The significance of sentimentalism’s role in Victorian culture has long been recognized, if not always celebrated.¹ A series of major critical studies has, however, deepened our understanding in recent years of how sentimentality works across a range of nineteenth-century literary and visual arts. In music, by comparison, the surface remains but scratched. In all artistic forms it is widely acknowledged that notions of sentimentalism pose critical challenges to ideas of high and low art and that the manner in which they either accrued value or fell into disrepute across the nineteenth century is indelibly tied to how the concept was heard to inform such hierarchies. In the standard narrative the high critical value of late-eighteenth-century sentimental literature, with its strong relationship to contemporaneous philosophies and cultures of sensibility, is often regarded as diminished through the nineteenth century.² In mid-nineteenth-century

¹See, for example, the essays collected in the special issue of 19. Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century 4 [2007], “Rethinking Victorian Sentimentality.”

²For reflections on music in this narrative of decline, see the concluding pages of Stefano Castelvecchi, Sentimental Opera: Questions of Genre in the Age of Bourgeois Drama [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013], 228–31. The ambiguities of terminology across this period—sensibility, sentiment, sentimentalism—are discussed by Marie Banfield, “From Sentiment to Sentimentality: A Nineteenth-Century Lexicographical Search,” 19. Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century 4 [2007]: 1–11. Also particularly valuable with regard to shifts in philosophical and literary discourses of emotional expression across the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is Adela Pinch, Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of
England, however, many prominent artists espoused the important function of sentimentalism as an expressive form of heightened sensitivity in which a desire for emotionally felt communion or unity, and often a call for morally justified action or opinion, is driven by a sense of identification with artistic representations of suffering figures, or indeed, as we will see, animals. The contribution of music to the developing ideas of sentimentalism in this milieu is the focus of this article.

A consideration of sentimentalism in art requires careful scrutiny of many key binaries in nineteenth-century culture. Binary concepts of private/public, work/leisure, amateur/professional—all these inform the creation of high/lower art divisions and are, to some strong degree, informed by constructions of masculine/feminine. Sentimentalism, though routinely attached to forms of feminine feeling by those who seek to dismiss its significance for “serious” culture, was rather ambiguously poised in mid-nineteenth-century England. It was condemned by its opponents as trivially domestic but identified by its advocates with refined aesthetic modes, which included those associated with the domestic but also had potential to inform important art more broadly and thereby encourage a sense of moral development. Sentimentalism was invoked as a key aspect of artistic taste and critical judgment, and the worthiest Victorian arbiters of cultural value weighed in with their views. A crucial concern for John Ruskin was how sentimentalism, identified with heartfelt sympathetic feelings, might inform visionary artistic achievements associated with notions of profundity and sublimity. Ruskin’s contempt for what he saw as lower forms of sentiment, or for works in which he sees the artist losing technical and formal control because of over-indulgence in his sentiment, is a consequence of the high value he places on sentimentalism as an idea and how it should inform “great” art. Ruskin provides a critical model from which to begin rethinking and re-evaluating these often derided ideas and also a model for moving into broader discussion of form and sentimental effect. This article develops from a dual focus: one, on the manner in which sentimentalism intersects with notions of domesticity and design, and relatedly, on the sentimentalism attaching to invocations of twilight, melancholy, and death. These foci will draw us into a musical case study of how the sentimental informs the activity and reception of Joseph Joachim in Victorian England. Through the consequent refinement in understanding the functions, topics, values, and characteristics

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3For example, Thomas Carlyle, whom Kaplan has discussed as an ambivalent sentimentalist, one who was hostile to it because he saw its romantic versions as lapsing into mere sensuality and sensibility, as indulging the pleasures of feeling at the expense of a loss of the moral aspect, which he saw as so important for the sentimentalism of eighteenth-century philosophical idealism. This is exemplified by Carlyle’s admiration for Tennyson’s earlier work because he felt that these poems were heroic, with sensibility serving a “cosmic vision”; later work by Tennyson, by contrast, he read as a decline into sensuousness without moral purpose, even as this was what increased the poet’s popularity [and therefore demonstrated for Carlyle the public decline in taste and judgment]. Sincere art possesses spiritual depth: the worst kind of sentimentalism for Carlyle is solely based on superficial, artificial feeling. Kaplan, Sacred Tears, 8, 135.

assigned to the sentimental, the collection of binaries identified above can be freshly challenged.

For all the achievements of recent scholarly work sentimentalism still seems to require a defence. In June Howard sought to progress beyond two rather obdurate debates. First, over whether sentimentalism, in its supposed excess and fakery, can ever be authentic. Howard notes that much recent work in anthropology and psychology has critiqued the notion that emotions are “natural” by countering that emotions are always constructions (social, cultural). Hence, Howard argues, emotions are understood in the manner commonly ascribed to sentimentalism. If so, how can we identify or ascribe sentimentalism itself? For Howard it can be identified just when those constructed and embodied bases of emotion [its tales and tears] are overt, at “moments when the discursive processes that construct emotion become visible,” and, we might add, readable or audible. When we call something sentimental this is driven by the manifestation of convention or tradition and the evocation of certain familiar tropes and figures [the man of feeling, the suffering woman, a fatally sick child]. The second long-standing debate is concerned with whether sentimentalism is complicit with regard to dominant ideological constructions, such as those of gender, nation, and class, or whether it can be subversive, or, more ambiguously, a complex mixture of complicity and resistance. Such ambiguity would distinguish some forms of sentimentalism from its commonly assumed association with the faux simplicity and unambiguous meanings frequently identified and condemned as kitsch. Recognizing and understanding its persistence and transformation across different political, social, and cultural contexts demands that we avoid essentializing sentimentalism. Howard especially urges a dismantling of the simplistic identification of sentimentality with “nineteenth-century domestic ideology,” to interrogate their relationship in order to “reconstruct the history of their imbrication.” This effort does not dismiss the links with everyday

subjects and emotions but subjects the association of sentimentalism with the conventionally feminized space of the home to contextualized critical scrutiny. Nineteenth-century domestic music-making has recently received considerable musicological enquiry. The relationship of this activity with the performance culture of the concert hall raises ambiguities between notions of “private” and “public,” complexities that possess rich creative and interpretative potential. Marie Sumner Lott shows how, in some of Schubert’s most ambitious chamber music, a “domestic style” is portrayed as a kind of topic in, for example, “leisurely” and “soloistic” second subjects that, by contrast with dramatically intense first subjects, can evoke homes feelings of “comfort, even nostalgia.” Lott explores how a range of examples of nineteenth-century chamber music moves across the emerging schisms between “serious” and “light” and “private” and “public”; Brahms’s chamber works, for example, negotiate a shifting mediation between the two, with transformations of the “domestic” style in concert works demonstrating the composer’s skill and evoking a nostalgic expressive vein. These compositional features are also reflected in the diversity of performance contexts, such as Joseph Joachim’s performances of the same work of Brahms in private and concert events.

Lott’s musical examples, in which domestic styles infuse public works of high artistic ambition, chime with Ruskin’s concern for how “domestic aestheticism” might combine with a “sublime sentimentality.” His description of Edwin Landseer’s The Old Shepherd’s Chief Mourner (1837) in the first part of his Modern Painters (1843) is instructive. Within a section titled “Definition of Greatness in Art,” he analyzes Landseer’s “perfect” painting by

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7See, for example, the essays collected in Brahms in the Home and the Concert Hall: Between Private and Public Performance, ed. Katy Hamilton and Natasha Loges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).


9Feldman, Victorian Modernism, 3. The rest of this paragraph draws upon Feldman’s discussion of Ruskin, 20–34.
moving from the details of representation [the language of words] and execution of technique [the language of lines] into how the canvass evokes more abstract thought, into how a broader sentimental feeling can be expressed by a detail or, indeed, by its absence. Ruskin’s aim is to reveal, in an artistic representation of a dog mourning over the dead body of his owner, the manner in which heartfelt sentiment is deployed in coded or allusive evocation, in synecdoche and other technical and formal devices. Ruskin’s discussion of domestic “sites” of sentimental expression such as these can therefore move to consideration of formal design and emotional expression in more abstract terms. Furthermore, domesticity and sentiment can expand or shrink in scale—the repose of the homely, for example, can be felt in ever larger forms, in church, cathedral or state. Thus, sentimentalism moves between the private and the public, between the sacred and the profane. Within this ambiguity, domestic sentiment can form the basis of a testing of these binaries and also of design, arrangements, unities, and explorations of how personal feeling moves toward abstraction, as people and buildings (and dogs) begin to share qualities. Crucially, for Ruskin, sentiment is necessary but not sufficient for great art. In his critique of Holman Hunt’s famous *The Scapegoat* (1855), for example, he sees artistic failure resulting from the artist getting carried away with the intensity of sentiment and losing formal control (gauchely placing the suffering animal up front and central; sentimentalism in your face, to use the modern vernacular) and lack of technique (Hunt can’t actually paint a goat). By contrast, Ruskin saw potential for sentimentalism to work at the highest artistic level through a controlled relationship to design, modeled in the forms of domestic aestheticism but expandable to grander canvasses. What is unmissable, however, is that this critical strategy is in strong part motivated by an attempt to save sentimentalism from the restrictions of womanly domesticity, about which Ruskin made several then influential and now rather notorious comments. Moving the sentimental into sublime artistic forms, no matter how homely in origin, grants these expressive forms the masculine seal of high cultural esteem (“manly tears”) that had long underpinned the distinction between the sublime and beautiful aesthetic.11

JOSEPH JOACHIM IN THE SALON: BEAUTY, AUTHENTICITY, AND SENTIMENTALISM

To explore this nineteenth-century sentimentalism more closely and musically the activity and reception of Joseph Joachim in England makes an interesting case study as it is one which cuts against the prevailing critical grain. Joachim’s role in nineteenth-century English concert life is long celebrated. It was secured by the success of his first performance, when he was probably not yet quite fourteen years old, of the Beethoven Violin Concerto under Mendelssohn on 27 May 1844. [“Probably” because no confirmation of the birth date on his tombstone has emerged.] He widely became associated with a practice and aesthetics of high seriousness, even earnestness, in which the performer’s duty was the authoritative execution of the music of the great masters (Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms) through which the values of what was understood as the “Classical” tradition are sustained.12 A review of this performance from the

11 A now classic analysis of Ruskin’s views on female domesticism is Janet Wolff, “The Culture of Separate Spheres: The Role of Culture in Nineteenth-Century Public and Private Life,” in *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 12–33. The complex and shifting relationship of tears, sensibility, power, and gender, which so strongly informs the aesthetic dualism of beautiful and sublime from Edmund Burke through to the nineteenth-century Romantics, is too large a subject to address here: a useful starting point is Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writing of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincy and Hazlitt* [London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999].


Illustrated London News invokes what would become two of the main tropes of Joachim reception in England through describing the performance as “chaste” and “like extemporary performance”13 it is heard as austere [Joachim eschewing excess sensuousness] and authentic [Joachim becoming creatively one with the composer]. As we will see, a common critical strategy to support this characterization was one that praised Joachim for avoiding sentimentalism in his performances. This was frequently aligned to well-bolstered binaries of gender and nation: in 1857 The Musical World, for example, described Ernesto Camillo Sivori’s “elegant, lady-like” performance of the Mendelssohn concerto and confessed: “we prefer [as more correct and genial] the vigorous German conception of Ernst, Sainton, and Joachim, to the sentimental Italian notion of the concerto.”14

However, with his growing fame in England, Joachim became a prominent celebrity in prestigious salons of mid-century, especially the Holland Park Circle in Kensington, where his performances in the 1860s were described as perfect sentimental echoes of beautiful interiors. The Victorian salon holds an ambiguous place within the public-private binary. As Ruth Solie has noted, the nineteenth-century salon differed from the private realm of the domestic home of the “conjugal family.” The space and practice of the bourgeois salon, in which star musicians such as Joachim were performing guest artists, was an aspect of culture and society very different from the family parlour. Solie’s exploration of the relationship between the domestic and public concert life raises important questions concerning the position of the salon. Following Jürgen Habermas, Solie considers how the spheres of private domestic life and public concert activity should not be seen in opposition but rather as “complementary,” as “embedded” and mutually “enabling.” She notes that the salon holds an ambiguous position as a “public space” distinct from the intimacy of family domestic spaces, one “in the midst of historical change, as domestic architecture itself adjusted to the process of privatization.” Through its social and cultural position, poised between the domestic and the public, the salon complicates the public/private, masculine/feminine binaries and becomes an important field for “competing but sometimes surprisingly complementary systems of taste and value.”15 Within the rather complex negotiations of artistic taste and expression that these salons could encourage, sentimentalism played a central role.

Little Holland House was an example of the Victorian house of high social standing where everything was constructed and related by fine design: the rooms, the furnishings, the garden, the sympathetic gatherings, and the music.16 The celebrity painters in these fashionable circles were G. F. Watts (who went by the pretentious sobriquet “Signor”) and Frederic Leighton; Tennyson was the great poetic figure, Ruskin a frequent presence, and Joachim one of the visitant stars from the world of music.17 Exquisite taste coexisted with extravagant consumption and carefully cultivated affectations. Sunday afternoons in pleasant gardens moved to long, twilight summer soirées in the house; all pursued with the aim of perfect aesthetic beauty. The house was host to a precious kind of cultured society on what was then the edge of town, a pastoral idyll soon to be transformed as the metropolis of London expanded. It offered a chance to stroll, to pose, to take high tea, to engage in talk

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14Anonymous review, Musical World [6 June 1857]: 363. This contrast between Joachim and Sivori, a pupil of Paganini, sustains the wider binary of sensuous Italian art versus spiritual Germanic art, which was commonplace in nineteenth-century discourse.
16Little Holland House was the dower house in the grounds of the majestic Jacobean Holland House. In 1850 this smaller property was advertised to let in The Times, where it was described as a “capital detached family house, making up about 17 beds . . . having beautiful lawn and extensive pleasure grounds.” It was taken by the Prinsep family, whose sisters rapidly gained a reputation for their beauty, unconventional dress, and charismatic magnetism, through which they quickly established wide connections with fashionable artists, who flocked to their garden parties. The main Holland House was virtually destroyed during the 1940 London Blitz, what remains now hosts the outdoor performances of the Holland Park Opera.
both small and pretentious, and enjoy pleasures epicurean and musical. As the area around Holl-land Park changed from aradia to suburbia toward the end of the century, the charmed social circle was broken.\textsuperscript{19} Little Holland House itself was demolished in 1875.\textsuperscript{19}

In nostalgic recollections of the Little Holland House salon we read of how a “breezy Bohemi-anism prevailed. That time of dread, the conventional Sunday of the early Victorian era, was exchanged for the wit of cynics, the dreams of the inspired, the thoughts of the profoundest thinkers of the age.”\textsuperscript{20} Janet Duff Gordon recalls how “in summer guests roamed the lawns, played croquet and bowls, reclined on Indian rugs, or sank into deep sofas under the elm trees, treated to impromptu performances by Joachim, Piatti or Hallé.” “One day,” she remarks, “a young violinist [I believe it was Joachim as a lad] came to play for ‘Signor,’ [Watts] who loved music. I was sitting on the floor listening intently, when ‘Signor’ put his hand on my shoulder and said: ‘Sit still, Janet, don’t move for a few minutes.’ He then did the accompanying head of me.” Watts’s sketch shows the young woman staring upwards in a fixed gaze of rapt wonderment. The pose suggests that a variant of the kind of “quiet, attentive listening” that Christina Bashford has seen as encouraged by formal chamber concerts in Victorian London\textsuperscript{21} was also possible, if only for a special passing moment, while reclining on a well-tended lawn. “After dinner,” Duff Gordon continues, “the musicians played by lamplight, often late into the night.”\textsuperscript{22}

Once the sun began to set and guests moved inside the house the music gained even more luster through its stunning domestic context. An anonymous writer revealed how the beauty of nature was brought into the house when they recollected “matted rooms, with cool green walls against which hung paintings glowing with Venetian colour, and the low ceilings, painted a dusk harmonious blue. . . . In the principal drawing-room, where stood the piano, the planetary system was traced in gold upon the deep-blue ceiling.”\textsuperscript{23} Descriptions of the musical performances that took place in such celestial splendor, where the house beautiful and astronomical sublime combine, are especially interesting.\textsuperscript{24} At the end of the century Mary Watts recalled Harry Prinsep’s account of the first evening on which Joachim played at Little Holland House. “It was after dinner in that drawing-room of harmonious colour, under the deep-blue ceiling, and Joachim leaning back had sunk into one of the biggest of sofas, when Signor [Watts] ventured to ask him to play.”\textsuperscript{25} Note the synaesthesia, the association of perfect music with exquisite interior design, and of culture with comfort—the celebrated violinist reclined in the cushioned armchair. Lord Leighton wrote to his sister of a similar evening at his house (which was just down the road from Little Holland House):

To me the most striking thing of the evening was Joachim’s playing of Bach’s “Chaconne” up in my gallery. I was at the other end of the room, and the effect from the distance of a dark figure in the uncertain light up there, and barely relieved from the gold background and dark recess, struck me as one of the most poetic and fascinating that I remember. At the opposite end of the room in the apse was a blazing crimson rhododendron tree, which looked glorious when it reached up into the golden semi-dome.\textsuperscript{26}


\textsuperscript{20}Joachim’s salon activity was to continue through the later part of the century, as Sophie Fuller’s developing project, “Sounding the Salon,” will reveal. My thanks to Dr. Fuller for conversations around this project.

\textsuperscript{21}Anna Stirling, A Painter of Dreams, and Other Biographical Studies [London: John Lane, 1916], 299.


\textsuperscript{23}Ross, The Fourth Generation, 40.

\textsuperscript{24}Anon. Quoted in Dakers, The Holland Park Circle, 27.


Design and detail are seen as in perfect beautiful harmony, right down, as Georgina Burne-Jones recalled of Little Holland House epicureanism, to the vividly colored fruit carefully arranged on the table, which seemed to glow in the house’s dimly lit spaces.27

What is the relationship between this exquisite beauty and sentimentalism? Ruskin urged that the eye’s sensitivity to form and color be connected to higher sensibilities, in particular that of noble love, and that an artwork’s inner expressive qualities are revealed by study of outer form. Ruskin’s sentimental heart is worn on a sleeve tailored from the finest fabric. Turner’s images of twilight confirmed for him, however, that beauty alone was insufficient, that emotional truth was also essential. In the fourth volume of Modern Painters, on the “Turnerian Picturesque,” he argues that the picturesque artist needs also to be sentimental.28 It is not enough that, say, the ruin, or the pauper’s cottage, be exquisitely drawn and formally placed. The artist needs to draw in the observer’s heart as well as the eye. For Ruskin, the sentimental can provide moments of truthful content within such beautiful forms. As Nicola Brown notes, sentimental works are those whose aesthetic beauty is “tender,” in that it is “of a kind that invites us to shed a tear or to nurse tender feelings.”29

Ruskin’s views on music are especially interesting and pertinent here. He condemned the lazy, superficial appreciation of music’s sensual qualities, which he considered greater, and therefore more seductive, than those of painting: “the great power of music over the multitude is owing, not to its being less, but more sensual in colour; it is so distinctly and so richly sensual, that it can be idly enjoyed.”30 The young Ruskin ranked music rather lowly (in 1838 he wrote “let the musician be honoured, but the painter be revered”),31 and this is partially sustained in mature writings, for example, when he vividly writes in 1877: “Painting is playing on a colour violin seventy times seven stringed.”32 In his 1867 Rede Lecture at Cambridge, however, he declared that the “worst debasement” of music is that which “the idle and sensual seeking for pleasure in sound only, without any true purpose of sentiment at all.”33 If music can be so debased, then it clearly can also be raised to higher levels, from beauty to truth. Here we see resonances of Ruskin’s argument, expressed in the analyses in Modern Painters, for grounding artistic “greatness” in combinations of aesthetic beauty with higher types of sentimentalism. While he acknowledged and regretted his lack of musical understanding when compared to that he was sure he had of painting, Ruskin wrote: “I scarcely count my love of music as a separate and additional faculty, because it is merely the same sensitiveness in the ear to sound as in the eye to colour, joined with the architectural love of structure.”34 In music, as in painting, Ruskin’s model for understanding involves a heightened appreciation of beautiful form infused with sentimental investment.

Watts wrote to Barrington on his sadness at the loss of the musical evenings at the Leightons: “Never was Joachim’s genius enjoyed more enthusiastically.”


32 The Laws of Fésole (1877), in Ruskin on Music, 57.
34 Gatens, “John Ruskin and Music,” 78. For the prominent critic W. G. Collingwood, Ruskin’s valiant “quest” to “qualify as a musician” was in vain: “it is the story of a failure.” Collingwood cites volumes of piano music and operatic arias with fingerings added by Ruskin from his Oxford days, describes the singing and composition lessons that Ruskin pursued in later life, and surveys his musical enthusiasms, in both the home and concert hall. Collingwood concludes that Ruskin “had a great love for music, and within certain limits a true taste, but no talent.” Ruskin’s “little output of musical composition need never see the light,” but, nonetheless, Collingwood reproduces the score of Ruskin’s 1881 attempt at setting Walter Scott’s “At Marmion’s Grave.” It is an “Air” whose banality unfortunately serves to support Collingwood’s judgment; Ruskin Relics [London: Isbister & Co., 1903], 151–63.
A reminiscence of Joachim can illustrate these relationships. Tennyson’s son, recalling his father’s esteem for Joachim, wrote:

My father was fond of asking Joachim to play to him in his own house. One particular evening I remember, at 86, Eaton Square. My father had been expressing his wonder at Joachim’s mastery of the violin. . . . Accordingly, after the guests had gone, he took the great musician to smoke with him in his “den” at the top of the house . . . and then my father read “The Revenge.” On reaching the line “And the sun went down, and the stars came out far/over the summer sea” he asked Joachim, “Could you do that on your violin?” 35

Of course Tennyson was sure that Joachim could. The poetic line is an image of fleeting beauty in a narrative of heroic struggle and loss, a moment of reflection on the beauty of a seascape that is also the scene of battle. The transience and melancholy of twilight anticipate the grief at the loss of life told later in the ballade. It is picturesque and sentimental because it uses the image of ephemeral beauty as a link to sympathetic feeling, the dying rays of sunlight foreshadow the remorse at the loss of life in battle. Tennyson’s request suggests that Joachim’s violin was considered able to create musical versions of these fragile moments of beauty set among broader, grander contexts of heroic greatness and to bring the scene and its sentiment into the domestic setting via music.

These associations of Joachim’s musical performance with that moment when daylight fades, when the assembled company moves from dusky gardens to the artificial but tasteful light of the house, infuse Mary Watts’s description of Watts’s “A Lamplight Study: Herr Joachim.” This painting (plate 1), she wrote, “will preserve

for future generations his aspect on these evenings. In imagination one can see him standing, bow in hand and chin upon the violin, in that room, with its wealth and colour from floor to ceiling, the art upon its walls answering so nobly to the music. Hallé at the piano, Joachim with his eyes that seemed only to hear, not to see, the lamplight falling softly on the faces of beautiful women.” 36 When exhibited by the Royal Academy in 1867 it quickly became one of Watts’s most famous portraits (and one the artist especially valued: he was never to sell it). Joachim described the experience of sitting for Watts in a letter to his wife:

I have sat for the painter Watts for several hours, for the third time, and I shall have to do so twice again; but I am consoled by the thought that it will be a real work of art. At any rate, the portraits by him of Tennyson and others that I have seen are excellent as regards conception and colour. He is painting me playing the violin. Watts belongs to the number of artists, particularly rare in England, who live only for their progress, and for whom the public (in the sense of dependence on it) does not exist at all. And so, in the midst of numerous ambitious designs, of which his studio is full and which he is carrying out con amore just as inspiration dictates, he has begun to form a gallery of those heads which appeal to him, and I am glad he has repeatedly asked me to sit for him. 37

The portrait attracted reflections that give a picture of how Joachim was received in these English houses. In her 1905 memoir of Watts, Mrs. Russell (Emilie) Barrington wrote that in the Joachim the value does not lie in the fact of it being a good portrait of the actual features of the great musician; in fact, there are many of his friends who never thought the likeness good. It lies in the fact that in the painting is an embodiment of Joachim’s feeling for music. By some subtle sense the painter has entered into and seized the genius of his sitter, and has translated through the medium of line and colour the essence of the deep feeling which inspired the master’s interpretations of Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms. Watts has immortalised in this portrait a reflection in painting of that unsurpassed art, which has affected so deeply all true music-lovers of our generation. The brow is weighted with a sense of the grandeur of great harmonies and melody; the fingers vibrate with the fervor of thrilling sound. The whole canvass is infused by a sense of such music as Joachim can produce. 38

In Barrington’s description the painting reflects a familiar image of the violinist, one based on concepts of “deep feeling,” of getting under the skin to reveal the inner genius that allowed Joachim to interpret the great German musical line. Barbara Bryant and Mark Bills, former curator of the now beautifully restored Watts Gallery in Surrey, describe how Joachim is portrayed “with soft jowly face and lugubrious expression”—the effect is a prematurely aged and rather melancholic figure. 39 This suggests that the portrait is far from straightforward in its intention and meaning. Accuracy of physical portrayal was secondary for Watts. Since the 1850s he had been developing the notion that portraits might express the “poetry of feeling” that lies beneath the exterior, visible form. Bills and Bryant in particular note the subtle effects of lighting in the portrait: “Watts’s technique of thin glazing creates a sense of impenetrable space. . . . Looming out of [this] dim background space, the figure is read through the intensely concentrating face and the powerfully active hands. . . .” 40 It is an example of how Watts idealized figures to embody “universal” values; as Watts explained to Ruskin, in an undated letter, “My own views are too visionary, & the qualities I aim at too abstract to be attained. My instincts cause me to strive after things . . . that are rather felt than seen. My instinct rebels against mere imitation.” 41 The aged face in the portrait grants

37 Joachim is thirty-six, Watts was fourteen years older.
39 Veronica Franklin Gould, “The Vision of G.F. Watts: Good and Evil Entwined,” in Gould, The Vision of G.F. Watts OM RA (1817–1904) (Compton: Watts Gallery, 2004), 10. See also M. S. Watts, Watts, 91. Perhaps it is no surprise that when, on 21 May 1877, with Richard feeling unwell, Cosima Wagner visits Watts’s Kensington studio, and writes in her diary that she saw: “A quite amazing picture of Joachim. I can read the whole biography of this thoroughly bad person in this picture, that is not what the painter intended, but it is the very thing that reveals his talent—that he has depicted the truth without realizing it! Indeed, by trying to express something splendid.” Cosima Wagner’s Diaries, Vol. 1: 1869–1877, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London: Harcourt, 1978) 962–67. Of course, in

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Joachim gravitas; but the effect is also to give him a longer history, to link him with pastness, with heritage, with nostalgia, and also, through the melancholic tones, somehow to a kind of suffering [for art, for love!] with which we might sentimentally sympathize.

For “Lamplight,” read “Twilight,” with all the attendant sentimental symbolisms noted above. The “lamplight” title also reminds us that this portrait is a domestic rather than concert image. But it also betrays the artifact: through man-made light [culture] a wonder of nature (twilight) might be sustained for sufficient time for Watts to make his picture. Watts’s portrait can be considered an example of “staged authenticity,” to use Karen Leistra-Jones’s term. Staged, and therefore, as pretense, as acted. This posed image of authenticity is focused particularly through the manner in which Joachim’s gaze lies on his instrument. Leistra-Jones discusses a series of photographs of Joachim, which invariably show him absorbed or engrossed in the musical performance, unaware of the presence of a viewer, and characterized by a total identification with artistic activity. Such images project notions of self-control, even self-denial, or self-sacrifice, which are important tropes in the cultural discourses of gender, nationality, and high [or “deep”] art. It is interesting to note that when Watts paints portraits of women with the violin or other musical instruments, by contrast with Joachim they turn away from their instrument and look directly at the observer, so that our gaze is diverted from the musical part of the image and fixed on their face. This is but one of several significant distinctions between Watts’s male and female portraits. As Colin Trodd notes, in the “hall of fame” portraits, to which Joachim’s portrait relates, the projection of masculine prestige seems to separate the figure from the surrounding space. In the Joachim portrait the domestic setting, while overtly signaled by the painting’s title, is but dimly perceived—it is a suggestion of the poetic trope of twilight but also one which isolates the illuminated male figure [and his instrument]. By contrast Trodd notes that in female portraits, such as that of Mrs. Nassau Senior (1857–58) the figure is brought into close relation to the beautiful domestic design, indeed through the pose of the female subject she is seen as forming and transforming, caring for and curating, the decorative shapes around her—at once functional and aesthetic,” homely and sensual, with her body “defined by in its relation to its garments” and the beautiful domestic objects. She is a sympathetic figure aligned with nature, but she is tending indoor plants: associated with fecundity and excess, she is figured as the agent of decorating and elaborating domestic space. This may seem to reinforce the marginalization of women from higher cultural work, but the separation of the male figure from such beauty, which is so lovingly reproduced in the portraits of women, is also a source of melancholy. The darker intensity of the male portraits such as that of Joachim can be seen in strong part as expressing “a consolation and a lamentation for an imagined lost fullness of being.” Watts’s Joachim portrait seeks to transform the melancholic expression and domestic setting into a sublime sentimentalism worthy of Ruskin’s praise.

It is not just Joachim that has symbolic status. Significance attaches also to the violin, which is brought forward to the viewer in the formal arrangement of the portrait. It is displayed and


Amy Fay’s contrast is significant here when she noted that: “Liszt never looks at his instrument; Joachim never looks at anything else.” This comment follows her characterization of Liszt as the consummate sentimental showman: on listening to Liszt, she writes, “all that one has suffered comes before one again” and thereby he “wrings our hearts”: Music Study in Germany (1873) cited in Leistra-Jones, “Staging Authenticity,” 397.


revered as much as the performer (Joachim owned a series of famous and highly valuable instruments; Watts was an amateur violinist who despaired at his own inadequacies). This aspect of the portrait's design encourages further Ruskinian analysis, in which the musical instrument synecdochally stands for the whole concept of music's sublime sentimentality, pictured emerging in the foreground from a domestic setting of aesthetic beauty only very shadily perceived because of the carefully subdued lighting in the house. A highly suggestive comparison is Julia Margaret Cameron's *Whisper of the Muse*, a photograph from April 1865 in which Watts himself poses with a violin—young muses surround him and the instrument, suggesting the association of musical harmony with sublime inspiration. Cameron photographed at least five portraits of Joachim in 1868 both with and without his violin. Watts encouraged her to produce photographs that would mirror the souls of her sitters. There was undoubtedly mutual influence. Comparison of *Whisper of the Muse* with Watts’s “Lamplight Study” of Joachim tempts one to speculate that Watts’s experiment with artificial light on Joachim’s face came from discussions of photography with Cameron as much as a desire to capture the special effect in a domestic setting. Furthermore, Cameron’s *Whisper of the Muse* is also similar to Watts’s *Whisper of Love*, and both owe much to Rembrandt’s *The Evangelist Matthew Inspired by the Angel* (1661). Watts’s and Cameron’s inspirations are therefore Renaissance religious paintings and Victorian sentimental genre subjects. Cameron was highly influenced by Ruskin in seeking the photographic form and expression of a sentiment that encompassed “the appreciation of beauty, ideals, mystical religious feelings, and even moral sensibilities.” Thus Watts’s Joachim portrait exemplifies how, for this Victorian circle, sentimentalism and authenticity were considered intimate companions.

Watts’s earlier “moonlight” portrait of Tennyson (1859) has tones and form akin to his lamplight portrait of Joachim and reminds us that during the 1860s the violinist became a prominent figure among the artistic milieu of mid-century English sentimentalism, the culture that produced iconic poems such as Tennyson’s “Come into the Garden Maud” (1855), which became a highly popular salon song when set to music by Balfe (1857). As an 1898 biographical sketch published in the *Musical Times* notes, Joachim was selected as a contributor for a commemorative collection of settings of Tennyson’s poetry. Joachim’s choice of “Merlin’s Song” is described as “perhaps being attracted thereto by the naïveté” (though the capricious English weather may have had a little to do with it):

Rain, rain and Sun! a rainbow in the sky!
A young man will be wiser by-and-by:
An old man’s wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain and Sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee,
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, rain and Sun! and the free blossom blows;
Sun, rain and Sun! and where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes.

(*The Coming of Arthur, 1869*).

Fuller Maitland’s *Masters of German Music* of 1894 is quoted as saying that Joachim’s song was one of the poet’s favorites from the collection. And Stanford also later recalled that Tennyson

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47 Although Cameron’s photographs are not discussed by Leistra-Jones, “Staging Authenticity,” they clearly relate to the issues raised by those that are.
50 Balfe’s setting, however, is far from straightforward. As Joanna Swafford has noted, it is a cavatina that, while emphasizing a domestic sentimentalism through the poem’s pastoralism and the language of flowers, also suggests a “sinister subject” of madness, obsession, and violence to which certain aspects of Balfe’s dissonance treatment might hint. The song can be heard to have twin registers, one “domestic,” the other “disruptive,” but the parlour setting of the performance would certainly support a more sentimental hearing; “The Domestic and the Disruptive: A Musical Setting of Tennyson’s ‘Maud,’” *Victorian Review* 38 (2012): 28–31. On Tennyson and sentimentality, see, among a rich critical literature, Fulweiler, *Here a Captive Heart Busted,* 33–62.
Example 1: Joseph Joachim, “Merlin’s Song” (Tennyson); mm. 23–28, the move to tonic major at beginning of final stanza.

was particularly delighted with the setting. The writer in the Musical Times is convinced of its great musical merit, but the song is, in truth, a thin effort in the weakest kind of salon style, set in F minor with a final verse in the tonic major at the moment of floral eschatology (see ex. 1). It is a mere footnote to Joachim’s compositional output, to be sure, but one which confirms his close association with the Victorian poet and his coterie of sentimentalists.

In Hallé’s reminiscences of Little Holland House we read of “beautiful surroundings and the sympathy of friends,” a perfect setting for “men who were famous and women who were beautiful.” When he played with Joachim he found the painters more receptive than the writers (with especial confidence placed in Watts’s musical sensibilities). Hallé was exasperated when Ruskin expressed a preference for Sigismond Thalberg’s variations on “Home Sweet Home” over a Beethoven sonata. This preference for music at the more popular end of the domestic scale in one sense reveals Ruskin’s dilettante musicality but it also exemplifies, as Derek Scott has noted, the taste for forms of overt sentimentalism among the “high priests” of “high art” at this time.

The variations open with a short contrapuntal introduction that builds through portentous diminished harmonies to arrive on what Robert Hatten might call an “arrival” or “salvation” dominant six-four chord (ex. 2, m. 5), which

Example 2: Sigismond Thalberg, Air Anglais: “Home, Sweet Home!,” op. 72 (1857); opening.

“elevates” and “transforms” the tone,56 before turning the parlour song into a Chopinesque nocturne in D♭. As such we might hear why Ruskin enjoyed this piece above Beethoven, for Thalberg is explicitly placing the song’s sentimental expression into a sophisticated musical design, one which displays the artist’s technique, evokes a favorite genre of domestic musical beauty, and seeks to raise it to levels of sublime expression.57

The range of music heard at Little Holland House was quite diverse. Joachim played Bach’s Chaconne, Beethoven’s F-Major Romance, and Spohr’s Barcarolle. But Barrington recalled that Watts and his circle were “no musical purists”: Mozart, Handel, yes, but also what Barrington calls, without clarification, the music of “street noted, “whether the audience that helped Brahms gain success represented a different class than the consumers of banal salon pieces is doubtful, and even improbable.” Boundaries between class and taste are “permeable”; “Trivialmusik” (1967), trans. Uli Sailor in Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate, ed. Christopher J. Washburne and Maiken Derno (New York: Routledge, 2004), 333–62, at 341.

57 More broadly, this ambiguity reminds us to be wary of simplistic parallels between class and taste. As Carl Dahlhaus

Downloaded from http://online.ucpress.edu/ncm/article-pdf/210628/ncm_2018_42_2_123.pdf by guest on 07 May 2020
hands” [so long as they played in tune; “there we did draw the line”]. For one visitor to Leighton’s similar soirée the evening’s pleasures were best sustained by music of modest demands: one Frederick Lehmann wrote:

Leighton’s studio looked lovely. Lamps all round and a sunlight from above lighted up his pictures, finished and unfinished. Hallé played a charming suite of Bach and Joe [Joachim] a Romance of Beethoven, but beside these solos they played two whole sonatas of Beethoven—the two that follow each other in our book in A and C minor. The latter they began only after 12: it was quite too much music and the kind of music I love to hear with a lot of men and women knowing about as much of music as my hat. I think they ought to play small salon pieces and give people a chance of talking. O, it was slow, my dear.”

Hallé, of course, was famous in both London and Paris for his pioneering concert performances of complete cycles of Beethoven sonatas. Leighton himself had rather higher musical aspirations than his disgruntled guest. In a letter to Joachim of 20 March 1875 he gushed: “it will be long indeed before I forget the impression made on me by that strange, fiery stirring composition which I heard yesterday for the first time and which has given me a greater idea of the extra-ordinary power of Brahms than I had heard of his before.”

Watts enjoyed Beethoven, but with a preference for the lighter end of the composer’s output. Mary Watts mentions enthusiasm for the bridal chorus and maiden’s magic music from the melodrama King Stephan. The song Adelaide was a particular favorite. Watts bought a violin for £25 and his “great wish was to accomplish playing the melody of Beethoven’s song.” On Joachim’s first visit to one of Sara Prinsep’s Sunday evening soirees, Watts asked Joachim to play an arrangement of the song. Adelaide has a fascinating history as an example of a piece that had claims made of both its great seriousness (Germanic, masterpiece, difficult) and its lightness (Italianate, operatic, easy) as a song occupying a shifting intermediate position regarding value and character. Its text, which concerns an amorous meeting in a spring garden at evening time, is comparable with the poetized Victorian garden at twilight. At the poetic evocation of “whispering” evening breezes Beethoven’s setting moves seductively from B to D major. Joachim’s arrangement of “Abendlied,” the last of Schumann’s piano duets for “small and big children,” op. 85 (1848) was also very popular at Little Holland House. A song without words at children’s bedtime, we are again drawn into a twilight world in D (ex. 3; Joachim insisted the piece be played in “soft” D rather than D, as some violinists preferred). The image of the child at bedtime combines with a sense of evening prayers in the piano’s hymn-like chords to form a perfect sentimental combination of innocence and the religious. The implication is that childhood, like the twilight, is about to be lost. [Hallé was to compose his own Dämmerungs-Gedanken, op. 7, a collection of piano miniatures in the salon style, though none of the four are in D.]

There is a hint of benediction about Schumann’s Abendlied. Joachim was, of course, closely tied to the reception of Mendelssohn in England, and therefore his activity can be seen as comparable with Mendelssohn’s high art aspirations for the salon as part of the commitment to Bildung; some of Joachim’s salon performances were portrayed as though he were a musical priest administering on a home visit. Mrs. Barrington’s recollections of Watts’s musical enthusiasms evoke a similar moment of beatitude at twilight, with the conjunction of musical appreciation and painterly expertise confirming the sacred quality of art:

Barrington, C.F. Watts, 96.
Dakers, The Holland Park Circle, 159-60.
M. S. Watts, Watts, 186. Watts was also reported as enjoying Schubert lieder, see Daphne du Maurier, The Young George du Maurier: A Selection of His Letters, 1860-1867 (London: P. Davies, 1951), 112.
M. S. Watts, Watts, 201. Ruskin lauds Beethoven’s song for “proportions” that are “fine” and “unteachable” in “Seven Lamps of Architecture,” Ruskin on Music, 59.

6Letter to his wife 19 November 1872, Letters from and to Joseph Joachim, 397.
On summer evenings [Watts] would ask me to play for him on the pianoforte. He liked simple tunes, especially airs by Beethoven and Handel. The rays of the warm evening light would come in through the high studio window, striking down on the paintings. As golden shafts from the setting sun lighted on the canvasses placed on the easels toward the light, how gloriously would the autumn-like tints burn out in fervent colour. With a passionate depth they glowed in harmony with the music of the masters. Watts was right indeed to call them his “Anthems.”

Of this kind of sentimental religioso, commonplace in Victorian culture, perhaps the musical classic is Arthur Sullivan’s setting of Adelaide Anne Procter’s The Lost Chord (1877). Derek Scott considers this song as an “ideal-type” of Victorian sentimentalism for its yearning for redemption achieved through music’s special powers. The technical correctness, archaism, and lyrical sweetness place Sullivan’s music as a sacred stylistic cousin of Thalberg’s “Home, Sweet Home” variations. And again, of course, we are at dusk as the “one chord” struck in a fleeting inspirational moment on the organ “flooded the crimson twilight.” The poetic emphasis on a singular musical detail and its relationship to a specially tinted light evoke parallels to the description of Joachim playing the Bach Chaconne above a “blazing crimson rhododendron tree” in the enveloping shadows of Leighton’s house. The blessed violinist stands anointed beside the “burning” bush as musical poet-priest on an evening domestic call. Amen, and goodnight.

66Barrington, G.F. Watts, 93–94. Synaesthesia, sublime (Handel; the anthem), and beauty (melodic airs); all these things were subject of debate in Little Holland House: see Paul Barlow, “The Pointless Meaningfulness of Watts’s Work,” in Representations of G.F. Watts, 29–47, at 37.


Joachim as Sentimental Composer

These kinds of tears at bedtime were held in high esteem at mid-century as a sign of sensitivity to moments of exquisite expression and the most refined forms of beauty. They are also tears that aspire to the sublime while being subject to tasteful control, in what Thomas Dixon has called a Victorian “duality of sentiment and restraint.” Shed after the demise of sensibility, they were considered expressions of “true human sympathy, rather than false sentimentality.” Dixon describes an “extended Dickiesian sunset of the age of sensibility” extending into the 1870s, but that this was the “setting of that sentimental star.” From the late 1870s onward a harder emotional repression starts to emerge as we move into the age of the stiff upper lip. This was coincident with an ever-widening schism between popular and high art combined with an increasing resistance to mid-Victorian sentimentalism. The nineteenth-century salon, identified by Richard Taruskin as the “chief catalyst of the ‘domestic-romantic’ music,” as the sole place, “on the cusp of private and public” where “the paradox of public display of private feeling disappear,” gradually loses status and high social standing. Salon style music became commercially marketed to wider domestic consumers in “tacky imitations,” which were dismissed with snobbish disdain. In short, Ruskin’s fears about the potential debasement and devaluing of sentimentalism appear to be gradually realized.

69 Thomas Dixon, Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 143, 153, 168, 185. Dixon richly describes the political and social contexts for this shift. The classic poetic expression of such feeling from the mid-century is Tennyson’s “In Memoriam A.H.H.” (1849), a work expressing anxieties over faith and mourning in the modern age but also offering strong vicarious identification with the suffering speaker; see Boyce, Finnelly, and Millim, Victorian Celebrity, 4.


Joachim seemed protected from any danger of falling into sentimental ignominy through his well-established critical reputation for avoiding excessive sentimentality in concert hall performances. This characterization could be further bolstered by dissociating him from certain aspects of Mendelssohn’s reputation, which was under considerable revision in the later part of the century. Representative of this critical strategy is C. Fred Kenyon’s contrast, made in 1897, between Mendelssohn and Chopin. Sentimentalism is identified as one side of Chopin’s music, but one counterbalanced by another that is described as “manly and vigorous,” with much that is “full of backbone.” (Kenyon despairs at the popularity of the Nocturne in E♭, op. 9, no. 1, which he feels regrettably distorts Chopin’s reputation through its appeal to a “school-girl” imagination and a “maiden’s” respectability.) By contrast, Mendelssohn’s Lieder ohne Worte are “monuments of sentimentalism and insincerity” in their restriction to respectable charms and superficial graces. Kenyon, wrestling with familiarly gendered oppositions, concludes that Mendelssohn is simply a “sentimentalist”; Chopin is a “poet” because he tempers the sentimental. When Fuller Maitland eulogizes Joachim in an obituary he absolves him of any sentimental guilt: “Of Mendelssohn’s concertos he was the composer’s favorite interpreter and his influence went for very much in the work of obtaining recognition for Mendelssohn’s music in England. That this recognition passed eventually into an indiscriminate fetish-worship of the Lieder ohne Worte and Elijah, was not Joachim’s fault.”

At the turn of the century Joachim’s salon activity clearly needed rather careful handling by those who sought to preserve his reputation. In his hagiographical 1905 monograph, Fuller Maitland admits that on occasions Joachim begrudgingly played “superficial” music for friends, despite his “resistance to temptations to prostitute his art.” His assessment of the expressive


tone of Joachim’s own salon compositions shows similar unease, but it is assuaged through appealing to a reserved type of melancholic expression. Joachim’s Romance, op. 2, no. 1 (ca. 1850) is described as expressing “tender melancholy . . . though the extreme of pessimism is untouched,” and in “Abendglocken,” op. 5, no. 2 (ca. 1855) (it’s twilight again) the music, while “full of a delicious, tender melancholy,” again avoids excess. In sum, Joachim is being identified as an artist in whom “strong emotion” is “strongly controlled.” Joachim may by now be famously thickly bearded but Fuller Maitland is hearing a hidden kind of musical stiff upper lip (or, alternatively, to deploy Kenyon’s anatomy, “back bone”). Fuller Maitland’s identification of a special kind of melancholy in Joachim’s music is worth exploring further. His repeated use of “tender” to characterize this feeling is telling: the word suggests softness, the easily touched or wounded, a susceptibility to being moved to pity. It chimes with the “tender beauty” noted above and the image of Joachim as performer in the descriptions of Watts’s portrait, and opens up consideration of Joachim’s relation to English sentimentalism to include his activity as a composer.

When Joachim turns to the poetry of Byron for compositional inspiration the musical results confirm that melancholy, as a response to suffering, is a close cousin of sentimentalism. Joachim drafted his Hebrew Melodies, subtitled “Impressions of Byron’s Poems,” for viola and piano in the first part of 1854. Byron’s poetic identification with a marginalized and suffering subject encourages Paul Berry to make comparison with Adelbert Chamisso’s Frauenliebe und -Leben (1831) and Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852). Berry considers these texts as making for “strange and uncomfortable reading. Intertwined with a fundamentally sympathetic stance toward the poetic speaker are stock images and stereotypes that provoke intense scrutiny today.” There was widespread interest in literary por-

traits of such suffering figures in mid-century German culture (Berry doesn’t mention Goethe’s Werther, that classic figure of late-eighteenth-century sentimentalism, but he could have been included). Byron’s Hebrew poems became popular through publication in several German translations, and selections were set by major composers, including Mendelssohn and Schumann. Berry sees significance in the proximity of Joachim’s Hebrew pieces to his conversion from Judaism (May 1855) and emphasizes the Jewish element, expressed in both personal and wider expressions of sympathy for the Jewish people’s sufferings. But in Joachim’s musical response archaisms and exoticisms coexist with sentimental tropes and autobiographical cyphers relating to his amorous circumstances. Many of Byron’s poems in the collection, written in late 1814 and early 1815, are not explicitly Jewish in subject and relate closely to the sentimental strand that was a strong if ambivalent aspect of Byron’s poetry from the early Hours of Idleness (1806) through to 1816. Jerome McGann has explored the influence on English Romantic poets of examples from the late-eighteenth-century poetic “metaphysics of sentimentality.” These poems contained a paradoxical coexistence of exquisite feeling and intense intellectualism, of markers of both spontaneity and artifice, of “natural” expressions and cultured sophistication, all brought to amorous, sometimes erotic purpose. Byron drew widely from such examples in his own poetic art (and to understand this importance of sentimentalism is to recover a crucial aspect of Romanticism that the modernist critical enterprise denigrated or ignored). McGann has also shown how the critical disparagement of his early, more explicitly sentimental poetry led to Byron’s satirical repudiation of the sentimentalists who had influenced him (in so doing turning from “feminine” to “masculine” poetic modes), seeking self-redemption through making “scapegoats” of those sentimentalists who had inspired him.

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Wordsworth sought to make sentimentalism into something “sublime” (one thinks, again, of Ruskin’s later concerns); Byron developed a more contradictory response in which his “sentimental beloveds” betray the sentimental ideal of devoted loving union.

The lament “Oh! Snatched away in beauty’s bloom” from Hebrew Melodies exemplifies this contradictory sentimentalism in its third and final stanza:

Away! We know that tears are vain
That death nor heeds nor hears distress—
Will this unteach us to complain?
Or make one mourner weep the less?
And thou—who tell’st me to forget
Thy looks are wan, thine eyes are wet.

Or, take the opening verse of “I speak not—I trace not—I breathe not”:

I speak not—I trace not—I breathe not thy name,
There is grief in the sound—there were guilt in
the fame
But the tear which now burns on my cheek may
impart
The deep thought that dwells in that silence of
heart.

In a complex tone alluding to sensibility within Romanticism and a return to the recurring sentimental time of twilight, the complete text of “It is the hour” reads:

It is the hour when from the boughs
The Nightingale’s high note is heard—
It is the hour when lovers’ vows
Seem sweet in every whispered word—
And gentle winds and waters near
Make music to the lonely ear.
Each flower the dews have lightly wet,
And in the sky the stars are met:
And on the wave is deeper blue,
And on the leaf a browner hue;
And in the Heaven that clear obscure,
So softly dark—and darkly pure,
That follows the decline of day
As twilight melts beneath the moon away.

Joachim’s attraction to these poems as Hebraic expressions (or constructions thereof) is clearly related to his Jewish identity. But that issue, though certainly one with fascinating sentimental aspects, is not a concern here. Widely expressed in the poems is a melancholy generated by lost or frustrated love, expressed in sentimental phrases. This was sure to be a strong part of their attraction for Joachim. When he began writing his three “interpretations” of Byron’s collection (they are not individually identified with specific poems) Joachim’s private life was dominated by failed hopes of marriage to Gisella von Arnim (their engagement broke down in late 1853). As Katharina Bozena Croissant Uhde has argued, there is a strong autobiographical, even confessional element to Joachim’s compositions during the 1850s. “Abendglocken,” for example, contains cyphers and mottos that spell out this amorous desire: she is G# to his home key of A major, the leading note to the yearned-for domestic union. Of the kind of emotional music that he aspired to write, Joachim saw Beethoven as the great example. Describing how Beethoven kept his musical ideas with him in his notebook, Joachim wrote in 1853: “one actually feels as though it [Beethoven’s theme] had experienced everything with the master, that it had been his constant friend and companion, hence the sympathetic effect—I would like to be able to write a psychology of tones.” The musical theme


7This aspect is explored by Berry, and Joachim’s relationship to his Jewishness has received sustained and broad examination by Borchard, Stimme und Geige, 553–63, and Robert W. Eshbach, who writes: “If one wishes, then, to tease out a single, ‘central line of tradition’ that reaches from Joachim back through Felix Mendelssohn to Moses Mendelssohn, it might be this: the idea of a canon, grounded in timeless, inviolable texts whose meaning is to be deciphered through exegetical interpretations. This quintessentially Jewish modus met with the Romantic Beethoven tradition as water with water.” “Joachim’s Youth—Joachim’s Jewishness,” Musical Quarterly 94/1 (2011): 548–92, at 574–75.


is characterized as a witness of the composer's sufferings, sentimental in the sense that it is compassionate and hence enables the expression and working through of confidences. Joachim admired the way in which Beethoven developed these intimate musical "friends," these expression-laden themes, to create musical form. Ruskin's sublime-sentimental ideal again seems apposite.

Details in Joachim's music can support a sentimental reading. In the second of the Hebrew Melodies an opening "Grave" is explicitly both funereal and Judaic in tone. Its key of C minor also suggests that this grief is being carried in the Beethovenian tragic-heroic manner. But the contrasting middle section of the ABA' ternary form offers major-mode lyricism that leaves behind both the Jewish and elegiac idiom to offer sweeter comforts. The extreme contrast between this lyricism and the opening funeral music is comparable with the effect of the trio that follows the funeral march in Chopin's Second Piano Sonata, op. 35 (whose funeral movement was composed in 1837). As Lawrence Kramer has discussed, in its ambiguous generic suggestions of nocturne and prayer [a domesticated sacred] the trio presents a notable "clash between solemn ritual [of the march] and sentimental sociability," a move from cadaver and coffin to parlour piano. In moving from an elegy of tragic temper to lyricism in the salon style Joachim's piece offers a generic shift between ritual and sentimentality strikingly similar to Chopin's movement, while also confirming that both the morbidity and mourning of the funeral and the consolations of beauty belong with the sentimental trope. Joachim's expressive shift is perhaps more transparently motivated. It reflects the sentimental dimension of Byron's poems and contributes to the confessional mode that characterizes much of Joachim's music, in which suffering and amorous yearning conjoin. In the most touching moment of the piece this lyricism briefly returns toward the end of the A' section, when the final structural dominant of C minor is diverted by an interrupted cadence to the A♭ harmony of the middle section (m. 68; it is a deceptive cadence that is lent hesitancy by the lack of A♭ in the first beat). This A♭ lasts little more than a measure: indeed, in a moment, marked "espress.," of great subtlety, the absence of a bass A♭ and the low C in the viola on the downbeat means we cannot be sure that this is not the tonic C minor (ex. 4). The harmonic instability and formal position of this reminiscence intensifies the expressive effect and makes the sentimentalism especially poignant: at the approach of "death," the final moment of closure, sweeter themes are recalled, but only ephemerally. Almost as soon as the sweet moment is recollected, it is lost. Expression and design [tonal and thematic] conjoin to sentimental ends.

Joachim was deeply wary about his compositions lapsing into uncontrolled emotional content [in Ruskin's pictorial terms, placing the scapegoat too prominently in the design, in a lapse of formal control]. He expressed this concern to his beloved Gisella. In letter of 3/4 December 1853, in a self-evaluation as a composer [as he was composing his "Demetrius" overture] he's disappointed that, rather than "re-echo with the eternal essence," his music "is not free enough to loose the fetters which still bind it to the morbid in me." In this matter he compared himself unfavorably with Brahms. A week earlier he had written to Gisella that Brahms is "sincere in the expression of his feelings, with none of the false sentimentality with which other of his kind like to deceive themselves." Again writing on Brahms to von Arnim he admires "the way in


83The conventions of an aestheticized, "beautiful death" were crucial in sentimental literature, for example in Richardson's Clarissa (1748), Rousseau's Julie (1761) and in nineteenth-century successors, of which the death of Little Nell in Dickens's The Old Curiosity Shop (1841) is probably the most famous and most discussed. We seem privy to the moment immediately before the subject's demise, that mythical final moment of clarity or reminiscence, the moment at which Dickens's Little Nell heard "beautiful music." For wide discussion, see Elisabeth Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

84Letters from and to Joseph Joachim, 45.

85Letter of 27 November 1853, Letters from and to Joseph Joachim, 40.
which he wards off all the morbid emotions and imaginary troubles of others is really delightful. . . . His compositions . . . rejecting all earthly sorrows. Joachim's admiration for Brahms reveals his concern for how the emotions associated with sentimental feeling should be artistically treated with caution. Joachim's expressions of such self-doubt on this matter to his most beloved highlight this as a crucial creative issue. With the failure of their engagement just a few weeks later Joachim inevitably felt a sense of deep loss and isolation. In the face of the dark uncertainties and skepticism that the grief at loss or separation generates, sentimentalism can,

as Mary Louise Kete has argued, affirm the hopeful and the benevolent through seeking to re-establish “symbolic connections severed by the contingencies of human existence.”

It is apparent that for Joachim, as for Ruskin, such “connectivity” should not only be emotional but also structural. In 1856 Joachim was to return to such tones, where reparation is expressed and structured in sentimental guise, in the Elegiac Overture, “In Memoriam Heinrich von Kleist,” op. 13. The first subject (ex. 5) starts as lament, with the traditional grief motive of 5–♭6–5 and falling chromatic line, before moving to more sympathetic figures as

Example 5: Joachim, Elegiac Overture, “In Memoriam Heinrich von Kleist,” op. 13 (1856); opening.

A rising seventh deflects the lamenting descent and the harmony turns momentarily to diatonic major rather than chromatically embellished minor. The second subject also presents a dual character. It is first presented as a hymn, then as lyrical song without words; two sides of the sentimental coin, religioso and amoroso. The exposition ends in codetta material of decidedly heroic mode, so the overall expositional context is a post-Beethovenian tragic heroism. By contrast, however, the structurally parallel coda to the recapitulation is an elegiac commemoration, as the lamenting, weeping aspect of the first theme is reduced to its essence, the D–Eb–D motive. At the end of the overture we are left with the dying sounds of sympathetic identification with the suffering subject (Kleist) to offer closure and comfort.

The overture was performed at the concert arranged in 1877 to celebrate the award of Joachim’s honorary doctorate at Cambridge University. The Musical Times reported that this was “a work which commemorates a poet of high genius but most unhappy fortunes . . . a man whom rarest intellectual gifts could not guard against despair and self-sought death. The music which a sympathetic master laid, like an immortelle, upon Kleist’s grave, is thoroughly en rapport with its inspiring cause. . . . It is penetrated by a tenderness of sentiment and a dignity of purpose that at once predispose the hearer in its favor, because such qualities are at once
Joachim is praised for his compositional ability at turning tears into music. But such tears, for this English critic, were noble and sympathetic. Joachim was also lauded for being able to achieve this expressive effect as a performer. In his 1905 biography Fuller Maitland comments how, on listening to Joachim playing first violin in the Cavatina from Beethoven’s op. 130, one ‘is to be allowed to gaze into the uttermost profundity of human emotion, into a depth far below the source of tears.’ The contrast is overt: we are moved beyond the superficial weeping of the sentimentalist. But to insist on such contrast is to suspect that this sentimentality still resides. Indeed, uncertainty with such residues informs the critical reception of this Adagio. The testimony of Haas that the composing of this work cost Beethoven tears, and that its mere recollection brought the return of weeping, was so often invoked during the nineteenth century that not to weep at hearing this music was to suggest one didn’t understand it (or was listening to an inadequate performance). In a 1904 essay on Beethoven, Arthur Symons wrote: “In that Cavatina which Beethoven wrote weeping, one overhears a noble and not despairing sorrow, which can weep but not whimper; an imploring, sadly questioning, unresentful lament; the most reticent sorrow ever rendered in music.” And then, in a quasi-Russian move to a sacred sublime, he continues: “To have written this movement is as great a thing as to have built a cathedral, in which, not more truly, the soul shelters from its grief.” It is not difficult to once again perceive the latent anxiety over what kind of tears are appropriate for a great man, or in a great work.

In this regard Joachim’s reputation as interpreter of apparently “deep,” sorrowful adagios is telling. Typical is the report from Vienna given in the Musical World in 1861 of Joachim’s performance of the slow movement of Beethoven’s Concerto, “which he gave with deep feeling, but with such a degree of freedom that he almost appeared to be extemporising.” The contrast is made with Vieuxtemps’s “gushing” performance. In an unspecified “adagio by Spohr,” Joachim’s playing was “vigorous” and “varied”: in other words, avoiding the effeminacy, feeble meanderings of the sentimentalist. Adagios had become a highly valued, special type of expressive music. So sentimentalism in such adagios had to be heard as carefully handled. Margaret Notley, a self-confessed “sensitive soul” to whom Adagios speak, has explored the nineteenth-century “cult” of the Classical Adagio, of how it became a favorite topic in German novels of the early Romantic period, serving as “the aesthetic symbol of melancholy soliloquy and sentimentally excessive feelings of love.”

Later, in the hands of the post-Beethovenian Romantics, the Adagio became a site for exploration of subjective inwardness and spiritual transcendence. The sentimentalism previously attaching to the Adagio seems to be transformed into something of higher or deeper value; in short, raised into the rarefied realms of absolute music. In his Joachim obituary, Donald Tovey described Joachim’s performance of the slow movement of Beethoven’s Concerto as one that “revealed a new heaven and a new earth”: it is Biblical, revelatory, and redemptive. This was

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88 Musical Times 18, no. 410 (April 1877): 171.
89 Fuller Maitland, Joseph Joachim, 49.

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Musical World [March 9 1861]: 151–52.
Margaret Notley, “Late-Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music and the Cult of the Classical Adagio,” this journal 23 ([1999]: 33–61, at 35 and 61.
92 There is a powerful and extensive discourse in German letters here, of course. Ludwig Tieck made the contrast between the demands of sublime feeling from those of the sentimental; we can easily be moved to tears, but the tears of the sublime are more powerful. Wackenroder, however, wished to retain the sentimental and to value the tears it produces; these distinctions between the sublime and the sentimental recur, sometimes overtly other times implied, in both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discussions of instrumental music. Carl Dahlhaus discussed how “absolute music” as a notion in part developed in opposition, or resistance to, the popular (and lower) variants of the aesthetics of feeling [which included the sentimental, though Dahlhaus does not use this term]. The Idea of Absolute Music, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 58, 62, 71. Again, of course, there are gendered implications: on the masculine character of absolute music, which was explicitly set against the feminine qualities of such as Mendelssohn’s Songs without Words, see Marcia J. Citron, “Gendered Reception of Brahms: Masculinity, Nationalism and Musical Politics,” in Masculinity and Western Musical Practice, ed. Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009], 152–53.
the highest, most sublime kind of musical religiosity. The other end of the scale, for Tovey, was Sullivan's Lost Chord, which he despised as representing a “sentimental description of the lowest type of musical maudlinings”; its religious tone was “an unpardonable blasphemy against the art of music.” Joachim was the priest proclaiming the great Beethoven’s profound truths: Sullivan was the pedlar of false comforts; Joachim hero, versus Sullivan heretic.

**Sentimentalism in the Concert Hall: Beautiful Design Magnified**

As a young man Tovey began playing chamber music with Joachim in 1894. He was to become one of his strongest critical advocates in England. Joachim was a profound influence on Tovey’s loyalty to Austro-Germanic Classicism, which Tovey combined with a tenacious Victorian conservatism. As Michael Spitzer has noted, Tovey’s writings owe much to the art criticism of Ruskin, for example, how Ruskin’s analyses in Modern Painters employ the rhetorical devices of ekphrasis and hypotyposis (the focus on the vividly picturesque) and emphasize the treatment and relationship of detail within the whole. Tovey once compared being inside a musical work with being surrounded by a picture: he described how the music “is around you like a panorama, like a picture painted on a round wall.” In The Poetry of Architecture (1873) Ruskin counsels that a house “must not be seen all at once; and he who sees one end should feel that, from the given data, he can arrive at no conclusion respecting the other, yet be impressed with a feeling of universal energy.” The parallel with how Tovey describes musical listening is striking. Listening to musical works is like moving through a beautiful house: organic, energetic, urgently leading us through the elements of its form via its various passages. This wholeness is the path to the holiness he heard in Joachim’s adagios.

Tovey sustains the long-standing critical association of Joachim’s concert performances with a resistance to sentimentalism when he rather stridently writes in 1902: “that the public can be so stirred without the smallest concession being made either to its ignorance or its sentimentality the whole of Joachim’s career triumphantly testifies.” In particular, Tovey identifies a contrast between Joachim and those who seek sentimental effect through slowing down the execution of the “beautiful” passages of a work. In another essay (1899) Tovey identified the “truthfulness” of Joachim’s performances in his grasp of “wholes”—sentimental performances, by contrast, highlight parts, details, and the subjective identity of the performer rather than the intention or person of the composer. Such cautious chime with passages in the violin treatise that Joachim wrote with Andreas Moser. In the sixth essay of the treatise’s third volume they are contemptuous of the way some violinists play the tranquillo theme of the first movement of Mendelssohn’s concerto: “dragged in this manner, a lachrymose sugariness comes to the fore, which is grounded neither in the theme nor in the intention of the composer.”

In its recourse to the theme itself and the intentional authority of the composer, the essay, like Tovey’s, deploys aspects of musical idealism to resist the sentimental. This also applied to virtuosity—which from Schumann

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Tovey, “Music in Being” (1925), in *The Classics of Music*, 485.


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Tovey, “Performance and Personality,” *Musical Gazette* 1 (Dec. 1899): 2 [March 1900]: 3 [July 1900], in *The Classics of Music*, 641–42. In his TLS Joachim obituary, Tovey again repeats the idea that to hear Joachim play is to hear Beethoven or Bach themselves.

onward was associated with salon sentimentalism and from which Joachim’s astonishing technique was repeatedly differentiated. Characteristic, for example, is an 1879 report of a Joachim performance in Pest printed in the Musical Standard, which speaks of Joachim demonstrating a new kind of virtuosity—one that is objective and classical [evoking “perfection of form” and “truth”], and in marked contrast with those virtuosi who focus on subjective detail. In the performances of the latter “the expression of the whole picture strikes us as changed, as strange”; Joachim’s performances are not tarnished by such practices, instead they are raised as a “purity” that is described in spiritual/religious terms, with Joachim exalted as a “priest of art.”

So are there two Joachims: one a sentimental artist for 1860s salons; another an anti-sentimentalist as heard in the concert hall? Well, we have already seen that the private/public, home/concert hall binary is more fluid than that. And as composers, neither Joachim nor Tovey was averse to including sentimental generic references in big, “serious” works with aspirations to greatness. For Tovey, Joachim’s “Hungarian” Concerto was a “great” work because it demonstrated Joachim’s Classical grasp of form. The formal command of the first movement [the “masterly and often intricate design” as it is described by Fuller Maitland] allows, if you will, Joachim a well-earned sentimental moment in the Romance slow movement, just as Tovey himself slipped a berceuse, marked to be played with innocent tenderness, into his earnestly ambitious Second String Quartet, op. 24 [1914], and of course Beethoven, the “greatest” of them all, incorporated a Cavatina into his op. 130. The inclusion of genres associated with sentimental expression in larger forms suggests that Tovey’s adulation of Joachim’s art, though expressed at a time when mid-century Victorian sentimentalism was widely considered out of fashion, carries echoes of Ruskin’s demand that in “great art” such feelings of sentiment need to be placed in beautiful designs that expand to the formal proportions of the sublime. Another way to achieve a similarly sanctioned incorporation of sentimental moments into ambitious design is exemplified by Stanford’s String Quartet No. 5, written “In Memoriam Joseph Joachim” in 1907, each of whose four movements ends with a quotation, marked “J.J.” in the score, from the opening of one of Joachim’s salon pieces, the Romance in B♭. The effect of this strategically designed homage is to reveal that all the preceding themes and developments of each movement are related to Joachim’s theme, that intricate, elaborate, and “serious” musical forms have been derived from a borrowed sentimental moment, reflecting on the loss of an esteemed friend.

Similar concerns inform Tovey’s 1901 discussion of the Adagio of Beethoven’s “Hammerklavier” Sonata, op. 106, with its opening instruction to the pianist: con molto sentimento. Tovey argues that “true” expression is based on its relationship to other resources, especially what he calls “design.” An “emotional rendering” of a “great work,” one with no concern for the design of the whole, would be “callous and flippant.” Where “symptoms of emotion are excited by single phrases . . . the impression of the whole ought to produce hysteric s or aphasia.” In a critical strategy that recalls Ruskin’s contrast between Landseer’s The Old Shepherd’s Chief Mourner and Hunt’s Scapegoat, Tovey compares Beethoven’s op. 106 with Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony: “there are probably a hundred lovers of music who would be moved to tears by Tchaikovsky’s ‘Pathetic’

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103 Musical Standard, 17 May 1879. On Joachim and virtuosity more widely, see Karen Leistra-Jones, Virtue and Virtuosity: Brahms, the Concerto, and the Politics of Performance in Late Nineteenth-Century Austro-German Culture (PhD diss., Yale University, 2011).
104 Tovey, “Joseph Joachim: Maker of Music,” 89.
105 Fuller Maitland, Joachim, 53.
symphony to one who would be so moved by the slow movement of Beethoven’s Sonata op. 106.” Though he expresses “great respect and admiration” for Tchaikovsky’s work and “it produces more effect on me” than when he hears op. 106, there is no “range.” Nothing new would appear from repeated hearing, no “new depths” would be revealed. [All of Tchaikovsky is grasped immediately, his sentimentalism is dominating, overly prominent; again one is reminded of Ruskin’s low opinion of Hunt’s front-loaded Scapegoat.] By contrast, the complete appreciation of Beethoven’s slow movement demands specially sensitive listening, for “unless one is in a state of unusual susceptibility to beauty of design, the slow movement is too quiet to produce the ordinary symptomatic effects on one’s nerves, and its material too romantic and the design too grand . . . to give an immediate impression of . . . tragic pathos.” Tovey emphasizes that it is “the quiet, the romance, and the grandeur” that “are the very things which make the pathos so real; and if they are lost in the rendering or not sought in the listening it avails nothing that the single phrases are eloquently declaimed.” The key requirement for Tovey is understanding the formal context of sentimental types of expression, of how gently amorous and beautiful effect is artistically placed in grand designs, in the Ruskinian manner (Tovey avoids using the term sentimental, though his alternative descriptors identify this as clearly the expressive effect indicated by Beethoven’s con molto sentimento).

Through the combination of design and sentimentalism, equivalent to the placing of beautiful objects or exquisitely decorated spaces in the perfectly formed house, Mendelssohn can insert what is essentially salon music, a song without words, as the second subject in the first movement of his Violin Concerto movement without losing esteem, though not without the dangers of misinterpretation by those performers who, by contrast with the master Joachim, are unwilling, or unable, to control their sentimentality, or indeed by those listeners who, according to Tovey, are similarly disinclined to control their response. This sentimental heart transplant resonates with examples in Victorian visual art in which, as Sonia Solicari has explored, “the same image could be imbued with, or denied, emotional profundity according to its visual context” as it moves between works praised as “timeless classic[s]” and those of more “popular banality.”

A more complicated example is the second subject of Brahms’s Violin Concerto, which can almost be identified as a subjective representation of Joachim himself, so close was his association with the composition and performance of the work. Brahms’s theme contains several features that can prick up sentimental ears (and the salon “feel” is perhaps heard more overtly when it is presented in Brahms’s arrangement for violin and piano as in ex. 6); the vibrato markings on the semitonal motives, the falling bass, the way it is introduced by dolce arpeggiation, in short, expressions of beautiful softness and weeping. Its formal position as a second subject and character as a moment of lyrical inwardness are, of course, conventional, but in Brahms’s movement the contrast with the absence of such a subjective condition in the preceding orchestral exposition, and therefore its identification with the solo violin, imbues it with strong sentimental effect: it is Joachim’s violin presenting us with a lost beautiful moment. This music exemplifies how sentimentalism can inflect different genres in different ways.

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106 Tovey’s essay was originally published as an extended program note for his own 1901 London performance of the sonata, as Essays in Musical Analysis, vol. III: Concertos [London: Joseph Williams 1901], rpt. in The Classics of Music, 43–67, at 45–46.
Brahms's theme has attracted comments on the notation of vibrato on the semitonal motives. Vibrato is one of the chief effects that spark the concern for what Joachim and Moser in their *Violinschule* call "normal" and "healthy" violin playing: "A tasteful violinist with healthy sensitivity will always recognize the steady tone as the normal one, and will only use vibrato where the requirements of the expression compPELLingly suggest it." And then they issue further caution: "a superfluity of [vibrato] especially in the wrong place, calls forth a feeling of extreme discomfort in the listener." Vibrato is, along with portamento and rubato, one of the essential tools of the sentimental violinist. All are treated with such caution in the treatise, as if they were possible contagion: portamento, for example, "must never degenerate into a whine overstepping the limits of the beautiful." It was all a matter of good taste allied to an ideal realization of the composer's intentions, and to a suspicion that virtuosic effect was empty, by contrast with the spiritual dimension of masterful compositional content. Because Brahms is considered a master of formal design who is able to work such moments of sentimental expression into sophisticated relationship with other parts of the structure through demonstrable motivic links, Tovey has no problem with such passages. Again, of course, given the cultural association of the sentimental with the feminine, the formal control required of great art by Tovey and Ruskin is one way of legitimizing Joachim's own C-Major Romance that Joachim made in old age; see, for example, the transcription and analysis in Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice, 1750–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 449–52; and the discussions in David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance 1850–1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 96–98, 128, 166–67, 208.

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Example 6: Brahms, Violin Concerto, op. 77 (1878), arr. for violin and piano by the composer: mm. 203–18.
certain forms of expression and assuaging anxiety over their gendered character. Where a composer (or artist, as we saw in Ruskin’s condemnation of Holman Hunt) is considered to lack such formal mastery charges of over-sentimentality can accrue. And when a composer appears to resort inadequately to highly valued forms to project sentimental expression such criticism can be especially cutting. George Bernard Shaw, one of Joachim’s more equivocal critics, lambasted the violinist for his persistence in playing the music of Max Bruch. In 1892 he wrote after hearing Joachim play the third concerto: “Bruch’s concerto, like most of his works, is masterly in the most artificial vulgarities of the grandiose, the passionate, the obviously sentimental, and the coarsely compulsive.” He dismisses the Joachimites who insist that their hero never plays music that is less than the “very highest class.” “Then, I ask, why does he play Max Bruch?” The concerto, then newly composed, was dedicated to Joachim so the violinist’s advocacy of the work is unsurprising. But Shaw is dismissive; “a violinist who plays Bruch will play anything—variations on the Carnival of Venice, Home Sweet Home on one string, or what you please.” As we have seen, it would have been no surprise if Joachim’s fans [Ruskin among them] at Little Holland House had (if perhaps to Halé’s despair) requested a rendition of Bishop’s sentimental favorite—and Joachim may well have consented, and in so doing would no doubt have been heard to raise the sentimental melody into sublime experience under those magnificent ceilings (though not so likely played on one string, Shaw is probably slipping in a reference to the well-travelled story of Paganini’s singular virtuosic technique acquired on a broken instrument during incarceration). The crucial thing for Shaw is encapsulated in the misconception that “the form makes the composer, and not the composer the form,” the false perception that by writing big, complicated pieces quality is assured: “it is on the strength of his concertos that [Bruch] is regarded as a sort of contemporary old master, and played by the severe Joachim.”

Shaw’s description of Joachim as “severe” in his review is interesting as it points to a major point of critical debate in comparisons between the now ageing Joachim and the rising star, Eugène Ysaÿe. In 1890 Shaw expressed preference for the latter’s playing of Bach. This would be heresy to the Joachim adherents, who invested such authority in Joachim’s interpretations of the Chaconne and other works. Ysaÿe’s London performances were, however, leading to rather wide critical revaluation of Joachim’s playing. On a 1900 performance of the Beethoven concerto, The Musical Standard commented that some might have thought Ysaÿe’s performance too sentimental. The comparison is made by contrast with Joachim’s approach, which is described as “more aloof, colder, perhaps purer, and more abstract and less individual.” All these ascribed characteristics, of course, were crucial bases of Joachim’s reputation for authentic and self-sacrificing interpretations. However, the critic suggests other approaches are defensible, “after all there is no reason why Beethoven should be played in that much-lauded objective style.” The following year Edward A. Baughan [who was the editor of The Musical Standard] wrote a substantial critical essay on this subject. Setting himself against “intellectual” criticism, though he saw its attractions when there is “a deal of slushy sentiment in the world,” he compares Ysaÿe’s Bach interpretations with

115Hans Keller, who identified the violin as the ultimate “sentimentality test,” rescues the Glazunov Violin Concerto, for example, from failing this test through lauding its formal structure and developmental processes, and in hearing the finale as “masculine without the over-comlications of a masculinity complex.” Lissitzian formal complexity and Brahmsian motivic unity save the work, and the feminine associations of sentimental feeling are avoided through the muscular masculinity of its finale. George Bernard Shaw, “The Sentimental Violin” in Essays on Music, ed. Christopher Wintle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 71–73.


118The Musical Standard, 3 March 1900, 128.
Joachim’s performances of the Chaconne. The former made it sound “new” and full of “life” and offered a “reading just as inevitable as Joachim’s”: Ysaye’s is a “human” and “modern utterance”; Joachim’s one of “formal beauty,” “cold, but it has the merit of its austerity.” Baughan questions whether we can be sure that such an “austere” approach is one which matches the composer’s intentions, as advocates of Joachim repeatedly asserted. He is ultimately ambivalent and proposes that a “perfect” critic is one who can see both sides, who considers the “recent trend against emotionalism” as just as one-sided as is single-minded emotionalism. Baughan espouses a balanced, dual approach which sees merit in both the “formalism” of the “aesthete” and the “impressionism” of the “Emotionalist.”

Against the charge that Joachim’s approach was one-sided Fuller Maitland, though keen to re-assert the gendered oppositions that had characterized the contrast between Joachim and Sivori in mid-century by describing Joachim’s tone as one of “virile energy rather than voluptuous roundness,” counters that the charge of a “Classical coldness” is not appropriate for Joachim (unlike some of those who, following his example, seek a “classical” style through “avoiding all nuances, whether of time or force, that are not actually indicated in the printed score”). Fuller Maitland insists that Joachim’s playing is “warm” and “noble” in a manner that does not eschew the expressive rewards of rubato but deploys it as part of a “perfect” and “natural” interpretation. It was an art, he argues, which Joachim learnt from Mendelssohn. But this is a dangerous call, given the revaluation of Mendelssohn’s reputation in these years, not least as put by Shaw in 1889: “We now see plainly enough that Mendelssohn, though he expressed himself in music with touching tenderness and refinement, and sometimes with a nobility and pure fire that makes us forget all his kid glove gentility, his conventional sentimentalism, and his despicable oratorio mongering, was not in the foremost rank of great composer.” Shaw continues that Mendelssohn “is the great composer of the century for all those to whom Tenney is the great poet of the century,” thereby associating Mendelssohn with the mid-century sentimentalists who flocked to Little Holland House, and identifies Mendelssohn’s tendency, as he did with Bruch, to compose in “deadly” and “tiresome” examples of sonata form. As we saw, in his obituary of Joachim, Fuller Maitland recognized the need to dissociate the violinist from the sentimental aspect of Mendelssohn’s reputation; the appeal to Mendelssohn in his defence of Joachim written just two years before reveals his deeply conservative aesthetic.

**JOACHIM’S TWILIGHT**

The crowning moment of Joachim’s association with England was the “diamond jubilee” celebration of the anniversary of his first London performance, held in the Queen’s Hall on 16 May 1904. Robert Eshbach has described the main event and the character and significance of the surrounding activity, including the private occasion that took place two weeks before the public ceremonial at the Surrey school run by Sophia Weiss (who was also an important mentor to Tovey), and that inspired Robert Bridges’s sonnet “To Joseph Joachim.” In lines celebrating Joachim’s “Making Beethoven’s inmost passion speak/bringing the soul of great Sebastian near” and how the violinist is to be similarly “laurel’d” and “enobled” in the heavenly afterlife, Bridges confirms Joachim’s place in the sanctuary of the German musical art. More widely, Hubert Parry’s address at the Queen’s Hall celebration identified Joachim with “classic art and with self-sacrifice to the cause of truth: you devoted your whole energies, as executant and composer, to continuing the tradition and maintaining the ideal of classic music.” “Fidelity” and “sincerity” are once again identified with subservience to the will of the composer. After a speech by the Prime Minister, Balfour, 19TH CENTURY MUSIC
Joachim performed the Beethoven concerto (after some misgiving, as he knew his technique and stamina had weakened) and his arrangement of Schumann’s Abendlied, in the version with orchestra. One of Joachim’s most popular domestic pieces (so often requested at the Kensington soirees of the 1860s) was thereby transformed into a public moment of commemoration at the twilight of his career.

Joachim’s ranking with not only the German musical masters but also with the Victorian great and good was sealed when John Singer Sargent’s portrait was presented at the ceremony. Comparison with Watts’s portrait [which had similarly put Joachim in exalted and worthy English company and had regained currency on its reproduction as the glossy frontispiece to the 1901 English translation of Andreas Moser’s biography123] reveals some interesting contrasts (plate 2). Watts painted against the traditional aims of portraiture and its aspirations of glamour, identity, and synthesis, which convention had set as public markers of success and prestige. Watts portrays his subjects in private solitude and holds them with a sense of mystery “hovering between the sensual and the austere.” In the work of Sargent, who was one of the most successful portrait artists of the later nineteenth century, the subject is posed to “dominate the social space,” in a controlled and monumental form.124 In a 1900 essay, Symons contrasted Watts directly with Sargent, whose bright studio


[123]Fuller Maitland notes in his introduction: “Some of those in England who are proud to call themselves the friends of Joachim may feel a little aggrieved at the very small space, hardly more than a passing reference, allotted to the time the illustrious artist has spent in London.” “Introduction” to Andreas Moser, Joseph Joachim: A Biography 1831–99, trans. Lilla Durham [London: Philip Welby, 1901], v.

lights he sees as causing the soul of his sitter to take flight, leaving behind a portrait with no hidden secret, no mystery. By contrast, Watts’s work is described in terms of instability and layering: “Thoughtfulness comes slowly into these faces, as the soul of the painter trains his hand to finer uses. At first a blank, then an animal intelligence, then will, then the desire of beauty, or knowledge, or power, then the consciousness of self, then personality unconscious even of its presence, then the passion of an idea, into which the whole man passes, more visibly than in life [as in the portrait of Joachim]. . .” Such forms are evanescent, emerging from sensations and forces, impressions in a process of gradation and becoming. As Trodd points out, Symons describes an aesthetic, after the influence of Walter Pater, which is very different from the classical idea that was commonly attached to Watts.

Sargent paints Joachim in authoritative and imposing manner, arms folded, face fully illuminated: Joachim stares directly and assuredly at the observer. Watts paints him in the dim lamp-light of a domestic setting: Joachim’s eyes turned down toward his instrument. The other obvious difference between the portraits is that the older Joachim in Sargent’s work now sports his famous beard. Tennyson is reported by Stanford, upon looking at one of Cameron’s photographs of the violinist, as saying “Why did he cover up that fine jowl with a beard?” This late-nineteenth-century signifier of masculine cultural authority was wonderfully lampooned by Stefan Zweig, who, reminiscing about the early years of the century while in exile in England in 1939, wrote:

In our father’s generation a poet or musician was esteemed only when he had “proved himself,” adjusting to the worthy tastes of bourgeois society. All the men whom we had been taught to respect bore themselves and behaved like people truly worthy of that respect. They had fine beards, sprinkled with grey, above poetical velvet jackets. . . They had themselves photographed with a pensive gaze, always in “dignified” and “poetic” attitudes, they behaved like the bearers of official titles, excellencies and councillors, and like them were awarded honours.

Watts was himself luxuriantly bearded [as indeed was Tennyson] and was photographed with the tonsorially bestowed Joachim on a visit the violinist made to Watts’s Surrey home, Limnerslease [ca. 1900].

Watts, though now very old and rather frail, attended Joachim’s jubilee celebrations, and music remained crucially important to him for both its sensual qualities and its apparent perfect integration of form and content. Barrington compared Watts’s art with Brahms: “Like Brahms’s music,” she wrote, “Watts’s colour seems in touch with the mystery and the undefined in nature.” Watts’s later work becomes increasingly abstract and thereby, in his own view, closer to music; in 1880 he wrote: “To my mind [art] is nearer in its operation on these sensibilities to music than to anything else, but it must not only have the power to touch and awaken. It must have also the power to sustain the awakened & elevated spirit in that pure atmosphere that we only breathe in our happiest & least earthly moments.” For the critic G. K. Chesterton, Watts’s art was symptomatic of the doubtful faith and faithful doubt of the second half of the nineteenth century. Like many commentators, he focused on Watts’s iconic late painting Hope (ca. 1885–86). A girl with bandaged eyes plays on the solitary string of a damaged, archaic lyre; having gained a position of knowledge over the world she has lost her music and its joy. The one string of hope remains [given Watts’s musical eclecticism one can only be partly sure she is not, to evoke Shaw, attempting to play one-stringed variations on “Home Sweet Home”]. In his 1889 lectures on Religion in Recent Art, P. T. Forsyth discusses Watts as exemplifying a “branch of sacred

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125 Symons, “Watts,” in Studies in Seven Arts, 90, 94.
126 Ibid.
130 Barrington, G. F. Watts, 69.
harmoneutics” as a kind of heroic figure who might stir the English from their fondness for the “merely congenial and agreeable.” (Forsyth, it should be clarified, was a Scot.) Forsyth compares Watts as a religious painter with the poet-priest described in Wagner’s then recently published essay “The Religion of Art.” Forsyth characterizes the Victorian era as an “age of growing and inevitable sadness” and sees Watts’s works as “painted parables” that project a new “darkling” Hope.133 When we recall Ysaÿe’s description of Joachim’s playing as “a consecration, a sort of Bayreuth on a reduced scale, in which tradition was perpetuated and made beautiful and strong,”134 it is not hard to see why the violinist was such an attractive figure for Watts, a worthy subject of one of his most sympathetic portraits.

Watts’s Hope can be read as an elegy for art (perhaps we should say “Art”) itself. At the turn of the century Tovey already sensed it was not only the twilight of Joachim’s career but also of the classical aesthetic that he shared with his friend. While he despaired at the ever-widening partisanship that he saw emerging out of the Brahms-Wagner polemic, he praised Joachim for realizing that the “old school” of German music would better nurture the greatness of his art.135 He wrestled somewhat intensely with the vogue for praising “progress” and the degrading accusation of the backwardness of “academicism”; in fear of the dangers of ephemerality he implored that permanence in critical thought can only be achieved if based in large part on study of the “classics.”136 In his 1901 Hammerklavier program note, he defined a “classic” as that status achieved when “emotion has a place in the work analogous to that which emotion has in a heroic life.”137 As one such emotion, sentimentalism only gets its proper place and interpretation in the great work of his musical heroes, such as Joachim. It is characteristic that in his program note for the Joachim memorial concert of January 1908 Tovey clings to supposedly eternal notions of classical beauty, manifest in particular in the value placed on certain types of “absolute” musical unity.138 In his study of the “fantasy of absolute music” Thomas Nelson notes how what he calls the “sentimental” Romantics of the second half of the nineteenth century (and he includes both Brahms and Wagner in this category) were “infected by passive melancholy,” seduced in a world of doubt by the “opportunity to enter the timeless refuge of a structurally opposed alternative world of symbolic certainties,” a “religion of art” of “ascetic purity.” Their art was in effect an “escapism that avoids acknowledging the structural and fantasy of its symbolic representations.”139 But this image of subjective unity was now receding. Watts died on 1 July 1904. In response, Stanford wrote his Sixth Symphony, entitled “In Memoriam G. F. Watts” (1905). It is one of his most impressive orchestral works. After a first movement of notable energy and robust vigor the long Adagio seeks to capture in sound Watts’s mythical conception of love. Dibble describes the movement as a combination of “melancholy” with “voluptuousness.”140 It sounds like an elegy to a waning artistic style and age, but one couched in exquisite and seductively beautiful form. By the time of Joachim’s death, three years after Watts’s demise, the painter and sculptor was a figure whose reputation was in steep decline. Bloomsbury modernists dismissed him as absurd and irrelevant. In the farce Freshwater

134Quoted in Eshbach, “The Joachim Quartet Concerts at the Berlin Singakademie,” Brahms in the Home and the Concert Hall, 32.
135Tovey, “Performance and Personality” (1899–1900), The Classics of Music, 629–49.
136Tovey, “Permanent Musical Criteria” [1903], The Classics of Music, 664–86.
137Tovey, The Classics of Music, 45.
138Tovey, “An Appreciation of Joseph Joachim as Composer” [program note for the memorial concert, Queen’s Hall, London, 23 January 1908], The Classics of Music, 687–88.
140Dibble, Stanford, 362. Stanford’s Suite for Orchestra, op. 32 (1888), one of several works he dedicated to Joachim, also encapsulates this sense of musical “pasts-ness” through its mixture of Baroque archaisms and a conservative Romanticism often recalling Mendelssohn.
[Watts and Tennyson both had houses in the eponymous Isle of Wight village], Virginia Woolf ridicules the mores of the circle of Watts, Tennyson, and Cameron (who was her aunt). The Holland House set were derided for their “ tiresome piety.” Watts was “ written off as an impossible concoction of the classical and the demotic, the heroic and the sentimental.” In such terms, however, we can identify why Joachim’s relationship to Victorian culture was so important: by turns he was for them keeper of the Classics, heroic servant of artistic ideals, and purveyor of exquisite examples of the finer forms of the sentimental.


Abstract.
Joseph Joachim’s role in nineteenth-century English concert life is long celebrated. As yet unexamined, however, is how his performances and reception informed critical debates on sentimentalism. Joachim was a prominent celebrity in the domestic salons of mid-century, for example the Holland Park Circle, where his performances were described as perfect echoes of beautiful interior designs and his status confirmed by G. F. Watts’s famous portrait. This article builds on the relationship between “ sublime sentimentality” and “ domestic aestheticism” in the writings of John Ruskin, a prominent member of these salons. It explores how Ruskin’s idea of moving from domestic “ sites,” through “ patterns” to “ states” in which the heartfelt is expressed in coded, synecdochal or allusive evocation, even in abstract abstract design, can offer insight into the sentimental dimensions of Joachim’s salon performances.

Crucially, Ruskin considered both domesticity and sentimentalism as designs and expressions of feeling which are capable of expansion into large forms and contexts, of moving from the intimate to the public. The second part of this article explores sentimentalism in works composed for the concert hall, provoking critical debate at the turn of the century. Tovey’s Victorian tastes were strongly influenced by both Joachim and Ruskin, but Tovey’s assessments of Joachim as the violinist reached the end of his career exemplify the wide critical turn against mid-century sentimentalism. In 1902 Tovey praised Joachim for making no concession to public sentimentalism, in particular through demonstrating a “ Classical” grasp of form, by contrast with those who seek sentimental effect through slowing down the performance of “ beautiful” passages. In a late echo of Ruskin, Tovey desired that one must be susceptible to the beauty of “ design.” The article ends by comparing Sargent’s late portrait of Joachim, presented at the Jubilee celebrations of 1904, with that of Watts.

Keywords: sentimentalism, Joachim, Victorian England, salon

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE [SPRING 2019]

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