

## Revolution and Reaction in historically inspired string playing

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed revolutionary changes in the handling of string instruments and a general rejection of performing traditions that retained links, however tenuously, with the classical past. That modernist stylistic revolution is still at the root of most conservatoire teaching; its impact remains equally influential in modern and period performance. During the past half century, increasing lip-service has been paid to the concept of fidelity to 'the composer's intentions', but essential aspects of the relationship between notation, technique, and style, as it was understood during preceding centuries, remain essentially misunderstood. This results in realisations of 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century repertoire, both on modern and period string instruments, that would undoubtedly have seemed utterly alien to its composers. Vibrato and portamento are obvious areas in which historical practice was markedly different. It is less well recognized that articulation and bowstrokes, as well as general aspects of performance, such as rhythmic and tempo flexibility, which are very different from conventional modern practice, are equally fundamental for understanding the expectations that are embodied in a composer's notation.



**Clive Brown** was a member of the Faculty of Music at Oxford University from 1980 to 1991 and is now Emeritus Professor of Applied Musicology at the University of Leeds and Guest Professor at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst (University of the Arts), Vienna. Monographs include *Louis Spohr: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge, 1984; revised German edition 2009), *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice* (Oxford, 1999; Chinese translation 2012), and *A Portrait of Mendelssohn* (Yale, 2003). He has also published numerous articles on historical performing practice. As a violinist he has concentrated on practice-led research and performance. During the 1990s and early 2000s he was concertmaster of the Cambridge Classical Orchestra. As leader of the Ferdinand David Ensemble, he took part in many chamber performances with his practice-led PhD students and more recently has performed as a violin and piano duo with Neal Peres Da Costa and Mikayel Balyan. He seeks not only to apply historically verifiable practices in his playing, but also to adopt the physical and technical practices of the 19th century. His critical, performance-oriented editions of music include Brahms' and Mendelssohn's *Violin Concertos* (the latter with a companion volume, *Performance Practices in the Violin Concerto op. 64 and Chamber Music for Strings*), and Brahms' complete *Sonatas for one Instrument and Piano* (jointly authored with two of his former PhD students Neal Peres Da Costa and Kate Bennett Wadsworth), together with a separate publication: *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* (Bärenreiter); *Beethoven's 1st, 2nd, and 5th symphonies, Choral Fantasia, and Violin Concerto*, as well as a performing edition of Mendelssohn's *Die Hochzeit des Camacho* (Breitkopf und Härtel); *Franz Clement's D major Violin Concerto* (AR-Editions); and *Elgar's Music for Violin* (Vol. 37 of the Complete Edition). His edition of *Beethoven's Violin Sonatas* was published by Bärenreiter in September 2020, together with a 144-page online *Performing Practice Commentary*.