that a more pronounced degree of inequality would have been expected in such circumstances, as will be considered further below.

Another aspect of rhythmic alteration discussed in the *Violinschule* is the treatment of dotted figures. Leopold Mozart refers to this several times, observing for instance: 'It is always better if the note following the dot be played somewhat late'.[37] 'The same must be observed with dotted notes followed by two quick notes which are slurred together'.[38] On the other hand, he urged composers to be more explicit with respect to dotted figures and clearly encouraged his son to use double dots where a strongly over-dotted execution was envisaged. His influence may well be reflected in his son's notational practice which, with respect to such matters, as well as to details of dynamics and articulation, is more explicit than that of many of his contemporaries. But this does not mean that all single-dotted figures in W. A. Mozart's music would have been expected to be played exactly as written; the difference between single- and double-dotted figures, especially at a slower tempo, is considerable, and there may be many occasions in W. A. Mozart's music where an intermediate execution is appropriate. In his excellent survey of rhythmic alteration Stephen Hefling provides examples of W. A. Mozart's double- and single-dotting as an illustration of his tendency to be more explicit in this respect than many of his contemporaries, observing that 'nothing in the treatise sources would particularly suggest over-dotting if 7:1 ratios were not already notated'.[39] His example, from the Andante cantabile of the Symphony No. 41 (Example 10), may well, however, be a case where the single-dotted figure requires an over-dotting that falls between single- and double-dotting; a strict 3:1 ratio would seem rather inflexible in this context.

36 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 2, § 6
37 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 2, § 2
38 Mozart, *Versuch*, VII, 2, § 3
39 Stephen E. Hefling, *Rhythmic Alteration in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Music* (New York, 1993), 159

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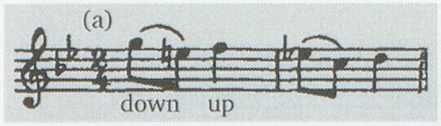

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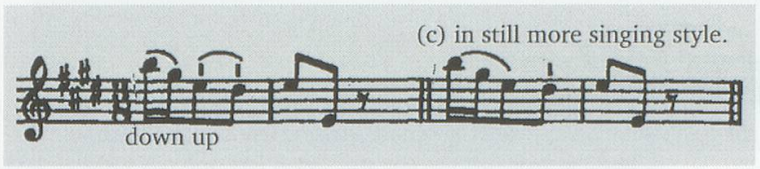

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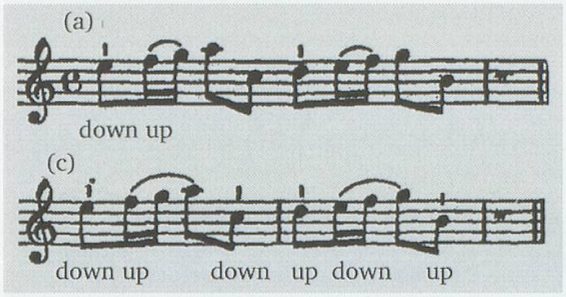

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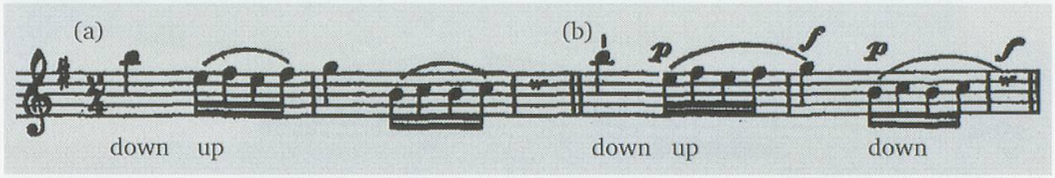

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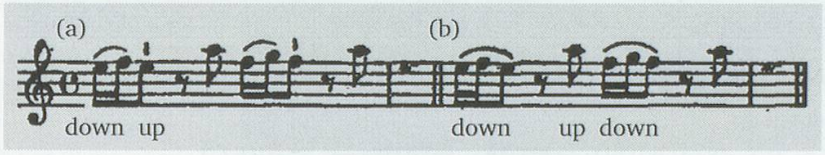

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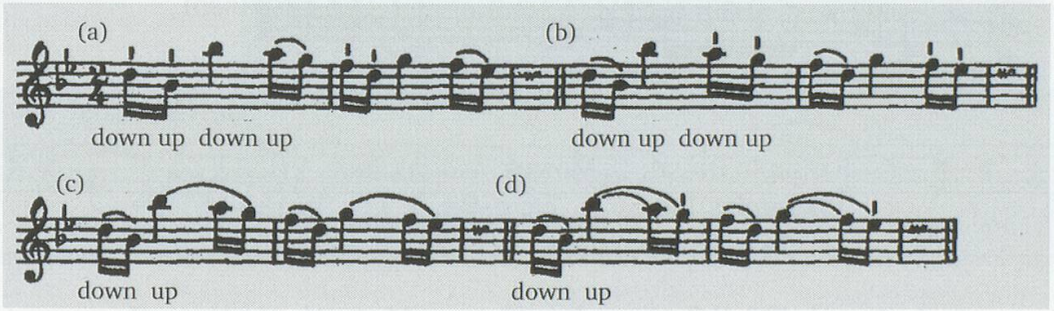

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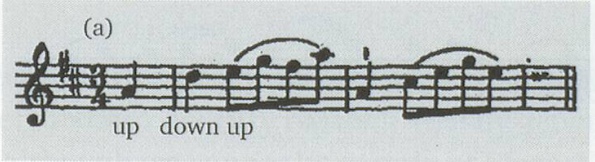

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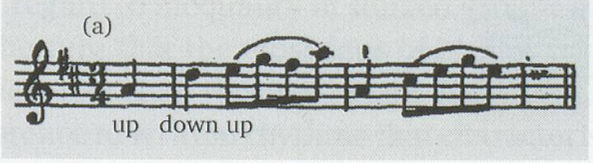

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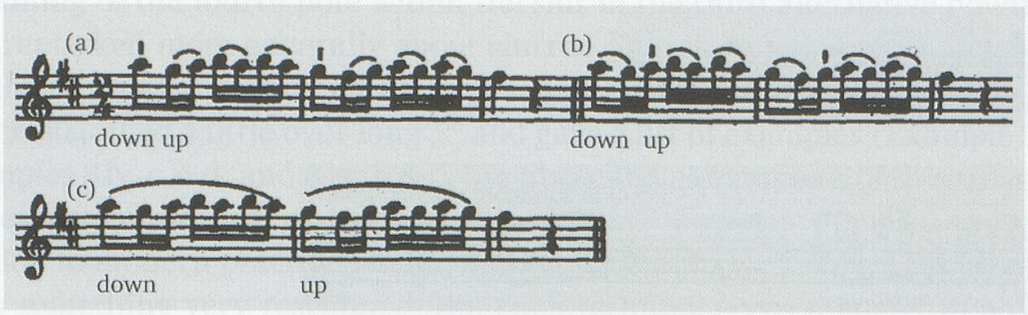

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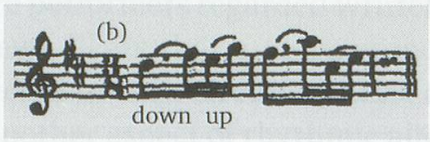

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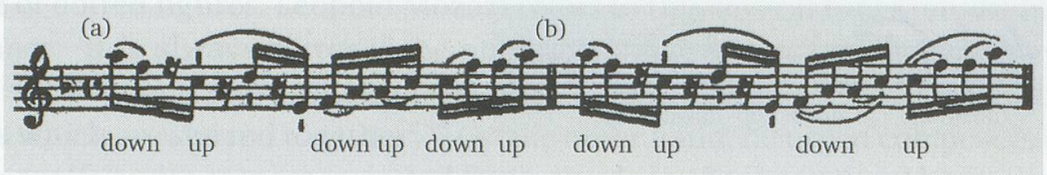

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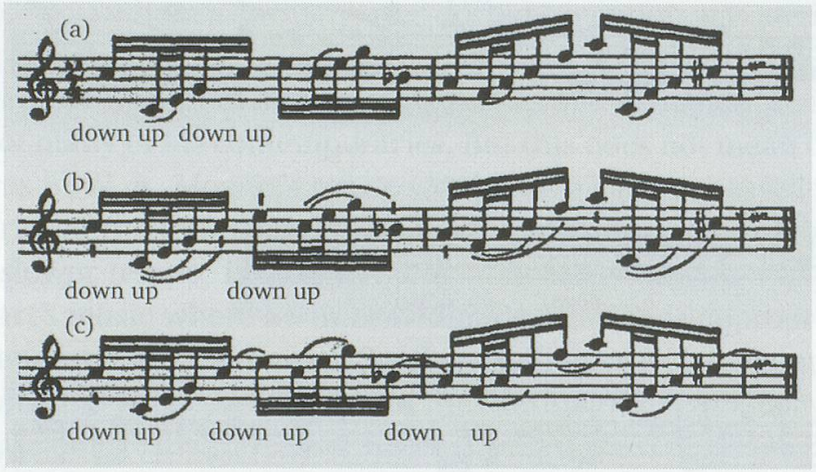
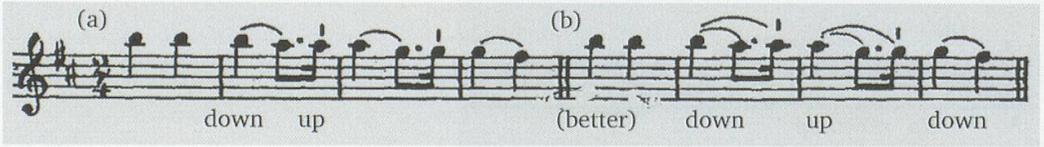


Example 8 i–xii: L. Mozart, *Violinschule*, VII, 2 § 1
(examples 1 a, 6 b, c, 7 a, c, 9 a, b, 11 a, b, 13 a–d,
14 a, 17 a, b, 20 a–c, 22 b, 28 a, b, 33 a–c)

i



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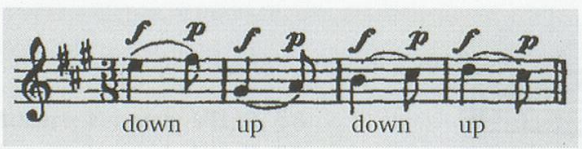
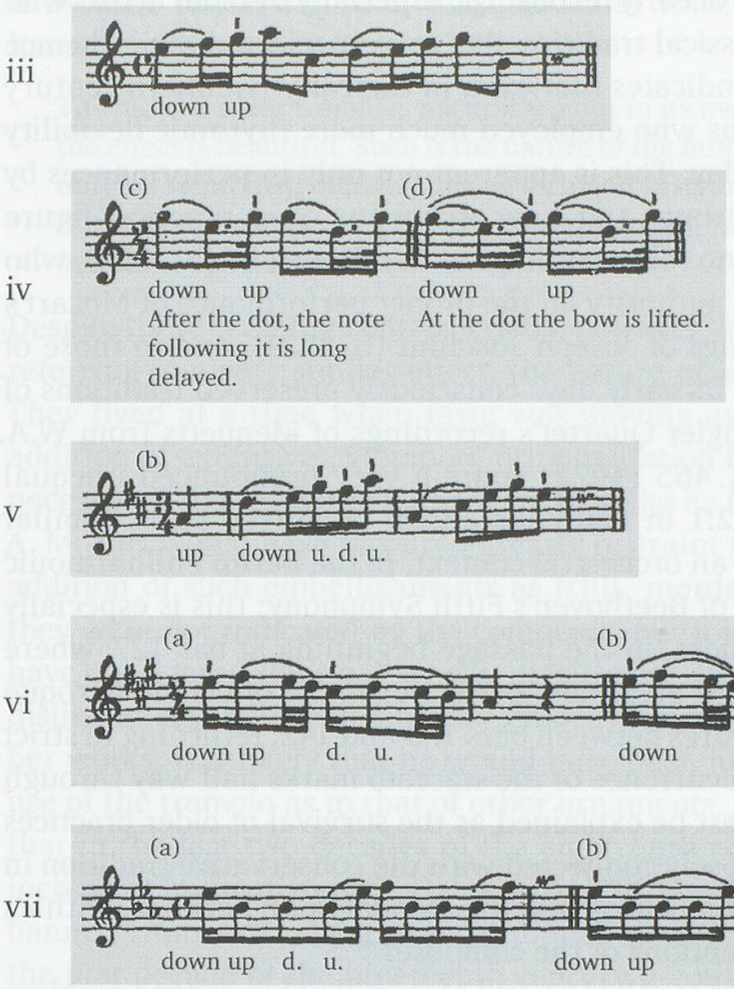
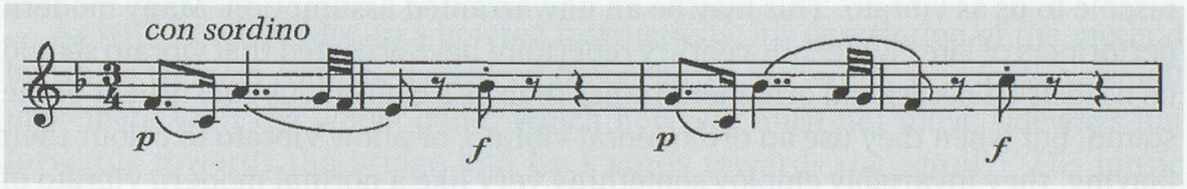




Example 9 i–vii: L. Mozart, *Violinschule*, VII, 2 § 1
(examples 4 a, b, 5 b, 7 b, 8 c, d, 14 b, 21 a, b, 32 a, b)



Example 10: W. A. Mozart, Symphony in C K. 551, bars 1–4

When present-day period-instrument performers employ rhythmic alteration in late eighteenth-century repertoire, they generally do so in a very cautious manner. And although we cannot be certain of Mozart's expectations or of his own practice with regard to inequality in slurred groups or the execution of dotted figures, we can be sure that the musicians of his day had a much freer attitude towards the musical text than those of recent generations, and that the predominantly strict adherence to written rhythms that characterises modern performances of this repertoire would have been uncharacteristic of their practices. Despite the tendency of nineteenth-century authorities to call increasingly for musicians to play exactly

what was written, the evidence of early recordings, especially by older artists who belonged to an identifiable classical tradition that largely rejected the influence of Wagner and his followers, indicates that even in the early twentieth century there were important musicians who employed much more rhythmic flexibility than we are accustomed to today. This is apparent not only in performances by soloists, but also by chamber groups and even orchestras. Such practices figure particularly strongly in the piano roll recordings of Carl Reinecke (b. 1824), who was regarded in his time as an authority on the proper performance of Mozart's music, in the acoustic recordings of Joseph Joachim (b. 1831), and in those of the Klingler Quartet, which in its early days consciously preserved traditions of the Joachim Quartet. The Klingler Quartet's recordings of Menuetts from W.A. Mozart's K. 428 (1912) and K. 465 (1922) contain very pronounced unequal treatment (between 3:2 and 2:1 in many instances) of slurred pairs. Similar practices can even be heard in an orchestral context, in the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra's 1913 performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; this is especially the case in the Andante con moto, in the passage beginning at bar 127, where the wind instruments settle into an almost perfect example of classic Baroque 3:2 inequality in the slurred figures between bars 133 and 142, returning to strict equality immediately on the occurrence of the staccato marks half way through bar 142. Such examples can best be explained as the survival of older practices among musicians who were closely connected with the conservative tradition in German music that centred upon Leipzig and the Mendelssohn heritage, with its emphasis on fidelity to the intentions of the composer.[40]

Another of the practices discussed by Leopold Mozart that has proved problematic for modern performers is the tremolo. We automatically equate this with what is now universally referred to in English and most European languages as vibrato, and automatically assume that what Mozart is describing will have been recognisable to us as vibrato. This may be an unwarranted assumption. Many modern performers of late eighteenth-century repertoire have accepted that vibrato should be used as an occasional ornament rather than as a continuous constituent of the sound, but when they use an ornamental vibrato, or allow vibrato to colour their playing, they invariably employ something very like a normal modern vibrato of the kind they learned to use continuously in their early training.

Leopold Mozart describes the tremolo as an embellishment that is used 'not only by good instrumentalists but also by clever singers.'[41] He does not suggest, as might have been expected, that it is essentially a vocal ornament imitated by violinists. In this respect, his conception of the tremolo seems closer to that of Tartini than to his son's view of it. Tartini wrote that it 'is by its very nature more suitable for instruments than for voices. If we meet it sometimes in the voice, this

40 See Clive Brown, 'Performing Classical repertoire: the unbridgeable gulf between contemporary practice and historical reality', *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis 30 (2006)* (Winterthur, 2008)

41 Mozart, *Versuch*, XI, § 1

is because of the nature of that particular voice'.[42] W. A. Mozart, on the other hand, wrote to his father in 1778:

> The human voice trembles naturally – but in its own way – and to such a degree that the effect is beautiful. Such is the nature of the human voice; and people imitate it not only on wind instruments, but on stringed instruments too and even on the clavier. But the moment the proper limit is overstepped, it is no longer beautiful – because it is contrary to nature.[43]

Despite these seeming contradictions, however, it is probable that all three were referring to a very similar effect, the nature of which will be considered below. They lived at a time when taste was moving away from a style in which the addition of extensive extempore ornamentation by the performer was seen as a necessity if the composer's text were to make its full effect. It is arguable that W. A. Mozart would have favoured greater restraint than Tartini or his father in the addition of such embellishments as trills, mordents, turns and tremolo where they were not indicated by the composer, but it is hardly tenable that he would have considered their use wholly illegitimate. Insofar as he shared the growing dislike of excessive extemporary embellishment, especially in concerted chamber works, it is likely that he would have been just as opposed to the profligate use of the tremolo as to that of other ornaments. There is considerable evidence that in the last two decades of the eighteenth century the tremolo was falling increasingly into disrepute. Galeazzi in 1790 considered that it 'should be entirely banned from music by anyone equipped with good taste'.[44] And by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century it could be regarded, in the words of an English violin tutor in 1811, as having 'become obsolete'.[45] Among younger musicians at that time it may at best have been considered 'an old ornament that ought nevertheless not to be wholly rejected if introduced infrequently and in the right places'.[46]

As with Leopold Mozart's bowing instructions, his description of the method by which tremolo could be produced lacks clarity. He wrote: 'one makes a small movement with the whole hand; which however must not move sideways but forwards towards the bridge and backwards towards the scroll'.[47] His music examples and instructions, however, may help to clarify the effect he envisaged. To produce the effect shown in Example 11 he stated that: 'The movement must, however, be made with strong after-pressure of the finger and this pressure must be applied on the first note of every crotchet; and in rapid movement on the

42 Tartini, *Traité*, 84

43 *The Letters of Mozart*, 552

44 Francesco Galeazzi, *Elementi teorico-pratici di musica, con un saggio sopra l'arte di suonare il violino annalizzata, ed a dimostrabili principi ridotta*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1791–6), I, 171

45 *Theory and Practice of the Violin*, 48

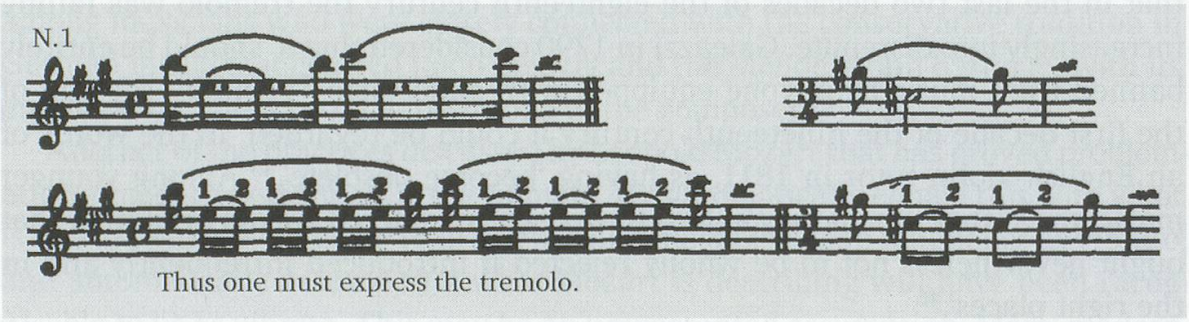
46 Justus Johann Friedrich Dotzauer, *Violoncell-Schule für den ersten Unterricht nebst 40 zweckmässigen Übungsstücken mit Bezeichnung des Fingersatzes op. 126* (Vienna, c. 1836), 28

47 Mozart, *Versuch*, XI, § 2

first note of every half-crotchet."[48] This section of the *Violinschule* was evidently derived directly from Tartini, who instructed that to perform the tremolo shown in Example 12

> the finger does not leave the string, but it is raised a little [...] It should always be equal and played in such strict time that the stronger portion of the tremolo falls on the second of the two tied notes, marked 2, and the weaker portion on the first one, marked 1; this is a general rule,

later reinforcing this with the statement: 'The general rule is that the stronger portion always falls on the first note of the crotchet, the quaver or the semiquaver."[49] These descriptions are problematic from the mechanical point of view. No increase in pressure on the string by the finger of the left hand can, by itself, have any effect on the accentuation of the note, as implied in Mozart's and Tartini's instructions; only the bow can produce such accentuation. Although it may feel to the player that pressure is being alternately applied and released by the left hand in the execution of this ornament, the resulting effect is solely one of rhythmical pitch variation. It is entirely possible, though, that a subconscious response of the right hand may also contribute a slight increase of pressure on each strong beat by the bow.



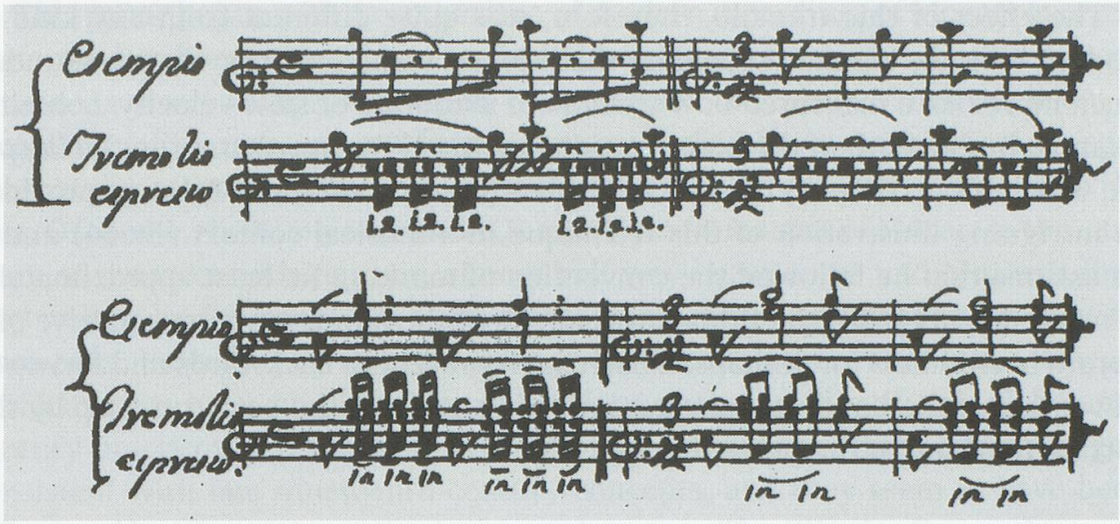
Example 11: L. Mozart, *Violinschule*, XI § 5

It might help us to conceive what this type of tremolo may have sounded like if we consider Mozart's description of its effect:

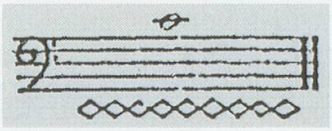
> as, when the remaining trembling sound of a struck string or bell is not pure and continues to sound not on one note only but sways first too high, then too low, just so by the movement of the hand forwards and backwards must you endeavour to imitate exactly the swaying of these intermediate tones.[50]

Mozart's slightly younger contemporary, Löhlein, similarly used the analogy of striking a bell or a bass string on a keyboard instrument.[51] The fact that many

48 Mozart, *Versuch*, XI, § 5
49 Tartini, *Traité*, 87
50 Mozart, *Versuch*, XI, § 2
51 Georg Simon Löhlein, *Anweisung zum Violinspielen* (Leipzig and Züllichau, 1774), 51



Example 12: Giuseppe Tartini, *Traité des agréments de la musique*, ed. Erwin R. Jacobi, 86 (facsimile, 16)



Example 13: Justus Johann Friedrich Dotzauer, *Méthode de violoncelle*, 47

writers also saw this kind of left-hand tremolo as virtually interchangeable with a vibrato produced by the bow (a kind of pulsating stroke, sometimes notated like portato with dots under a slur), may help us to envisage its effect. As late as the 1820s, the cellist Dotzauer still described the effect in very similar terms to Mozart and Tartini, writing:

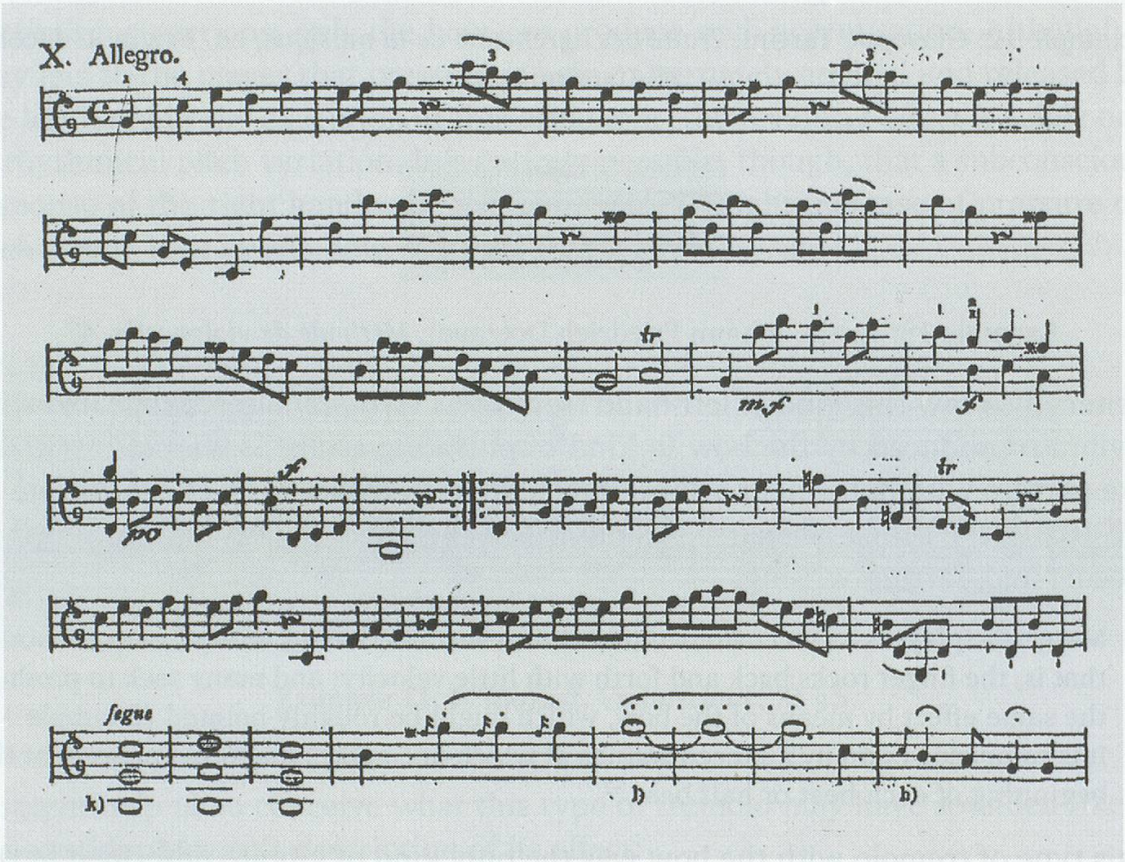
> Many solo players are accustomed to perform sustained notes with vibrato [Bebung], that is, the finger rocks back and forth with little velocity; and many seek to produce the same effect by means of the bow, which might be roughly notated (Example 13). It is composed of many nuanced sounds of which one makes the forte apparent at the beginning of each beat or half beat.[52]

This type of tremolo with the bow was the only kind of vibrato described in the influential Paris Conservatoire *Méthode de violon* of 1803, edited by Baillot, Rode and Kreutzer. Late eighteenth-century authors often stated that left-hand vibrato, like the related clavichord Bebung, might be indicated by a succession of dots over the note on which it was to be executed; as Koch reported: 'various composers are accustomed to mark it with dots over the note, and indeed with as many dots as movements should be made with the finger'.[53] It may not have been unusual to put these under a slur, producing an ambiguous notation that could just as well apply to the bow (in an effect analogous with portato) as to the left hand.

52 Justus Johann Friedrich Dotzauer, *Méthode de violoncelle / Violonzell-Schule* (Mainz, c. 1825), 47

53 Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon* (Frankfurt am Main, 1802), art. 'Bebung'

The effect of this tremolo, therefore, was quite different from any kind of modern vibrato. We may speculate that Mozart's and Tartini's vibrato sounded much more like a measured bow tremolo of moderate or slow velocity. Löhlein's example in the tenth of the practice pieces in his 1774 *Anweisung zum Violinspielen*, which his accompanying narrative identifies as a left-hand Bebung, provides an intriguing illustration of this technique in a musical context (Ex.14) and if we assume that he followed the convention of marking (at least approximately) as many dots as there should be movements of the hand, we must conceive of a vibrato in crotchets (or perhaps, if each dot represents a backwards and forwards movement of the hand, in quavers) following on from the pattern set up by the portato marking in the preceding bar.



Example 14: Georg Simon Löhlein, *Anweisung zum Violinspielen*, 68

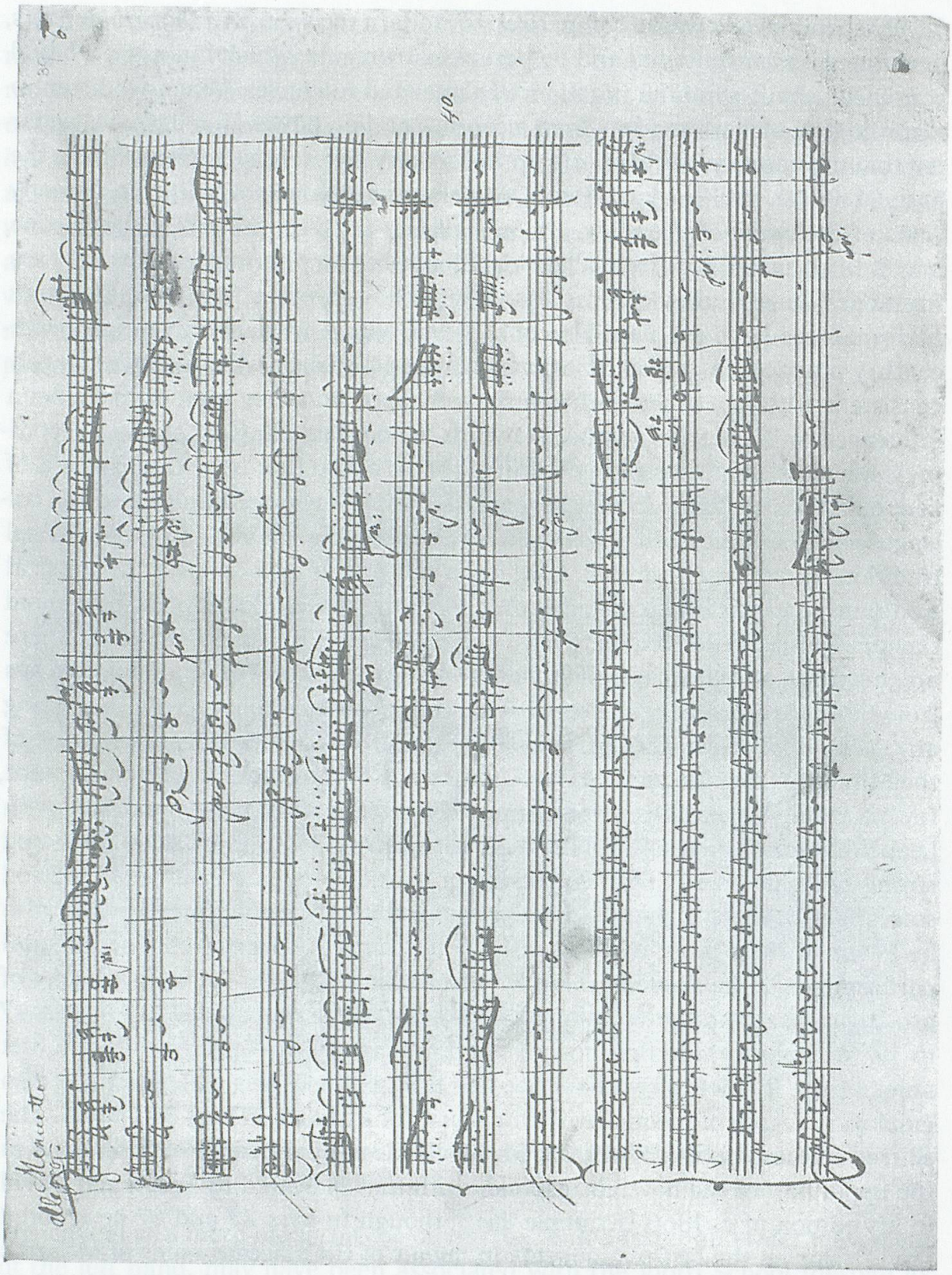
The advent of a more modern type of vibrato, with a faster and freer movement of the left hand, may have been associated with the Viotti School (despite its absence from the 1803 Conservatoire *Méthode*), for Baillot, whose later *L'art du violon* of 1834 gives a music example that suggests a very much faster movement than Leopold Mozart's, wrote: 'Avoid giving the vibrato a slackness that would make the playing seem old-fashioned'.[54]

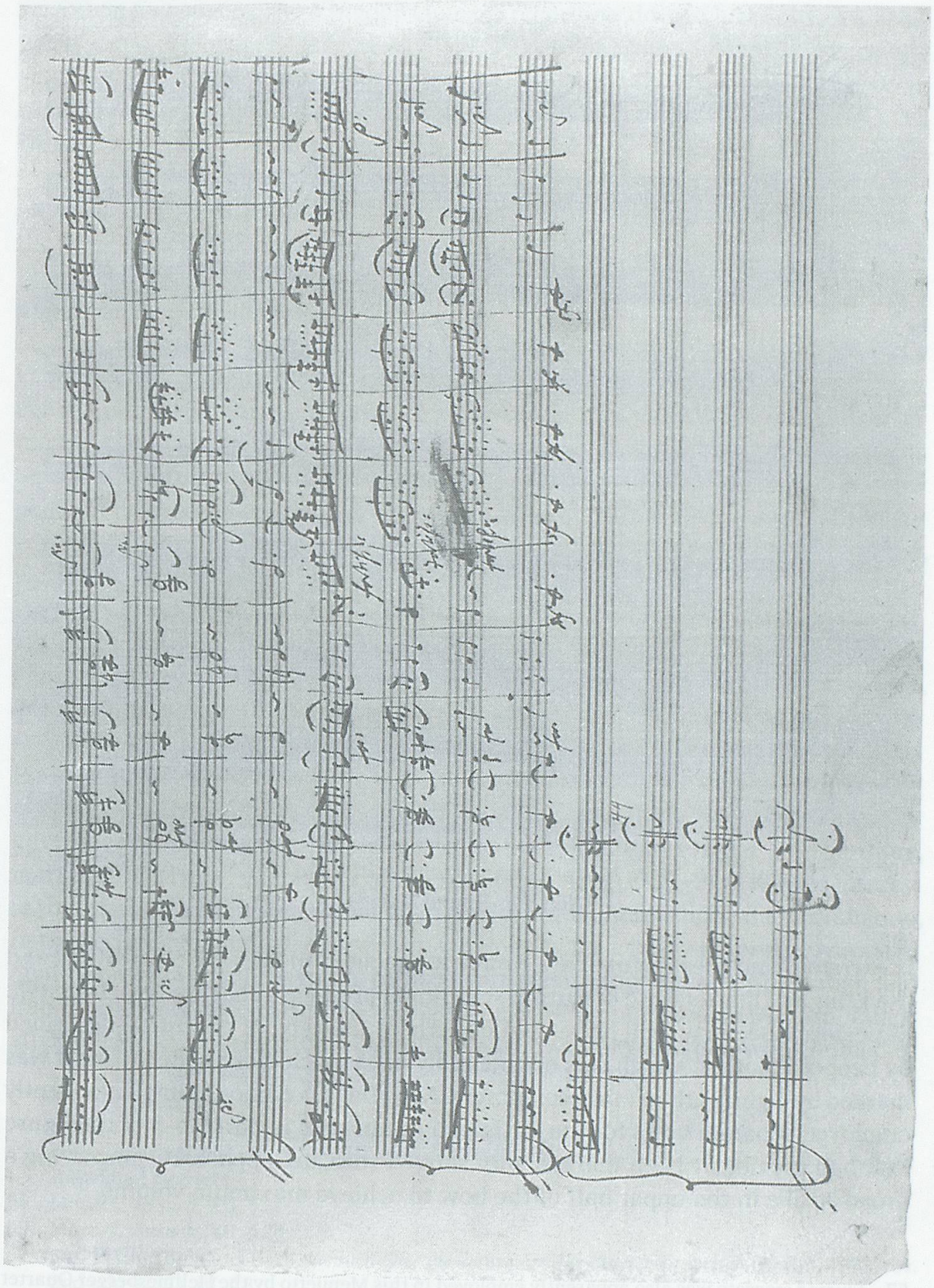
54 Pierre Marie François de Sales Baillot, *L'art du violon: Nouvelle méthode* (Paris, 1834), 138

This paper began with a comparison of modern recordings of Mozart quartets, performed on conventional and on period instruments, which indicated a broad consensus about what the notation was intended to convey. When we listen to recordings of Mozart quartets from a century earlier, however, it becomes apparent that the notation has been susceptible to very different interpretations in the past. Of course, the Klingler or Rosé Quartets' performances of Mozart in the early years of the twentieth century, almost half way between us and Mozart's time, may well be as different from a late eighteenth-century performance as they are from ours. Indeed, they contrast strongly with each other. The Rosé Quartet's performances have no plausible connections with any identifiable eighteenth-century practices in respect of articulation and phrasing, which appear largely consistent with late nineteenth-century concepts, and they seem to have been influenced by Wagnerian attitudes towards tempo. The Klingler Quartet's recordings, however, contain striking features that seem to link us with the world of Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule*. Perhaps the recordings of Klingler and his colleagues, who saw themselves as the direct heirs of the Joachim Quartet, preserved traditions of performance that Joachim, a self-proclaimed defender of classical traditions, had passed on from his own mentors, Joseph Boehm and Ferdinand David, who in turn derived them from musicians active in Mozart's lifetime. There are, however, so many cases of students adopting radically different approaches from those of their teachers, that extreme caution must be observed in advancing any such notion. Nevertheless, analysis of the Klingler Quartet's performance of the Minuetto from Mozart's String Quartet K. 428 (Example 15),[55] for instance, reveals three conspicuous respects in which direct parallels may be drawn with Leopold Mozart's instructions: the frequent occurrence of significantly elongated strong beats in slurred figures, consistent over-dotting, and the use of slurred staccato to produce a sharply-detached articulation. (Similar features can also be heard in their other early recordings of Classical repertoire.) The unequal performance of the slurred groups is very striking. Klingler varies the degree of prolongation according to the musical context; in the repeated figure in bars 17 to 19, for instance, the first note of bar 17 is greatly prolonged, while the first notes of the following two bars become progressively less elongated. He also employs a degree of inequality within slurs, for instance in bars 34 and 35. The slurred staccato in bars 17–19, 22, 51, 55–57 clearly performed with up-bows in the upper half of the bow, corresponds with that indicated by Ferdinand David in his edition of c. 1860 (Example 16),[56] though in bars 23 and 67 he ignored David's slur on the last two quavers in favour of the staccato notes of Mozart's original. The over-dotting on both the first and third beats of bars 12, 14 and 15

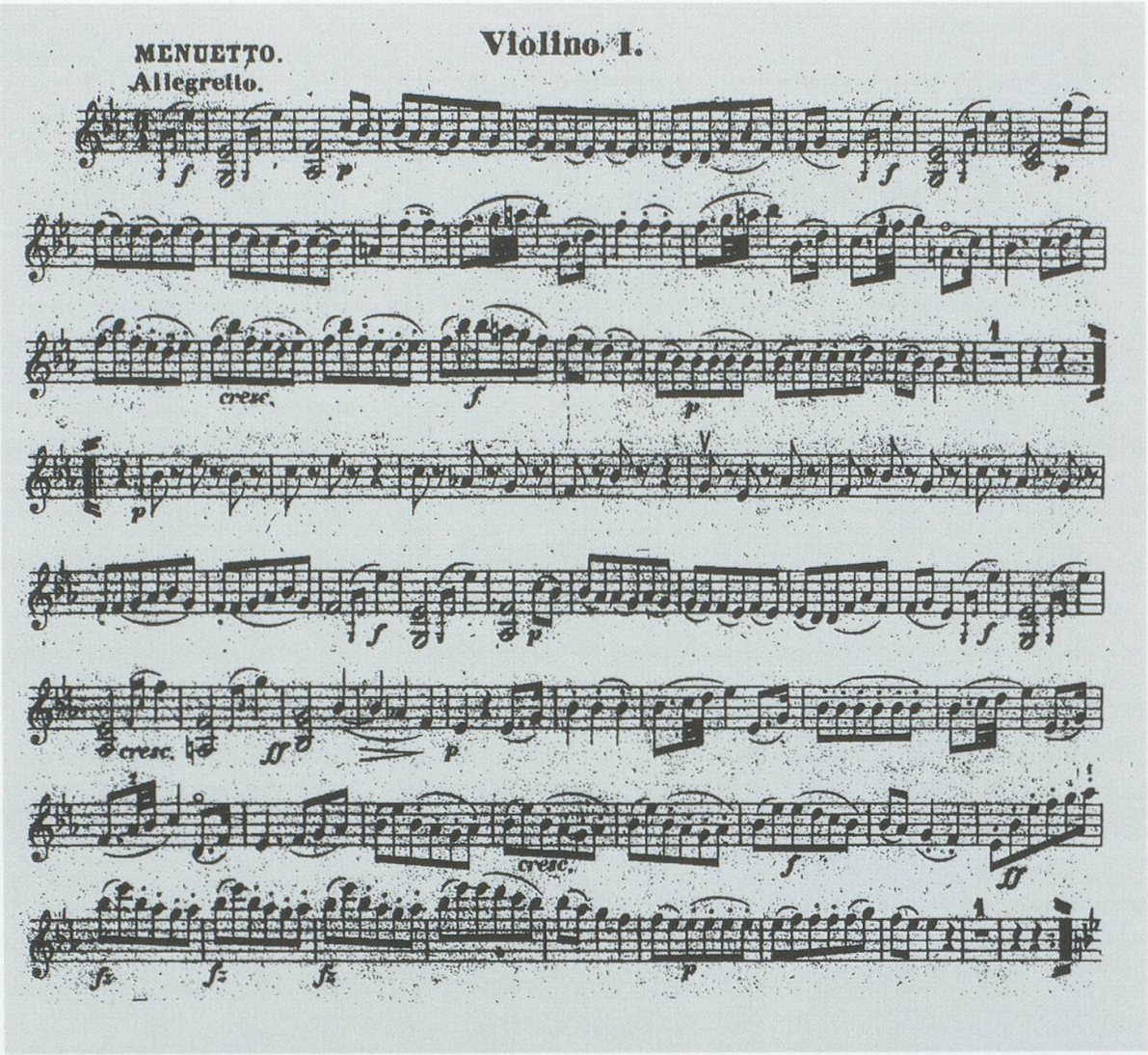
55 CD: *The Klingler Quartet 1905–1936 The Joachim Tradition,* 2 CD set, Testament SBT 2136 (1998), CD 1, track 6

56 *Quartette / 2 Violinen, Viola und Violoncell / von / W. A. Mozart. / Neue Ausgabe / zum Gebrauch beim Conservatorium der Musik in Leipzig / genau bezeichnet / von / Ferdinand David [...]* (Leipzig, Breitkopf und Härtel, [1860]), pl. no. 13168





Example 15i–ii: W. A. Mozart, String Quartet in E flat K. 428, Menuetto (autograph)



Example 16: W. A. Mozart, String Quartet in E flat K. 428, Menuetto (ed. Ferdinand David)

is extreme, and these figures are similarly executed in bars 48–53. David's and the Klingler Quartet's use of slurred staccato to produce a sharply detached style of performance may well be related directly to the type of execution described by Leopold Mozart, which was undoubtedly used much more widely than it was marked by eighteenth-century composers. As in David's edition, Klingler evidently employed separate bows for the *fortissimo* occurrence in bars 61–3 of the figure that had previously been marked with slurred staccato, apparently employing a broad stroke in the upper half of the bow to achieve maximum volume. [57]

57 Slurred staccato was also apparently employed in this Menuetto by the Hellmesberger Quartet (1849–91) in Vienna in bb. 17–19, 55–57, but not in bb. 22 or 51, and they also used this stroke in bb. 61–63. This is indicated in Universal Edition No. 435, *10 berühmte Streichquartette / für / 2 Violinen, Viola und / Violoncello / von / W. A. Mozart / herausgegeben / mit Benutzung der Stimmen des Hellmesberger- / Quartetts und der darin vorgezeichneten Stricharten / und sonstigen Vortragszeichen, wie sie von / den Quartett-Vereinigungen / Georg und Joseph Hellmesberger Sen. und Jun. / angewendet wurden / neue, revidierte Ausgabe / von / Carl Nowotny* (Wien, New

Other features in the Klingler Quartet recording do not have obvious links with Leopold Mozart's instructions. The degree of tempo flexibility, especially the substantial hurrying which occurs in connection with crescendo, reflects nineteenth-century practices as described by Czerny and others, while Mozart's treatment of tempo is characterised by his emphasis on steadiness and the avoidance of hurrying.[58] But Mozart explicitly related this to orchestral playing, which he contrasted with the soloist's praiseworthy use of tempo rubato;[59] and about the same time C. P. E. Bach made the more general point that 'in ensembles made up of only a few understanding players, manipulations are permissible which affect the tempo itself.'[60]

Another feature in the recording that finds no parallel in Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* is Klingler's use of portamento in the main theme at bars 2, 8 and equivalent places (executed between bow-strokes by drawing up the finger to the new position at the end of the down-bow, immediately before the up-bow on the third beat of the bar). Leopold Mozart's instructions on fingerings for position changing seem mostly concerned with avoiding audible slides. In a few cases position changes occur within slurs that, if a true legato were maintained, would inevitably result in audible shifts, but it seems clear that none of these are intended to be ornamental. Klingler's portamento is contrary to David's fingering in this particular instance, although portamento in such contexts was certainly characteristic of nineteenth-century performance in general. It is also, however, not implausible as a late eighteenth-century practice. Portamento in comparable musical contexts to that in which Klingler applied it is explicitly recommended for singers in Corri's *Select Collection* (Example 17 i–iii),[61] which is almost exactly contemporaneous with Mozart's 'Haydn' Quartets; and Mozart would undoubtedly have heard such practices in the performances of Italian singers. Furthermore, markings in several of Haydn's op. 33 string quartets (1781–2) reveal an interest in this effect,[62] and during the last two decades of W. A. Mozart's life, portamento, in the sense of an audible connection between notes employed for its expressive qualities, undoubtedly began to be used with increasing frequency by Italian and Italian-influenced violinists of a younger generation than Leopold Mozart. Salieri attributed its popularisation to Antonio Lolli,[63] while Woldemar, who claimed to

York, Universal-Edition, [c. 1901]) consecutive plate numbers from U.E. 73 to U.E. 82 for the individual quartets

58 Mozart, *Versuch*, XII, § 21

59 Mozart, *Versuch*, XII, § 20

60 Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin, 1773, rev. 2nd edn 1787), III, § 8

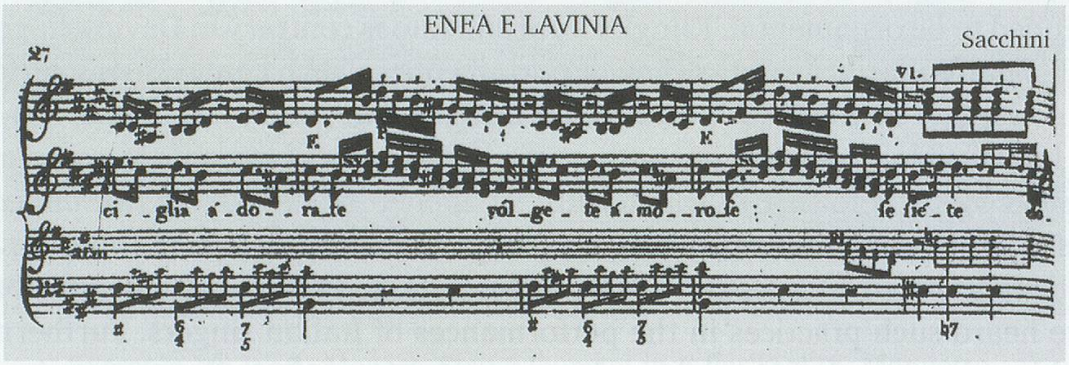
61 Domenico Corri, *A Select Collection of the most Admired Songs, Duetts* (Edinburgh, c. 1783). The preface makes clear that the appoggiatura before the first beats of bb. 1 and 3 in 17 i, before the second beat of b. 3 in 17 ii and before the fourth beat of b. 5 in 17 iii, which he calls the 'leaping grace' is a rapid portamento.

62 Brown, *Classical and Romantic*, 580–1

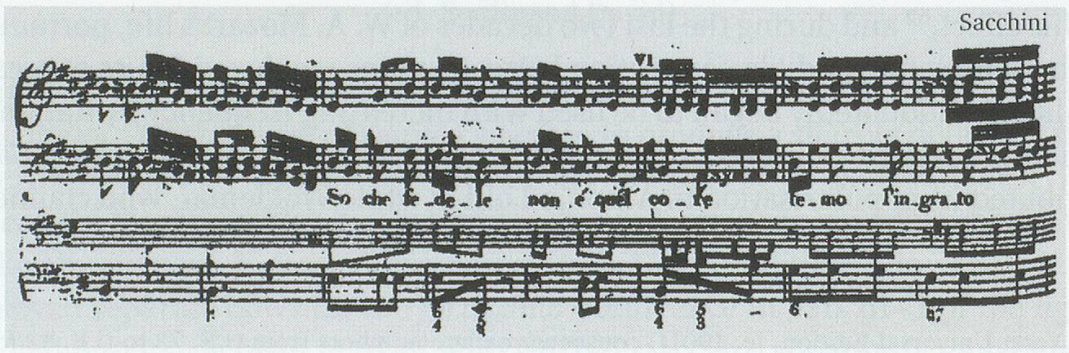
63 *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 13 (1811), 209

be a pupil of both Lolli and Mestrino, stated in his *Grande Méthode* that Mestrino had caused a sensation with his use of it in Paris in 1786.[64] The *Mercure de France* referred to Mestrino's playing as 'new, full of expression and sensitivity'.[65] In Paris Cambini (b. 1746), well known for his activities as a quartet player (with Nardini and Boccherini among others), considered the effective employment of portamento a mark of the most refined playing;[66] and his younger Parisian contemporaries Rudolf Kreutzer (b. 1766) and Pierre Rode (b. 1774) were noted for their extensive use of it. Woldemar also included a substantial section on portamento in his revision of Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* (1801).[67] Mestrino's association with portamento is particularly interesting; between 1780 and 1785 he was employed by Prince Esterházy and it seems highly probable that the portamento fingerings in Haydn's op. 33 quartets relate to his connection with Mestrino. Whether Mozart would have favoured the use of portamento in his own compositions for strings cannot be ascertained, but it seems certain that Viennese violinists of the 1780s would have employed it from time to time. Klingler's use of portamento in this repertoire, therefore, was undoubtedly not anachronistic.

i



ii



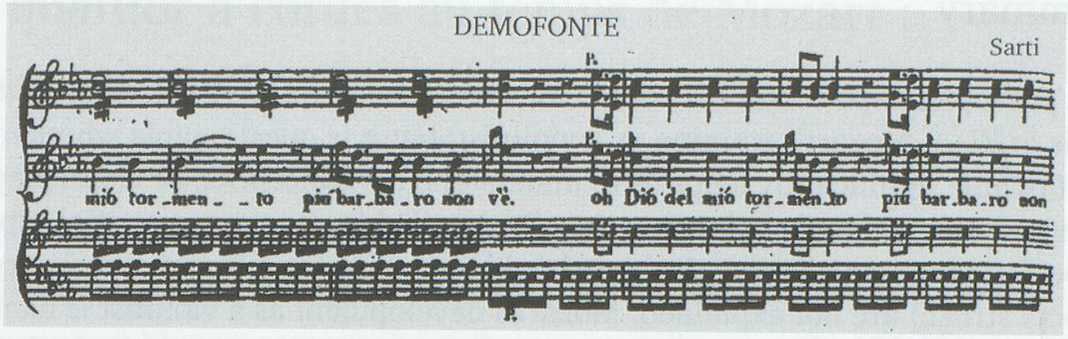
64 Michel Woldemar, *Grande Méthode ou étude élémentaire pour le violon* (Paris, c. 1800), 34

65 *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 2nd edn (London, 2001), xvi, 507

66 Giuseppe Maria Cambini, *Nouvelle méthode théorique et pratique pour le violon* (Paris, c. 1795)

67 Michel Woldemar, *Méthode de violon par L. Mozart rédigée par Woldemar, élève de Lolli* (Paris, c. 1801)

iii



Example 17i–iii: Domenico Corri, *A Select Collection* i, 27, 73, 111

The suggestion that an early twentieth-century recording may have anything to tell us about eighteenth-century performing practices may at first sight appear far-fetched; it certainly raises more questions than can be answered in the scope of this discussion. Exercising the greatest caution, we can merely say that the Klingler Quartet's approach to Mozart performance reveals radical stylistic differences from present-day performances of the same repertoire, whether performed on modern or period instruments. More speculatively, we may say that some of the most striking ways in which the early recording differs from recent ones parallel techniques and practices described in Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* and other relevant eighteenth-century sources. More provocatively, we may claim that some of the unfamiliar stylistic features of their performance are directly descended from eighteenth-century practices. The manner in which Klingler and his colleagues played the music of Mozart in the early twentieth century will certainly have differed in many significant respects from the way in which eighteenth-century musicians will have played it. Nevertheless, the Klingler Quartet's interpretation of Mozart's notation may plausibly reflect practices that, albeit modified gradually over time, were consciously passed on as a genuine tradition of performance in the German School to which they belonged. At the very least, their recordings can provide valuable insights into some of the ways in which eighteenth-century notation may have conveyed quite different messages to the musicians for whom it was written than it does to us.

Summary

The principles expounded in Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* will have formed the basis of W. A. Mozart's training as a violinist, but it is questionable whether the *Violinschule* significantly helps us to understand his conception of violin playing. Although the *Violinschule* is exceptionally detailed for its time, essential aspects of performance (eg. the way the bow should be handled to execute different types of bow stroke) are not explained. Mozart's development as a violinist is likely to have paralleled his development as a composer; he will have learned much from hearing violinists of differing schools and will undoubtedly have adopted and subsequently developed aspects of their styles that appealed to him. A range of evidence (Mozart's letters, contemporaneous comparisons of violinists, L. Mozart's and other late 18th-century treatises, slightly later accounts of changing practices) suggests that Mozart's approach to violin playing may have been very different from the practices of modern period performers.

Résumé

Les principes exposés dans la *Violinschule* de Léopold Mozart auront formé les bases de l'éducation de Mozart en tant que violoniste, mais la question peut se poser si la *Violinschule* nous aide de manière significative à comprendre sa conception du jeu du violon. Bien que la *Violinschule* soit exceptionnellement détaillée pour son temps, certains aspects essentiels du jeu (par exemple la manière dont l'archet devrait être tenu pour exécuter certains types de coups d'archet) ne sont pas expliqués. Le développement de Mozart en tant que violoniste s'est probablement fait parallèlement à son développement de compositeur, il aura beaucoup appris en entendant des violonistes de différentes écoles et aura sans doute adopté et en conséquence développé des aspects de leurs styles qui lui furent révélés. Une série d'évidences (des lettres de Mozart, des comparaisons contemporaines de violonistes, les traités de Léopold Mozart et d'autres de la fin du 18ème siècle, des témoignages légèrement plus tardifs de changements de pratiques) suggèrent que l'approche du jeu du violon de Mozart peut avoir été bien différente des pratiques d'interprètes de la période moderne.