The recordings of these sonatas spanned the entire length of the project, and the collected archive of significant project recordings includes some duplication of the performances in order to show how the works were performed at different times and under differing circumstances.

Purporting to perform these sonatas in the manner of Joseph Joachim – Brahms’ contemporary and close artistic colleague – is, of course, an obvious thing to do, and as such it has been attempted by other specialists in this field. Inevitably, the likely effectiveness and accuracy of such an attempt to evoke, for example, a Brahms and Joachim performance in the 1880s or 1890s (such as the rehearsal Marie Soldat famously interrupted in 1879, when she was introduced to Joachim\(^1\)) is predicated upon developing skills in performing in the ‘Joachim manner’, gained from not only the study of editions, treatises and early recordings, but also from the practical experiments that arise from this. It is thus to be hoped that, as with all works looked at in this project, my attempts will be revised constantly in the light of evidence and experience.

One of the great difficulties of course relates to the evidence we have for such a Joachim performance. Joachim’s 1903 recordings do not include any of the sonatas, and the Bach fragments and the two Hungarian Dances might be considered a little too remote stylistically to form the platform for performance. His Romance in C performance, which has been extensively analysed before (and which I also recorded in order better to understand his playing), is perhaps the most representative, and contains the most information on this topic.

In this regard, several years’ immersion in these performance materials has given me much more confidence and a more detailed view of the subject. When completing my PhD in 2000 I decided to give a recital reflecting, amongst other things, Joachim’s practice. Leaving aside the fact that I was obliged to perform with a modern piano on this occasion (and that I decided, pragmatically, that this early attempt at late nineteenth-century performing practice should be made using the more familiar medium of modern strings), I felt very unsure about this style of playing. Observing the number of portamenti, vibrati and so forth in early recordings or even for that matter reading what can often appear to be vague aesthetic advice

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in treatises is a very long way indeed from feeling confident that you have some understanding of the intuitions of players of this period – that you execute the right form of portamenti and in the right way is thus far more revealing than the simple matter as to whether you use them at all, for example.

In terms of the Brahms sonatas, it is a matter of great frustration that Joachim did not edit these for Simrock, and it is for future research perhaps to find out whether this was ever intended. Even if Joachim did do this, it seems probable that a Joachim edition would not be so helpful, given his light editing of the Beethoven violin sonatas, for example, which are not really all that revealing about his style of playing. Two of Joachim’s pupils did edit the sonatas, however – Leopold Auer, who in many ways continued to evoke Joachim’s style of playing and can be heard to this effect in his private recordings of 1920 (although there are also key differences), and Ossip Schnirlin (1873-1939). Schnirlin remains a somewhat enigmatic figure in this regard. We know relatively little about him, and there is little evidence that he made any sound recordings, which even a moderately successful player of his generation might well have done. Schnirlin is perhaps best known for his work, *A New Way for Mastering the Violin’s Entire Literature* (1923) – a curious collection of key excerpts from important works for violin, marked up with bowings and fingerings as a way of learning a vast swathe of repertoire in a short space of time. Schnirlin, in addition, gave the posthumous premiere of Brahms’ ‘FAE’ sonata in 1909, further cementing his closeness to the Joachim circle, and it is symbolic that he edited works for Simrock, who published works (and editions) by Brahms and Joachim themselves. This includes an edition of Viotti’s 22nd violin concerto for Elite editions (a reprint of a Simrock edition) which describes itself as ‘edited’ by Joseph Joachim but ‘revised’ by Ossip Schnirlin.²

Schnirlin did edit a number of works independently, and in some cases these included works that Joachim had edited. All of this makes Schnirlin’s editions of the Brahms sonatas a little difficult to gauge in terms of their likely parity to Joachim’s practice. On the one hand these editions, made nearly twenty years after Joachim’s death and when most violinists, even in Berlin, played in a style that had very few resemblances to Joachim’s own practice, may have little in common with his style of playing, and we know too little of Schnirlin to know what his own playing sounded like. On the other, and when looking at the editions themselves, they do show remarkable similarities to Joachim’s own. Schnirlin rarely shortens Brahms’ phrasing (Auer does, as in the first movement of the Op. 78 sonata), and when he does he marks his own bowing in a way that shows it to be an interpretation of the original without attempts to negate it. Schnirlin’s fingerings, with frequent use of open strings and a conspicuously large number of harmonics, imply the kind of sonority with which Joachim (and indeed the classical German school overall) would have been familiar. As posited elsewhere, such fingerings, as found in David’s edition of the Mendelssohn E minor violin concerto and Spohr’s edition of Rode’s 7th concerto, are anachronistic from the point of view of the twentieth-century violinist with their

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favouring of the frequent vibrato – harmonics and open strings generally create a pure tone that doesn't mix well with vibrato. More modern fingerings often involve complex arrangements (including replacing fourth fingers with 3rd fingers) in order to facilitate what until recently was still generally (and erroneously) described as ‘Brahms sound’ – a thick and rich texture, garnished with lots of vibrato.

Schnirlin's editions also invite frequent portamenti and, although I made a few small changes to the printed fingerings out of personal preference, in general I tried to follow Schnirlin's markings, which, particularly when performed in a way that intends consciously to evoke Joachim's style of playing, results in a style entirely consistent with his approach.

Auer's editions of 1917 are in many ways similar – his fingerings, whilst at times rather idiosyncratic (as in the development section of the first movement of Op. 108 – see score included in this archive) are otherwise, aesthetically at least, within the parameters of the classical school of playing, as indeed are his own recorded performances. In general, Auer's editorial stance is quite different from Joachim's, as can be seen in a comparison of their Beethoven Romance in F editions. Auer's editions, which date in the main from the period after his forced emigration to the United States, are more consciously 'pedagogic' – in that they supply more explicit information for performance, as opposed to Joachim's own light editorial hand. (This also separates Schnirlin's editing style from Joachim's – as the preface to the 3rd sonata shows, for example). In content, the main difference it would seem to separate Auer's editions from Joachim's is his concentration upon practical matters. One has a sense that Auer was much more consciously motivated by fingerings and bowings that ‘work well’ on a practical level, hence his splitting of slurs and so forth, whereas Joachim’s stance was more lofty and predicated more noticeably by artistic concerns. This, as we have seen elsewhere can also be heard in his recordings which, technical insecurities aside, seem to ‘foreground’ the virtuosic elements more consciously than Joachim. I have included scanned copies of the Auer editions here for comparison purposes. Although Auer was chronologically much closer to Joachim than Schnirlin, he was a Joachim pupil before the sonatas were written and Schnirlin, in all likelihood, learnt them with Joachim. For the most part we played paying close adherence to Schnirlin’s editions, with a few small adjustments out of personal preference.

I have provided a number of different recorded versions of these sonatas with a collection of period pianos: two Broadwoods, of 1865 and 1898, and two Erards, of 1854 and 1870. The works were produced with very minimal editing, and we tried to maintain the ethos of live performance – some live performances are also provided for comparison. As befits performance in an attempt to evoke Joachim’s style and practice, we attempt to create a relatively ‘informal’ ensemble, with small-scale rhythmic freedom, and by no means averse to changing notated rhythms by means of over-dotting and agogic accentuation, to create a sense of the spontaneity of performance that Joachim favoured. In this sense, we attempted, quite consciously to ‘understand’ the work and not simply ‘read’ it. By the same token, I encouraged Jonathan Gooing to arpeggiate chords freely, especially those at points of importance harmonically and metrically, whilst I, of course, took a very selective approach to vibrato, and used portamento frequently but not indiscriminately.