César Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major: The Significance of a Neglected Composer’s Influence on the Violin Repertory

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César Franck’s *Violin Sonata in A Major*:
The Significance of a Neglected Composer’s Influence on the Violin Repertory

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Introduction and Presentation of My Argument

My story of how I became inclined to write a thesis on Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major is both unique and essential to describe before I begin the bulk of my writing. After seeing the famously virtuosic violinist Augustin Hadelich and pianist Joyce Yang give an extremely emotional and perfected performance of Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major at the Aspen Music Festival and School this past summer, I became addicted to the piece and listened to it every day for the rest of my time in Aspen. I always chose to listen to the same recording of Franck’s Violin Sonata by violinist Joshua Bell and pianist Jeremy Denk, in my opinion the highlight of their album entitled French Impressions, released in 2012. After about a month of listening to the same recording, I eventually became accustomed to every detail of their playing, and because I had just started learning the Sonata myself, attempted to emulate what I could remember from the recording. When I finally decided to experiment with other recordings, I noticed that when any of the other violinists or pianists did something different than the Bell/Denk recording, it would catch me off guard and I would get angry at the disturbance in what used to be a serene listening experience. One of the reasons I relied on that recording from French Impressions was for the comfort and expectation of an achieved perfection that I would hear each time.

I knew that as a serious musician, I should be listening to other recordings and enjoying aspects of those performances as well as my favorite. So I began to build my tolerance for other interpretations, by sonata duos such as Sarah Chang and Lars Vogt, Anne Akiko Meyers and Rohan De Silva, and Anne-Sophie Mutter and Lambert Orkis, among others. As I learned the Sonata with my own pianist, I began to question which qualities of which recordings I wanted to
emulate, and it eventually became essential to wonder what Franck himself really intended for the performers, and what his markings in the urtext of the score really meant.

For this project, I examined a total of eight different recordings of Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major from different time periods. Based on my close observations of different recordings and various interpretations of Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major, I have found that the modern performances I have examined take Franck’s original markings in the score much more literally than earlier performances, while still adding a sense of personal interpretation. This quality is especially emphasized when comparing these newer recordings to recordings from as early as the 1930s, which contrastingly seem to be much more individualistic and provide wholly new interpretations of the piece. This contrast is apparent when comparing the pronounced differences of various aspects of performance practice such as tempi, bowings, articulations, and vibrato usage from each recording.

About the Composer

César Franck was born on December 10, 1822 at Liège, at the time a town located in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, now located in Belgium. Even though Franck is not typically seen as an authentic French composer because he was born and spent most of his childhood in Belgium, it is important to note that from his arrival in Paris in 1835 to his death in 1890, Franck “never, in any real sense of the word, left the French capital,”¹ and, according to

Julien Tiersot, “it would be impossible to find a more perfected adoptive Frenchman.”

After studying piano and organ at the Paris Conservatoire, Franck dedicated his life to his family; after marrying in 1848, Franck focused on “providing his family and himself with the material necessities of life,” by teaching and taking jobs as an organist at cathedrals around Paris. He finally settled at Sainte-Clothilde, and by having a steady job at the aristocratic church, was able to compose music in addition to his performance duties. Unlike composers of the same era, such as Franz Liszt, who led hectic lives of touring and performing, Franck was able to settle down and live in the “calm and quiet of the family atmosphere,” where he dedicated time to writing some of his most well known pieces: his Symphony in D minor (1888), String Quartet in D Major (1890), and Violin Sonata in A Major (1886).

Performance Background

César Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major represents one of the highlights of the composer’s compositional career, and remains “one of the supreme masterworks of the literature.” Franck composed the Sonata rather quickly, in August and September of 1886, as a wedding gift for the famous violinist and Franck’s Belgian compatriot, Eugene Ysaÿe. The Sonata was formally premiered by Ysaÿe and pianist Léontine Marie Bordes-Pène on December 16th, 1886, at the Cercle Artistique in Paris. Ysaÿe acknowledged that the Sonata was not

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 30.
4 Ibid.
immediately popular; it took several performances for the Sonata to gain public attention, and it was finally at a performance in the Musée Moderne de Peinture in Paris that the Sonata “took its place in the front rank of public esteem.”

The reason for this change in reception was an alteration in performance setting, simply by chance; at this particular concert in the Musée Moderne de Peinture, Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major was placed last on the long program that had begun at 3 p.m. that day. After performing the first movement of the Sonata, it had grown so dark outside that the performers “could scarcely read their music,” and since the concert was being performed in a room with several paintings, the addition of artificial light would have been strictly forbidden. At first, the audience was urged to leave, but the listeners were “so full of enthusiasm that they refused to budge.” So, Ysaïe and his pianist performed the last three movements of the Sonata from memory, with “a fire and passion astounding to the listeners.” The performance significantly altered the reception of the Sonata, in that the performance was regarded as “a miracle that will never be forgotten by those present,” and is still an aspect that accompanies the Sonata in the modern performer’s historical analysis of the piece.

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6 Ibid., 47.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Structure of the Four Movements

Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major is divided into four movements, the first being *Allegro ben moderato*. Franck originally intended for the opening movement to be “slow and reflective,” but since Ysaÿe preferred a slightly faster tempo, Franck used the tempo marking *Allegretto* to indicate a comfortably quick speed, but with the qualifier *ben moderato*, meaning “moderately.” The movement “juxtaposes rather than develops” two motives, the first given mainly to the piano, the second almost exclusively to the violin. The first idea consists of a sustained chord on the downbeat of the measure, followed by an eighth note and a dotted half note, setting the scene for the melody in the violin, which alternates between eighth and quarter notes and adds more motion to the initially hazy texture. These two motives, referenced in Figure 1, occur repeatedly in different contexts throughout the piece, and are what form the basis of the cyclical outline of the whole Sonata.

*Figure 1: The two motives presented in the first eight measures of the first movement*

First motive in piano

Second motive in violin

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12 Ibid.
During the first movement, Franck keeps the two motives from the exposition relatively in the same form; halfway through the first movement, there is a recapitulation of the exposition that is nearly identical to the original statement at the beginning. The rhythmic patterns presented in these two intertwined ideas in this first movement provide the basis for many of the themes from the other three movements of the Sonata.

The second movement, *Allegro*, creates a newly turbulent atmosphere in the key of D minor. To create the principal theme of this movement, shown in Figure 2, Franck inverts the rhythm and intervals from the violin motive from the first movement; instead of the phrase descending in 3rds as in the first motive, this theme ascends, with added 16th notes after the syncopated quarter notes. Franck reverses the rhythm in this second theme as well; as the first motive is eighth note-quarter-eighth, this theme follows a quarter-eighth-quarter pattern, with sixteenth notes acting as passing tones in between the eighth and quarter notes.

![Figure 2: The first theme of the second movement](image)

The second theme of the second movement, presented in the violin, is a significant contrast to the initially more violent first theme, in that it assumes a very calm and vocal style:

![Figure 3: The second theme of the second movement](image)
The third and fourth movements of the Sonata, *Ben moderato: Recitative-Fantasia* and *Allegretto poco mosso*, respectively, are the two movements of the piece that are the most closely related in terms of thematic material. The third movement is in a *recitative* style, a term originating from opera that signifies a musical declamation, sounding improvisatory, and sung or played in the rhythm of ordinary speech. Much of the movement references this improvised, speech-like style, and because of this *recitative* nature, the first half of the movement is more like a series of interjections than a cohesive theme. The first main theme that appears in the third movement returns to the lyrical style of the rest of the piece, and appears again in full form in the last movement:

![Figure 4: The first main theme of the third movement, reappearing in the last movement](image)

The second main theme that also reoccurs in the fourth movement is very dramatic, expansive, and striking in the context of both movements, referenced in Figure 5. Simon Trezise states that even though Franck was often criticized for a “lack of emotional restraint” in his music, this theme demonstrates an “exquisite use of canon” in addition to “a melody of rare grace and expressive simplicity, invites comparison with remoter French traditions.”

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Figure 5: The second theme of the third movement, reappearing in the last movement

The bright theme that drives the fourth movement, referenced in Figure 6, is probably the best known of the whole Sonata, and is in the piece’s home key of A Major. For much of the movement, the violin and piano play the phrase in canon with one another:

Figure 6: The main theme of the fourth movement

Early and Modern “Romantic” Performance Practices

When comparing various interpretations of any piece of music, it is important to consider what performance style would have been appropriate for the time of that specific performance. Since Franck’s Violin Sonata was written in the late Romantic era, 1886, and was intended as a wedding gift, modern performers in the 21st century would most likely include a good amount of wide vibrato, exaggerated tempo fluctuations, a warm tone, and a full, lush sound in their interpretation of the piece, all aspects that are perceived “typical” of the Romantic era by most
modern performers. The fact that the piece was written to celebrate a wedding is another reason to play the piece not just in a “Romantic” style, but romantically!

However, performers in the early-to-mid 20th century had different interpretation of what “Romantic” meant in terms of performance style. Robin Stowell acknowledges that in the early 20th century, there was an “increased prominence given to the cultivation of an expressive singing style, with the strong tone and broad or martelé (meaning “hammered”) bow strokes characteristic of the Parisian violin school”\(^{14}\) as well as a “greater virtuoso element.”\(^{15}\) In addition to these aspects, early interpretations of Romantic pieces included a strong tone and a narrow, fast vibrato. Jascha Heifetz clearly demonstrates these earlier aspects of Romantic performance in the earliest recording of the Sonata from 1937, a style that contrasts sharply to the modern recordings of the piece. Figure 7 presents a visual comparison of these qualities, and illustrates the key differences between early and modern interpretations of a “Romantic” musical work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Interpretation of “Romantic”</th>
<th>Modern Interpretation of “Romantic”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singing style</td>
<td>Singing style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong tone</td>
<td>Warm tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad bow strokes (martelé)</td>
<td>Smooth, connected bow strokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow, fast vibrato</td>
<td>Lush, wide vibrato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speeding up of energetic passages to increase virtuosic effect</td>
<td>Dramatic tempo fluctuations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 161.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
To reiterate why these contrasting performing styles are significant, my listening method throughout the project was to compare the following aspects of each recording I examined: tempo, bowings, articulation, and vibrato usage.

## Recordings

For the purpose of this thesis, I examined 8 different recordings of Franck’s Violin Sonata, choosing each recording based on the violinist/pianist team that had a very unique performance of the Sonata as determined by my listening criteria, as well as the year that the performance was recorded. After noting the total time of each recording, I organized the results into the following table, in order of the year recorded from earliest to latest:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Year Recorded</th>
<th>Total Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heifetz/Rubinstein</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>25:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stern/Zakin</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>27:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zukerman/Neikrug</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>28:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko Meyers/De Silva</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>28:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutter/Orkis</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>30:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang/Vogt</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>27:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell/Denk</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>27:36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capucon/Buniatishvili</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>28:19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8*

In a detailed review of various recordings of Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major by different artists, Caroline Gill separates the recordings into two general categories: “the
unintentionally glib, and the overplayed.”  Gill elaborates on these categories by stating that in the second category, the overplayed, performances of the piece “rarely tip over into the magical piece it can be – they largely start out almost matter-of-fact.” Gill classifies performances in the “unintentionally glib” category as being too extreme and even superficial at times; in order to illustrate her point she references the third movement of the Sonata in the Mutter/Orkis recording: “the ravishing central phrase is swooped over with such extreme vibrato that the bow is almost bounced off the string, leaving the sound so undermined that it is impossible to be comforted by it.”

While her listening method is justifiable, both of Gill’s categories seem overly critical and subjective. I disagree with Gill’s negative labels, and instead choose to analyze the difference of interpretations in comparison to the original score, not necessarily categorizing each one. As a reminder, my listening method was to compare the following four aspects of each recording: tempo, bowings, articulations, and vibrato usage.

**Tempos**

As Figure 8 displays, the recordings of the Sonata that I chose to analyze from earlier in the 20th century were generally faster than those recorded later in the 20th century and in the 21st century. The longest recording is the Mutter/Orkis performance from 1996 at thirty minutes, longer than the Heifetz/Rubinstein recording from 1937 by nearly five minutes. This

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17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.
difference is most likely because modern performers are taking Franck’s marked tempos in the score more literally, causing the Sonata to become generally slower in tempo, therefore fitting a more modern definition of the indulgent, Romantic performance style. Mutter and Orkis’s recording is also by far the most “romantic” in terms of the extreme use of vibrato and exaggerated tempi. As Gill claims, Mutter goes too far in the Romantic direction, and even seems to convey that the pianist, “an artist of profound thought, is [rarely] more than a hitchhiker on Mutter’s journey.”

Robin Stowell offers a possible explanation for this notable contrast in recording lengths between older and more recent recordings using a similar method of research with Beethoven’s Violin Concerto, a piece that was composed earlier in the Romantic era. Stowell claims that “performances from the 1920s and (to a decreasing extent) 1930s very often show substantially greater fluctuations of tempo within movements than late-twentieth-century recordings” and that “the most striking differences [between earlier and modern recordings] are in the speeding up of energetic passages.”

**Example 1**

Examining recordings of the Franck Sonata in particular, a place of notable tempo fluctuation is at the end of the 2nd movement, *Allegro*. The exact moment in the score (shown in

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19 Ibid.


21 Ibid.
Figure 9) is the *animato poco a poco* after the tempo changes to *Poco Più Lento*, marked 7 bars earlier.

This difference is most apparent when comparing the Heifetz/Rubinstein and Bell/Denk recordings. In this example, it is clear that while Joshua Bell and Jeremy Denk abide by the direction in the score, Jascha Heifetz and Arthur Rubinstein ignore the specific marking, thus supporting my overall argument that modern performances tend to observe the composer’s original score indications with greater care than earlier performances. Heifetz does exactly what Stowell notes from the earlier performances of Beethoven’s Violin Concerto: he uses the exciting momentum of this passage to create more energy, and by doing so makes the end of the *Allegro* sound like a virtuosic sprint to the finish line. Unlike Bell, Heifetz begins the *animato poco a poco* in a fast tempo, leaving little room for the instructed accelerando *poco a poco*, and increases this tempo by fractional increments as it quickly reaches breakneck speed.
Analyzing the direction that Franck actually wrote in the score, *animato poco a poco* means “becoming more animated little by little.” Bell uses this section to create a more gradual accelerando, as Franck directed, and reach an exciting finish. Even when the tempo is the fastest and the energy is the highest, Bell takes time to place each significant note and outline the interesting chromatic harmonies, such as the Bb and C# highlighted in Figure 10.

![Figure 10: end of 2nd movement](image)

This is just one of many passages in Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major that exhibits a wide range in tempos and interpretations by various sonata duos. I prefer Bell and Denk’s interpretation of this passage, as it presents interesting fluctuations of tempo, as Franck intended in the score. However, it is also necessary to listen to each performance in the context of when it was performed; as I described earlier, there are several differences between what modern performers perceive to be typically Romantic and what performers from the early 20th century interpreted as Romantic.

**Bowings and Phrasing**

It is interesting to note that in some places in Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major, there are some vast differences in bowings among violinists, but there are also some significant bowing
contrasts when comparing what is implemented in modern performances to what Franck
originally indicated.

**Example 2**

One specific instance that is a consistent difference from the original score is again in the
2nd movement of the Sonata, and it is such a consistent change that all violinists make when
performing this Sonata that it is surprising to note that in the urtext of the score, this was not the
bowing that Franck wrote. Figure 11 is the excerpt from this particular passage from the original
score, with no bowing indicated. Figure 12 shows this same excerpt, with the bowings that
virtually all violinists use when performing the Sonata:

![Figure 11: excerpt of 2nd movement from the original score](image)

![Figure 12: excerpt from 2nd movement with modified bowing](image)

There is not a clear reason for why this alternative bowing has become so universal. In
Stowell’s collection of essays, Clive Brown’s point about how the composer “did not regard the
text of the solo part in the autograph or first edition as definitive, especially with respect to
bowing,”²² seems very relevant in this case, especially because Franck was in a rush to finish the
score in time for Ysaÿe’s wedding day. Another explanation could be that this modified bowing

²² Ibid.
was more comfortable for violinists, and matched the bowing that Franck provided for the same rhythm at the very beginning of the movement, as referenced in Figure 12.

Due to the fact that the Sonata was composed specifically for Ysaïe, an accomplished violinist, it is also probable that during the performance from memory in the dark museum, Ysaïe could not remember the exact bowing in this section of the 2nd movement. For every repetition of this rhythm, Ysaïe could have used the same bowing that Franck articulated at the beginning of the movement, as shown in Figure 12, and decided that because this bowing was much more comfortable and fitting for the sound that Franck intended, unofficially changing it for the whole movement. We will never know for sure why this bowing has changed, but it is interesting to note that even in performances as early as Heifetz and Rubinstein’s from 1937, Heifetz consistently uses the modified bowing. Since this particular bowing is a common factor among all of the recordings I have observed, it serves more as a unifying feature than a point of contrast.

**Example 3**

However, the various bowings for the main theme from the 4th movement of the Sonata show that the same phrasing and dynamic contrasts can be achieved through different bowings. As a reminder, Figure 13 shows the theme that I am referencing:

![Figure 13: Main theme from the fourth movement](image-url)
This is a very controversial passage, as every violinist tends to use a slightly different bowing when performing the piece. For example, the first edition of the Sonata prints a completely different bowing, as shown in Figure 14:

![Figure 14](image)

It is difficult to tell from a recording which bowing the violinist is using, but each bowing is meant to yield the same continuous phrasing and “singing” quality of the musical line. While the quality of separate bow strokes in fast, dramatic passages tended to vary greatly between early and modern interpretations of the Sonata, I found that while listening to each recording, lyrical phrases that were slurred and legato, such as this one, sounded very similar despite the slightly different bowing used by each violinist. This observation tells me that while bowings vary greatly between violinists, it is not as significant a difference as something that is very audible to the listener, such as variations in tempo or articulation. This realization is something that inspired me to focus my listening method toward tempi, articulation, and vibrato rather than bowings, as violinists should not make their bowing choices audible to the listener one way or the other; bowings are simply a medium to play the notes, not necessarily convey musical interpretation.
Articulation

Examining bowings leads to a discussion of articulation (the length, shape, and style of the notes), and there are several instances in Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major that violinists choose to articulate differently.

Example 4

One example from the 2nd movement, shown in Figure 15, I chose specifically because it shows a style that evolved from the older to modern era, and Franck did not specify an articulation in the score. Looking at the table listing every violinist’s interpretation, presented in Figure 16, the older recordings tend towards a shorter articulation, while most of the modern performances use a longer articulation, which stays consistent with the contrasting definitions of the Romantic performance style.

Figure 15: Passage from second movement, Allegro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violinist</th>
<th>Articulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heifetz</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stern</td>
<td>Slightly detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zukerman</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko Meyers</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutter</td>
<td>Slightly detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capuçon</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16
Listening to contrasting recordings of Heifetz and Bell, the two violinists that I think best represent the extremes of the recordings I examined, the articulation of the note highlighted in the visual is much shorter in the earlier recording than in the recording from 2012. Going back to Figure 7, the comparison between earlier and more modern interpretations of “Romantic” performance practice, Heifetz’s shorter articulation in this passage coincides with the broad, *martelé* bow strokes that were characteristic of earlier interpretations of Romantic violin pieces. An explanation for this interpretative difference could be that because earlier recordings tended to be faster, articulations were shorter to accommodate this faster tempo, as there is less time for the violinist to spend more time on the string as the notes move by at a faster speed.

Comparing the specific times of Heifetz’s and Bell’s recordings of the *Allegro* movement, 7:28 and 8:00 respectively, it is evident that Heifetz took the movement at a considerably faster tempo than Bell, leaving less time for more legato articulations. Following the performance practice characteristic of modern interpretations of Romantic works, Bell executes smoother, connected bow strokes in this passage of the Sonata. The explanation for this difference could be just the opposite of the reason for Heifetz’s shorter articulation choice; Bell’s slower tempo leads to longer articulations, because there is more time to spend on the string. Both of these articulation differences can be connected to each violinist’s tempo choice for the movement, and establish this tempo/articulation relationship as a clear reason for how these characteristics of early and modern interpretations have been established over time.
Vibrato

The last aspect of my listening method concerns each violinist’s use of vibrato, presented in Figure 17. In order to make sure I obtained a consistent example of each violinist’s vibrato, I listened to the first phrase at the very beginning of the Sonata, shown in Figure 18, to judge each violinist’s type of vibrato.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violinist</th>
<th>Quality of Vibrato</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heifetz</td>
<td>Fast, narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stern</td>
<td>Fast, narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zukerman</td>
<td>Fast, narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiko Meyers</td>
<td>Slow, narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutter</td>
<td>Fast, wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>Slow, wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell</td>
<td>Slow, narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capuçon</td>
<td>Fast, wide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When listening between recordings, there is a noticeable difference between Heifetz and Anne-Sophie Mutter’s recordings; Mutter tends to play with such extreme vibrato that, as Caroline Gill states, her bow “tends to bounce off the string” with the exaggerated sound, while Heifetz plays with significantly less vibrato. Examining Figure 17, older recordings tend to use a
fast, narrow vibrato, while modern recordings have a wider and/or slower vibrato. This difference could be explained by the modern view of “Romantic” performance practices, as well as by previous examples we have examined; for instance, because older recordings tend to be faster, there is less time to use a more luxurious vibrato. Even though Mutter is a violinist from my era and there are many aspects of her playing that I admire, I prefer Heifetz’s intentional, understated use of vibrato when comparing their recordings of the Franck Violin Sonata. Heifetz uses vibrato as an ornament that doesn’t distract from the notes, but highlights significant phrasing. The analysis of a violinist’s use of vibrato is one of the many aspects that can be used to characterize a performance as “Romantic,” but it depends on one’s use of the term “Romantic” in their classification of the performance.

**Conclusion**

All of these examples from César Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major serve to demonstrate that there are two separate definitions of how to perform pieces from the Romantic era, stemming from older and modern traditions of performance practice. After all of the research and listening, I have come to the conclusion that older artists, such as Jascha Heifetz, adapted a greater freedom to interpret a piece based on what they wanted to do and say as an artist, which did not necessarily prioritize what the composer indicated in the score. On the other hand, I have found that modern violinists, such as Joshua Bell, tend to follow the composer’s original markings much more closely than violinists from earlier eras.

It is also important to realize that it is nearly impossible to put recordings into distinct categories based on musical choices; each recording contains aspects of both older and modern
interpretations. However, the evidence that I have presented in this paper leads to the conclusion that recordings from certain eras tend to reflect specific performance practices characteristic of their time. Although Franck’s Violin Sonata is not very well known to the public audience as a significant piece in the violin repertoire as well as in collaborative chamber music, it is a fascinating work that illustrates the amount of variation that occurs in performances of Romantic pieces over the 20th and 21st centuries. My experience listening to and learning this Sonata, as well as collaborating with my pianist on the piece, has taught me that regardless of interpretation or performance practice, Franck’s Violin Sonata in A Major is a fascinating, meaningful work that represents some of the best features of the Romantic musical era.
Bibliography:


