Selections from Hermann Ritter's Viola Alta Repertoire:
A 21st Century Rendition of 19th Century Repertoire

by

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ABSTRACT

This research paper provides a revised version of viola alta compositions by Hermann Ritter. These original compositions, written for viola alta, were published between 1878 and 1900. Without further reprint, these works are largely unknown by this generation of violists. Yet, these works are precious examples of viola alta repertoire from the late nineteenth century.

The viola alta was designed by Hermann Ritter with an instrumental length between 17 and 19 inches. Another version of this instrument was constructed with five strings, adding a high E-string. Higher pitches could then be played with relative ease in lower positions. Compositions for the viola alta often feature brilliant passages in the treble register and rarely showcase the sonority of the lower strings. Many of Ritter's scores for the instrument are notated in the alto clef and contain numerous ledger lines. Due to the difficulty of reading the music and handling such a large instrument, the viola alta had a relatively short existence and its repertoire was soon forgotten.

Hermann Ritter actively promoted the viola alta during the late nineteenth century. His compositions featured the range of the instrument and captured the emotion and character of the late Romantic era. Ritter contributed a wealth of repertoire for the viola alta to increase its significance and importance. For today's violist, it represents a body of work from the nineteenth century, and adds to the repertoire many wonderful, short, character pieces.

This document consists of a brief discussion of Hermann Ritter's career and his contributions to the viola alta. Six of Ritter's viola alta works are presented in order of difficulty with bowings and fingerings, along with a performer's analysis and

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performance instructions. To aid ensemble issues, the revised version includes simplified

piano parts. It is the author's hope that this volume increases repertoire options for

violists and becomes a valuable pedagogical resource.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

For my grandmother, mom and dad,

who have raised me in a blessed family of God.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The viola had a close relationship with the violin before the late nineteenth century. Violists were violin players trained to play the enlarged version of the violin. The violin was the first member of the string family to rise to a virtuosic level during the seventeenth century with its brilliant sound and ease of playing. Its repertoire quickly developed along with the instrument's artistic aesthetic. The viola was primarily used to fill out harmony in an ensemble without the need for brilliant technique. Thus, it was often played by violinists as their secondary instrument.

Richard Wagner (1813-1883) addressed the phenomenon of a general lack of violists in his 1869 essay "On Conducting," stating the following:

> The viola is commonly (with rare exceptions indeed) played by infirm violinists, or by decrepit players of wind instruments who happen to have been acquainted with a stringed instrument once upon a time; at best a competent viola player occupies a first desk, so that he may play the occasional solos for that instrument…It was pointed out to me that in a large orchestra which contained eight violas, there was only one player who could deal with the rather difficult passages in one of my later scores![1]

This situation was reflected in the viola repertoire before the twentieth century that showed that the viola lagged behind in comparison to the development of other members of the string family. Composers focused on the violin, and even the cello received more attention due to its unique bass-voice character. The viola remained a second class citizen in the string family and it was seldom featured as a solo instrument. Some notable, successful violinists such as Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) and Henri

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[1] Richard Wagner, *Wagner on Conducting*, trans. by Edward Dannreuther (New York: Dover Publications, 1989), 4.

Vieuxtemps (1820-1881), promoted the viola. But rather than highlighting the instrument's sonority, they transferred their virtuosic violin technique onto the viola. Their viola compositions still require a level of skill and technique affiliated with the violin.

It was not until 1894 that an independent degree track was established for the study of viola. The Paris Conservatory was the first school to offer a professional study program, with French violist Théophile Laforge (1863-1918) as its founding professor. Thus began a pedagogy and system intended for the development of violists, marking the distinction of viola studies from the violin. Students were required to participate in school contests in order to graduate. With the inauguration of the viola degree, contest pieces were commissioned and repertoire soon expanded, featuring the viola's technique and sonority.

The viola repertoire also started to expand with more active soloists on the stage, independent from the violin. Great violists such as Laforge and his pupil Maurice Vieux (1884-1951) inspired many composers to write pieces for them. German violist and composer Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) took efforts to extend the instrument's technique by composing solo works. Additionally, some violists, such as Hermann Ritter (1849-1926), Lionel Tertis (1876-1975), and William Primrose (1904-1982), took on the role of performer, composer and arranger, realizing the importance of extending the concert repertoire. Each individual made significant contributions to the viola repertoire. Violists eventually began to exploit the artistic potential of their instrument, and the repertoire has grown substantially since the late nineteenth century.

As the viola became more independent from the violin, violists were encouraged to find their own voice and discover the viola's unique sound and deeper sonority. Its physical size, however, was not standard and its tone production varied in relation to its dimensions. German violist Hermann Ritter, recognized the nasal and thin quality of sound produced on smaller violas, and constructed the Viola Alta to truly represent the tenor range of the viola. Derived from the original tenor viola model from the Baroque era, Ritter built an instrument with a body size ranging from 17 to 19 inches. Later, when the ribs of this instrument proved too wide to comfortably shift, he made an adjustment, adding a fifth string to compensate for the difficulty of reaching the high positions.

The viola alta became the representative of the tenor voice in its short life during the late nineteenth century because of Ritter. Richard Wagner promoted its use in his orchestra, where Ritter was principal violist. Ritter's students all played the viola alta, and Ritter devoted his career promoting and writing numerous compositions for it. As the instrument's popularity was short lived, so was the music. His compositions are found in less than a handful of libraries across the world. The viola alta was difficult to play, and its use diminished in favor of a smaller instrument size.

Visiting the Primrose International Viola Archive[2], I gained access to the Ulrich Drüner[3] special collection to review the most complete collection of nineteenth century viola music. Most of the viola alta repertoire was written by Ritter. The viola alta compositions are inarguably the largest body of original repertoire written for the viola in its time. This arranged collection can be added into a violist's repertoire to expand the range of solo pieces from the Romantic period. It provides players with an opportunity to explore various character studies and introduces a sample of Ritter's compositions for viola.

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[2] The Primrose International Viola Archive is located at Brigham Young University in Provo, UT. It is the official viola archive of both the International Viola Society and American Viola Society, with the largest collection of musical scores, manuscripts and recordings.

[3] Ulrich Drüner (b. 1943) is a retired violist who played in the Stuttgart State Orchestra. Over 5000 works from his personal library have been donated to PIVA, mostly original and first edition manuscripts.

CHAPTER 2: HERMANN RITTER AND THE VIOLA ALTA

The Construction of the Viola Alta

The viola alta was designed by German violist Hermann Ritter (1849-1926) in 1875. It featured an instrumental body length of 18.9 inches (48cm) to create a true tenor sound.[4]

Ritter became interested in the viola while he was employed in the City Orchestra in Heidelberg. He noticed that the instrument's range of expression was not equal to that of the violin or cello.[5] Ritter was inspired to bolster the reputation of the viola, and he utilized his knowledge of science and acoustics in pursuit of this goal. Ritter's concepts concerning the size of the viola were based on proportions he deemed necessary for producing the most efficient sound. By studying Antonio Bagatella's 1786 publication *Regole perla costruzione di violini* (Geometrical Principles of Violinmaking), Ritter realized that the resonance of different registers on string instruments is related to the proportions of the instrument's body.

The open strings of the viola are a perfect fifth lower than the open strings of the violin. The relationship of these two instruments is of the tonic to the subdominant. The standard violin size is 14 inches (35.5 cm). Therefore, the dimensions of the viola should align with the mathematical relationship of 3:2, which becomes 21.25 inches (54 cm) in length to be acoustically optimal.[6]

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[4] Maurice W. Riley, *The History of the Viola* (Ann Arbor: Riley, 1980), 229.

[5] Carl Smith, "Hermann Ritter and his Viola Alta," *Australian and New Zealand Viola Society Journal* 30 (November 2011).

[6] Riley, 229

As a result of his findings, Ritter commissioned a redesigned viola from a Würzburg luthier, Karl-Adam Hörlein (1829-1902).[7] However, while the general adult demi-span of the arm is between 30-35 inches (76-90 cm), a 21.25 inch viola creates performance challenges as it would be too difficult to physically play an instrument of this length under the chin. Luthiers had to adjust the instrumental body length to match acoustic properties with practical playing ease.

Hörlein settled on the proportion of a 4:3 ratio, calling this instrument the viola alta. In 1875, Ritter's viola alta was produced at a length of 18.9 inches (48 cm). The viola alta was designed as a great tool for violists to develop their desired sound. Ritter claimed that his instrument improved the resonance and provided a more brilliant tone,[8] and his professional career promoted this lush sound.

In 1898, Ritter added a fifth string, E, to the viola alta, as the highest string. This modification extended the ability to play high notes in lower positions. He commissioned this five-stringed instrument from Philipp Keller.[9] This adaptation added to the viola's sonority and provided better ease of playing. Despite adjusting the angle of the bridge in relation to bow placement, the five-stringed instrument provided increased possibilities for fingering choices and facilitated the playing of chords. However, these five-stringed

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[7] Riley, 211.

[8] Watson Forbes, "Ritter, Hermann," *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 2, 2018, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023532?rskey=oUP0aJ&result=1.

[9] Philipp Keller (1868-1948) was a string instrument maker, who worked in Würzburg, Germany, from 1896 to 1926.

instruments were eventually reduced back to four strings because the E-string would repeatedly break under the immense tension.

Currently, there is one five-stringed viola alta on display at the Primrose International Viola Archive (PIVA). This instrument was donated to the archive by Franz Zeyringer.[10] Made by Keller in 1904 in Würzburg, it has Ritter's autograph on the back of the instrument.[11] I had an opportunity to play the instrument when I visited the PIVA in 2017. The instrument was difficult to play in the high positions due to the large width of the upper bout. It produced a deep sonority in the lower strings, and included the violin E as the fifth string. Unfortunately, the fifth string was not able to function properly because it could not be adjusted in the peg box tightly enough to tune to the accurate pitch.

The Development in the Nineteenth Century Orchestra

Orchestral music played an increasingly important role in the nineteenth century musical canon, with contributions from Romantic composers such as Johannes Brahms (1883-1897), Wagner, and Hector Berlioz (1803-1869). The contemporary style favored dramatic and rich sonorities, especially in orchestral works that involved highly complicated textures and many independent voices.

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[10] Franz Zeyringer (1920-2009) devoted his career as a professional violist and educator. He was a past president of the International Viola Society and donated his personal music collection to the Primrose International Viola Archive.

[11] David Dalton, "*New PIVA Acquisitions: A Crown Jewel for PIVA*," *Journal of the American Viola Society* 23, No. 1 (Spring 2007): 48.

When Wagner heard about Ritter's redesigned viola, his attention was immediately gained. Wagner had been constantly looking for new orchestral tone colors, especially in the middle register. Ritter met Wagner in Münich in 1875 to present the viola alta. Wagner was fascinated by its sonority, and appointed Ritter to the position of principal violist for the premiere of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the first Bayreuth Festival in 1876.[12] Wagner was so looking forward to using the viola alta sound in his orchestra that he wrote this highly complimentary letter to Ritter on March 28, 1875:

> I feel certain that the universal introduction of the Viola Alta into our orchestra would serve not only to throw a proper light on the intention of those composer who had to content themselves with the ordinary Bratsche while they required the true Alto violin tone…
>
> The free "A" string of this no longer thin but now free and brilliant sounding instrument, will be able to take over many an energetic melody from the hemmed in A-string of the violin which hitherto was so impeded in its energetic expression of tone, that, for instance, Weber was already obliged to add a wind instrument (clarinet or oboe) in such cases to strengthen the violin part.
>
> The Viola Alta will obviate all this, and will therefore no longer compel the composer to use mixed colors where the pure string character was originally intended. It is desirable that the improved and vastly ennobled instrument should be given to the best orchestra, and that its cultivation should be urgently recommended to all the best viola player."[13]

In 1889, five of Ritter's pupils played the viola alta in the Bayreuth orchestra, including Michael Balling (1866-1925), and Karl Paasch (1891-1959).[14] This performance apparently gave testament to the quality of the instrument and attracted

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[12] Riley, 211.

[13] Ibid, 229.

[14] "Richard Wagner and the Ritter Viola," The Wagner Society of Dallas, accessed March 2, 2018, http://www.wagnerdallas.com/events2004/wsd050326.htm.

more admirers. During the Bayreuth music festival, Ritter became friends with Franz

Liszt (1811-1886), Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894), and Hans von Bülow (1830-1894),

they all served as important contacts within Ritter's musical circle. In fact, Liszt

dedicated his composition *Romance oubliée* (1881) to Ritter and the viola alta, while

Richard Strauss (1864 -1949) and Hans von Bülow both encouraged the use of the viola

alta in their orchestras.[15]

The viola alta continued to gain attention following its successful appearance in

the Bayreuth orchestra. Ritter promoted the instrument and enjoyed international fame by

touring through much of Europe, including Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and Russia.[16]

The popularity of the instrument advanced due to the extensive promotion by Ritter. He

not only received compositions from his contemporaries, but also wrote numerous

original compositions and transcriptions.

Hermann Ritter's Viola Alta Literature

Ritter maintained a successful career as a concert violist and educator. After

returning to Würzburg in 1879, he was appointed to the position of professor of viola and

music history at the Royal Music School. There, Ritter devoted himself to education and

maintained a high level of performance activities. Praised by the Grand Duke of

Mecklenburg as a court chamber virtuoso, Ludwig II of Bavaria made Ritter a court

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[15] Daniel Thomason, "Hermann Ritter and His Viola Alta," *Journal of the American Viola Society* 6, No. 1 (Spring 1990), 4.

[16] Smith, "Hermann Ritter and his Viola Alta."

professor.[17] As a musicologist, Ritter published *Die Geschichte der Viola Alta* (1876), which explained the construction and history of the viola alta. Also, in *Die Viola Alta oder Altgeige* (1885), Ritter provided a comprehensive repertoire list, that included etudes, solo pieces, duets, and concerti.

Ritter realized the benefits of teaching viola performance as an independent system. He published the method books, *Viola-Schule: für den Schul- und Selbstunterricht* in 1884 and *Elementartechnik der Viola Alta* in 1895, as the initial reference for string beginners. These comprehensive books include stroke practice, rhythm variation, bowing exercise, finger dexterity, scales, double stops, and more.

To teach virtuosity, Ritter took important viola solos and excerpts from the orchestral literature, providing violists with comprehensive study material. His orchestra excerpt collection also included important passages from chamber music and solo works, such as the last movement of Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 59, No. 3 and Schumann's second movement of *Märchenbilder* Op. 113.

Adding repertoire for the viola alta, Ritter transcribed music by transposing the key signature and adjusting the register appropriately for the viola alta and piano. There are multiple sources for his transcriptions: violin and piano compositions as well as opera arias and recitatives. Transcriptions by Ritter include the second movement of Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D Major Op. 61, Schubert's *Moments Musicaux* Op. 84, No. 3, Handel's *Lascia ch'io piango* from *Rinaldo*, and Tchaikovsky's *Chant sans paroles* from *Lied ohne Worte*. Additionally, Ritter's *Sonata Albums* feature works by

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[17] Forbes, "Ritter, Hermann."

Mozart and Beethoven, compensating for the lack of repertoire in the classical style, and the violin and cello sonatas of Schumann. Ritter's transcriptions helped to improve the quality of viola playing.

Ritter's contributions to the viola alta repertoire feature original compositions, largely in the style of short character pieces. Most of his works were published by Kistner & Siegel of Lippstadt between 1883 and 1907. These works contain unifying characteristics that reflect Ritter's compositional style.[18] They are often titled and portray the character of the piece by repeating distinct melodic material in simple ternary form. Some of the compositions start with an introduction played by viola recitative or piano solo. Routinely, the piano part provides harmonic progressions using arpeggios or chords, adding richness to the sonority. Furthermore, because Ritter designed the five-string version of the instrument to avoid the frequent shifting of positions, more notes could be played staying in the lower positions. Many of his compositions use the timbre of the upper register not only to display the beauty of the music, but to avoid balance issues with the accompaniment. These high notes are written in the alto clef, resulting in numerous ledger lines that are difficult to read.

For pedagogical purposes, Ritter wrote in key signatures with sharps, especially utilizing the keys of D Major and A Major. A majority of his music is composed with diatonic material, tonal harmonies, and symmetrical phrase structures. Thus, these compositions are considered precious original material to augment a violist's repertoire from the late nineteenth century.

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[18] Riley, 212.

In general, viola alta music is difficult to find. Much of the work was printed only once and is largely inaccessible today. Ulich Drüner's collection of manuscripts and scores in the PIVA library allows today's violists to discover musical treasures from the late nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS & PERFORMER'S INTERPRETATION

Hermann Ritter's viola alta music was composed mainly between 1878 and 1900, during his teaching years in Würzburg. Most of his viola alta repertoire consisted of short pieces with characteristic titles that expressed either a single mood (e.g. martial, dream-like, pastoral) or suggested a programmatic idea.

The transcriptions included in this paper are suitable to add to the repertoire of young violists. The arrangements offer original compositions for the viola and augment the solo repertoire. This collection contains six pieces, compiled in order of difficulty, to increase a violist's technical skills and musical demands. These pieces are rare finds that cannot be accessed online. They are arranged with a specific pedagogical purpose in mind; the piano parts are rearranged to better support the viola line and sound.

This collection may be divided into two categories: each of the first three pieces (*Jagdstück*, *Barcarole,* and *Auf den Wellen*) has its own distinct character, while the last three works (*Allegretto Scherzando, Im Träume*, and *Andante*) require more comprehensive performance skills and more mature musical interpretations.

Jagdstück, Op. 17

Jagdstück is a hunting piece in D Major. It is composed in simple compound meter and is in ternary form. The piece utilizes a wide range from the low "D" on the open C-string to one octave higher than the open A-string. *Jagdstück* may be identified as a work originally written for the five-stringed instrument, because it contains double stops that would be easier to play with an A-string and E-string (Figure 1).

Figure 1: *Jagdstück*, Op. 17, mm. 17-18.

The work begins with a fanfare-like introduction on the dominant chord in the piano. This passage not only displays the work's unifying rhythmic motive but also an upwards scale figure (Figure 2). Both of these motives are used throughout the entire piece. The symmetrical four-bar phrase structures contain clear cadences. The piece modulates to the relative key of B Minor in the middle section, while still keeping the rhythmic hunting character.

Figure 2: *Jagdstück*, Op. 17, mm. 8-11.

At times, Ritter adds extra measures to break the balance of the otherwise consistent phrase structures (Figure 3). For instance, measures 59-62 consist of a chromatic sequence ascending from A-sharp, B, and C, to C-sharp (Figure 3). Eventually, this harmonic progression reaches the dominant of D Major, followed by the return of the A section. The codetta in measures 83-91 remains on the tonic chord as the viola plays

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the scale to establish the tonic key in response to the dominant sonority of the
introduction.

Figure 3: *Jagdstück*, Op. 17, mm. 51-67.

(A) Approach to Arrangement

      Jagdstück contains consistently simple rhythms and harmonies, along with
symmetrical phrase structures. This transcription keeps most of the original music
concepts in terms of pitch, articulation, and bowing, but allows for register changes using
lower octave notes. Because it is possible to play two octaves of the D Major scale
without shifting, this work offers an opportunity to stay in first position, maintaining the
tenor sound of the hunting call (Figure 4).

Figure 4: *Jagdstück*, Op. 17, mm. 12-16.

      To help overall balance and projection, the accompaniment part was lowered one
octave to reduce the density of the sound. In the B section, the original viola part is
played on the open D-string while chords are repeated on the piano. For this arrangement,

the viola part is transcribed to the lowest register on the instrument, and the

accompaniment chords are reduced (Figures 5 and 6). This adaptation not only avoids the

overlapping of registers, but also lightens the sonority. Additionally, eliminating doubled

notes increases overall clarity.

Figure 5: *Jagdstück*, Op. 17, mm. 40-41. Original score.

Figure 6: *Jagdstück*, Op. 17, mm. 40-41. Arranged score.

(B) Pedagogical Features

   The character of this composition is clear from the title and the rhythmic gesture.

In order to present a lively energy, violists can practice each stroke separated in a slower

tempo to find the core of the sound. Keep the bow on the string and release at the end of

each stroke with varied bow speed and weight to create a ringing and vibrant sound.

Additionally, in measures 28-32, the open A-string accompanies the melody in order to

enhance the energetic character. This piece may be an excellent introduction for young violists who are just learning to play double stops (Figure 7). Because this piece is based on a diatonic scale and can be played in the first position, it is a good resource for young violists to enhance their hand shape and refine finger patterns. It can also allow students to work on fingered chromatics in the first position. For example, in measures 61-62, the C is played by the third finger, and the C-sharp is played by the fourth finger (Figure 8) in order to reduce the unnecessary stretching of the third finger.

Figure 7: *Jagdstück*, Op. 17, mm. 28-32.

Figure 8: *Jagdstück*, Op. 17, mm. 61-62.

The hunting character features fanfare gestures, as if played on the horn or other brass instruments. These instruments would produce sound from the movement of air, which is different than a bowed instrument. Thus, the act of releasing the bow stroke imitates the breath and provides forward momentum. The regular phrase structures and cadences indicate the direction of the music, providing an accessible road map through which young violists may explore the hunting character.

Barcarole, Op. 37 No. 1

The *Barcarole* is a movement from Ritter's *Italian Suite,* Op. 37 (1886), one of three pieces that vividly characterizes specific regions in Italy. The *Barcarole* is a symbol of Venice, and the Italian term is used in reference to the boat songs sung by Venetian gondoliers as they propel their boats through urban canals. The most basic feature of a barcarole is the time signature (6/8) that provides for marked lilting rhythms that suggest the swaying movements of a boat.[19]

This work is in ternary form. The melody, centered on the pitch "B", mimics the natural sway of a boat. Figure 9 shows how the melody moves below and above this pitch to represent the gentle swing. The dynamic contrast aligns with the phrasing and harmony. With a few unexpected surprises, it captures the calm motion on the boat.

Figure 9: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, mm. 1-5.

The middle section, marked *Poco vivo*, modulates to the relative major of G. In this section, the viola plays a simple, metered melody while the piano provides a repetitive, wave-like arpeggio pattern (Figure 10). Overall, Ritter employs simple rhythms, and presents a sentimental and melancholic atmosphere using the tenor range superbly.

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[19] Maurice J.E. Brown and Kenneth L. Hamilton, "Barcarolle," *Oxford Music Online*, accessed March 18, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.02021.

Figure 10: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, mm. 42-44.

(A) Approach for the Arrangement

      In general, this piece utilizes the middle strings on the viola. The transcription retains the original key of E Minor, and rearranges some of the higher register melodies to be played in first position and in alto clef. This change created an ensemble issue, as the piano part overlapped the melodic line. To resolve this, the transcription rearranges the register and texture of the piano part, reducing doubled notes in the chords (Figures 11 and 12). The simplified the arpeggio figures become scalar passages, effectively condensing the sound (Figures 13 and 14).

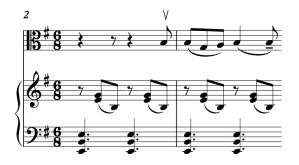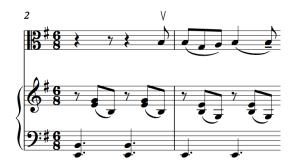Figure 11: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, mm. 2-3. Original score.

Figure 12: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, mm. 2-3. Arranged score.

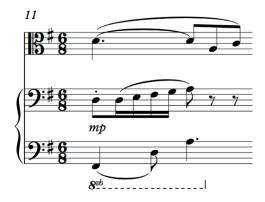Figure 13: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, m. 11. Original score.

Figure 14: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, m. 11. Arranged score.

When the theme returns the second time in the original register in measure 25, the melody is simplified in order to remain in first position (Figures 15 and 16).

Figure 15: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, mm. 25-26. Original viola part.

Figure 16: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, mm. 25-26. Arranged viola part.

(B) Pedagogical Features

This piece has a simple and repetitive melody in the viola alta part. To portray the character of a boat song, the tempo should be on the slower side, as if the boatman is rowing in a relaxed and calm manner. This tempo should also accommodate the eighth-note pulse. The hairpin dynamic represents the waves of the water moving back and forth. This effect may be achieved by using a varied bow speed in order to create convincing dynamic changes.

The bowing style matches the phrase in compound meter, as notes are combined into two groups. The stroke simply consists of short slurs and bowing. Consistent with the character of waves, each stroke should be released, especially the hooked ones to emphasize the pause. However, in the middle section, the melody is elongated and the

rhythm is expanded into dotted quarter notes or dotted half notes in the solo part, that require sustained bowing to connect the large eight-bar phrase.

Basically, the entire piece can be played in the first position. Alternative fingerings are provided in half-position to avoid having to slide the finger during the middle section where Ritter adds accidentals and mordents (Figure 17).

Figure 17: *Barcarole*, Op. 37 No. 1, mm. 27-32.

Overall, this piece is appropriate at the beginner level and may be used to reinforce fluency in first position. Most of the thematic material is played on the lower strings, and the performer may employ a rather slow bow speed in order to enhance the deep and lower sound of the instrument. The middle section modulates to the major key with agile accompaniment figures, allowing violists to open up their sound with vibrato and bow speed.

Auf den Wellen, Op. 27

Auf den Wellen, Op. 27 was composed from 1878. The title translates to "On the Waves," and the work is in D Major with a simple compound meter. The piece is in ternary form with a piano introduction. The tonic and dominant harmonies are prominent, softly alternating as imitating waves. Ritter embraces a romantic compositional ideal by modulating into multiple keys. The middle section contains several unexpected key changes and a contrasting piano accompaniment. Ritter begins the B section with a

common-tone modulation into the distant key of F Major. To add color, the development section also incorporates A Minor and B Minor passages. The viola plays arpeggiated triad harmonies (Figure 18) during the transition into B Minor, then, after a similar retransition, the music returns to D Major.

Figure 18: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, mm. 58-59.

The piano supports each section by providing different rhythmic textures. It starts with octave arpeggiated figures in the right-hand, creating waves in an undulating motion (Figure 19). In the middle section, the pianist's left-hand plays tremolo-like figures in order to create a sense of urgency. The recapitulated A section is followed by a coda that brings back the tonic and dominant chords from the opening introduction (Figures 20 and 21).

Figure 20: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, m. 12.

Figure 19: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, mm. 1-4. Introduction.

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Figure 21: *Auf den Wellen,* Op. 27, mm. 127-130. Coda.

The melodic material in this work features an elliptical figure and seldom contains large leaps. The transitory sections display a looping effect that reminds the listener of the title, "On the Waves" (Figure 22).

Figure 22: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, mm. 12-19.

(A) Approach for the Arrangement

This piece was originally written in D Major. The version is transposed to the key of B-flat Major so that it may be played entirely in the first position. This modification eliminates the difficulty of playing the diminished triad chord in measure 61 (Figure 23). Transposing the work to the key of B-flat Major simplifies fingering options for that figure and eliminates many string crossings.

Figure 23: *Auf den Wellen,* Op. 27, m. 61.

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The author decided to reduce the texture of the piano part to better highlight the viola sound. The left-hand of the piano part is rewritten, changing the tremolo passages to sixteenth notes (Figures 24 and 25). Instead of doubling the viola line, the piano right-hand provides decorative chords. In measures 28-30, the piano part is rearranged to outline the circle of fifths progression, making the harmonic progression sound smoother and adding more accompanimental variety (Figure 26).

Figure 24: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, m. 36. Original score.

Figure 25: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, m. 36. Arranged score.

Figure 26: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, mm. 28-30.

(B) Pedagogical Features

The title clearly suggests the character of this piece—an elegant and light song. The ostinato bass in the piano introduction establishes the feeling of 6/8 meter and the sixteenth notes provide continuous flow to the tempo. The bow corresponds by changing every two or four beats, keeping pace with the phrase length. The primary melodic figure begins with a dotted quarter note tied into the next eighth note (Figure 27). It is important to listen to the sixteenth notes underneath to line up this melody with the piano part. In the middle section, the piano plays a more vertical diatonic chordal accompaniment (Figure 28).

Figure 27: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, mm. 12-13.

Figure 28: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, mm. 44-45.

Although the work is transposed in order to stay in the first position, more advanced players can employ multiple position fingerings to color the melody. In the development, the key moves to D-flat Major. Agile shifting will make this passage feel smooth and accessible. Additionally, the half steps can be approached using the same finger (Figure 29). Another fingering to determine is the F-sharp diminished triad, requiring the third finger to cross over the second finger (Figure 30).

Figure 29: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, m. 32.

Figure 30: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, m. 87.

The piano part in this piece is not only accompanimental but engaging in conversation with the viola (Figures 31 and 32). The interaction between the two instruments adds interest to the overall work.

Figure 31: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, mm. 55-56.

Figure 32: *Auf den Wellen*, Op. 27, mm. 72-75.

In general, this work is lyrical in character and explores a variety of key areas. Each key represents different moods with distinct timbres. Practicing scales will help students realize the finger patterns and sonority of each key section. Violists can play the entire piece in the first position or choose alternative fingerings to incorporate position work. The player should keep the left-hand shape and fingers close to the fingerboard to secure the intonation.

Allegretto Scherzando, Op. 65, No. 2

Ritter's Op. 65 (1898) consists of two works: *Andante* and *Allegretto Scherzando*. (The Andante is a more complex composition than the Allegretto Scherzando. Therefore, it appears later in a subsequent chapter.) The Allegretto Scherzando is a romantic character piece in E Major. The work is in ternary form with a slow introduction and a coda that prolongs the final tonic arrival. "Scherzo" is the Italian term for "joke", and Ritter used similar motivic material with two contrasting characters in order to add humorous and playful elements.

The opening is recitative-like. The viola plays a motive consisting of an upwards leap of a fourth followed by a brief cadenza in a slower tempo. The harmony is

suspended on the dominant chord (Figure 33). The following *Allegretto Scherzando*

section uses the same melodic motive, but in a fast 3/4 meter. To emphasize the

humorous character, the texture is sparse. For example, the piano part does not use a

stable and regular accompanied figure but interacts with the viola by using rests (Figure

34). The articulations in the viola such as the slur and slur with dots indicate various

strokes.

Figure 33: *Allegretto Scherzando*, Op. 65, No. 2, mm. 1-4.

Figure 34: *Allegretto Scherzando*, Op. 65, No. 2, mm. 5-8.

The middle section is in the subdominant key of A Major and is marked *Comodo,*

which translates to "comfortable." This section functions like a development with

numerous harmonic progressions. It starts with a lyrical melody in A Major, then moves

through a sequence of key areas: the parallel minor mode (A Minor), the lower

submediant (F Major), the relative minor (D Minor), and finally resolving to the dominant (E Major).

(A) Approach to Arrangement

Ritter used the high register as a way to bring out a playful and light scherzo character. Except for one instance at the very end of the work (measure 147), the entire piece avoids the C-string. This work can be coinsidered as a violin piece. To evoke a mellower timbre, I lowered some of the passages. This modification matches the melodic sequence in measure 95. To add more variety to the main motive, the transcription switches the viola with the piano line in the return at measures 55-58 (Figure 35). In addition, notes are marked arco instead of pizzicato during the transition into the coda (Figure 36).

Figure 35: *Allegretto Scherzando*, Op. 65, No. 2, mm. 55-58.

Figure 36: *Allegretto Scherzando*, Op. 65, No. 2, mm. 135-136.

(B) Pedagogical Features

This work involves more varied techniques and contrasting musical characters. The recitative-like opening contains a cadenza, allowing for dramatic flair and interpretational freedom. The following section is a charming dance in triple meter. Attention to bow distribution is recommended. The articulation of separate notes will likely be made with a faster bow speed than the bar with slurred notes (Figure 37).

Figure 37: *Allegretto Scherzando*, Op. 65, No. 2, mm. 5-8.

As the range increases, higher position work is incorporated, such as in measures 10-12 (Figure 38). Violists are encouraged to practice scales in fourth position to establish good placement of the hand and frame. This piece also provides an opportunity to develop reading notes in both alto and treble clefs.

Figure 38: *Allegretto Scherzando*, Op. 65, No. 2, mm. 10-12.

The middle section consists of many sequential patterns that requiring different tone colors. In the arranged version, the viola plays quarter note accompanimental figures that should match the articulation in the piano.

This piece is a more complex composition and consists of multiple sections of varying character. Ritter inserts a *Da Capo al Coda* sign in measure 134. The coda represents an advancement in the formal compositional structure and is based on the tonic and dominant chords. The violist is now called to demonstrate collaborative skills.

Overall, the piece is more narrative in nature. The use of non-chord tones and chromatics provides harmonic tension and release, so cadences are at times unconventional. The performer may train their ear to focus on the unexpected harmonic tones in order to add more nuance to the interpretation.

Im Träume, Op. 32, No. 2

Composed in 1886, Ritter's Op. 32 consists of two pieces: *Pastorale and Gavotte* and *In Träume*, which translates to "In the Dream." *In Träume* is a unique composition among Ritter's short piece collection. It contains contrasting sections, irregular phrase lengths and structure, and mixed modal key relationships. The work is divided into three sections: introduction, waltz, and lullaby.

Although the key signature suggests G Major, the opening begins with a recitative-like viola solo in G Minor, emphasizing a dramatic and melancholic character (Figure 39).

Figure 39: *Im Träume,* Op. 32, No. 2, mm. 1-4.

A "Tempo di Valse" in triple meter follows. The phrase structure is interesting for its asymmetry, and the harmonic progression is unusual. It starts with two ten-measure phrases and ends in a perfect authentic cadence (PAC) at measure 29 before changing the mode to parallel key of G Major. The next section contains a fifteen-measure phrase with a half cadence (HC) in measure 45, and a nineteen-measure phrase with a HC in measure 63. Suddenly, there is a four-measure interlude marked *Lento* (measures 100-103) that serves as an expressive transition into the next section. This interlude consists of four chords and a chromatic progression into the dominant of G Major.

The next section, *Andante*, is marked as a lullaby and returns back to the 4/8 meter of the opening measures. This is a G Major section with simple and regular duple rhythms. The coda brings back opening material in measure 124 but stays in G Major with gentle rhythmic expression (Figure 40). The work concludes with music that alternates between tonic and dominant chords.

Figure 40: *Im Träume*, Op. 32, No. 2, mm. 124-126.

(A) Approach to Arrangement

In Träume explores a variety of tone colors and keys. To convey a more recitative-like character in the opening, the marking, "ad lib." was added to indicate greater interpretative freedom.

In the lullaby section, the viola part is transposed one octave lower to present a calmer and more peaceful color using the instrument's lower range. To avoid overlaps in register, the piano part was rearranged in a lower register. An ostinato bass in G is added as the foundation for the harmony, and the chord inversions are revoiced in the right-hand (Figures 41 and 42).

Figure 41: *Im Träume,* Op. 32, No. 2, mm. 104-107. Original score.

Figure 42: *Im Träume*, Op. 32, No. 2, mm. 104-107. Arranged score.

(B) Pedagogical Features

This piece consists of three different sections that present differing musical characters and expand the use of viola techniques. It begins with a G Minor chord, with two open strings establishing the minor mode and resonating well on the instrument. Ritter intended to repeat the same melodic line twice to create an echo effect. These

repetitions can be played with varied fingerings on different strings to present the desired effect. For instance, the initial statement of the melody could start on the A string or as a harmonic on the D-string (Figures 43 and 44). This modification also applies to the bowing.

Figure 43: *Im Träume*, Op. 32, No. 2, mm. 75-76.

Figure 44: *Im Träume,* Op. 32, No. 2, mm. 11-12.

A descending scalar passage with capriccioso character (Figure 45) connects the *Lento* chords in measures 101-103 (Figure 46) to the lullaby section that evokes an introspective and peaceful mood. These three sections (waltz, transition, and lullaby) require a change in character immediately through the use of different bow strokes and vibrato. The lullaby section is in the tenor register and a warm sound may be discovered using a slower bow speed and matching vibrato.

Figure 45: *Im Träume*, Op. 32, No. 2, mm. 96-100.

Figure 46: *Im Träume*, Op. 32, No. 2, mm. 101-103.

Overall, this composition satisfies its titled name, "In the Dream," because it depicts imaginative sounds and characters. It begins with a sentimental recitative and is followed by an elegant waltz and a dreamy lullaby. Performers may easily imagine a scene in order to effectively express the characters to the audience.

Andante, Op. 65, No. 1

The Andante is the other piece in Ritter's Op. 65. It is a "walking tempo" piece and Ritter uses dotted and double dotted rhythms to present the feelings of elegance and pause.

This piece is constructed in a symmetrical form consisting of two distinct themes without a development section. It is in A-B-A^1-B^1 form that is structured in the key relationship of the tonic and dominant keys. The two themes have similar phrase structure and the dotted rhythm is a main motive. The first theme in A Major modulates to the dominant key of E Major for the second theme. When the first section returns, it remains in A Major for the duration of the piece. Although Ritter clearly structured this work around the tonic and dominant key areas, he still uses sequential melodic lines to add elements of chromaticism (Figure 47).

Figure 47: *Andante*, Op. 65, No. 1, mm. 16-19.

This piece has a clear melodic line in the viola part, and the piano part takes an accompanimental role. The piano plays the chords on every beat, providing the harmonic progression (Figure 48). The principle motive features a melismatic figure that serves to embellish the line (Figure 49).

Figure 48: *Andante*, Op. 65, No. 1, mm. 1-4.

Figure 49: *Andante*, Op. 65, No. 1, mm. 32-33.

(A) Approach to Arrangement

Originally, Ritter wrote this piece in A Major and in the high register of the viola. He did not even utilize the C-string. To notate the music entirely in alto clef, he had to write numerous ledger lines for notes in that range. The brilliant A-string obviously

provided a clear and bright sound. In order to make this piece appropriate for a

conventional viola, it is transposed a perfect fifth down to D Major. This change keeps

the same fingering patterns as the original, but now incorporates the use of the C-

string. Transposing the piano part similarly required rearranging some of the chord

voicings to improve texture and clarity.

(B) Pedagogical Features

Due to the register of this arrangement, the pitches were limited to the first

position. In other words, it stays within the middle register of the viola. Performers need

to explore the tone quality of the middle two strings in order to bring out the tenor

sonority.

Ritter often uses chromatic pitches to embellish the melodic lines such as the

melismas. In order to smoothly perform the semitone passages and ensure clear

intonation, the performer may use half-position (Figure 50) or shifting by half-step

(Figure 51).

Figure 50: *Andante*, Op. 65, No. 1, m. 8.

Figure 51: *Andante*, Op. 65, No. 1, m. 35.

This composition features dotted rhythms followed by sixteenth notes. Internally subdividing the sixteenth notes helps establish rhythmic accuracy, tempo, and character. Additionally, awareness of voice leading may help performers build longer melodic lines. Bow distribution also helps shape the gestures. For instance, the opening four-measure theme is constructed in sentence structure, with the harmony moving from the tonic to the dominant and back. The abbreviated melodic line is: A-D-E-F#. Therefore, bow distribution may help shape the phrase by increasing the length of the bow in measure 2 beat by beat, then decreasing the length of the bow in measure 4 (Figure 52). In addition, the musical gesture is present within the bowing as well. For example, the first measure is a downward gesture, while the upward gesture occurs on the up bow on the pitch D.

In general, this piece requires agile shifting within positions so string crossings do not interrupt the smoothness and continuity of the music line. The harmonic progressions clearly indicate the music's direction with clear cadences. Violists may explore their sound by playing this lyrical composition, striving for seamless bow changes and connections.

Figure 50: *Andante*, Op. 65, No. 1, mm. 1-4.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

As Berlioz once mentioned about the viola, "the general character of its tones is one of profound melancholy and is notably different from that of the other string instruments."[20] The late nineteenth century had few solo compositions that featured its unique sound so violists today still look for opportunities to play pieces from the Romantic era. Ritter's invention of the viola alta was an attempt to develop the deep range of the viola.

Ritter's works in the PIVA library provide a trove of character pieces that are charming, delightful and largely unknown. The viola alta is essentially a five-stringed instrument capable of producing a vast range. This paper seeks to make some of these compositions accessible on the modern four-stringed viola, featuring a robust sound.

Arranging these pieces, along with the piano parts, made the author aware of the compositional process. One needs to consider issues such as balance and voicing, and whether to re-write, change registers or transpose music into different keys. Even utilizing string effects such as pizzicato and harmonics provided an opportunity to examine skill advancement and playing level, ultimately leading to the decision to arrange these pieces for an intermediate level violist.

Determining the pedagogical level of each piece led to decisions on fingerings and bowings for the viola, and for the piano part, accompanimental and rhythmic textures. It was important to write an edition that is readable and accessible and provides explanations to justify the deviations from the original score.

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[20] Hector Berlioz, *Treatise on Instrumentation*, ed. Richard Strauss, trans. Theodore Front (New York: Kalmus, 1948): 60.

These pieces are a sample of the compositions written by Ritter for the viola alta. Organized by key, young violists can explore their knowledge of the instrument and gain familiarity with the fingerboard. Shifting is not necessarily required, but an advancing violist may explore sound color possibilities once shifting becomes routine. Each piece represents a specific character or style; students may develop their interpretation skills, understanding how phrases are structured and constructed. Overall, differences in sound texture and nuance will be discovered through a full exploration of dynamics and articulation.

These pieces offer all violists more choices of authentic repertoire from the Romantic period, appropriate for recital programs or performance opportunities in which shorter pieces are desired. This music also provides collaborative opportunities for violists and pianists, and this rendition remains true to the musical language of the nineteenth century violist.

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APPENDIX A

VIOLA PART

Jagdstück, Op. 17

Barcarole, Op. 37, No. 1

Auf den Wellen, Op. 27

Allegretto Scherzando, Op. 65, No. 2

Im Träume, Op. 32, No. 2

Andante, Op. 65, No. 1

Jagdstück

Hermann Ritter, Op. 17
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

Viola

Viola

Barcarole

Hermann Ritter, Op. 37 No. 1
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

- Barcarole -

Viola

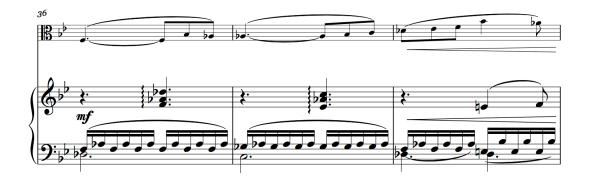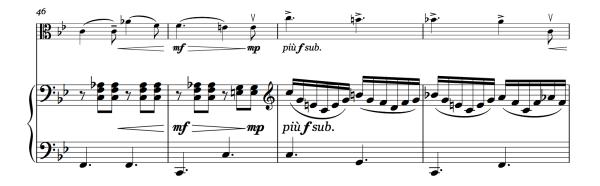# Auf den Wellen

Hermann Ritter, Op. 27
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

- Auf den Wellen -

Allegretto Scherzando

Viola

Hermann Ritter, Op. 65 No. 2
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

- Allegretto Scherzando -

- Allegretto Scherzando -

Im Träume

Viola

Hermann Ritter, Op. 32 No. 2
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

53

- Im Träume -

Viola

Andante

Hermann Ritter, Op. 65 No. 1
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

- Andante -

- Andante -

APPENDIX B

FULL SCORE

Jagdstück, Op. 17

Barcarole, Op. 37, No. 1

Auf den Wellen, Op. 27

Allegretto Scherzando, Op. 65, No. 2

Im Träume, Op. 32, No. 2

Andante, Op. 65, No. 1

Jagdstück

<div align="right">

Hermann Ritter, Op. 17
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

</div>

- Jagstück -

- Jagstück -

Barcarole

Hermann Ritter, Op. 37 No. 1
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

- Barcarole -

Auf den Wellen

Hermann Ritter, Op. 27
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

Allegretto Scherzando

Hermann Ritter, Op. 65 No. 2
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

- Allegretto Scherzando -

- Allegretto Scherzando -

- Allegretto Scherzando -

- Allegretto Scherzando -

- Allegretto Scherzando -

- Allegretto Scherzando -

Im Träume

Hermann Ritter, Op. 32 No. 2
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen
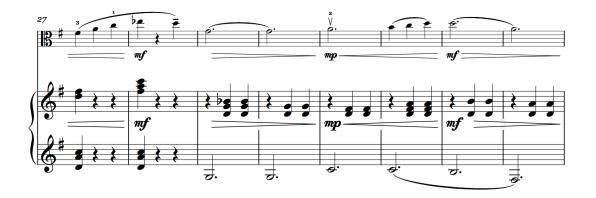
- Im Träume -

- Im Träume -
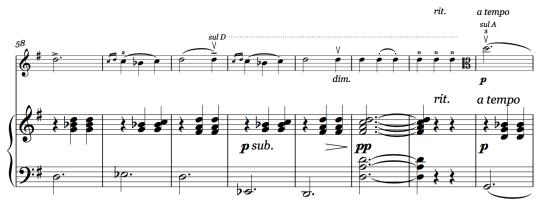
- Im Träume -

Andante

Hermann Ritter, Op. 65 No. 1
arr. by Yen-Fang Chen

- Andante -

- Andante -

- Andante -