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(Student Number: 3048780)  
Main subject: Cello  
Research coach: Anna Scott

## **2. Title of your research**

Adrien-François Servais's contribution to the evolution of the cello technique.

## **3. Research question**

With particular focus on his scores, how did Adrien-François Servais advance cello technique in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

## **4. Motivation/rationale and goal of your research project**

I wanted to do a research that would have a direct link with my own instrument and I searched for a topic of interest that took into account my two favorite historical periods: the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Russian 20<sup>th</sup> century. I soon realized however that it would be really hard to work seriously on the Russian 20<sup>th</sup> century without reading many sources from what is a very vast and complicated historical-cultural period.

Then I had the idea to focus on one of the numerous cellists-composers from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I first thought about David Popper but he is already quite well known today and his works are usually played by all cellists, at least during their studies at conservatoires. But much less is known however, about Adrien-François Servais's work. At most, cellists usually only ever play some of his *Caprices*, despite the fact that he and his works were fundamental to the evolution of the cello during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Servais was the first cellist who used the spike. He could have more freedom to move on the cello and have more stability by adding a contact point on the ground. This important evolution is the first step for the development of his virtuosity, especially in high positions on the fingerboard. Cellist already used the thumb to play in high positions (c.f. Duport *21 Exercices*, Haydn *Concertos*...) but Servais developed this virtuosity as the violonist could do it (maybe because he first was a violonist during his childhood or because of his friendship with the great Belgian violonist Henri Vieuxtemps?). According to articles published after Servais's concerts, it also seems that Servais has added a lot of new aspects in the bow technique. As Servais has not written method or treaty but wrote a lot of pieces (not less than 100 pieces!), we have to analyse and compare his scores in order to understand how his technique grew up all his cellist life.

With this research, I would like to try to better understand the evolution and development of cello technique and repertoire during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by studying Adrien-François Servais's scores in order to highlight what is innovative in his approach to the cello, compared to earlier techniques and repertoires. Finally, I hope to expand the cello repertoire by adding and bringing attention to unedited or rarely performed pieces by Servais, and by sharing the results of my research with as many musicians and audiences as I can, thought primarily with cellists where technical aspects are concerned.

## **5. Research process**

First I am searching information in books and websites. I have borrowed the Lev Ginsburg's *History of the Violoncello* at the KC library in December which is a good base to acquire knowledge about cellists and cello schools of playing during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>

centuries; I still have to check its bibliography in details. The chapter about Servais is available on line at <http://www.cello.org/heaven/bios/servais/serv01.htm> .

The website of the Servais Society ([www.servais-vzw.org](http://www.servais-vzw.org)) is of course really helpful for me. There one finds the list of all Servais's works classified according to three big categories: published compositions, unpublished compositions and not yet located works, with details concerning which pieces have been recorded or not. I am in touch with Peter François, president of the Servais Society and specialist in Servais, who came to do a presentation during our last Master Circle; I can contact him by email for any information or documents that I will need.

I still have to contact other members of The French Cello Society ([www.levioloncelle.com](http://www.levioloncelle.com)), that I know because I am also a member, in order to find out if any of them have information for me; I am going to post an advertisement on their forum online. They also regularly publish a review that is at my parents' place; I received all pages concerning Servais yesterday, I have to read it.

### **Sources to be consulted:**

Bréval, Jean-Baptiste: *Traité du violoncelle*, op.42 (Paris, 1804)

Brown, Clive: *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750–1900* (Oxford University Press, 2002)

Duport Jean-Louis: *Essai sur le doigté du violoncelle et sur la conduite de l'archet* (Paris, 1806; Eng. trans., 1878)

Ginsburg, Lev: *History of the violoncello* (Paganiniana Publications, 1983. Trans. from the Russian by T. Tchistyakova)

Romberg, Bernard: *Violoncell-Schule* (Berlin, c1840); Eng. ed as *A Complete Theoretical and Practical School for the Violoncello* (London, 1839)

Walden, Valerie: *One Hundred Years of Violoncello: a History of Technique and Performance Practice, 1740–1840* (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

*The Cambridge Companion to the Cello* (published by Robin Stowell, 1999)

### **Planning**

**February:** By February, I plan to have a better historical view of the different cello schools during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and be doing some research into earlier cellists in order to better understand the development of cello technique.

**March:** By March, I will have obtained copies of the scores needed and I will have chosen those that are the most representative of the development of cello technique.

**From June:** I will practice those Servais works I want to perform in concert and start to search where I can play next year.

I would like to go also to Halle in Belgium to see the town where Servais lived, to visit his museum and to see his original scores but I don't know yet when it will be possible for me.

**Next year:** I will perform my chosen pieces in concert, and record them.

## **6. Chosen format of documentation:** Research paper