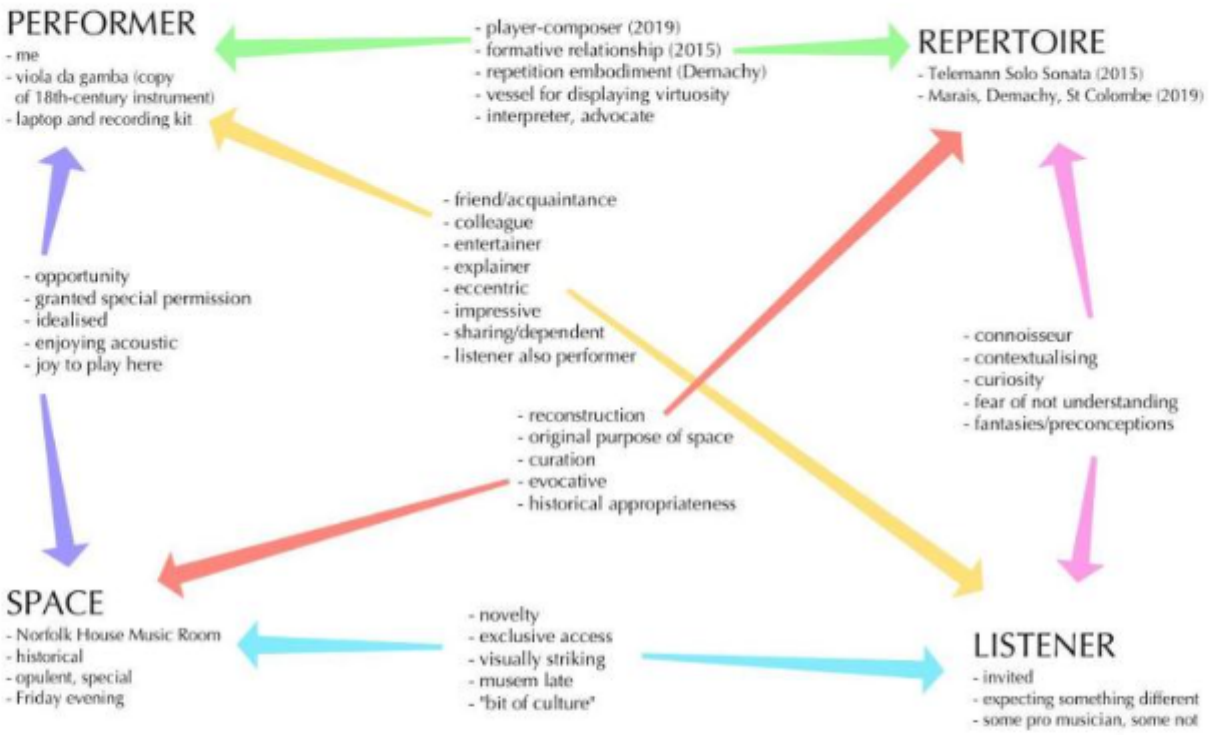
In Front of a Live Studio Audience – Agency

This project first took place in September 2015 during my artist residency at the V&A, and again in August 2019. It was, in effect, a recording session that took place in front of a live audience. A bit different from the two experiments described above, where the focus was on the live experience and recordings were made just for reference and documentation; here the goal was to *make* a recording. The experiment was built on the same basic hypothesis that using museum spaces to bring listener and performer together outside the concert format would yield a richer experience for all involved. This time, however, I wanted to capture that richer experience in mediatized form.

The design of the experiment was that a small, invited audience of around 15 people came to the Norfolk House Music Room on a Friday evening to attend a recording of solo viol music, which lasted roughly an hour and a half. I set up professional quality microphones and had my laptop on the ground next to me.[1] I told the audience that my priority for the evening was to make a good audio recording; I needed them there so I had someone to play for, and I did genuinely want to play *for* them, but it was not a concert and I would be doing multiple takes of some tricky sections and fixing any mistakes later in editing. I likened the event to filming a TV sitcom in front of a live studio audience; everyone understands from the outset that it will be edited but the presence of a live audience makes the jokes funnier and more real. Let's return to our vector diagram a final time to look at some of the potential dynamics at play in this experiment:



Vector diagram: *Live Studio Audience*

The invited audience was made up of friends, colleagues, some acquaintances, and a few of their guests. There were very few people I didn't know at least a little. Because it happened in the NHMR during a Friday late opening of the museum when the British galleries were otherwise closed, we had exclusive access to the beautiful space, which amplified a sense of its specialness, and for me at least, it heightened the importance of the relatively rare opportunity to use the space. The repertoire I chose dated from slightly earlier than the music room: 1730's in 2015 and 1680's in 2019. In almost all the pieces, there was an element of virtuosity, which is precisely what I hoped the live audience would help to feel more exciting. In 2015 there were a few other viol players in the audience who knew the Telemann Sonata well; in 2019 there were listeners familiar with the genre or composers, but not necessarily the specific pieces. We will examine some of these dynamics in greater detail below, but to give a sense of the space, here is a short phone video taken by one of the listeners in 2019:

Ex 32 NHMR scene

Recording Early Music – Some Personal Context

Before we dive in to what happened in the NHMR, I would like to give a bit of background about my relationship with recording, and how this experiment evolved out of my reflections on—and frustrations with—a broad range of professional recording experiences over the years. I've had the opportunity to work within a variety of recording sub-cultures, both classical and non-classical, involving various permutations of the resources time, money, space, equipment, and expertise. There are advantages and disadvantages to all setups, and different types of music work better recorded in different ways, both technically and contextually.[2] Let's look briefly at a few different examples.

As we've already discussed, the Early Music movement's success in the 80's and 90's was closely tied to the burgeoning recording industry. One of the side effects of this wave of commercial success was that Early Music developed a culture of producing recordings incredibly quickly, keeping up with commercial demand. Now of course, there is no longer a profit to be found in making recordings, but this culture of quick production, particularly in the UK, has remained. I did a CD once with a very famous early music ensemble that involved *no* rehearsal, just one 3-hour recording session in a cold church in North London. At no point in the entire process did we play any of the pieces from start to finish. It was all recorded in sections in a way deemed to be the most efficient and then edited together later. I never got to hear the pieces of music, not once, until the disc was made commercially available.

Conversations with a number of Early Music colleagues in the UK confirm that this experience is by no means out of the ordinary. On this scene, the musicians who thrive are not necessarily the most talented ones; they are the ones who can be

depended on not to make a mistake that would ruin a take (or an under-rehearsed concert). Personally, I admit to having benefitted from this culture, with my early triumphs in sight-reading—sometimes even in concerts or radio broadcasts—leading to my getting hired more often, because I was considered somehow "solid". But it's such a restrictive way of playing, knowing that your first priority is to make an acceptable sound and deliver a usable take, but that music and expressivity come second.

A completely different experience has been working at Greenhouse Studios in Reykjavik, which is the home of the record label and artist collective Bedroom Community. In this environment, the artists literally own the means of production, and the philosophy is that you go into the studio and record as much as you want, and then think about what comes out of it afterwards. It was in this context that I produced my solo album *Concrete*, which was recorded over five years between 2013-2018 without any real pressure of time. The very act of recording, trying things out, sketching, making attempts and then keeping or discarding them, was completely different to the concept of "we have three days in this studio to record this specific amount of material and at the end of those three days we must leave with a usable version of all of this material".

Of course being able to work like this is an extreme luxury, and was especially useful in some contemporary pieces that relied more heavily on studio techniques. But my first time at Greenhouse in 2013, I also attempted to record some Baroque solo pieces, on my own time. The results were mixed. Some things, like the Marais piece *Les Voix Humaines* came together beautifully (and it was this recording that ended up on *Concrete*). But others I wasn't able to get. I tried to record my favourite Demachy Menuet but it just felt so flat. This was early on in my relationship to the studio, and I was still a bit intimidated by the legacy of Bedroom Community, whose work was exclusively contemporary. So perhaps I feared that my simple little baroque pieces just didn't fit in that context. I have found the files of this first Greenhouse session and will compare a 2013 attempt of a Demachy menuet with some 2019 versions further below.

So, having not really found the right vibe for how I wanted to record Baroque solo music in any of these professional contexts, I decided eventually to buy some beautiful microphones and other audio equipment for myself, so that I would always have the tools at hand to make a professional recording anywhere, any time I felt like it. One day in 2014, I set up the mics in my living room and spent an afternoon trying to record the Telemann Solo Sonata in D major TWV 40:1, a piece I'd known for over a decade. I was able to get a sound I was really happy with, and after enough takes I was able to record a version of it that was technically pretty flawless. However, I felt something was missing from my performance; there was a flatness, an indifference in the sound I couldn't shake. Sitting comfortably at home alone, I couldn't get myself to really care about or invest myself in the piece enough to produce an interesting performance. There was no pressure of time, and there was no one else there to play for. This of course foreshadowed my subsequent realisations about needing to feel heard that emerged in *One Piece* and *Inside Voices*, as discussed above.

So I decided that I needed to try recording this Telemann Sonata in front of other people, in order to make the virtuosic expressivity of the piece more meaningful, and to get myself to *want* to try harder to communicate it. This of course brings us back to the performance experiment in question.

Telemann in 2015

In Summer of 2015 when, through my artist residency at the V&A, the possibility of doing something in the Norfolk House Music Room presented itself, it seemed the perfect opportunity to try out my ideas about live recording and the Telemann Sonata. The room itself is a fully preserved set of ornately carved wooden wall- and ceiling-panels from a music room built in the 1750's, and it was acquired by the V&A just before the demolition of Norfolk House in 1938. It dates from a little bit later than most of the viol repertoire I play, but the historical resonance is still close

enough to feel a bit magical. The acoustic of the entirely wooden room is very warm and clear, and it is an absolute joy to play in.

NHMR in 1937

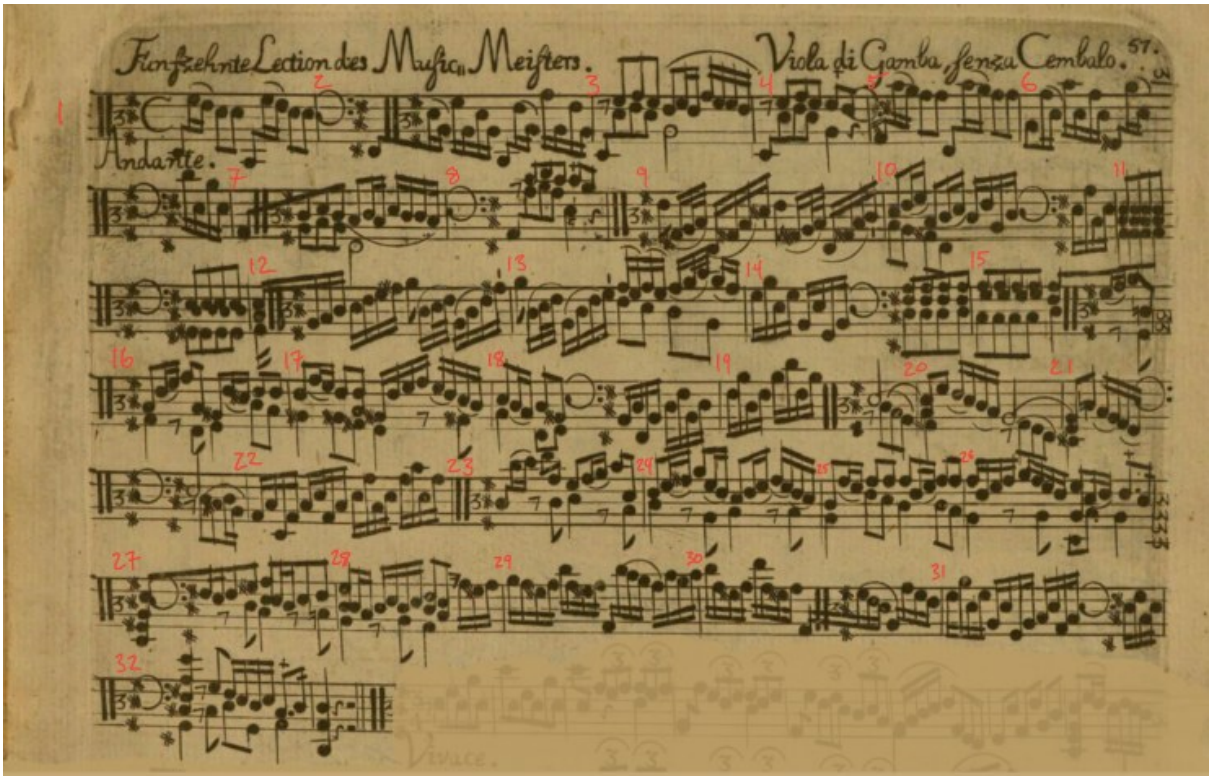
NHMR now

The room itself is of course technically a museum object, and as with many objects in the V&A, it was acquired primarily for its decorative interest, and not necessarily because it was a music room. However, the musically themed carvings combined with the knowledge that it *was* very likely used for music-making inspire rich fantasies of the sounds that may have reverberated against these walls.

Being that my aim throughout these experiments was to present Baroque musical practices to listeners in ways with which they weren't familiar, and to play with finding new dynamics between performer, listener, space, and repertoire, I didn't want to just put on a concert in the NHMR. That already happens anyway several times a year with students from the Royal College of Music. So I decided to use the room, its atmosphere, its acoustic, and its historical resonance to make a live recording of the Telemann Solo Sonata, in which I would *perform* the act of making an edited recording of the piece for an assembled audience.

In this constellation, the listeners who are the live audience in the room actually become part of the performance. Their presence influences my playing, giving them a form of agency over the sounds that are recorded. In essence, the audience assembled in the NHMR could actually be considered performers, and ultimately the real listeners are those who listen to the edited recording. With my live audience thus being complicit in the artificial construction of an edited recording, I involve them in not just my playing the piece but also in my failures.

In the performance experiments discussed in previous sections, I always presented the listeners with a 99% error-free reading of the piece in question. But in the NHMR, I shared mistakes, false-starts, and multiple attempts. In explaining the process to the audience at the outset, I told them that, "one of the things that's particularly hard about this piece is that there are some high notes that are really hard to play in tune.". I was thinking specifically of the C# in bar 23, and I suggested to them that I might take a few attempts to get it right. Here's a score:



Telemann Sonata I. Andante

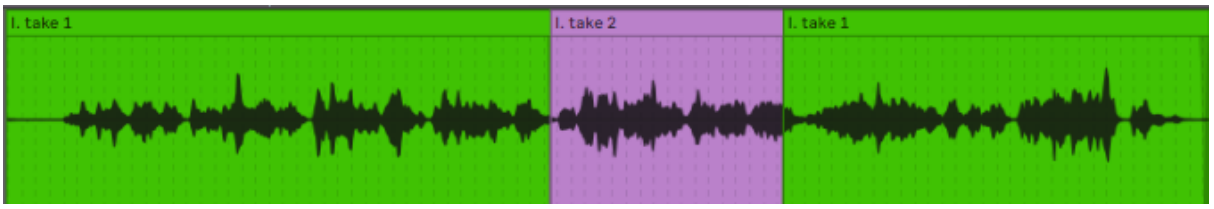
I started with a full take of the first movement, during which I actually nailed the high C#, although in the moment I didn't *think* I had. There were a few bumps in the phrases before the C#, so after the first take I announced that I needed to fix a thing in the middle and started again from bar 15, which covered the bit that went wrong. But then when I got to bar 23, I missed the C#. So I stopped and tried again. With repeated failed attempts (nine in total), I could feel the atmosphere in the room changing from one of relaxed enjoyment of my performance to an empathetic increase in anxiety on the part of the audience. It was making everyone—including me—a little uncomfortable. I could see the looks on people's faces change as they watched me repeatedly fail, so I tried to diffuse the tension with a joke, at which they laughed. But I still felt an increased sense of pressure in the room, throughout my repeated attempts at this section, and a palpable sense of relief when I finally decided to move on. Already it felt like everyone assembled was starting to realise what an unusual journey we were all on together. (However, it must be said that what I *imagined* the audience feeling is not necessarily what they actually *were* feeling.)

As you can hear in the following clip, I never actually played the C# better than I had in the first full take, but I stopped once I reached a version that was well enough in tune to be acceptable to posterity, even though its pacing was less fluid.

Ex 33 Telemann I bar 22 take 1

Ex 34 Telemann I c# tries

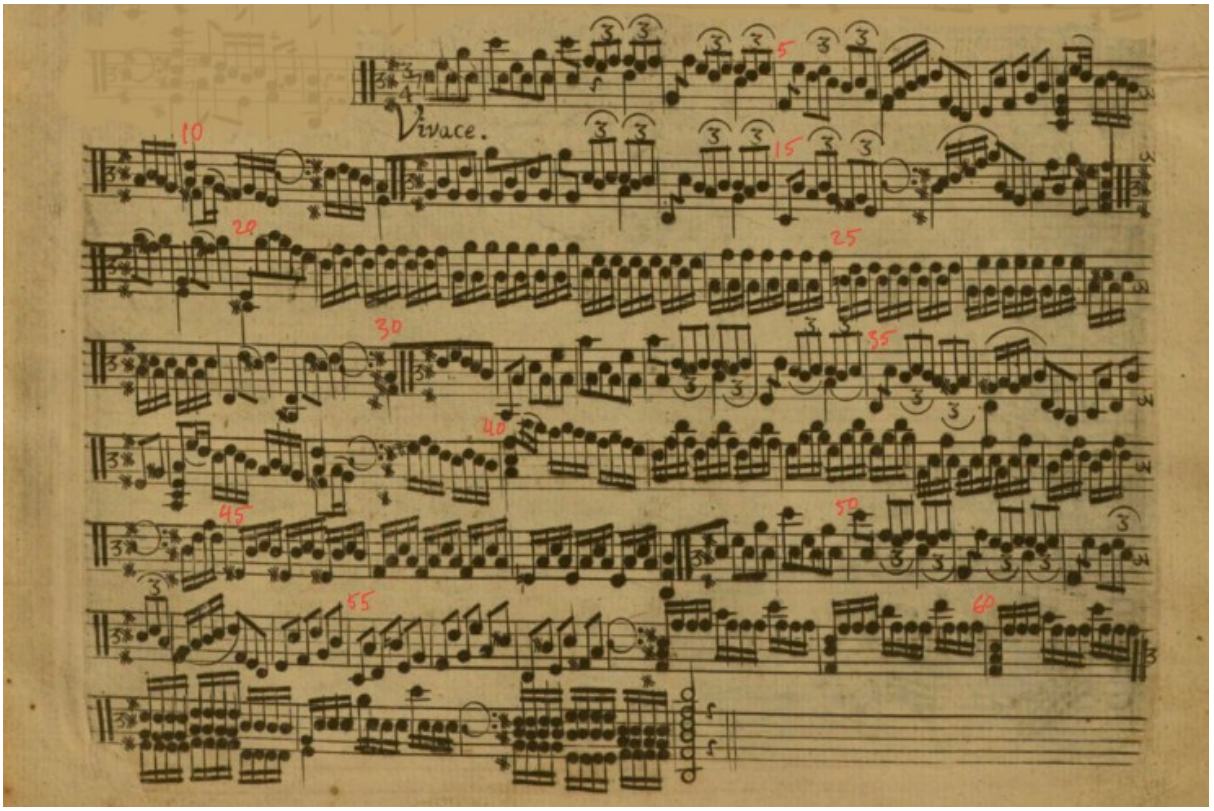
After my struggle with the C#, I did another version of the very end and another version of the very beginning, as is common practice in recording, but when editing it all together later I found the first take generally much better (apart from a wrong note in bar 21), so I kept the first take and just patched the middle section with a bit of take two. In the graphics that follow, green indicates the first take and purple, a patch from the subsequent take:



Telemann Sonata I. Andante

Ex 35 Telemann I full

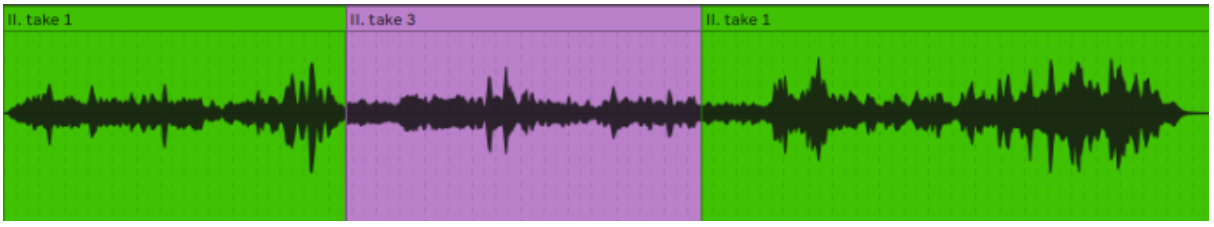
The second movement followed a similar pattern. The first take had a slight glitch or two in it, so I did two more nearly full takes and then about 5 attempts at the ending. When I went back later to edit, I saw that none of these special attempts at the energetic ending had anything like the momentum of the very first take. While recording these multiple ending takes, I attempted to keep the audience engaged by explaining what I was trying to achieve, that there were two different ways of playing the final chord and each needed to be approached with a certain momentum. I was, with hindsight, trying to avoid the kind of tension we'd had in the first movement by presenting my multiple attempts as exploring options, rather than trying and failing. It was successful at keeping things calm, but as with the multiple attempts in the first movement, it did not result in anything more interesting than my first run through. So again I ended up using the first take as a base and patching a few bars from the middle out of take 3.



Telemann Sonata II. Vivace

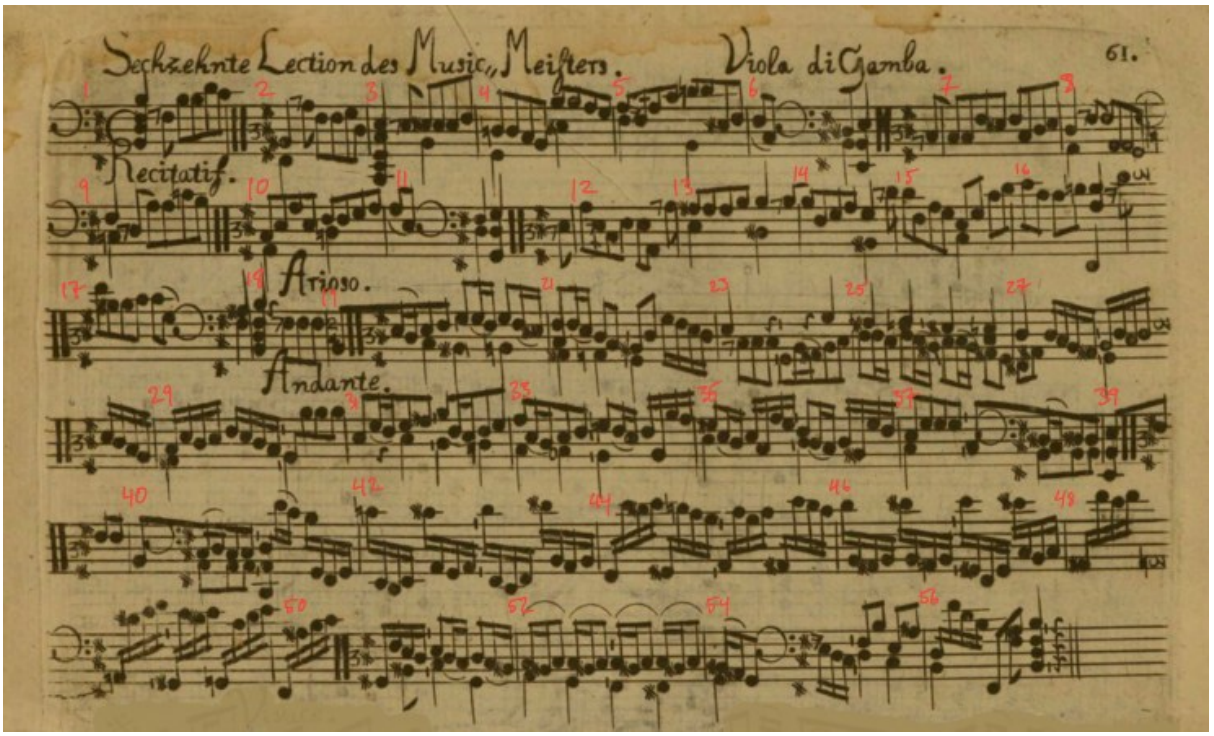
Ex 36 Telemann II take one ending

Ex 37 Telemann II futile endings



Ex 38 Telemann II full

In the third movement is where things start to get interesting. It opens with a Recitativo, which is not a standard movement for solo viola da gamba, but a very effective caricature of 18th century vocal recitative.



Telemann Sonata III. Recitativo – Arioso Andante

I did three takes of the Recitativo right off the bat, the first was middle of the road, the second quite forward-moving, and the third significantly slower and more indulgent. I introduced the third version by describing it as “a different translation of the text”. After the concert, this was the moment that garnered the most comments from the audience. The non-musicians especially were surprised to see the same piece of music come out three different ways from the same person. Even casual listeners are familiar with the idea that different artists will interpret the same work differently, but I think it was an eye opener to see one person do two very different interpretations one after the next. I remember feeling at the time that, with this movement alone, I had fulfilled the goal of showing the audience a side of Baroque music they don’t normally get to hear.

Ex 39 Telemann recit take 1

Ex 40 Telemann recit take 2

Ex 41 Telemann recit take 3

In editing, I ended up using the first half of take 3, because it provided such a silky contrast to the energy of the second movement. But I used the ending of the second, forward-moving take. The third take built momentum in the middle but lost it, so I grafted take 2 with its sustained momentum on to take 3 at a point which felt organic, the upbeat to bar 13. Then the final bar 17 came from a fourth take, to get the high E just right.

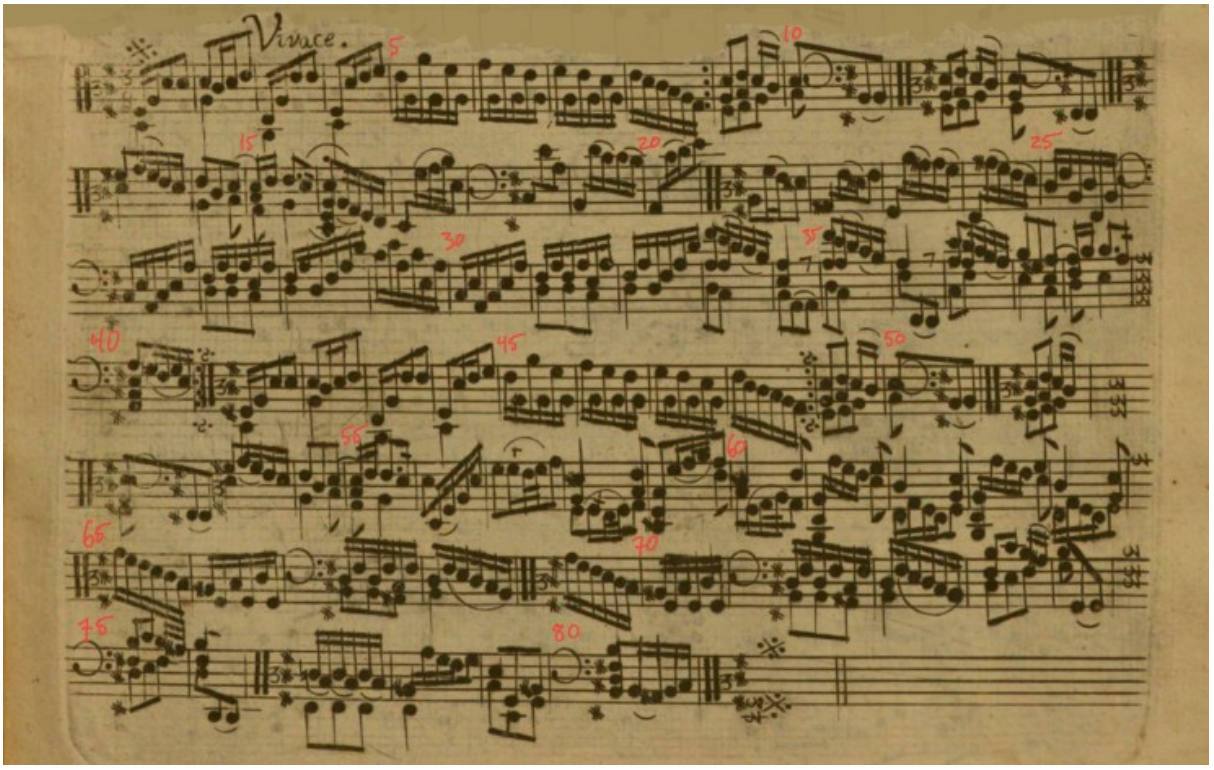
Unlike the patching to fix mistakes that I did in the first two movements, this compilation used editing to create a larger shape to the movement, one which I wasn't quite capable of seeing and achieving in the moment, at least without the objective perspective of a producer. This type of editing feels less like correcting live performance and more like normal recording, but it was the most constructive and artistic use of editing in this experiment.

The three takes of the second half of the third movement, the Arioso Andante, were less dramatically different. The first half came from take 2 and the second half from take 1, with two small patches from take 3. Here is the complete third movement:

Telemann Sonata III. Recitativo – Arioso Andante

Ex 42 Telemann III full

The fourth movement went more like the first two. I played half a take, then a proper complete take, and then many attempts at patching and improving, all but one of which ended up on the cutting room floor.

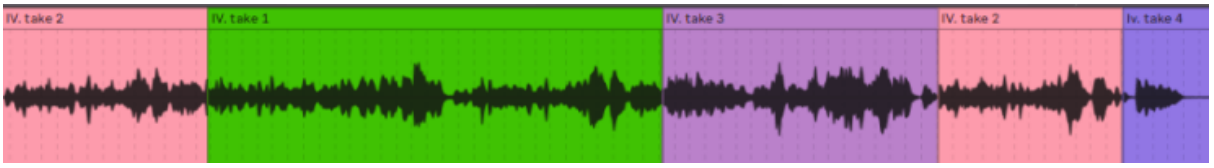


Telemann Sonata IV. Vivace

The fourth movement is technically the most challenging and I was feeling quite tired at this point. And as with my high C# in the first movement, with multiple failed attempts at tricky bits in the final Vivace, I could feel the sympathetic tension in the room rising, and see the audience fidgeting. This time my attempt to diffuse it almost came out as a chastisement of the audience, or a plea for them to calm down:

Ex 43 Plea for calm

After this little pep talk, on my second attempt I got a good version of bars 57-end with trills as fast as I'd hoped. Then I proceeded to flog various dead horses throughout the movement, but never improving upon what I had done in the first take and a half. In fact, this movement accounts for 25% duration of the piece but took up 40% of the recording session, most of it fruitlessly. Although the snappiest version of the very final 4 bars of the Da Capo did come from one of those later takes, so I pasted it on the end. Here is the edited movement in its entirety:



Telemann Sonata IV. Vivace

Ex 44 Telemann IV full

So why was it that the first takes (excepting the Recitativo) generally all had a feeling of freshness, flow, and momentum that I failed to achieve on subsequent attempts? Later takes sometimes fixed technical errors, but they mostly lacked that feeling of liveness I was searching for. It can't simply be because the first time is always the best and repetition makes things stale. From *One Piece* and *Inside Voices*, I found repetition per se not at all detrimental to my performance, and indeed it was around the 100th repetition of that St Colombe Sarabande that it got really interesting.

Could it be that the difference here lies with the repertoire? I was able to repeat that Sarabande for hours because technically it wasn't challenging, and rhetorically it didn't rely on being novel or impressive. It is also, obviously, a binary dance form with inbuilt repeats, so it's literally made to be repeated in a way the Telemann is not.

Perhaps the presence of the live audience as co-conspirators had something to do with it. As we saw quite clearly on the first day of *One Piece*, I sometimes need to feel like I'm being listened to in order to really make an effort with my performance. Was it here the case that, after the first run-through, the live audience morphed from being listeners for whom I could show off to being my co-performers, thus leaving me with no one to play *for* on subsequent takes? It is true that whenever we record, there is a certain amount of temporal displacement trickery that occurs when we record multiple takes; we have to pretend each take is a singularity, that it's the *one* time we play, no matter how many takes we actually play. It's a tiny lie we tell as

performers that feels like acting or posing, and it's OK in the end because all the failed attempts will just be discarded like unsuccessful selfies and no one will ever know we took them.

Maybe attempting to bring a room full of people with me on this truth-bending journey of temporal displacement required more plausibility than our collective imaginations could sustain. Perhaps if the audience wasn't convincingly pretending subsequent takes were fresh and new, I couldn't feel like I was getting away with that illusion myself.

Another, possibly conflicting explanation relates to the Globe epiphany from *One Piece*. In the Globe I'd felt that, pre-epiphany, I was getting in my own way by always trying to create an idealised version of the Sarabande with each repetition. This attempt at an ideal was preventing me from "living in the moment" of the flawed but beautiful reality of the variation I was playing at that time. So freeing myself from an ideal—or more accurately, understanding that showing my subjective self does not necessarily destroy a musical ideal—gave me a greater sense of presence.

In the NHMR Telemann sessions, the first takes of movements 1, 2, and 4 had a heightened sense of presence because I was telling the story to the listeners for the first time. But all the subsequent takes didn't quite work because I was striving for an ideal, either a more perfect version of what I'd just played, or something that would *match* with what I'd just played. From the moment I started doing multiple takes of the same thing, I lost that sense of freedom to show my subjective self in my playing.

This theory would explain why the Recitativo worked well on multiple takes. By purposefully setting out on three different journeys with the phrasing of the recitative, I naturally accepted the flaws and idiosyncrasies of whatever readings might occur. I wasn't striving for an ideal, so I could be more expressive with whatever happened in the moment. This resulted in three more characterful takes, which I was then able to "idealise" afterward with the magic of editing.

Ultimately, this performance experiment was successful at achieving what it set out to do, which was make a high-quality recording of the Telemann Solo Sonata that felt "live" and didn't have any glaring flaws I couldn't live with. Here is that complete, edited version:

Ex 45 Telemann complete

This performance also achieved the goal of entertaining the listeners in the room, activating a beautiful historical object, and giving people a different perspective on the practice of solo viol playing. However, for research purposes, this experiment did not really generate a tidy epiphany or illuminate a particular expressive variable as much as it highlighted a struggle. Having underpinned our analyses of the other experiments as well, it is the struggle for me to feel like my playing mattered, that I had *agency* in music-making.

In this Telemann Sonata, the first takes felt like they mattered because rhetorically I had the power as an orator to lay everything out for my audience; I had agency in the dramatic telling of the tale. In subsequent takes, however, I was working more like my own artist's assistant, just trying to fix mistakes but not being allowed or expected to create anything new. The exception to this was the Recitativo, where each take had its own agenda, and thus it mattered by virtue of the need to be different.

As much as the experience of recording has disrupted the dynamics between listener, performer, repertoire, and space in the performance itself, this attempt to capture a musical practice for posterity has highlighted what, for me, is one of the primary struggles in that practice.

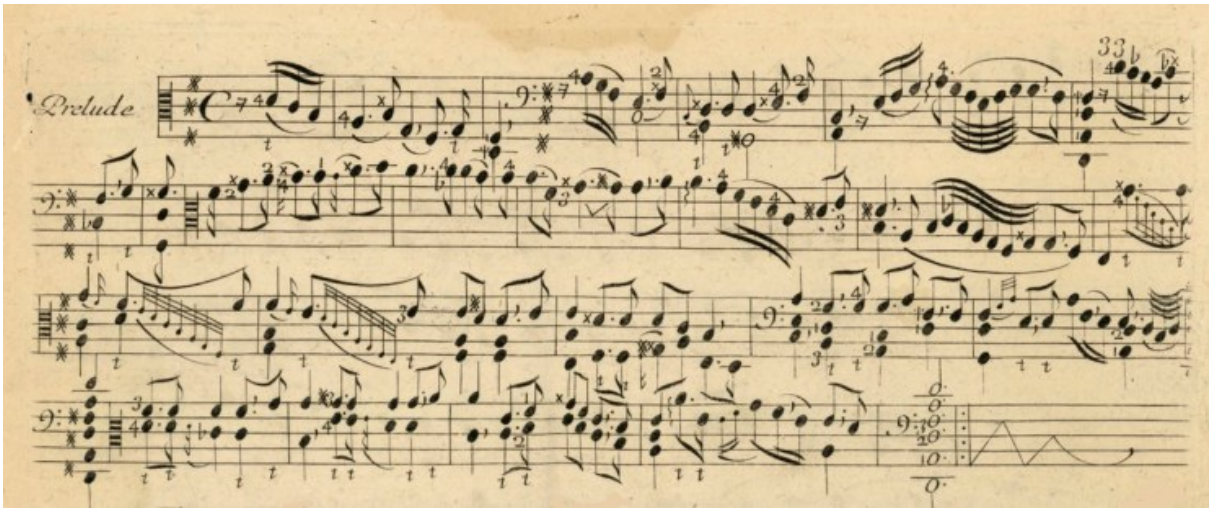
Marais, Demachy, and St Colombe in 2019

This iteration of the experiment was, to be honest, a bit of a failure, and not just in the sense that I was unhappy with my playing. On the day in question I was tired, stressed, and really not in the mood. The audience was a strange mix of people, including quite a few non-musician friends who had never heard me play before, and a few acquaintances from the distant past who had randomly responded to a Facebook post I'd made about the event. I felt afraid that people weren't going to get it, in contrast to the Telemann evening four years before, where I'd been excited to share with the audience there.

Another very real problem with the 2019 session is that I was setting out with too many expectations and too much to prove. By this point in the research process, I had been through a lot of experiments and had a lot of ideas about the dynamics that were at play. This recording session was no longer following the model of "set up the experimental parameters and then see what happens", and my self-consciousness about the research outcomes of the event really sidetracked me. I know that any performer who also undertakes academic work talks about the difficulties balancing the two, and the need to create boundaries. It's not that the one practice doesn't inform the other, but if they are allowed too much influence over each other, they can bring each other down. Up until this day in the NHMR I had managed to keep things pretty well balanced, but here—luckily at the final stage of my research—I found my tipping point.

This time I let the evening run on quite a bit longer. The first 25 minutes I spent recording a Marais Prelude in D major from book one of his *Pièces de viole*. I first did

a full take that was OK, and followed it with a few different versions of the beginning, describing my motivation for each to the audience. Then did a second take where I interrupted myself several times, sometimes explaining to the audience what I found difficult, or pointing out bits where I couldn't make up my mind one way or the other about how it should go. Listening back to myself doing this, it sounds like I was trying to build on the success of the third movement of the Telemann from 2015, in showing the listeners an interpretational variety, but here I was pushing it too far. It went beyond the point of illuminating the piece and just sounds like I'm more concerned with keeping the audience entertained through chat and explication rather than playing. Here is the score, my multiple beginnings, and a meandering second take:



Ex 46 Marais multiple beginnings

Ex 47 Marais take two meandering

After this second take, I spent about 10 minutes with various attempts at the last line, all of them even more interrupted and piecemeal than the second take above. In this approach, I got myself stuck between two different methods: on the one hand, I didn't do enough *performing* of the piece for my assembled audience, not enough run-throughs or chances for the listeners to vibe with the music themselves directly. But on the other hand, I was still clearly preoccupied with keeping it entertaining for

the live audience in the room, so I wasn't able to focus on "posing" for the recording as much as I could have if I'd been alone.

At one point in the session I actually tell the audience that something I like to do when recording myself is comp as I go along, i.e. decide *during* the recording session which takes to use and edit them roughly together in situ. It is a useful technique because it gives me a sense of confidence in the accomplishment and also encourages a reflective practice that can improve subsequent takes. And it is perhaps *most* useful because once the comp is done, I usually do another full take or two just "for fun", which then feels free and flowing and often more exciting. Once I know that a good/usable comp exists, I can then play in a more relaxed way and take more risks. The security of making an acceptable comp in the session thus allows me to play subsequently with more *agency*, less feeling of needing to match a pre-existing ideal version, and more freedom to express something new in the moment.

However, even though I described this entire concept to the audience during this session, I for some reason did not use this technique in the NHMR. Perhaps the process of listening back and choosing takes was too embarrassing to do in front of people, or felt like it would be too boring for them? I wrote in my notes afterward that I also "had this sense of not being able to indulge *too* much in multiple takes of smaller sections". So while the Telemann Sonata session was successful in creating a live-feeling recording with the safety of correcting edits, this time in the NHMR I seemed to be getting the worst of both worlds: not feeling live enough in my performance to capture any excitement, but not feeling safe enough in my editing process to create a good constructed performance. I had neither the agency of the performer, nor of the producer.

It would be possible to go back through the 25 minutes of rambling Marais recording and take an almost archaeological approach to editing, and there may well be some decent material in there, which could be assembled to make a nice sounding recording of this Prelude. But I have tried on multiple occasions over the last year and a half to do this and I simply cannot muster the desire. Whenever I listen to this

session, my playing sounds so passive and uncommitted to me. I hear none of the agency or personal presence that I found in previous experiments. Perhaps I am allowing the memory of my discomfort or foul mood on the day to colour my hearing of the recording, but I don't hear anything in this session that I want to save, and artificially constructing a dinosaur skeleton from fossilised traces was never the point of this recording project in the first place.

After the Marais I attempted three movements of a Demachy solo suite in A major. I spent about 14 minutes on the Gavotte, which mostly involved repeating it over and over. After the first repetition I tried to explain the nature of the dance and even demonstrated a pas de Gavotte to the audience, again highlighting my need to make them feel entertained. I followed this with 10 minutes on an unmeasured prelude, mostly doing full takes but stopping myself at times. Then I did only about five minutes on one of my favourite Menuets of all time before spending 18 minutes on a St Colombe Chaconne that didn't yield anything of note.

The Demachy Menuet was particularly frustrating because it's a piece that I love; it's not especially difficult but there are a lot of trills and my left hand was getting quite tired at this point (I'd been having some shoulder issues at that time, which were affecting the muscles in my forearm). As I mentioned earlier, I had tried to record this Menuet in 2013 in Iceland, but never found the right vibe. Since then, I've been on quite an interpretative journey with that particular piece. When I first met the fiddler Cleek Schrey (who has since become one of my favourite collaborators) in 2016, we taught each other tunes from our "traditions" aurally; I got a slide from him and he got this Menuet. Learning the piece anew through his eyes gave me a completely different sense of how repetition and embodiment in the folk tradition could apply to short and simple 17th century dance tunes on the viol. Normally when we as classical musicians repeat a piece multiple times, we always feel that we have to "do" something to it: vary the dynamics, the articulation, add ornaments. Folk musicians also typically repeat their simple binary tunes multiple times, and a

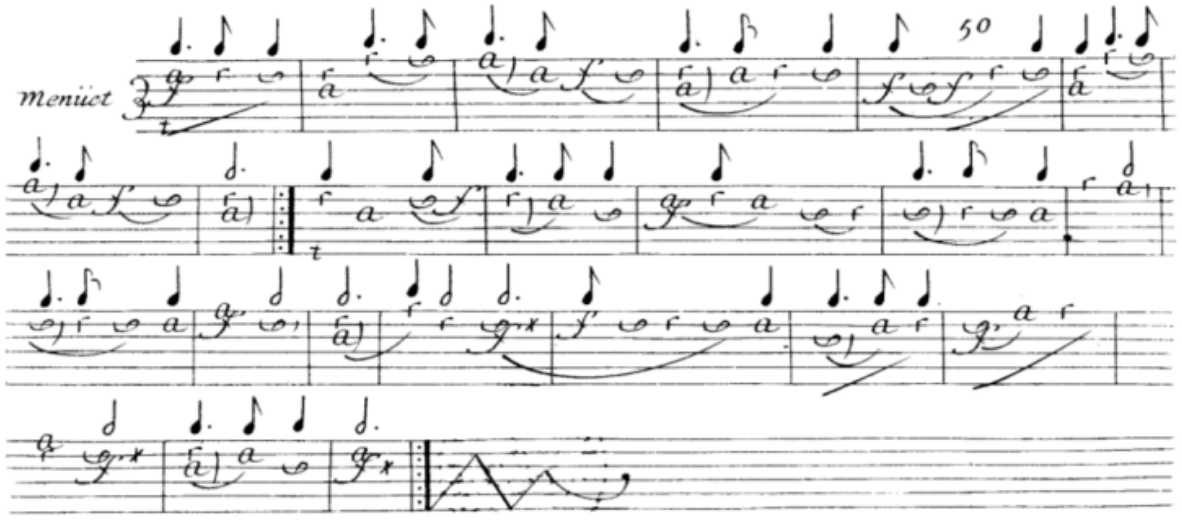
certain amount of organic variance occurs, but it is not the same thing as when we fussily say “first time through the B section is piano then crescendo, second time through the B is forte>piano<forte”. And ornamentation in folk music certainly doesn’t follow the traditional Early Music model of only being on the repeats.

In short, through playing this piece with Cleek, I started to find a way of repeating it multiple times without a plan for actively *doing* something to it, but which kept it still feeling fresh.[3] A month after this experience, I tried playing it three times in a row in a house concert and it went down so well that as I finished, someone in the audience let out an audible joyful sigh before the applause started. This piece, in a way, has become a bit of a touchstone for many of the things I’ve learnt from Cleek, and the experience of repeating it several times in solo recitals has given me a sense of freedom to simply enjoy the act, the process, of playing such a charming thing.

So attempting this Menuet in the NHMR, I was really hoping it would all come together and I’d make a recording that would capture everything I loved about this piece and its lilt. But in the context, with an audience who had been sat politely watching me do the musical equivalent of mumbling to myself for an hour already by this point, I felt like I was forcing it a bit, and the anxiety I felt about whether the audience was enjoying themselves or not started to remind me of that inexorable momentum I felt crippled by in Talbot’s Tower in Kilkenny a few years before. I repeated it four times, but as with that first day in Kilkenny, I simply felt like I didn’t actually have any influence over my own phrasing, so I abandoned it and moved on.

On the day after, I was up in the Ceramics galleries again doing more *One Piece* and it was very quiet. So, at a certain point I decided to break the rules of that experiment (having already done 5 days of it by then and feeling like I’d got what I needed from it) and I played a few repetitions of the Demachy Menuet. This was partly to see if it felt any better than it had the night before, partly to check and see if the less intense circumstances yielded a better result. Here are the three versions of the same Demachy menuet: one from my solo attempts in Iceland in 2013, one from the

NHMR in August 2019, and one from the Ceramics gallery (recorded on my phone) the day after.



Ex 48 Demachy Menuet Reykjavik Sept 2013 a=440

Ex 49 Demachy Menuet NHMR 9 August 2019 a=392

Ex 50 Demachy Menuet Ceramics 10 August 2019 a=392

The recording from 2013 is a bit slow and not really grooving, but it was also before I met Cleek and refined my senses of rhythm in simple binary tunes. Between the two August 2019 recordings, the NHMR obviously has the better sound quality, but it feels often forced to me. The appoggiaturas are all a bit too heavy, and the figure on beat two of bars 2 and 6 is trying to be too expressive and getting in the way of things. The phone recording from Ceramics only makes one or two big expressive events per phrase, and lets go of the less important notes in-between phrases. As such, it has more of a *sense* of the dance to it, because I feel myself occasionally releasing my momentum, allowing certain steps to be placed and other steps to just happen as a consequence of what came before.

The second B section of the NHMR version feels especially pushed the way it speeds up. I think in front of that audience, I felt a little silly playing something so simple. In a way, by inverse this embarrassment supports my original design motivation of this experiment, which was to record things that were demonstrative and virtuosic. Similarly to my struggles performing Simpson divisions for large audiences, the Demachy suffered in this context, although it should be (and previously always has been) the sort of piece that would thrive in a domestic music room for 15 people.

This experiment in the NHMR, in both its successes and failures, has highlighted the elusiveness of my sense of agency in a recording session environment. Perhaps if we remember that the thing which draws me to music is the opportunity to bend time, to assert my temporal agency, it could be that I fear that in recording, this agency is only going to be undermined by whatever editing might happen later, even if I'm the one doing the editing. That could definitely account for these feelings of expressive impotence under such circumstances.

Interestingly, performing on live radio, or in a normal concert that's being recorded, this recording anxiety doesn't manifest itself in the same way. The forward momentum in live performance has an inevitability to it that almost makes time *easier* to subvert, because I can flirt with stopping or stretching time with the knowledge that I can't actually stop. It's more fun because there is a sense of risk and something to push against. Of course I have a different form of performance anxiety in that case: the garden variety fear of making mistakes. But when I know there will only be one shot, it doesn't feel like it takes the poetry out of my time-bending agency the way multiple takes can.

References

↑1	I used a stereo pair of Gefell mv692 with m70 cardioid capsules. There was, however, a mechanical buzz on the right channel from the mic clip in 2015 which adversely affected the sound.
↑2	Eno, B. (1979) 'The Recording Studio as a Compositional Tool' is one excellent example of how a specific recording environment can be artistically productive. And on a more theoretical level, Auslander, P. (1999) *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. p. 43-46 discusses the inevitable influence of mediatized forms on shaping performance.
↑3	My fruitful repetitive relationship with this Demachy Menuet was, predictably, the initial inspiration for the *One Piece* installation. And this sense of keeping freshness in the face of repetition is definitely related to the Globe epiphany about feeling presence, discussed previously.