CHAPTER 4
THE GENDER OF STYLE

Many academic studies of recordings are organized around contemporaneous writings on performance practices or musical meaning. Will Crutchfield’s pioneering work on ornamentation in Verdi interrelates early recorded evidence with written documentation of Verdi’s own preferences.1 Similarly, in his seminal book on early orchestral recordings, Robert Philip begins each chapter with a survey of documentary evidence, then proceeds to a discussion of recordings. Such studies use recordings “to compliment analytical claims or illuminate interpretive possibilities.”2

More recently, some scholars have begun to move towards a paradigm that puts performers and performances on more equal footing with musical works.3 Their work typically adopts a combined approach, one in which analysis of the written and aural records of a piece complement each other. The second chapter of this dissertation followed their lead in three ways: by interweaving singing terminology with recorded evidence; by illustrating a pedagogue’s writings with recordings made by his students; and by using singers’ own recordings to exemplify their concepts of musical expressivity.

This chapter seeks to expand that paradigm by exploring an issue that is not discussed in the pedagogical literature or in performers’ own writings: the effects of

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gender on style. This is a large topic, in which I offer a single case study, the object of which is to explore some possible methodologies for addressing how gender impacts singers’ stylistic choices. In particular, I am interested in methodologies suggested by the recordings themselves, rather than by secondary materials.

Numerous factors led me to choose “Die Forelle” for analysis in this context. The song was recorded often, perhaps because of Schubert’s reuse of it in his “Trout” Quintet – and perhaps because it is extremely easy to sing. Its range, only a minor ninth, presents no difficulties, and it makes no great vocal demands, being neither dramatic, nor lyric and sustained. The poem, by Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, is equally suited to men and women. It is therefore hardly surprising that “Die Forelle” was recorded frequently, by singers of all voice types.

All these features would make “Die Forelle” excellent subject matter for a study of gender and style – and it turns out that, as a group, the recordings display an interpretative divide that splits almost entirely along gender lines. Because gender differences are neither explicitly discussed nor prescribed in any documentary evidence from the period, the “Die Forelle” recordings make an essential case for a performance-centric analysis of recorded performances. This is not to suggest that methodologies structured around documentary evidence are flawed or wanting. I simply want to propose that recordings sometimes make a case for alternative analytical methods in which performance itself occupies center stage.

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4 In recent years, the pedagogue Richard Miller has published Training Tenor Voices and Training Soprano Voices. These address differences in voice types from a pedagogical point of view.
“Die Forelle” recorded

In 1902, the Moravian bass Leopold Demuth made what was probably the first audio recording of Schubert’s “Die Forelle.” Although it has been beautifully remastered, several aural characteristics establish its origins from the first decade of commercial recording: the quaint, spoken introduction “Aufnahme für Gramophon,” the *whish-whish-whish* of the earliest acoustic technology, and the predominance of high frequencies in Demuth’s voice. Furthermore, Demuth sings in the easygoing, declamatory style that was common among singers of his generation. His performance privileges the rhythms of text declamation over rhythmic notation, and the speech-based rubato that results – for example, on “Betrogne” where he lengthens the stressed syllable, or on “so fängt er” where he rushes to the verb – is his style’s most salient feature. However, Demuth makes no pronounced tenuti, nor does he expand this declamatory rubato to the point of affecting the basic pulse (CD 3, track 1; Figure 4.1: the score, which serves as a reference for the entire chapter, is in the original published key of D♭ Major, but Demuth’s recording is in A Major): 7

Two more recordings of “Die Forelle” are known to have been issued before World War I: the first in 1908 by the soprano Susanne Dessoir, and the second in 1911, by the Austrian contralto Ernestine Schumann-Heink. Schumann-Heink was Demuth’s exact contemporary – both were born in 1861 – and their careers had much

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6 Sir George Henschel, who was born in 1850, just a decade before Demuth, is one well-known exponent of this style; its relevance to his recordings was examined in Chapter 3, 120 ff.  
7 In *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, Robert Philip divides rubato into three categories: accelerando and rallentando, melodic rubato, and agogic accent. The first is used to describe local changes in tempo; the second refers to melodic displacement tempo vis-à-vis the accompaniment, and the third includes momentary changes in pulse, for tenuti and the like. Philip’s book deals primarily with instrumental recordings; on vocal recordings, it is important to distinguish between two types of agogic accent, one that is driven by music and one that is driven by text. In practice, these may overlap, but not always. See Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, 37-44, and also Chapter 1 of this dissertation, 14.
Figure 4.1, Schubert, “Die Forelle”
Etwas lebhaft  

\[ \text{dim.} \]

In einem Bächlein hell, da schoß in froher.

Eil' die ländische Fessel vorüber wie ein Pfeil. Ich stand am Ufer und sah in süßer.

Ruh des munter Fischleins Bade im klaren Bächlein.
zu, des muntern Fischleins Bad im klaren Bäcklein

Eins

Fischere mit der Rute wohl an dem Ufer stand, und

sah's mit kaltem Blute, wie sich das Fischlein wand. So

lang dem Wasser Hel le, so dacht ich, nicht gebrecht, so
Figure 4.1 (Continued)

43

füngt er die Fo - rel - le mit sei - ner An - gel nicht, so

47

füngt er die Fo - rel - le mit sei - ner An - gel nicht.

51

Doch

55

end - lich ward dem Die - be die Zeit zu lang.

59

Er macht das Bäch - lein tük - kisch trü - be und eh' ich es ge -
Figure 4.1 (Continued)

63

dacht, so zuck-te sei-ne Ru-te, das Fisch-lein, das

67

Fisch-lein zap-pelt d’an, und ich mit re-gem Blu-te sah die Be-trog’-ne

72

an, und ich mit re-gem Blu-te sah die Be-trog’-ne

76

an.

dim PP
in common: both performed at Bayreuth, sang under Mahler, and were known for their solo concerts as well as operatic appearances. It is therefore hardly surprising that their recordings demonstrate a similar predilection to declamatory rubato – but beyond that, their interpretations of “Die Forelle” could hardly be more different. Schumann-Heink’s performance includes a great deal more portamento, and her interpretation of “Die Forelle” displays every kind of tempo flexibility. She makes a significant accelerando in the song’s middle section in a display of agitation as the fisherman sets his trap and the fish is caught. She also relies on many kinds of agogic accent, applying tenuti just before important cadences – on “Bächlein,” “Angel” and “Betrogne,” as well as on the upward slurred pairs at “süßer” and “nicht,” which she sings with considerable portamento and rubato (CD 3, track 2, sung in B Major).

It is this last gesture, the upward portamento-rubato on “süßer,” that follows a conspicuous pattern among early recordings of “Die Forelle.” Table 4.1 lists twenty-eight recordings, of which I have had access to twenty-four; all but one of these is pre-war.8 Exactly half of these twenty-four recordings, including Schumann-Heink’s, feature a significant temporal stretch around the ascending slurred pair on “süßer” in bar 17; of these, eleven are sung by women. The other half, including Demuth’s, exhibit only slight if any rubato at this point; nine of these twelve are sung by men.

The gender divide becomes all the more striking when we consider the diverse backgrounds of the singers on these recordings: they were not only German and Austrian, but also Danish, Norwegian, Russian, French, English and American.9 With the exception of the French singers, most sang in German, though there are

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8 The recording in question was made by Heinrich Schlusnus and dates from 1943. I have included it because Schlusnus’ work figures so prominently in other chapters.
Table 4.1, Published\textsuperscript{10} Pre-World War II Recordings of “Die Forelle”\textsuperscript{11}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singer</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Recording Date</th>
<th>Significant stretch at “SÜBER”?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leopold Demuth</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Susanne Dessoir</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernestine Schumann-Heink</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Elisabeth van Endert</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmond Clément</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Jenny Jungbauer</td>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olga Haley</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1924?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fritz Soot</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena Gerhardt</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotte Schöne</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie Braslau</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebba Wilton</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanni-Marcoux</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lula Mysz-Gmeiner</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland Hell</td>
<td>English?</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernestine Schumann-Heink</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willy Tubiana</td>
<td>Algerian-French</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henri Saint-Criq</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*J. Nicolesco</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>1926-31</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne Brothier</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy Stanton</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1932</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elisabeth Schumann</td>
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<td>1933</td>
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<td>Georges Thill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Panzéra</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ria Ginster</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marian Anderson</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsten Flagstad</td>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinrich Schlusnus</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The asterisks indicate recordings that I have heard.

\textsuperscript{10} The following artists made recordings of “Die Forelle” that are not known to be published: Clara Butt (1912), Marcella Sembrich (1913), Julia Culp (1917), Elena Gerhardt (two additional recordings in 1925 and one in 1925), Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1927) and Sophie Braslau (1928).

\textsuperscript{11} Complete discographical information of the recordings discussed in this chapter may be found in the Discography, 194-207. For those recordings that are not discussed, I refer the reader to the Schubert Songs discography on the CHARM website.
unique English and Russian versions as well. As for the French singers, their recordings feature not just one but two translations of Schubart’s original poem. Even so, the evidence on French recordings supports the gender gap previously described: on the parallel slurred pair, soprano Yvonne Brothier sings with more portamento and rubato than her male counterparts.

The agogic accents on this melodic figure can, to some degree, be understood in a musical context. Many late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers thought that musical tension and release should be defined, in performance, by various kinds of tempo flexibility. In an unpublished paper on musical meaning in “Die Forelle,” Burkhard Schwalbach suggests that singers may slow down over “süßer” because it is a point of harmonic tension: the slurried notes on “süßer” span a tritone, the epitome of melodic tension in and of itself; moreover, the top G♭ of that tritone forms a seventh with the A♭ in the bass. He makes a similar case for cadential ritards within the piece, drawing on discussions of musical rhetoric found in Hugo Riemann’s *Musikalische Dynamik und Agogik* (1884) as well as his *Handbuch des Klavierspiels* (1905):

Riemann classifies a move to the dominant as a ‘positive’ development, requiring an increase in tempo, whereas a return to the tonic constitutes a ‘negative’ development, which performers should communicate by a *ritardando*.14

Schwalbach’s analysis provides an excellent foundation for understanding why singers might make these ritards in the first place. What it doesn’t explain is why some performers choose to and others not – and not only singers. Consider the following recorded excerpts: the first, from the Pro-Arte Quartet’s 1935 recording of the fourth

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12 A broad discussion of this may be found in Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style.*
movement of Schubert’s “Trout Quintet” (CD 3, track 3); the second, the instrumental
interlude from a medley of Schubert songs sung by tenor John McCormack, recorded
in 1928 (CD 3, track 4). Why do some performances make more of these
opportunities for agogic accent than others? And among singers, why would women
be more likely to make such accents than men?

To understand why this gesture inspires such disparity between men and
women’s interpretative choices, we must consider it in several contexts: the word
“süßer,” an unfolding drama, an upward slurred pair, and an interval that traverses the
passaggio. In performance, these translate into both musical and declamatory agogic
accents, large-scale tempo changes, and different kinds of portamento. Exploring each
of these parameters in turn sheds light not only on this isolated gesture, but also
suggests further avenues for considering how gender and vocalism may influence style
more broadly.

**Words and drama**

Because the first slurred pair is on the word “süßer,” it is easy to imagine that
the word “süßer” must influence how the slurred pair is sung. In “Die Forelle,” this is
a hypothesis that can be tested, for the slurred pair reappears in the song’s second
verse, on the word “nicht.” On pre-war German recordings, many singers take a
similar approach to both slurred pairs, making an agogic accent on both or neither;
other singers make an agogic accent on the first syllable of “süßer” but not on “nicht.”
The third option, however – that a singer would make an agogic accent on “nicht” but
not on “süßer” – never occurs: not one singer who makes a tenuto on “nicht” sings
“süßer” rhythmically straight.

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15 See Chapter 2, pp.24-26, for a brief discussion of the passaggio.
However, in a couple of cases other differences between the vocalism on “süßer” and the straight or even rushed rhythm of “nicht” are so striking as to suggest that the words themselves influence how singers approach the slurred pairs. The contrast is particularly marked in the recordings of Lotte Schöne and Elisabeth Schumann (CD 3, tracks 5 and 6, recorded in 1927 and 1933, respectively). Moreover, in conjunction with the word “süßer,” the lilting portamenti of Schöne and Schumann have an almost madrigalistic effect.

Of course, it is hardly surprising to find a connection between the meaning of a specific word and the way it is sung. More broadly, it seems equally possible that, when singers interpret the two slurred pairs differently, they are in fact responding to a change in Affekt in the surrounding text. In this scenario, singers would use less agogic accent on the second slurred pair as a result of a steadier or even faster tempo in the second stanza. The few French language recordings from the same period bear out this hypothesis. Five of the six recordings feature an agogic accent on the first slurred pair; two of these feature less rubato across the second. Again, in no case does a singer make more of the second slurred pair than the first – even in two different French translations (Appendix B).

Relevant excerpts from the French translations are given below. These correspond with the following recorded excerpts: the first translation (“A”) is used by soprano Yvonne Brothier (ca. 1930-31, in D♭ Major), bass-baritone Willy Tubiana (1929, in A Major) and tenor Henri Saint-Cricq (ca. 1929-30, in C Major; all three sets of excerpts are on CD 3, track 7); the second translation (“B”) is sung by tenor Georges Thill (recorded 1934, in D♭ Major) and bass-baritone Vanni-Marcoux (1928, in A Major; both these sets of examples are on CD 3, track 8):

16 Robert Philip comments on this phenomenon: “in pre-war performances, slowing down at points of low tension and speeding up at points of high tension were both used frequently.” Early Recordings and Musical Style, 35.
It is worth noting that none of these syllables invites special treatment. The original German text may have influenced the French singers, who could have known the original German from scores or recordings. It is equally likely, however, that the agogic accents in the first verse are a response to the general Affekt.

Either or both of these text-driven scenarios – the first involving agogic accent and the second, changes in Affekt – may play into the gender gap on “süßer.” In the former, we would understand female singers to be more likely to emphasize the word “sweet.” In the latter scenario, we would understand female singers to be more likely to create a sweet Affekt for the first verse and/or to create a dramatically intense Affekt in the second. These possibilities are not necessarily mutually exclusive; however, the French recordings suggest that it is not necessarily the word “süßer” that inspires the agogic portamento in the first verse.

In either case, it is hard to escape the impression that the portamento on “süßer” sounds sweeter in a woman’s voice than in a man’s. That sweetness is caused by a difference in the registration of men and women’s voices – and it is a quality that lyric sopranos in particular capitalize on throughout their recordings. Because
registration is to some degree a choice, however, it is worth examining how it operates in portamenti more broadly, across many voice types and both genders.

A gesture of sweetness: gender, registration and portamento

Registration is related to range; as such, the sweet, heady sound that many women achieve on “süßer” is largely a function of tessitura – of where the gesture lies in the voice. The recordings of Elena Gerhardt offer a particularly clear demonstration of this point. In this excerpt from Schubert’s “Auf dem Wasser zu singen” (Figure 4.2), recorded like “Die Forelle” in 1926, Gerhardt’s portamenti change in quality as they ascend: Gerhardt’s registration changes, and her portamenti sound lighter (CD 3, track 9). The registration change in “Auf dem Wasser zu singen” is not only the result of range, however: Gerhardt achieves it by singing at a relatively soft dynamic. Compare her portamenti in Schubert’s “Liebesbotschaft” (Figure 4.3) which she also recorded in 1926 (CD 3, track 10).

Though the highest slurred pairs in both of the aforementioned recordings have top notes of E♭, the difference in Gerhardt’s vocal quality on each is immediately apparent. While the portamenti in “Liebesbotschaft” give the impression that Gerhardt is somehow “dragging” her voice from bottom to top, in “Auf dem Wasser zu singen” and “Die Forelle” (CD 3, track 11) Gerhardt gives the impression that she is instead removing weight from her voice.

Among lyric sopranos, this kind of vocal gesture – removing weight during an upward portamento – is commonplace. This is especially true when the upper note of the portamento is in or above the upper passaggio.¹⁷ Compare the following: Lotte Schöne’s “süßer” (CD 3, track 12) with how she sings the word “so” in the Norina-

¹⁷ The higher and lighter a singer’s instrument, the more essential to her vocal longevity that she not take excessive weight through the upper passaggio – which for sopranos normally occurs around the notes E–F–F♯. For a brief discussion of vocal weight and registration, see Chapter 2, pp.27-29.
Figure 4.2, Schubert, “Auf dem Wasser zu singen,” mm. 7-21
Figure 4.3, Schubert, “Liebesbotschaft,” mm. 16-30
Malatesta duet from Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale* (Figure 4.4; recorded in 1927 and excerpted on CD 3, track 13); Elisabeth Schumann’s “süßer” (CD 3, track 14) with the gesture she makes on “hängt” in this excerpt from Robert Schumann’s “Schneeglöckchen,” op. 79, no. 27 (Figure 4.5; recorded in 1930 and included here on CD 3, track 15); and finally Ria Ginster’s “süßer” (from 1935; CD 3, track 16) with her recording of a passage from Schubert’s “Wiegenlied” D. 867 (Figure 4.6; recorded in 1933, excerpt on CD 3, track 17).

In each instance, the combination of agogic accent and portamento creates a caressing gesture, one that sounds very much at home in these lyric soprano voices. These examples all feature a combination of portamento and agogic accent. But Schöne, Schumann and Ginster approach ascending slurred pairs similarly at steady tempos as well. Compare the previous examples with the following excerpts: the first, of Lotte Schöne singing Schubert’s “Der Hirt auf dem Felsen” (Figure 4.7; recorded in 1929, excerpt on CD 3, track 18) the second featuring Ria Ginster in Schubert’s “Auflösung”\textsuperscript{18} (Figure 4.8; recorded in 1935, excerpt on CD 3, track 19) and finally Elisabeth Schumann singing Schubert’s “Nachtviolen” (Figure 4.9; recorded in 1938, excerpt on CD 3, track, 20). As a group, these examples suggest that in lyric soprano voices, the most ear-catching element of this kind of gesture is not an agogic accent, but the registration shift itself. In this context, the ascending slurred pairs on “süßer” of Schöne, Schumann and Ginster seem to exist within a culture of vocalism – that is, of lyric voices singing lyrically.

The registration shift towards more head voice on “süßer” is also taken up by some lower voiced women, but not all. Like Gerhardt and Schumann-Heink, mezzo-
Figure 4.4, Donizetti, *Don Pasquale*, Act I, *Recitativo e duetto*, mm. 64-65

Figure 4.5, Schumann, “Schneeglöckchen” (Op. 79, no. 27), mm. 1-9
Figure 4.6, Schubert, “Wiegenlied” (D. 867), mm. 5-14

Figure 4.7, Schubert, “Der Hirt auf dem Felsen,” mm. 253-259
Figure 4.8, Schubert, “Auflösung,” mm. 43-56
soprano Lula Mysz-Gmeiner and contralto Sophie Braslau, both of whom recorded “Die Forelle” in 1928 (CD 3, tracks 21 and 22; in B Major and A Major, respectively), sing “süßer” with a lot of head voice. However, soprano Kirsten Flagstad (CD 3, track 23; recorded in Db Major, 1937) and contralto Marian Anderson (CD 3, track 24; recorded in B Major, 1936) do not. In Anderson’s version, her persistently heavy registration recalls some of Gerhardt’s dragging portamenti in “Liebesbotschaft” and “Auf dem Wasser zu singen.” In Flagstad’s, though she sings the top note with lighter registration than the bottom note, she accomplishes the registration shift by popping directly from bottom to top. Had Flagstad instead sung the interval with portamento, she might have sung the top note of “süßer” as Anderson did, with heavier
registration.¹⁹ Her registration is heavy enough in the middle that it sounds like it
would be difficult for her to accomplish the shift to a headier tone without coming off
the voice, then getting back on.

These examples shed light on the disparity between men’s and women’s
recordings of “süßer.” Physically, traversing an ascending slurred pair that traverses
the passaggio is one gesture when the singer allows the registration to lighten, and
quite another when she does not – or can not. Nearly all men’s voices are registered
more heavily than women’s – so for a man, the equivalent to Schumann or Schöne’s
“süßer” would require a shift into falsetto. Such a shift would be unusual and almost
impossible without a significant ritard.

To demonstrate this last point, we turn to two sets of examples: the first set
taken from Schubert’s “Der Jüngling an der Quelle” (Figure 4.10) as recorded by
Elisabeth Schumann (1936, in A Major), Lotte Lehmann (1947, in F♯ Major), Heinrich
Schlusnus (1931, in G Major) and Leo Slezak (1928, in A Major). Schubert’s setting
features an ascending slurred pair that, once again, traverses the passaggio – which in
Schumann’s voice recalls the gesture she made on “süßer.” In the voices of Lehmann,
Slezak and Schlusnus, however, Schubert’s “ach” in measure 19 becomes quite a
different gesture (CD 3, track 25).²⁰ These recordings shed some light on how
baritone Leopold Demuth and tenor George Thill sing the upward slurred pairs in “Die
Forelle” (CD 3, tracks 1 and 8, respectively). Both men have relatively heavy
registration, and carry it through the top note of the slurred pair.

¹⁹ Not all dramatic voices sing the slurred pair with such heavy registration: Sophie Braslau’s voice was
quite heavy – her opera career included Verdi and Wagner roles – yet her registration on “süßer” is
quite light. It is not clear, however, to what degree the shift in registration aesthetics was a choice and
to what degree it represents a change in which singers were encouraged to have careers in the first
place.
²⁰ Regardless of key, each singer traverses his or her respective passaggio to reach the top note on
“ach.”
Men do not always sing upward portamenti with consistently heavy registration, however. Both Schlusnus and Slezak are capable of singing ascending slurred pairs with lighter registration, as the following excerpts from Brahms’ “Ständchen,” Op. 106, no. 1 demonstrate (Figure 4.11). Their recordings are again
played alongside versions made by Elisabeth Schumann and Lotte Lehmann, for the sake of comparison – though this time in the following order: Schumann (1937, in G Major), Schlusnus (1931, in E Major), Slezak (1928, in G Major) and Lehmann (1941, in F Major; all four excerpts are found on CD 3, track 26):²¹

Figure 4.11, Brahms, “Ständchen,” Op. 106, no. 1, mm. 9-11 and 32-35

The two men’s recordings feature far lighter registration than they used in “Der Jüngling an der Quelle.” While some chest registration remains evident in the Schlusnus excerpts, Slezak pulls the chest out entirely. In the first verse, he manages this registration shift by aspirating the second note in the slurred pair; in the second

²¹ As in the last example, each singer traverses his or her respective passaggio to reach the top notes on the strong syllables of “brunnen” and “geliebten.” It is also worth noting that Slezak substitutes an E for the C⁵ in measure 33, on the syllable “ge-“.
verse, he pulls off the voice sooner, as the hooded quality (and slightly under-pitch singing) starting at “sie schaut” indicates.22

If Brahms’ “Ständchen” is any guide, Schlusnus may not have been able to handle “süßer” in the manner of Lotte Schöne or Elisabeth Schumann (CD 3, tracks 12 and 14) – but he certainly could have sung it with a slow portamento, in the manner of Ria Ginster (CD 3, track 16). So now we can add a second probable cause to the “süßer” gender gap: registration as gesture. Not even Schlusnus’ lightest singing would have resulted in the same sweet gesture as Ginster’s – and that may have contributed to his taking the slurred pair in passing (recorded in 1943, in B Major; included here on CD 3, track 27).

Agogic portamento

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that a portamento on a slurred pair might be nothing more than the interaction of the interval itself and a singer’s habitual portamento di voce. A singer with consistent portamento di voce glides across slurred pairs almost in passing; the resulting portamenti are therefore unmarked.23 But the portamenti on “süßer” are typically marked in one of two ways: most singers either slow down while singing a portamento on “süßer” – or alternatively, make a tenuto on the bottom pitch of the slurred pair. In either case, singers combine an agogic accent with a portamento. As such, the gestures on “süßer” could be termed “agogic portamenti.” Could it be possible that such portamenti are somehow gendered?

Agogic accent, generally, is not gendered. Julia Culp and Sir George Henschel both rely heavily on declamatory rubato; Elena Gerhardt and the baritone David

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22 This quality is not to be confused with what is described as “covered” singing or “voce coperta,” although the two may have some physiological common ground.
Bispham make frequent use of large-scale tempo flexibility; and singers from Marcella Sembrich to Leo Slezak often make tenuti that we would find excessive today. Similarly, it does not appear that men and women make radically different use of agogic portamento. Instead, as with all kinds of agogic accent, it seems that each singer simply has interpretative habits that result in a larger or smaller number of portamenti.

Consequently, Heinrich Schlusnus and Julia Culp make fewer agogic portamenti than do a whole range of singers, men and women. To underscore this point, I have chosen the following excerpts: Wolf’s “Verborgenheit” (Figure 4.12) sung by Culp (1926 in D♭ Major), Schlusnus (1949, also in D♭ Major), Lotte Lehmann (1941, in E♭ Major), Karl Erb (1935, in F Major) Slezak (1928, in E♭ Major), Herbert Janssen (1935, in D♭ Major) and Gerhardt (1927, in E♭ Major; all the excerpts included in this order on CD 3, track 28); and Brahms’ “Feldeinsamkeit” (Figure 4.13) as recorded by Schlusnus (1935, in F Major), Culp (1926, also in F Major), Slezak (1928, in A♭ Major), Alexander Kipnis (1929, in F Major), Gerhard Hüsch (1934, in G Major), Gerhardt (1929, in F Major) and Ginster (1934, in A♭ Major; all on CD 3, track 29). As these excerpts suggest, a singer’s usage of agogic portamento is not necessarily a predictor of his or her predilection towards agogic accent more generally.

Both Julia Culp and Sir George Henschel make frequent use of declamatory rubato,

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24 Bispham’s recording of Schubert’s “Hark! Hark! The Lark” offers a particularly fine example of this phenomenon.

25 In light of Slezak’s character, it is tempting to hear his tenuti as the kind of gesture that exists within a cult of personality rather then the realm of refined musical taste. In this regard, it is worth remembering the recordings of Marcella Sembrich, the musician’s singer par excellence, as well as recordings of Richard Strauss at the piano, accompanying singers in his own music: both frequently feature lengthily sustained high notes. Strauss typically adds extra beats in the accompaniment in support of a singer.

26 Two notes about the recordings selected for these comparisons: first, I chose Schlusnus’ 1949 version of “Verborgenheit” over his 1943 recording. While there is little demonstrable difference between them in Schlusnus’ use of agogic portamento, the later recording features a more impassioned, moving performance (see Chapter 3, 96). Second, in the case of “Feldeinsamkeit,” I have not included Lotte Lehmann’s recording, for Lehmann’s vocal habits preclude her from making choices that are comparable to those of her colleagues. Lehmann, with her short breaths, takes “Feldeinsamkeit” significantly faster than any other singer heard here.
Figure 4.12, Wolf, “Verborgenheit,” mm. 28-36
Figure 4.13, Brahms, “Feldeinsamkeit,” mm. 1-18
yet are sparing in their usage of agogic portamento. 27 Though the two are often used in conjunction with each other, evidently they do not necessarily have the same meaning for performers. Moreover, underlying the examples recorded by men there is an unanswerable question: what if Kipnis, Hüsch, Janssen, Erb or Slezak had recorded “Die Forelle?” Do their performance styles suggest that they might have made more of an agogic accent on “süßer” than, say, Schlusnus or Demuth?

In this context, it is worth considering post-war recordings of “Die Forelle.” Most of these eschew agogic accent as a general rule – except, as it so happens, for an agogic accent on “süßer.” These later recordings suggest that the disparity in pre-war recordings may indeed stem from the particular sample: tenors Jussi Björling (1952, in D♭ Major) and Ian Bostridge (1998, in D♭ Major), both rhythmically flexible singers, make more of “süßer” than most of their pre-war male counterparts. In a different way, however, post-war recordings in fact underscore the gender gap: in agogic accent on “süßer,” Björling is surpassed by soprano Elly Ameling (1984, in D♭ Major), and Bostridge by mezzo soprano Monica Groop (2001, in B Major; these four recordings are excerpted on CD 3, tracks 30-33, respectively).

Although agogic portamento is not gendered, it does seem to evoke feelings that other kinds of agogic accent do not – but in this way, it is no different from portamento more generally. In his paper “Portamento and Musical Meaning,” Daniel Leech-Wilkinson convincingly argues that portamento intensifies any feeling. 28 One might similarly contend that, in Schubert’s “Die Forelle,” the portamento on “süßer”

27 In addition to the recordings cited in this chapter, Culp’s recordings were considered in Chapter 2, pp. 72-80; Henschel’s were given considerable treatment in Chapter 3, pp. 119 ff.
28 “…portamento in a conventionally ‘sad’ score will tend to suggest a more intense sadness, in a ‘calm’ score a more intensified calm, in a playful score a more joyous sense of fun…” Leech-Wilkinson, “Portamento as Musical Meaning,” 248. Though the portamenti he takes as his primary examples – Elena Gerhardt’s 1928 recording of Schubert’s “Schlaflied” – are not agogic, many of them are unquestionably ornamental, in so far as they are drawn out over time.
intensifies the sweetness of the moment. Just where each singer finds the impetus for such an intensification, we can never know for sure.

Conclusions

It may be that no single factor fundamentally causes some singers to ritard on an ascending slurred pair. Certainly each singer’s habitual approach to music influences his or her particular style choices. Nevertheless, recordings demonstrate women making more of “süßer” for nearly a century. If women sing this gesture with more agogic accent than men, is that fact in and of itself enough to say the gesture is gendered? In other words, does the very existence of a gender gap on “süßer” signal that a connection between gender and style exists? It seems to be the case that it does.

This connection may exist in the mind of the composer as well. The Lieder repertoire provides numerous examples of slurred pairs, particularly upward ones, on words like “süß” and “Liebe” – and such words are frequently set with sudden leaps to a high tessitura. Moreover, it is possible that some Lieder were intended for either male or female singers. But further exploration of the relationship between gender and vocal style would need to rely on the operatic repertoire, where gestures are written with greater specificity of voice type in mind. As a starting point, it would be worth considering the upward slurred pairs Donizetti wrote for Norina (Figure 4.4) in light of the following: when Malatesta repeats her music (Figure 4.14), Donizetti removes the upward slurred pairs. Neither syllabification nor range could have been behind Donizetti’s change, for Malatesta’s lines scan identically to Norina’s, and the E in his iteration (momentarily in C Major) corresponds to the A in hers (in F Major). Might Donizetti have been making a distinction between masculine and feminine gestures here?
To be sure, questions like these are not easily answered. But what is important to realize is that recordings suggest some unique answers. In the case of “süßer,” it would seem that played on a lyric soprano, a gesture may be one thing; played on a dramatic baritone, it may be another. Recordings and performers engage us in these sorts of musical issues in a way that scores do not, and probably cannot. All we have to do is listen.