

2-21-1989

Henri Temianka Correspondence; (menuhin)

Yehudi Menuhin

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/temianka_correspondence

Recommended Citation

Menuhin, Yehudi, "Henri Temianka Correspondence; (menuhin)" (1989). *Henri Temianka Correspondence*. 1453.
https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/temianka_correspondence/1453

This Letter is brought to you for free and open access by the Henri Temianka Archives at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Henri Temianka Correspondence by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

Henri Temianka Correspondence; (menuhin)

Keywords

Henri Temianka, Yehudi Menuhin, February 21, 1989, culture, virtuosity in musical performance, violinist, chamber music, camaraderie, husband, wife, Emmy Temianka, music education

21st February 1989

*65, Chester Square,
London, S.W.1*

Mr Henri Temianka,
2915 Patricia Ave,
Los Angeles,
California 90064,
U.S.A.

Dear Henri,

You do write most eloquently; it is a charming article you wrote on Victor Borge.

I love your account of the early Italian composers, and how right you are. In fact, the whole assumption that expression in violin playing only began with the Russians, when our dear Yasha arrived as a young man in San Francisco, and that before then there was no vibrato and no expression, is, of course, nonsense. It is true that there was a period - in France particularly - when vibrato was eschewed, as with the Capet Quartet, whom you may have heard, but that was an intellectual discipline. Then again, some German violinists were not blessed with that passion which should be part of violin playing, and always has been in Italy and among the gypsies. It has been forgotten that the violin is the voice and the vibrato is part of the actual movement of the left arm required to change positions and even for the finger fall. It is actually a tremendous effort not to vibrate, and a very useful one, as we know.

Another proof of passion is the use of the baroque bow, the convex shape of which produces several extraordinary results. One of them is that the wood moves before the hair and provides an automatic accent on every détaché if so wished. Automatically, in forte and at speed, it gives the semi-quavers an unbelievable vitality. Another effect of the convex shape is the infinite degree of portato and the myriad inflections, which become automatically part of all phases and all phrasing. Today's thinking would have it that the

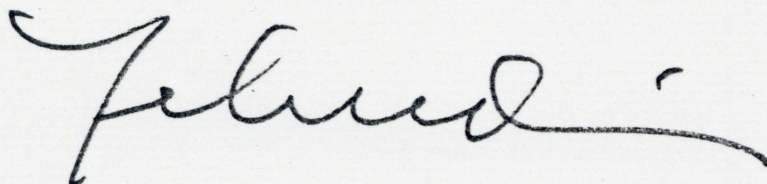
baroque bow is useful only to play three or more strings together. That is simply a further addition. The fact that the right-hand fingers could control the tension of the hair is something we have totally lost with the modern Tourte bow.

I am, therefore, at one with your evocation of the Corelli - Locatelli - Nardini era, and then I think that a very rough indication of vibrato, exuberance and wild passion is simply the number of children that the composer had, or the opportunities of adopting them as, for instance, Corelli with his girls' schools!

Your article is most timely in that it occurs at the end of an epoch - an impoverished epoch, in fact - belonging to your, mine, and a few succeeding generations, when composition was no longer practised and the professional dentist or driller, scratcher or grinder seem to be the one aim of the Jewish parents and remains now the main aim of the Chinese, Japanese and other emerging parents. However, the new trend among violinists and jazz musicians is to base their art and their skill on a much wider foundation than was thought necessary during the last three generations. Many more compose and improvise today than before. As you quite rightly say, Ysaye and Enesco were the last, but there are many budding ones today.

Love to you and Emmy,

Your old Friend,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Felix', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.