Adrien-François Servais
(1807-1866)

How Adrien-François Servais (1807-1866) Improved Cello Technique During the 19th Century

Masters Research Paper

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Research question

With particular focus on his scores, how did Adrien-François Servais advance cello technique in the middle of the 19th century, and with what implications for modern performers?

Introduction

I wanted to carry out research that would have a direct link with my own practice, and I decided to focus upon one of the numerous cellist-composers of the 19th century. This is one of my favourite periods, but it is also one in which the cello underwent major changes, both technically and from the point of view of repertoire. After carrying out some initial research, to my surprise I discovered that very little work has been done on the contributions of one notable 19th century cellist-composer: Adrien-François Servais (1807-1866). As George Kennaway notes:

> At the time of writing, for example, there exists no detailed study in English of...Adrien Servais...[whose] compositions have not been studied yet at all by scholars, and the only significant biographical work on him is in Flemish.[1]

With this research project, I would like to try to better understand the evolution and development of cello technique and repertoire in the 19th century by studying Adrien-François Servais's scores: particularly with regards to what was innovative in his approach to the instrument as compared to earlier techniques and repertoires. As Servais did not write either methods nor treatises but rather many compositions (no less than a hundred!), I will have to analyze and compare his scores, both with each other and with earlier repertoires, in order to understand how his approach to the cello both differed from what came before and how it evolved over the course of his own life. By carrying out this research I hope to contribute towards expanding the cello repertoire commonly played today, by bringing attention to unedited or rarely-performed pieces by Servais. In order to do this, I have chosen a piece rarely performed today: the *Fantaisie "Souvenir de Saint-Pétersbourg"* Op. 15.

I would like to share the results of my research with as many musicians and audiences as I can, though primarily with fellow cellists where technical aspects are concerned.

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[1] George Kennaway, *Playing the Cello, 1780 - 1930* (Ashgate Publishing, 2014), xv.

1 Historical background

1.1 Duport and his *Essai sur le Doigté du Violoncelle* (1806)

Illustration: J. L. Duport.

Jean-Louis Duport (1749-1819) was a French virtuoso cellist. He was supported by the Royal family until the French Revolution and performed in many courts throughout Europe. He was linked to many notable musicians and composers such as Mozart and Beethoven (and in 1796 he even gave the premiere of the later's *Cello Sonatas* Op. 5). His musicianship was much appreciated during his lifetime; indeed, after hearing a recital of his in 1780, Voltaire said: “Sir, you will make me believe in miracles, for I see that you can turn an ox into a nightingale.”[2]

To this day, Jean-Louis Duport's *Essai sur le Doigté du Violoncelle et sur la Conduite de l’Archet* remains the foundation of all modern cello technique, even though it continued to evolve after his death. Duport's *Essai* discusses in great detail a wide range of issues related to cello technique and it even includes twenty-one etudes for two cellos. At the book's very outset, in its preface, Duport demonstrates his intention to provide a well-organized system of technique useful for anybody wanting to learn the cello, as well as his desire to establish a universal approach to playing the instrument:

> I shall restrict myself to the fingering, as it is the part the least known, yet most important; and though I am aware that many teachers are fully masters of it, yet it is not less true, that its rules in regard to the Violoncello are very vague. Even the best teachers justly complain of the want of a complete system, and almost every player of this instrument has a particular method of fingering. Should any one object that there are as many manners of playing as there are players, I must reply that this is the nature of the thing, as everyone must follow his own taste; yet the fingering which is entirely mechanical, should according to my judgment, be similar for all.
>
> It is certain that on the fingering of the Violoncello nothing satisfactory has as yet been written.
>
> I have rather resolved on treating the fingering so clearly and fundamentally that even teachers who have hitherto differed in some points, may agree and be convinced into unity of system.[3]

[2] Rik Van Beveren, "Jean-Louis Duport," *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=44170686, accessed February 3, 2016.

[3] Jean-Louis Duport (trans. A. Linder), *Essai sur le Doigté du Violoncelle et sur la Conduite de l’Archet* (André Offenbach New Edition, 1806), 2 - 3.

Duport was also the first to theorize a clear organization for the thumb position, even if this technique had already been in use for a few decades (e.g. Boccherini's and Haydn's *Cello Concertos* of the 1760s and 70s):

> The subject of double-stops I have treated at length, and for two reasons: 1) because as yet nothing has been written on that subject, though it is so important for a good player, 2) because they serve to justify my argument; for without regular fingering the double-stops are not practicable.[4]

The *Essai* is divided in eighteen chapters dealing with three main topics: an explanation of the left hand system, principles of bow posture and technique, and the relationship between fingerings, strokes and rhythm.

Duport established the left hand nomenclature that is still currently in use today: four positions corresponding to the notes of the scale (on the A string for example, those four notes would be B, C, D, and E); and there is a half-tone between each finger, with the possibility of stretching the first finger (the forefinger) in order to have a full tone between the first and second fingers.

Illustration : Duport, Essai p.28.

In thumb positions, the thumb has to play a fifth (in order to replace the open-string fifths obtained with the nut) and then the other fingers are organized as on a violin (except for the fourth finger, which is generally not needed). From these basic rules, Duport came up with a system of regular fingerings for scales, arpeggios, and double-stops.

Concerning right hand technique however, in Duport's *Essai* one finds many difficult bow-strokes that were not yet in use in the repertoire of the time. He might have had the feeling that playing the cello would soon require a strong virtuosic technique, similar to that already expected of violinists, and thus tried to adapt some bow-stokes found in violin methods to the cello (he was called the "Viotti of the Violoncello"[5]) in order to improve the bow technique of his own instrument.

1.2 Overview of various cello techniques that coexisted at the beginning of the 19th century

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a major stylistic shift in performance practices across most instruments. Naturally, an instrument such as the cello was well-positioned to capture the public's attention within this new style, due to its large register and capacity for a singing tone. Nevertheless, some technical adjustments were required in order to elevate the cello to the rank of a real virtuosic and soloist vehicle for the new Romantic performer. Many cellists at the time thus began to consider ways of improving cello technique in order to facilitate this evolution. Some of the most important advancements in cello technique at this time were made by cellists such as Bernhard Romberg (1767-1841) and Friedrich Dotzauer (1783-1860): two very famous performers who used very different techniques.

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[4] Jean-Louis Duport (trans. A. Linder), *Essai sur le Doigté du Violoncelle et sur la Conduite de l'Archet* (André Offenbach New Edition, 1806), 3.

[5] Dimitry Markevitch, *Cello Story* (Alfred Music Publishing, 1999), 58.

1.2.1 Romberg

Bernhard Romberg (1767-1841) was born into a family of musicians and was thus raised in a musical atmosphere. He took his first cello lessons from his father before studying with such renowned teachers as Johann Konrad Schlick and Franz Marteau. As a young virtuoso, Romberg soon became famous and began to tour across Europe to great acclaim. While in Paris he had the opportunity to hear Duport perform, and this experience left a huge impression on the young musician.[6] By the beginning of the 19th century, Romberg and Duport would play side-by-side for a few years as court musicians in the Berlin Chapel. Another friendship that would greatly impact Romberg was that of Ludwig van Beethoven. They met each other for the first time around 1790 in the court orchestra of the Bonn Chapel (where Beethoven played organ and viola), and subsequently "Franz Ries, Andreas Romberg, Ludwig van Beethoven and Bernhard Romberg formed a quartet."[7] In Vienna in 1796, they then performed Beethoven's freshly-composed Op. 5 sonatas together (premiered earlier by Duport): "Here Romberg met Beethoven, who took part in his concert. Together they played two of Beethoven's Sonatas Op. 5, which had been composed not long before."[8]

Romberg's performance style was nonetheless slightly old-fashioned as compared to his contemporaries. His playing was very clear and he had beautiful tone production, but his interpretations were rather distant and academic. His legacy however, is nicely summed up by Lev Ginsburg: "It is no exaggeration to say that in the history of cello playing, Romberg's name signified a whole epoch, characteristic of the transition from the classical style to the romantic."[9]

Illustration: Luigi Boccherini (1743 - 1805).

Indeed, thanks to Romberg, two important advancements were achieved in the building of cellos: "It was his suggestion to introduce a hollow on the fingerboard which saved the C-string from beating on the fingerboard when the bow was pressed too hard."[10] As you can see by comparing the illustration on the left with those below, Romberg also requested instruments with longer fingerboards, allowing cellists to play in higher registers with their left hands supported under the strings. Compared to Romberg's instrument, Duport's cello had a much shorter fingerboard, much like that depicted here, with Boccherini. Both of Romberg's improvements to cello construction are still in use today.

Romberg published his *Violoncell Schule* (1840), in which he explains his personal technique in great detail, at the very end of his life. For this reason, by the time of publication a few of his most fundamental points had become "definitely outdated in what [they] had to say on hand position and bow holding (the deep grip of the instrument's neck, the slanting "oblique" position of the fingers on the fingerboard, a stiff holding of the

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[6] "One can imagine how greatly the 16-year old Romberg was impressed by the art of Duport and the other French virtuosi, and it is very probable that the French influences which later manifested themselves in Romberg's creative works, to a certain extent, connected with his youthful impressions." Lev Ginsburg, (trans T. Tchistyakova), *History of the Violoncello* (Paganiniana Publications, 1983), 17.

[7] Ginsburg, *History of the Violoncello*, 17.

[8] Herbert Schäfer, *Bernhard Romberg: Sein Leben und Wirken.* (Lübben, 1931), 36, in Ibid., 18.

[9] Ginsburg, *History of the Violoncello*, 16.

[10] Ibid., 21.

bow).” Furthermore, “the bowing technique described in the *Method* with Romberg’s typical avoidance of jumping strokes, staccato, etc., had also become outdated.”[11] Nevertheless, Romberg's *Violoncell Schule* also contained much great advice, and it remained a key reference on cello technique until the end of the 19th century (an English version was even published in 1880).[12] In the 20th century, while many of Romberg's works were still included in the standard cello repertoire for their pedagogical value, they were rarely heard in concert.

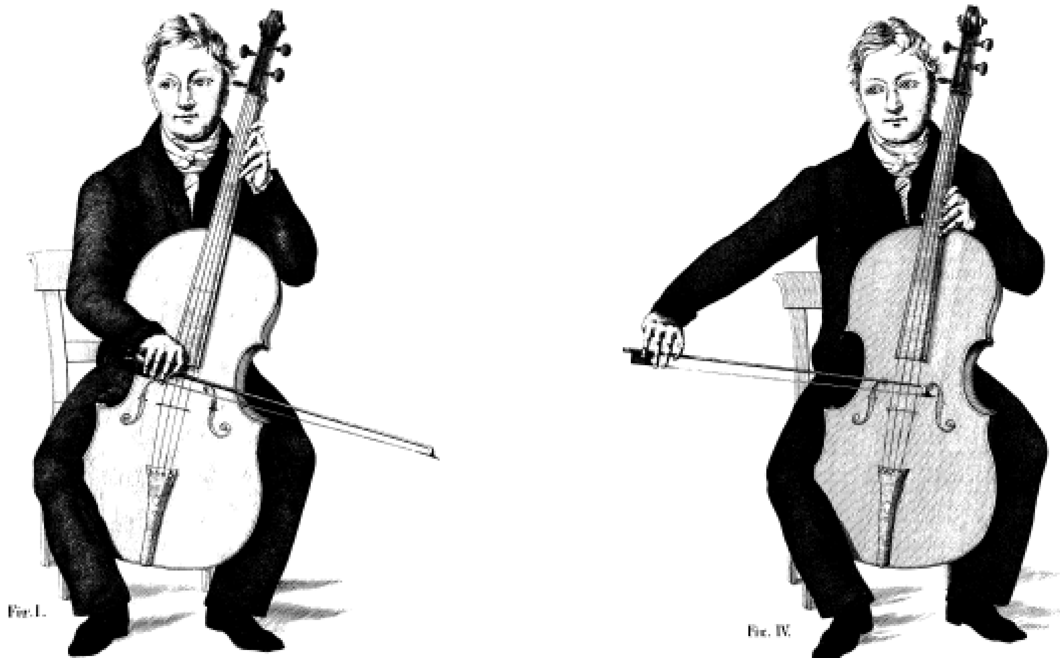

Illustration: Romberg's posture.[13]

As shown in the illustration above, Romberg's left hand technique was a highly individual one. The hand itself was kept in a very pronated position (palm of the hand outwards), regardless of what position he was playing in, and he held his elbow very low. As such, his posture is much more similar to that of the violin than to what we'd recognize as a typical for the cello. Romberg however is still recognized for his development and advancement of left hand thumb position technique: the so-called “positional parallelism” principle. This involves remaining in the same position without hesitating to use neighboring strings in order to avoid too many position changes.[14]

Concerning the right hand, Romberg seems to have held the bow at almost the same place we do today: that is to say, nearly at the frog. But when playing at the tip of the bow, his wrist was extremely low, while his arm was very tight - especially when playing the high strings. This is due to the far-left inclination or orientation of his instrument. In order to maintain this orientation, one can see from the illustration that the cello is held quite vertically and that his legs are surrounding the lowest part of the instrument. His right leg is not only supporting the ribs but it is also touching the table of the instrument. This would undoubtedly have had implications for sound projection, as holding the instrument in this manner would disrupt the natural resonance of the cello, almost like a mute might do.

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[11] Ginsburg, *History of the Violoncello*, 26 - 7.

[12] Bernhard Romberg, *A Complete Theoretical and Practical School for the Violoncello* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1880).

[13] Bernhard Romberg, *Violoncell Schule* (Berlin: T. Trautwein, 1840), 6, 8.

[14] Ginsburg, *History of the Violoncello*, 25.

From his compositions however, one can tell that in terms of style Romberg belonged to an older Classical generation, but that he paved the way for the next generation of the newer Romantic virtuosi.

1.2.2 Dotzauer, founder of the Dresden school

Dresden was the Duchy of Saxony's capital from 1806 and was an important musical center during the 19th century. Its renowned court orchestra attracted many famous musicians of the time, including Carl Maria von Weber, Richard Strauss, and the cellist Justus Dotzauer, who was the founder of the Dresden school of violoncello.

Justus Johann Friedrich Dotzauer (1783-1860) was principal cello at the Dresden Chapel from 1821 until he retired in 1850, and was also greatly admired as a chamber musician and soloist throughout Europe. He was also a prolific teacher who left a rich pedagogical legacy for both contemporaneous and future generations of cellists. He published several books of methods and studies that highlight his views on cello playing and technique. He composed a number of important pedagogical pieces (sonatas, variations, etudes, concertinos, and concertos) that are of great use to all cellists, from those taking their very earliest musical steps to those who have achieved a professional level of performance. These pedagogical pieces cover a wide range of technical and musical issues, accompanied by relevant exercises and etudes, and many are still played today by most cellists during their musical studies. On Dotzauer's pedagogical legacy, Lev Ginsburg writes:

> Dotzauer's teaching compositions were very valuable, and some are still. The cellist tried to embody his long years of performing and teaching experience in numerous etudes, exercises and methods. He compiled *The Violoncello Method* Op. 165 (1832), *The Violoncello Method of Elementary Teaching* Op. 126 (1836), *The Method of Playing Harmonics* Op. 147 (1837) and *The Practical Method of Violoncello Playing* Op. 155.[15]

According to these methods, Dotzauer was still playing without an endpin, but he held his cello quite high (at almost the height at which cellos are held today, including endpins). This allowed for a much freer posture than Romberg's way of holding the instrument. He searched for a more relaxed bow grip and was "one of the first authors of violoncello methods who insisted that the bow be held near the frog – as today's contemporary cellists."[16] These advancements helped forge a path towards a more 'modern' Romantic manner of performance, but Dotzauer still stylistically belonged to an older, more conservative generation of musicians, as he himself stated by quoting Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768) as an example "of the importance of musical taste being based on simplicity":

> A musician, who, as they used to say, does not leave a single note undistorted, who frames simple and quiet singing with embellishments and plays either with harmonics, or pizzicato, or ponticello, either up the fingerboard, or down, torturing the ear with different strokes … such a musician is a bad performer, who has no notion of beautiful simplicity. He vulgarly insults good taste.[17]

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[15] Ginsburg, *History of the Violoncello*, 58.

[16] Ibid., 58

[17] Ibid., 60.

1.2.3 The beginning of vibrato

While vibrato is such a natural part of modern string playing, it took time for it to be adopted and accepted by both cellists and audiences alike. According to Kennaway:

> Hardly any cello method mentions vibrato before Dotzauer, even Duport's *Essai*... It probably occurs for the first time in the cello literature in Joseph Alexander's *Anleitung zum Violoncellospiel* (c.1802), notated as a series of dots over a minim, whose execution is described in these rather minimal terms: 'The vibrato [Bebung], where one can, through a fast back-and-forth rolling of the finger pressing on the string, alternately change the pitch from strong to weak, from high to low.'[18]

In his *Method,* Dotzauer tries to describe what vibrato is and how to practice it:

> In long sustained notes one sometimes (especially Italian professors) make use of a type of vibration (*tremolo*) or trembling, which is effected by leaning the finger on the string from one side to the other, with little speed. Other artists try to produce the same effect by a movement of the wrist which is called *ondulé*…This is made by several *sons filés*, of which one makes the *forte* left at the beginning of each beat or half-beat.[19]

It is interesting to note that Dotzauer mentions that vibrato is possible for both the left and right hands. Indeed, "bow vibrato" could be a leftover Baroque technique: one that was rapidly disappearing.

Romberg was rather more cautious about vibrato, as he states in his own method:

> The close shake, or *Tremolo*, is produced by a rapid lateral motion of the finger when pressed on the string. When used with moderation, and executed with great power of bow, it gives fire and animation to the Tone, but it should be made only at the beginning of the note, and ought not to be continued throughout its whole duration.[20]

It is important to note however, that vibrato may not have been easy for Romberg to accomplish, given his violinistic left hand technique: using vibrato in this way within Romberg's technique would only have been possible on the second or third finger because of the shape of the left arm, which is bent while playing the cello. Furthermore, the 'fire and animation' of this newer approach doesn't really seem to fit with descriptions of his 'distant and academic' playing aesthetic. In fact, he considered vibrato to be much more like an ornament than the integral and widespread element of string playing that it is today.

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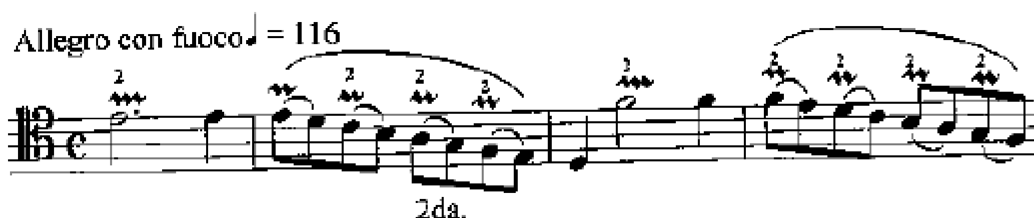
[18] Joseph Alexander, *Anleitung zum Violoncellospiel* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, c.1802), 25, in Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 123 - 4.

[19] J. J. F. Dotzauer, *Méthode de Violoncelle/Violonzell-Schule* (Mainz: B. Schott fils, 1825), 47.

[20] B. Romberg, *Complete Theatrical and Practical School for the Violoncello*, 85.



Excerpt: Romberg, Violoncellschule, vibrato exercise.

In annotations to his studies and exercises, Romberg describes the use of vibrato quite accurately:

> The 2nd finger will be the best in making the close-shake. The third finger is not adapted to the close-shake. The close-shake should never be held on though for the whole duration of the note, otherwise it will fail in his object, which is to add power to the tone; and should never exceed in time the third part of the value of the note.[21]

Friedrich August Kummer (1797-1879), Dotzauer's student, describes a vibrato technique in his own method that is closer to what players use today:

> One can also occasionally give a note more expression and gloss by a certain trembling, which is produced if one puts the finger firmly on the string and lets the hand make a trembling movement whereby, in order to be able to perform the same more freely, the thumb lies very loosely on the neck of the instrument.[22]

In those days, the use of vibrato was much more codified than it is today. It was used mainly on:

- metrically strong beats;
- weak beats when combined with agogic lengthening;
- diatonic notes much more frequently than on chromatics ones;
- longer notes rather than on shorter ones (but not on every longer note);
- and it could be played with any finger, though players generally preferred the third.[23]

Musicians have often tried to connect the use of vibrato in historical practice to certain 19th century notation practices. The *mezza di voce* notation (< >) is one such marking, and "could be related to the use of vibrato,"[24] as well as to dynamics, and even tempo. This relationship between practice and notation could further illuminate many well-known 19th century scores: especially those of Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms - each of whom used this indication particularly frequently.

1.2.4 Singing with portamento while shifting

With the Romantic period one saw a heightened emphasis on the expression of individualistic, private, and personal feelings in music making, whereas the Classical period was characterized by an emphasis on absolute values, truths, and tastes. The widespread use of vibrato was gradually adopted by many string players, and was soon accompanied by the development of expressive shifts, or portamento. According to Kennaway however, "neither portamento nor vibrato were theorized by cellists to anything like the degree found in at least some violin methods."[25] Based on the fact that technique and interpretation tend to evolve in parallel within families of instruments

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[21] Bernhard Romberg (trans. anon.), *Méthode de violoncelle* (Paris: Henry Lemoine, 1840), 84, in Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 127.

[22] F. A. Kummer, *Violoncelloschule* (Leipzig: Hofmeister, 1839), 45.

[23] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello*, 131.

[24] Ibid., 133 - 5.

[25] Ibid., 99.

however, it is likely that 19th century cellists were thinking about and using portamento as much as their violinist colleagues - particularly given the cello's growing appeal as a soloistic and virtuosic vehicle. And much like vibrato, it took time for portamento to be accepted and appreciated by the majority of musicians and audiences.

This manner of expressive shifting was in fact already explained in Duport's *Essai*, and here one can see in just how cautious a manner the author felt it should be used:

> I have avoided it carefully in all the scales, having two notes played with one finger... I consider it faulty, because it produces a bad effect. Only when the fingers strike well down on the strings, the tones will be connected pearl-like, but not if the finger slides from on tone to the other, or if the bow does not touch the string in the same moment when the finger is sliding, a very disagreeable tone will be produced. It is true, two notes which do not follow each other too rapidly, may be taken by one finger; that may, if well pressed down even slide on the third, fourth, fifth, etc., which proceeding, called carrying the tone, is sometimes productive of a very good effect… In a solo performance, which has been practiced, it is better to avoid it. In a run for example, which consists of slurred scales this is inadmissible.[26]

According to Romberg however, portamento should be used as a 'vocal connection' between notes, thereby linking it to singing performance practices of the time, as well as to the period's emphasis on individual expression of feeling. To his mind, the use of portamento is generally fine as long it occurs naturally and in keeping with the principles of tasteful phrasing:

> The expression *Portamento di voce* (the sustaining and combining of notes) is applicable in the same manner to Instrumental, as to Vocal Music, and signifies the gliding from one note to another, by which means, the most strongly accented notes of the air are blended together with those which precede them, and an agreeable effect produced.[27]

When using portamento, a player can interpret the same interval in a number of different ways, depending of the relation of the left hand to the right. A player can use their bow to highlight such a shift by sustaining the sound during the move of the left hand, or on the contrary, they can disguise a slide by lightening the weight on the string (which can also be done by the left hand). The various weight and speed combinations of these elements mean that a player has a huge range of possible shifts between notes at their disposal, and thus an endless palette of expression as well.

1.2.5 The evolution of bow-hold position

Three types of bow were in use until the middle of the 18th century: "A short bow was used for French dance music and a long one for Italian sonatas. At the same time, the German bow, which was very short, was supplanted by the French type,"[28] but all of them had a convex stick and needed to be held away from the nut. Indeed, Charles-Nicolas Baudiot (1773-1849) "recommended a bow-hold similar to that of the violinist, whereby the fingers were placed on the stick in front of the nut."[29] Bow shape became much more standardized by the end of the 18th century with the creation

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[26] Duport, *Essai*, 15.

[27] Romberg, *Complete Theoretical and Practical School for the Violoncello*, 87.

[28] Markevitch, *Cello Story*, 27.

[29] Margaret Campbell, "Nineteenth-Century Virtuosi," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello*, ed. Robin Stowell et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 62.

of Tourte's concave stick model, which is still in use today. These developments were then followed by a dramatic change in bow-hold at the beginning of the 19th century: from a hold just ahead of the nut to a more modern grip right on the nut. In terms of performance style, this development makes the bow seems much heavier - especially at the tip - allowing cellists to play with more sustained sound along the entire length of the bow, to use powerful attacks at the tip, and to develop virtuosic strokes such as *staccato* in both down- and up-bow motions.

2 Adrien-François Servais

2.1 Biographical Elements

Adrien-François Servais was born in 1807 in Halle, a little town close to Brussels. He first began to study the violin, but later turned to the cello after hearing the French cellist Nicolas-Joseph Platel (1777-1835), a student of Duport at the Paris Conservatory. He entered Platel's class at the Brussels Conservatory as a student, then later stayed on at the conservatory as an assistant in 1829 and finally as a teacher in 1848.

He toured Europe frequently and widely; giving concerts in capitals such as London, Paris, and Vienna. He made his debut in Paris during the 1833 - 1834 concert season to immediate acclaim, as reported in a little book[30] written by Servais's friend, impresario and secretary, Jules Lardin (1787-1870). This is a precious account of the inner workings of a concert organization at this time. Of particular interest is its positioning at the outset of the very notion of freelance musical work. Previously, musicians were always linked to the court of a given city. While they could give concerts or go on tour abroad, they could never do so without the consent of the ruling aristocratic or royal figures involved (both their own patrons, and those of the city in which they wished to perform). The new virtuosi of this period however, began to break these rules: they were no longer directly tied to a particular court as a rule, but rather had to organize their own musical activities. While the patronage of influential people was still a lucrative way of making a living, one's musical network and even commercial ads became more and more important when finding and securing work.

Servais's first two concerts in Paris took place on December 29, 1833 and April 27, 1834 at Jean-Henri Pape's home, where concerts were regularly performed. The first concert, the programme of which is included below, was organized in order to show off up-and-coming virtuosic talents, a group to which Servais certainly belonged. The concert was such a success for Servais, that in January 1834 he received a medal from the *Société libre des Beaux-Art*s "as the expression of its admiration and its warmest thanks."[31] Before leaving for Brussels, he was then asked to give the April 1834 concert, and at the top of the programme for this second Paris concert was written: "Musical evening given by Mr. Servais, cellist."[32] He was afterwards asked to perform additional concerts, but had to refuse in order to return to Belgium.

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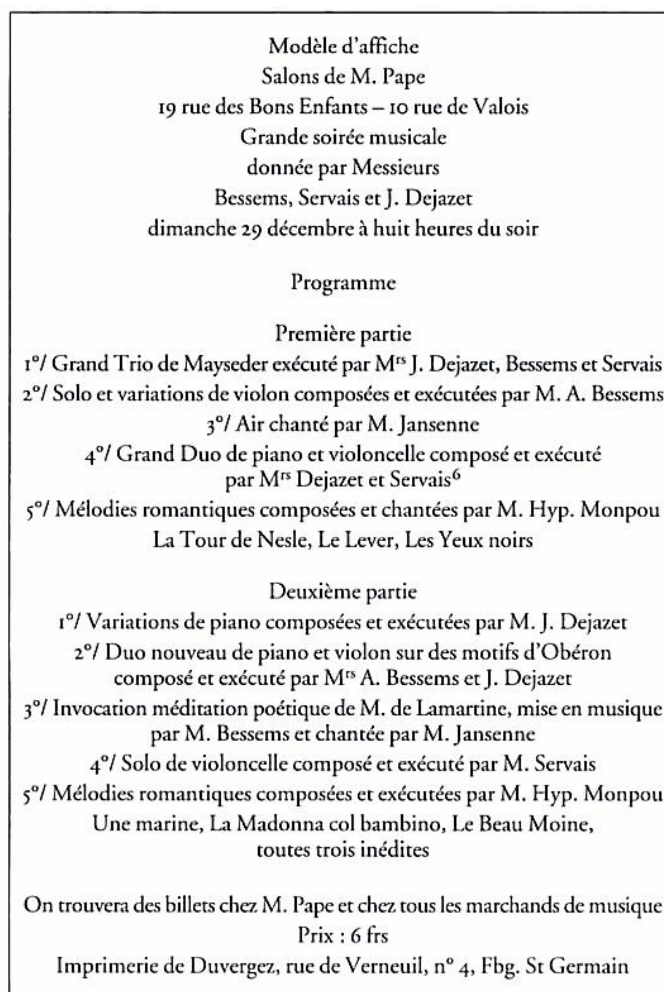
[30] Jules Lardin, *Album-Souvenir des débuts à Paris en 1833 et 1834* (Private Collection), in Malou Haine, "Musicien, mécène et imprésario: Les concerts du violoncelliste Adrien-François Servais et leur promotion par Jules Lardin," in *Le concert et son public: Mutations de la vie musicale en Europe de 1780 à 1914* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2002).

[31] Haine, "Musicien, mécène et impresario," 108.

[32] Ibid., 109.


Modèle d'affiche
Salons de M. Pape
19 rue des Bons Enfants – 10 rue de Valois
Grande soirée musicale
donnée par Messieurs
Bessems, Servais et J. Dejazet
dimanche 29 décembre à huit heures du soir

Programme

Première partie
1°/ Grand Trio de Mayseder exécuté par Mrs J. Dejazet, Bessems et Servais
2°/ Solo et variations de violon composées et exécutées par M. A. Bessems
3°/ Air chanté par M. Jansenne
4°/ Grand Duo de piano et violoncelle composé et exécuté par Mrs Dejazet et Servais[6]
5°/ Mélodies romantiques composées et chantées par M. Hyp. Monpou
La Tour de Nesle, Le Lever, Les Yeux noirs

Deuxième partie
1°/ Variations de piano composées et exécutées par M. J. Dejazet
2°/ Duo nouveau de piano et violon sur des motifs d'Obéron composé et exécuté par Mrs A. Bessems et J. Dejazet
3°/ Invocation méditation poétique de M. de Lamartine, mise en musique par M. Bessems et chantée par M. Jansenne
4°/ Solo de violoncelle composé et exécuté par M. Servais
5°/ Mélodies romantiques composées et exécutées par M. Hyp. Monpou
Une marine, La Madonna col bambino, Le Beau Moine, toutes trois inédites

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Illustration : Programme of Servais's first concert in Paris.[33]

Servais was also very well-connected and appreciated in Russia, where he went several times for lengthy tours. Around 1845, the Russian Prince Nikolaï Borisovich Yusupov purchased him a cello built in 1701 by the famous Italian luthier Antonio Stradivarius (1644-1737), and the instrument was later named *The Servais* in memory of his famous owner.[34] In 1849 Servais married Sophie Féguine, the daughter of a rich family in Saint-Petersburg. In 1857, a young Karl Davidov heard Servais perform in concert; the impact of which can easily be heard both in the former's later works for cello, and in his playing immediately afterwards, as noted by critics: "We have already taken note of his exceptional gifts, but no one could have anticipated so much progress in so little time. In the past year the concerts of M. Servais have left a definite imprint on Davidov, many of the remarkable qualities of the great Belgian have been assimilated by the young artist."[35]

In 1844, after playing a concert in Berlin with Mendelssohn as conductor, a reviewer gave Servais the nickname of "Paganini of the cello," comparing him of course to the famous violinist. Since then, critics and musicians alike have referred to him by this nickname, and it indeed stuck for the remainder of his life. Hector Berlioz also admired Servais's virtuosity when he came in Paris for concerts in 1847: "In the second concert, we discovered a first class talent, of Paganini's standing,

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[33] Haine, "Musicien, mécène et imprésario," 96.

[34] "Servais Stradivarius," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Servais_Stradivarius, accessed February 10, 2016.

[35] Markevitch, *Cello Story*, 92.

which amazes, touches and fascinates by its courage, flights of feeling and vehemence: I am speaking of the great violoncellist Servais."[36]

His programs were at first mostly built with his own numerous compositions, except for some private chamber music concerts where he played mixed-repertoire programs with his many talented and well-known colleagues. As noted by Lev Ginsburg, "Servais's programs usually consisted of a concerto and two or three of his own fantasias which he played with orchestra or a quartet."[37] His programming seems to have evolved according to the public's growing taste for more mixed and varied programs, thereby prompting him to add more repertoires to his own compositions.

While Servais was friends with Mendelssohn as stated above, and performed with the composer acting either as conductor in orchestral repertoires or as pianist in chamber settings, Rossini too had written a cello concerto for Servais. Servais's playing style must have been very pleasing to the Italian composer, with its deep vocal and melismatic expressivity. Servais was also well-connected and frequently collaborated compositionally with a number of other musician-composers of the time, including Joseph Ghys, Hubert Leonard, Jules and Felix Godefroid, Jules Déjazet, and Joseph Gregoir - with whom Servais wrote a number of duos for cello and piano on famous operatic themes.[38] Servais had also special connections with renowned violinists, including Henri Vieuxtemps with whom he had also composed duos, and Paganini from whom his nickname derives.

Aside from these collaborative efforts, Servais composed an incredible number of pieces for the cello. An accurate list of his approximately ninety works is available on the website of the Servais Society, which is based in Halle - his birthplace.[39] Opuses 1 to 21 were published by B. Schott's Sohne – Mainz between 1838 and 1864, and are for cello solo accompanied by various ensembles such as symphonic orchestra, quintet, quartet, or piano alone. A few works were published posthumously, but most do not carry an opus number. Servais composed a huge number of duos on operatic and other well-known themes (no less than 24 duos with Joseph Gregoir alone!), and made a few transcriptions of other composers' works for cello and piano. More than twenty compositions remain in manuscript form and at least ten are still lost (such as the duo composed with Jules Déjazet and performed during his first Paris concert in 1833). Servais also produced many fantasias, a typical form of the Romantic virtuoso epoch as pointed out by Robin Stowell: "Fantasias on well-known themes also became an indispensable part of musical entertainment in the 19th century."[40] These works tended to be based on Servais's reminiscences of his travels to various locales such as Spa, Naples, Switzerland, and Saint-Petersburg.

2.2 Introduction of the endpin

Although Servais was the first to regularly use the endpin still used by cellists today, as early as 1765 the English cellist Robert Crome advised beginners to use a peg in order to help them practise.[41] But Servais seems to be the first virtuoso to have always used an endpin: both for his daily practicing as well as while onstage in concert. It seems as though this is related to his

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[36] Ginsburg, *History of the Violoncello*, 34.

[37] Ibid., 33.

[38] http://www.servais-vzw.org/index.php?fr-oeuvre-apercu, accessed February 20, 2016.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Robin Stowell, "Transcriptions and Fantasias," *The Cambridge Companion of the Cello*, 158.

[41] Robert Crome's *The Complete Tutor for the Violoncello* (London, c.1765), contains advice on what is obviously a forerunner of the spike: "For the greater ease of a learner we would advise him to have a hole made in the tail-pin and a Wooden Peg to screw into it to rest upon the floor which may be taken out when he pleases." Campbell, "Masters of the Baroque and Classical Eras," *The Cambridge Companion of the Cello*, 57.

advancements in cello technique and performance. As noted by John Dilworth, "the adjustable endpin [was] introduced by A. Servais c.1845 to give the instrument greater stability during large shifts of the left hand."[42]

As playing styles and expectations quickly and dramatically evolved during the 19th century, virtuosos felt as though they needed even more freedom on the cello in order to improve technique even further, and in order to elevate the instrument to similar importance and popularity as the violin or piano. The endpin was one solution to this problem, and was introduced by Servais c.1845. While the addition of the endpin didn't necessarily mean that cellists altered their basic sitting posture (Servais only added a peg to his cello, though some people say that this was because of his weight!), adding a point of contact with the floor allowed the body to be freer and more ready to move while playing - both in terms of bow and left hand technique. This also meant an improvement in tone quality, the facilitation of larger shifts, and greater agility of the bow during string crossings. The use of the endpin also liberates the ribs of the instrument from the pressure of the legs, as they are no longer needed in order to hold the instrument. The instrument is then also freer to resonate and to project in concert halls, which were becoming larger and larger during the 19th century.

Another improvement due to the introduction of the endpin was the inclusion of female cellists in public concerts. Although women played the cello at home, they never before appeared in public as performers due to what was viewed at the time as the inappropriate position of the legs necessary to holding the instrument. By adding this extra contact point on the floor however, female players could suddenly more easily adapt their sitting postures. As Kennaway observes, "even though Servais died in 1866 and toured abroad frequently in his later years, he appears to have taught at least four females pupils."[43] And as Anita Mercier describes in her account of the famous cellist Guilhermina Suggia:

> A side-saddle position was popular [amongst women], with both legs turned to the left and the right leg either dropped on a concealed cushion or stool or crossed over the left leg. A frontal position with the right knee bent and behind the cello, rather than gripping its side, was also used. Feminine alternatives like these were still in use well into the 20th century.[44]

Another possibility for female cellists of the time was to adopt the traditional sitting posture while wearing an extra large and long dress.

Although Servais taught his students to use an endpin, and although he himself was a great ambassador for the device during his numerous tours, its use would not become universal before the early 20th century.[45]

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[42] John Dilworth, "The Cello: Origins and Evolution," *The Cambridge Companion of the Cello*, 1.

[43] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 190.

[44] Anita Mercier, "Guilhermina Suggia," http://www.cello.org/newsletter/articles/suggia.htm, accessed January 13, 2016.

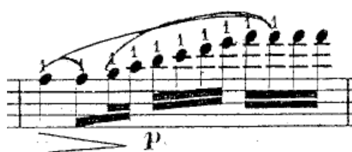
[45] "There are two ways of holding the cello - without the peg (Piatti's method), and with the peg, the latter being generally adopted at the present time." Alfredo Piatti, revised by W. E. Whitehouse (London, 1911), *Violoncello Method*, vol. 1, ii, in Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 14.

2.3 Elements of playing

One of the keys of Servais's success was his innovative approach to playing the cello. One can get a fairly good idea of his playing style and technique (or at least as much as is possible given the lack of sounding evidence) by reading reviews of his concerts:

> The repeated first finger markings on the semiquavers are not unusual...[Servais's arrangements] contain some of the most remarkable fingerings of this type from the period...this was something of a Servais speciality, found in many of his works.[46]

By examining some of his scores, I quite easily found much evidence in support of this claim, as shown here in his *Concerto Militaire* Op. 18:



Excerpt : Servais, Concerto Militaire Op. 18, First Movement.

Regarding Servais's playing style, in 1839 the Russian pianist Odojevsky wrote a letter to Count Alexeï Verstovsky after sight-reading Servais's *First Concerto* with the composer as soloist:

> The score that lay in front of me was proof that Servais was a great artist... Servais's melodies are not ordinary phrases consisting of passing notes and embellishments which become trite after a week. They are in fact a constellation of sounds, which a mere talent cannot hope to approach; a constellation that remains eternally young and keeps the music of the old masters fresh and vivid to our days. Servais's modulations are natural, but often surprising, and cause one to think about them at first hearing. In both his concerto and fantasia it is easy to notice some beautiful, simple and easily grasped melodies based on very unexpected chords and where the top voice glides easily and effortlessly over harmonic bridges, which shows both the composer's solid knowledge of harmony and lively inventiveness.[47]

After having heard Servais's concerts in 1847, Berlioz too wrote:

> His singing is heartfelt, without any exaggerated emphasis, with grace and without affectation; he makes short work of the most incredible difficulties: he never allows any error in his tone quality, and in the passages when the instrument has to play its highest notes, reaches an impetuosity which the bow of a master-violinist would find hard to manage.[48]

A few months later when Servais performed in Vienna, a correspondent of the Russian musical gazette *Nuvellist* wrote:

> Servais is one of the most notable violoncellists of our time, his playing is both graceful and bravura. Whereas other cellists absolutely neglect the virile character of the instrument, Servais keeps himself to the middle-way: he sings on the

[46] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello*, 113.

[47] Letter from Odojevsky to Verstovsky, S. Peterburgskiye vedomosti (Moscow, n.16, 1840), in Ibid., 43.

[48] Ibid., 34.

violoncello, approaching the highest notes of its range, but he also reminds his listeners that the cello has strong bass strings as well. No contemporary cellist other than Servais can perform musical figures in such abundance, such vigorous and brilliant passages; not the slightest effort, however, is seen when he surmounts difficulties which seem to vanish because of his poetic flame. Servais's aim is not to cast dust in his audience's eyes, but to enrapture the heart.[49]

As with any extraordinary person Servais's playing style also had detractors, such as this musical critic who, at the end of the cellist's life, observed: "Servais's bowing certainly does have more lilt than Davidov's, but the very lilt is so full of the unending sugary vibrato that one would, no doubt, like to cleanse one's ears with full and clear sounds, as one would like to have some plain water after eating candies."[50]

The writings of Servais's admirers and critics alike have left us with invaluable evidence of how he came to be so famous, and how he turned cello playing on its head during the 19th century. In sum, he astonished his contemporaries with his extreme virtuosity - a facility close to that of the great violin virtuosos of his day - and with his extroverted expressivity. For these reasons, Servais's life and work marks a real turning point in the history of the cello. With all this in mind, we can now take a closer look at one of his compositions in order to highlight more precisely his revolutionary approach to cello playing.

3 Servais's works

While the piece I have chosen to examine is rarely performed today, it wonderfully illustrates the tastes of Servais's epoch. In a style and form (theme and variations) that would have been very fashionable for Romantic virtuosi, especially with regards to how much space it allows for performers to develop and show off their technique, agility, and musicality, the *Fantaisie* '*Souvenir de Saint-Pétersbourg*' was first published in 1856, as noted in the *Bibliographie de la France.*[51] Composed in 1839 however, Servais's *Fantaisie* recalls a tour in Russia and is based on the melody of a Russian romance. The piece is dedicated to the Prince Nicolas Yusupov, who had given the cellist his Stradivarius a few years earlier. Two versions of this work exist: one for cello and piano, and one for cello and string orchestra as arranged by Servais's student Ernest de Münck and published by B. Schott's Söhne in 1891. The following observations however, are based on the first edition of Servais's version for cello and piano.

The piece is built in four distinct parts (introduction, theme, and two variations), each separated by double-bar lines and fermatas. It begins with a *larghetto* introduction full of contrasting characters. A brief transition takes you to the theme, which is simple and romantic. Next comes the first variation, marked *Poco più mosso*, where the solo part contains some virtuosic bow strokes in an elegant style before concluding with heroic arpeggiated chords. Finally, the second variation (the longest section) is itself divided into three parts (*Allegro ma non troppo*, *Andantino,* and *Allegro*). It contains a number of motives already used in the *Fantaisie*, developing them virtuosically and expressively across the entire range of the instrument.

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[49] Literary supplement to *Nuvellist* (March 1848), in Kennaway, *Playing the Cello*, 34 - 5.

[50] Pavel Makarov, "St. Petersbourg concerts -Muzikalny svet," no. 6 (1866), in Ibid., 52.

[51] IMSLP Petrucci Music Project, Bibliographie de la France, 45th year, no. 49 (December 8, 1856): 1243, http://imslp.org/wiki/Souvenir_de_St_P%C3%A9tersbourg,_Op.15_(Servais,_Adrien-Fran%C3%A7ois), accessed February 5, 2016.

As Servais both composed for himself as well as for his students, his many precise annotations seem to clearly communicate his wishes regarding performance style. While one must bear in mind that Servais was well ahead of his time, both in interpretive style and technique, such advancements are only possible via experimentation: the searching for and trying out of new possibilities. A few of his annotations may seem incredible or radical, but I suspect that they were just part of this process of searching and experimenting (and most of them actually work!).

All observations that follow are thus based on my assumption that Servais has tried to write out what he himself wanted to do, and what he also wanted his students to do, in this particular work.

3.1 Left hand technique

3.1.1 Finger substitution within a slurred bow

Let's first take a look to the two C sharps in bar 41 (last note of the 2nd beat and first note of the gruppetto):

Excerpt: bar 41.

This is an example of a finger substitution (replacing one finger with another in order to play the same note again). From Duport's *Essai* (1806), we know that the structure of the left hand in clear positions is a crucial technical point for cellists in order to facilitate frequent, quick, but also secure shifts, as the technique is built on clear principles. As such, even if fingering is not explicitly indicated here, the performer needs to substitute the fourth to the first finger in order to articulate the repeated C sharp within a slurred bow. The left hand begins in half-position (as indicated by the 2 over the B) but the performer then needs to change position in order to play all of the thirty-second notes of the last beat. The only possible fingering solution therefore, is to substitute fingers between the two C sharps. Otherwise, in order to keep the same finger but still hear two different notes, one would need to cut the slur and change bow (a solution generally preferred today, but with very different sounding results).

Examples such as this can be found throughout the work; like in bar 29 for example as shown above (on the two F sharps), and in bar 82 where the substitution is clearly indicated as shown in the excerpt below (on the two C sharps). In bar 29, the substitution also helps the performer to change the atmosphere and to return to the gentler theme of the introduction. Keeping the slur intact in this bar via substitution allows for a more connected and smoother change of mood. The substitution in bar 82 on the other hand occurs at the end of the Theme, and is more related to the precise phrasing that the composer himself sought. Indeed, the slurs here could have been written over two beats each time, but his phrasing instead offers an alternate framing, allowing the last three eighth notes to sound more like an elegant ornament that flows towards the conclusion of the Theme.

Excerpts: bar 29.

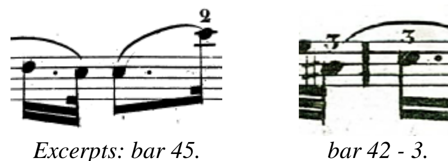
bar 82.

Servais's frequent use of this kind of substitution (see also bars 178, 222 - 3, 254 - 5) leads me to believe that it is an important element of his own technique (and one that perhaps evidences that technique's diversity), as it can be used in order to execute a precise articulation (as in bars 41 and 105), or to bring about a change of color or mood (see bars 29 and 82). Servais does not seem to

care much for the principles of good taste as advocated by previous cellists, but rather seems only interested in fully expressing his own personal feeling through the possibilities of his instrument.

3.1.2 Shifting with the same finger

Another recurrent technical particularity in the score of Servais's *Fantaisie* is his use of the same finger while shifting, no matter what interval is involved. This often occurs with large singing intervals (bars 45 - 8), as well as for intervals of a second or third (bars 35 and 42 - 3).



Excerpts: bar 45. *bar 42 - 3.*

This way of moving between large intervals is very powerful and can convey many different affects (bravery, despair, and heroism). The smaller intervals on the other hand, can be played either very smoothly or very emphasized/stressed via quick shifting (bars 42 - 3), or they can be played very precisely as if the notes were articulated by different fingers (bar 35). The performer can thus choose whether to make the shift more or less audible by either using a more sustained bow (thus highlighting the portamento), or a less sustained bow (thus diminishing the portamento).

3.1.3 Harmonics

The main section of the *Fantaisie's* first variation ends with an energetic arpeggio in harmonics on the A string (bar 107): a gesture that was typical of the period, especially amongst virtuoso violinists (Paganini used it a number of times in his compositions). Here, Servais is translating this effect on the cello for the very first time. In the second variation he also uses it briefly at the end of an arpeggio figure (bar 138), as well as to transition from a cadenza to a new iteration of the theme (bars 217 - 221) - now heard exclusively in harmonic leaps. The indicated fingering requires a shift on each note, thereby making it much harder and much more virtuosic. It should also be pointed out that the use of natural harmonics was considered to be in bad taste until Servais began to use them.

Excerpts: bar 107. *bar 217.*

3.1.4 Thumb position

Servais is the first cellist in history to use the thumb so fluently and so diversely.

Interestingly, in this work one finds scales fingered much as we would today: 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3 for an octave scale (bars 132 and 134). This is surely evidence that much of modern cello technique originates in, or at least was codified during, this particular period of musical history.

Excerpt: bar 134.

Servais used also the thumb just as one would use any other normal finger, and not just as a replacement for the nut as described in Duport's *Essai*. Romberg's positional parallelism technique on the other hand was already a step further than Duport's, but was nonetheless much more static than Servais's. Indeed, Servais plays in thumb position all over the range of the A string (bars 251 - 3) even though he could play the lowest pitches in bar 253 in a "normal" position.

Excerpt: bar 251 - 3.

Servais also makes frequent use of double-stop octaves (bars 146 - 7, 290 - 4, 304 - 315). In bars 146 - 7, an ascending scale in octaves brilliantly concludes the second variation's opening section. A long slur even further reinforces this character, as does Servais's use of accents on each note. The second passage (bars 290 - 4) indicates arpeggios in octaves, something that is extremely hard to execute on the cello and is thus rarely written. Servais seems to be the very first cellist to include this technique in his compositions, though he will be later followed by cellists such as Popper, who uses arpeggio octaves in his *Second Concerto* Op. 24 (1880). Finally, Servais also uses octaves at the end of the work (bars 304 - 315) in order to add power and dash.

Excerpts : bar 146 - 7. *bar 292 - 4.*

In fact, in the coda of this work (from bar 266) the virtuoso cellist even includes a passage in broken tenths (bars 282 - 9). This interval had already been used before (see Haydn's *Concerto in D Major*, 1783), but never quite in this virtuosic a fashion. Here, the tenths are played in a broken manner, and are filled with the sixth and the octave in the lower voice, thereby demanding particular stretches of the left hand into the extended position. The main motive is also repeated three times in chromatic modulation here, and for all of these reasons, the coda of the *Fantaisie* presents a real firework display of technical difficulties for the cellist's left hand.

Excerpt : bar 282 - 3

While he used principles already established by a previous generation of cellists, Servais is the first to bring thumb position technique to quite this level. We can find many of these advancements in the later works of Popper, Dvorak and Davidov.

3.2 Right hand technique

3.2.1 About bowing

No bowing indications are precisely notated at the beginning of the solo cello part (bar 17). Nowadays most of the upbeats would be played up-bow, allowing one to arrive at the downbeat of bar 22 with a down-bow. But if you look further in the score, you will notice that if you keep this bowing scheme it will become really uncomfortable by bar 34. Another solution would be to consider that in Servais's time the habit was to start playing down-bow if nothing else was specified. I think that this might have been Servais's thinking as well, which seems to be confirmed by the down-bow indicated at the beginning of the first recitative (bar 56) - one that naturally leads to a down-bow for the entrance of the Theme (bar 61). Furthermore, a variation of the same

material appears in bar 172 along with another down-bow. For this reason, it seems logical to start the introduction with a down-bow, even though this goes against the instincts of most modern cellists.

3.2.2 Long bow strokes

One particular element in Servais's score is immediately visually striking: namely, the length of the indicated bow-strokes in the virtuoso passages. Servais frequently uses extra long slurs here, like during the introduction for example, and at the beginning of the second variation. In the virtuoso part of the introduction (bars 38 - 55), he uses extra-long slurs within a *piano* dynamic. This creates the feeling of one large pulse with an uninterrupted flow of notes, while demanding from the performer a huge capacity for saving the bow in order to have enough space to play all the notes in only one slur, as well as an agile and precise left hand in order to articulate all of the notes within that slur. In bar 54 for example, the composer slurs all thirty-second notes of the bar, thereby indicating 36 notes in total to be played in a single down-bow, while covering the entire range of the A string! This bar then later becomes the primary motive of the second variation (bar 124).

Excerpt: bar 54.

3.2.3 Double-slurs

A very typical element of Servais's virtuoso style is the double-slur (see bar 35). After an ascending scale arriving on the highest point of the section, the phrase then descends via an elegant line of chromatic appoggiaturas in sextuplets. Servais fits this entire descending figure into a single long bow-stroke, but he also asks for two-by-two chromatic slurs within this line.

Excerpt: bar 35.

Throughout the work, one finds similar double-slur treatments for ascending scales (bars 140 and 142), as well as for a shorter bow stroke in the coda (bar 273, 2nd beat). This element brings the phrasing much more to life than indicating one stroke for the entire beat, while also preparing the *piano* section that follows.

Excerpts: bar 140.

bar 273 - 4.

3.2.4 Strokes: the use of staccato

According to Kennaway, “the term staccato is also used much more consistently throughout the 19th century to denote, specifically, a group of clearly articulated notes played in one bow, as opposed to any generally short note, or a single note with a dot.”[52] The first variation of Servais's *Fantaisie* allows the soloist to show off both the virtuosity of his right hand as well as the agility of his left hand. The variation starts (bar 85) with two-by-two strokes consisting of two slurred notes in down-bow and two jumping staccato notes in up-bow, which in turn lends a sparkling character to the *piano* sections.

Excerpts : bar 85. *bar 88.*

It must be pointed out that when the *forte* arrives (bar 88), the stroke then changes to two slurred notes and two *détaché* notes in order to achieve a broader sound by using a longer bow on the string. The same thing occurs in the *Con espressione* passage (bar 104), where the soloist needs much more space to sing and to prepare the shift between the third and fourth beats. Elsewhere, Servais uses one longer staccato bow stroke in order to distinguish longer phrases: over two beats (bar 87), and over one bar (bar 91). This emphasizes the feeling of pulsation and makes the *forte* arrivals much more powerful.

Excerpt: bar 91

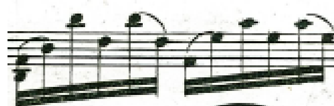
The second *forte* (bar 92) is even further reinforced by three down-bow retakes in order to emphasize the only half notes of the variation, written here in the lowest register on the C string.

3.2.5 Arpeggiated chords

Brilliant codas conclude both the first variation (bars 113 - 120) and the end of the first part of the second variation (bars 152 - 162), each featuring arpeggiated chords slurred across all four strings, which produces a huge virtuosic impression on the public without being too difficult to execute. This kind of purely showy virtuosity is intended to add a theatrical dimension to the act of performance.

Excerpt: bar 113.

Another version of this technique ends the work (bars 316 - 9), but now features broken chords with two slurred notes, two *détaché* and two slurred. This new stroke allows for a broader and more defined sound in the *fortissimo,* and is thus better suited to ending the work with flair.



Excerpt : bar 316.

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[52] Kennaway, *Playing the Cello,* 85.

3.3 Expressiveness and Interpretation

3.3.1 Written vibrato

Examples of possible notated vibrato (< >) can be found bars 36 - 7:

Excerpt: bar 36 - 7.

Both the B flat and the A that are accompanied here by <> markings are key notes in the agogic flow of this phrase. As mentioned before, Servais made frequent use of vibrato, and it was an integral component of his playing style. According to concert reviews of the time, he was using vibrato not only as an ornament, but almost everywhere (much as we do today). I think that he has indicated vibrato on these two important notes via <> markings because he absolutely wanted to be sure that performers would do it. This vibrato can of course also be combined with an increase and decrease in volume, as well as a bit of rubato, in addition to the *ritardando* indicated in bar 37. This supports accounts of how the <> sign was often used in the 19th century to refer to manipulations of volume, vibrato, as well as time. Furthermore, because the piano part has only one chord per bar on the first beat of bar 37, this allows the cello part to be as free as possible.

Further proof of Servais's widespread use of vibrato may be found in cases where he indicates that he doesn't want the expressive device used. Notice for example how a zero is notated on the C sharp at the beginning of the *Recitativo* (bar 56).

Excerpt: bar 56.

This zero notation is usually used to indicate an open string, or a natural harmonic when combined with a fingering (see the last note of bar 54). Those are two cases in which a performer doesn't use vibrato. As such, I think that Servais has written it on the C sharp here in order to indicate his desire for no vibrato whatsoever on this note. This seems logical given that the phrase comes from a harmonic in the highest position of the fingerboard (bar 55), and that the cello plays these few bars of recitative alone. This allows the performer to build the line from a very pure sound (bar 56), to a much more present and expressive sound: one helped by a shift with the same finger (bars 58 - 9), and paralleled by the expression marks towards the end of the phrase.

3.3.2 The case of the > marking

The > marking (usually called an accent) is an invitation for the player to insist on a note. This can be done in many different ways and it is up to the performer to understand and to feel why the composer wanted to highlight those notes.

In bar 38, look at the three accents indicated at the beginning of each group of thirty-second notes.

Excerpt: bar 38.

To me, these accents have a dynamic meaning here, as they can help the player to transition from a *forte* into the *piano* indicated on the first beat of the following bar. Servais could have written a normal diminuendo here, but his choice underlines what seems to be his desire for a stair-like

change of dynamics. The opposite occurs in the last variation (bars 242 - 3), were accents highlight the appoggiaturas of each beat, helping the crescendo to reach the upper *sforzando* F sharp.

Excerpt: bar 242 - 3.

Another type of accent is found bars 72 - 4, only this one seems more expressive.

Excerpt: bar 72.

This could potentially serve to remind the performer to gently reach the high notes with the time needed to shift and sing them. The same principle applies when the theme, in variation, is heard for the last time before the Coda (bars 208 - 210).

A third interpretation of the > marking can be found at the beginning of the second variation (bars 124 - 5). Here, an accent is put on every first beat.

Excerpt: bar 124.

This seems more of a metric indication rather than a dynamic one. Despite the grace notes, Servais seems to want the first real note of each group played on the beat (rather than before the beat with the grace notes).

Finally, the accents at the beginning of the Coda (bars 266 - 8) seem to evidence Servais's wishes in terms of phrasing:

Excerpt: bar 266 - 8.

We notice here that accents are placed on the first notes of the first three beats, while the beat before bar 268 has no accent in order to reach the first beat of bar 268.

By paying close attention to Servais's indications therefore, performers can learn a lot: not just about the composer's wishes as related to interpretation, but also about his own approach to performance as well.

3.3.3 Interpretation

Servais is also quite precise when it comes to his annotations concerning character and tempo. *Dolce* is the most frequently used verbal indication (see bars 17, 68, 188, 221, 237, 254 and 294), and it is the primary character of the theme wherever it occurs. But the theme also appears alongside *con espressione* and *Appassionato* markings (see bars 61 and 172 respectively). Servais seems to combine larger strokes with *con espressione* (bar 104), and sparkling passages in the upper register of the instrument with *leggiero* (bar 245). Those notations are innovative given how frequently they appear in this work.

It must be mentioned that while Servais probably didn't bother trying to notate each of the tempo modifications he had in mind, but rather left them to the discretion of the performer (though performers of his generation and beyond would probably have used many!), in addition to the verbal expression markings mentioned above (all of which impact a performer's use of rubato), he indicates many *rallentandi*, as well as suspensions between each section of the work via fermatas. Generally speaking, tempo also increases over the entire work, driving the music from *Larghetto* to *Allegro*.

Although Servais did not write any books on his approach to playing the cello, one can gain a very clear impression of his unique and advanced performance style by conscientiously studying his compositions, and the technical developments they contain as related to both the left and right hands. The precision and flair of his annotations reveals what an extrovert he must have been as compared his contemporaries. This *Fantaisie* is a precious testimony to Servais's innovative approach to playing the cello.

Conclusion

With this research project, I hope to have shown the crucial role that Servais played in the history of the cello, and how important his innovations in cello technique and performance style were during the first half of the 19th century. Although it took some time for it to be widely adopted, Servais was the first soloist to use and to promote the endpin, both in performance and in his teaching activities; and throughout his many successful European tours he greatly contributed towards turning the cello into a well-known and hugely popular soloistic - and virtuosic - instrument. Both of these innovations only further advanced the speed and intensity of expressive and technical developments in cello playing during the 19th century. Servais left an invaluable impression on a younger generation of cellists and cellist-composers (like Davidov and Popper), and he laid the foundation of modern cello performance and perhaps modern classical musicianship in general, given his enthusiastic use of vibrato, his extroversion, and his preference for expressivity and musicality over all else.

An interesting further step to this research project would be to compare techniques evidenced by Servais's cello works to violin techniques from around same time in order to examine how the development of the latter may have influenced that of the former. I would first need to read some violin treatises however, in order to know at what stage violin techniques were around Servais's time. I would then choose Servais's *Grand Duo Sur des Motifs de l'Opéra "Les Huguenots" de G. Meyerbeer* for violin and cello in order to compare both parts and to try to understand what influence one instrument's technique had on the other.

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Annex

Servais, Adrien-François. *Fantaisie 'Souvenir de Saint-Pétersbourg'* for cello and piano Op. 15, Mainz Schott/Paris: Richault (1856), including my own annotations (which I plan to explain during my live presentation).

SOUVENIR DE St PETERSBOURG.

left hand
right hand
interpretation

FANTAISIE

Par F. SERVAIS, Op: 15.

1st edition, 1856

VIOLONCELLE.

Larghetto. ff p pizz: arco. ff p

pizz: p Cresc: f

14 or ⊓ V? Dol:

23 subs° Cresc: fz p

31 double-slur Cresc f

36 Rall: vibr. Più animato a tempo. vibrato stair-like diminuendo

39 p

41 1/2 pos. 2nd pos. subs° Cresc: ff shift with same finger

43

Imp: Jannot rue Lamartine 50.

45 shift

47

Cresc.

49 ff Dim

51

53 long bow stroke

55 Poco adagio. Recitativo. S.V. shift vibr. 1re C.

Moderato.

THEMA. Con espress.

67 Dol.

73 2e C.

79 subs° Rall.

Poco più mosso.

VAR. I.

p jumping stroke

88 f p

91 long staccato stroke f p

95

99 f p

103 subs° *Con espress.* *Cresc.*

107 harmonics f

113 arpeggiated chords

116

119

All° ma non troppo long bow stroke

VAR. II.

p

126

f

p

129

133 scale fingering

p

138

harmonics

double-slur

Facilité.

143

octaves

148 Tutti.

ff

arpeggiated chord

154

158

162 Tutti.

170 Andantino.

shift

subs°

Appassionato.

Cresc.

182

f p Cresc. Dol.

192

202 Animato il tempo.

f

209

Allegro.

Dim. p

harmonics

220 subs°

Dol.

228

Tutti.

f Dol. mf

238

Cresc. sf Leggiero.

246

251 thumb position all over the range of the A string

subs°

Dol.

257

Rall.

a Tempo.

meme position.

Con fuoco.

p Dol.

Cresc.

Fin.