

Setting the Record Straight:

**New Violin and Piano Acoustic Disc
Recording Project Discussed**

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Research Questions

- What is it like to make an acoustic recording? *Why would you even want to do this?*
- What is the relationship between 'normal' playing and playing on the recording?
- To what extent can making recordings by similar technology to those studied validate or otherwise allow one to assess the extent to which we have been able to assimilate historical modes of performance?
- Can this process help us gauge the extent to which HP playing is likely to have resembled those one is seeking to emulate?

Making a new acoustic recording based upon historical sound documents: initial practical questions

- What are we trying to do?
- Why are we trying to do this?
- How is this to be achieved?

Making a new acoustic recording based upon historical sound documents: more specific questions

- In what ways are we seeking to emulate an historical sound document?
- In what ways is existing research and knowledge of historical practices going to influence our project playing?
- Technical considerations: how to do this in the twenty-first century
- How will a practical understanding of (and knowledge of) making early recordings (limitations, adaptations) influence what we do?

Decisions and obvious issues to solve

- Repertoire selections
- How to practise for an acoustic recording session (a new experience for David before this project!)
- Sonic and organological issues – piano used, string thicknesses, etc

Initial Rehearsing

As though for a live research-based performance, seeking to replicate, embody, and model (in this case) early twentieth-century performing practices, and seeking to acquire an understanding in practice of traits of style by Arnold Rosé (1863-1946).

[Informal workshop performance]

Adapting style to Early Recording Conditions

Learning how to adapt such a 'live' HIP-style performance to the limitations (and unique artistic and practical opportunities) afforded by making acoustic disc recordings under the situational conditions available to us

- Volume/dynamics versus tempo and tempo flexibility matters
- Spatial issues
- Psychological issues

[Informal workshop performance seeking to demonstrate how we played in the acoustic sessions]

Huddersfield, January 2020



Huddersfield, January 2020



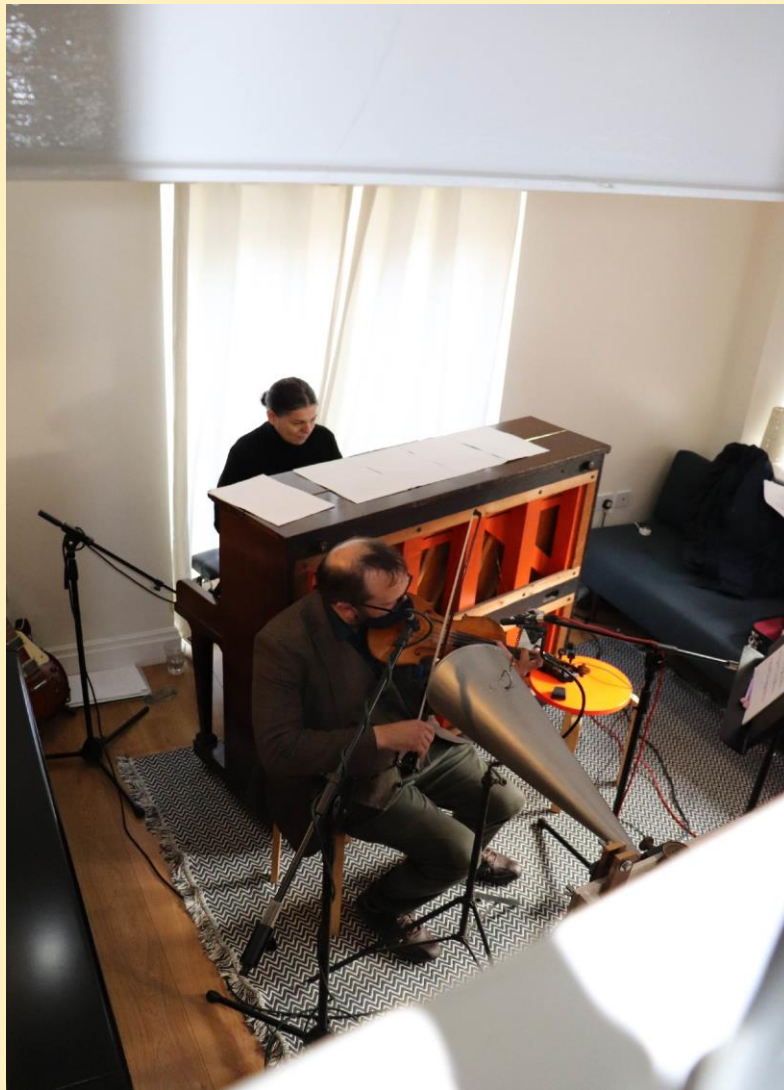
Huddersfield, January 2020



Huddersfield, January 2020



Sheffield, November 2020



Sheffield, November 2020



Sheffield, November 2020



Nardini: Larghetto from
Sonata in D, ed. Ferdinand
David (Breitkopf & Härtel,
Plate no. 11318, Leipzig, 1867)

Electronic Transfer
78 rpm pressing

Milsom & Stanovic, 2020



Rise
7/xi/

6 **VIOLINE.**
(Dieses Stück ist einer andern Sonate desselben Komponisten
entnommen und kann nach Belieben weggelassen werden.)

Larghetto.
mezza voce

gl. = glissando

11318

Similar output via similar input?

Schumann Abendlied op. 85 (arr. Ferdinand David)
Milsom & Stanovic, 2020, acoustic recording:



Similar output via similar input?

Schumann Abendlied op. 85 (arr. Ferdinand David)

Milsom & Stanovic, 2020, close mic electric recording of same session:



[There is a rather long lead-in with a bit of 'whittering' before we started, which I have left to give a sense of the atmosphere of the session! Note that this is the violin close mic, which leaves the piano sounding rather peripheral]

Conclusions

- It is possible to make convincing acoustic recordings
- It is a unique experience, unlike any other
- ...but you soon get used to it
- ...and make adjustments, consciously, and unconsciously

- Some parameters of performance are hard to replicate (faster bows, dynamic shadings, tempo issues)
- ...so (rather in the manner of harpsichord playing versus piano playing, for example) one tends to emphasize other parameters (asynchrony, agogic accentuation, tempo to delineate structure) instead
- ...some of which are often given to be major departures from 'theory' in the 'practice' of performance as revealed on early recordings
- ...which leads one to be cautious in terms of ascribing attribution of all performance traits detectable in early recordings

- All recording is an art form unlike live performance. Modern recording is invasive, and producers and recording engineers are substantially the agents of what we perceive of a performance style on record
- ...which is why any modern recording I do I insist on being the producer
- In an acoustic session, the musicians ARE the engineers: the playing input has to be adjusted to the technology, not the technology adjusted to the performance
- Paradoxically, this can be very liberating!
- To a certain extent, this makes it harder to deduce concert hall playing from early recordings. On the other hand, knowing the relationship between the two in my own practice allows for informed hypotheses

REFERENCES

Pietro Nardini, Sonata for Violin in D, ed Ferdinand David (Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1867)

Arnold Rose Nardini Larghetto (Gramophone & Typewriter, 47989, 1910)

Marie Soldat Schumann Abendlied op. 85, arr. F. David (Union A, c.1925)

David Milsom and Inja Stanovic Nardini Larghetto (to be released in 2021 by Pennine Records, University of Huddersfield, 2020)

David Milsom and Inja Stanovic Schumann Abendlied op. 85, arr. F. David (to be released in 2021 by Pennine Records, University of Huddersfield, 2020)