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**Continuity and Change in Eugène Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas,  
Op. 27, for Solo Violin**

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**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**The Open University  
Department of Music**

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# **Continuity and Change in Eugène Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas, Op. 27, for Solo Violin**

## **Abstract**

The Six Sonatas, Op. 27, for Solo Violin by the Belgian violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931), written in 1923/24, are increasingly adopted into the standard repertoire of violinists. Ysaÿe saw them as containing his legacy to future generations of violinists and composers and also as a statement of his aesthetic identity. However, not much research has been done on the aesthetics reflected in them. Yet, a greater awareness of Ysaÿe's aesthetics will add to the understanding of this important historical figure who did so much to popularise French and Belgian music of the turn of the twentieth century and very much identified with the circle of composers around César Franck.

This thesis focusses on Ysaÿe's relationship with music history as represented in Op. 27. It explores his aesthetics, in particular his attitude to the past, present and future as well as his insistence on the continuity of history. Part I examines Ysaÿe's historical and biographical context as well as his aesthetic predilections. It particularly focuses on composers to whom he was close, notably the Franckists, as well as on the violin tradition of which he was part, with an emphasis on Henri Vieuxtemps. As each Sonata is dedicated to a violinist of the generation after Ysaÿe, their personalities and playing styles are also discussed. Part II turns to the Sonatas themselves and explores ways in which Ysaÿe engages with past and contemporaneous composers, notably J. S. Bach, César Franck and Claude Debussy, as well as with the violin tradition and the possible influence of the dedicatees on their Sonata. It also demonstrates Ysaÿe's contribution to music history, especially to the development of the technical and expressive possibilities of his instrument.

**To Marianne Paul**

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# Continuity and Change in Eugène Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas, Op. 27, for Solo Violin

## PART I: Background

### Chapter 1: Introduction, literature review and methodology

The distinguished Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931) is widely regarded as one of the foremost violinists of his time. Greatly admired during his lifetime, he earned the esteem of the most eminent violinists, including Joseph Joachim, Carl Flesch and Joseph Szigeti. Flesch, for instance, called him 'the most outstanding and individual violinist I have ever heard in all my life,'<sup>1</sup> while Jacques Thibaud, the dedicatee of Ysaÿe's Second Sonata in the Op. 27 cycle, considered him 'THE VIOLINIST – any adjective [is], by nature, to define his genius [and], therefore, to diminish it.'<sup>2</sup> The author and composer Frederick H. Martens, who was able to interview Ysaÿe in about 1918, asks rhetorically: 'Who is there among contemporary masters of the violin whose name stands for more at the present time than that of the great Belgian artist, his "extraordinary temperamental power as an interpreter" enhanced by a hundred and one special gifts of tone and technic [*sic.*], gifts often alluded to by his admiring colleagues? For Ysaÿe is the greatest exponent of that wonderful Belgian school of violin playing which is rooted in his teachers Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski [...].'<sup>3</sup> Ysaÿe was proud to belong to the violin tradition of his native country and sought to follow in the footsteps of especially Henri Vieuxtemps. However, far from exclusively focusing on the past, he was instrumental in the development of modern violin playing. He was particularly important to the increased use of highly nuanced vibrato<sup>4</sup> and admired for synthesising 'technical perfection and the greatest intensity of expression.'<sup>5</sup>

The esteem in which Ysaÿe was held is equally evident in concert reviews. The anonymous reviewer of Robert Newman's Symphony Concerts in early 1900, for instance,

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<sup>1</sup> Flesch 1973: 78.

<sup>2</sup> 'LE VIOLONISTE – tout adjectif étant de nature à définir son génie, donc à le diminuer' (in Stockhem 1990: [7]).

<sup>3</sup> Martens 1919: 1.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Stockhem 1990: 236.

<sup>5</sup> See Flesch 1973: 79.

wrote enthusiastically: ‘and that marvellous violinist, M. Eugene Ysaÿe, scored triumphant successes in Saint-Saens’s Third Concerto (Op. 61) and Lalo’s “Symphonie Espagnole” (Op. 21). These works may not be great masterpieces [...], but they gave the great Flemish<sup>6</sup> violinist ample opportunities for displaying his phenomenal technique, his luscious tone, his melting cantilene. He had a great reception, and after Lalo’s work played as an encore Beethoven’s Romance in G.’<sup>7</sup> As a chamber musician, Ysaÿe gained equally high praise. Georges Systemans, for example, writes in *Le XXe siècle* on 24 December 1902 about the complete performance of Beethoven’s Violin Sonatas over three evenings at the Cercle artistique et littéraire in Brussels: ‘Never has one seen, at the Cercle artistique, a similar enthusiasm to that of Saturday evening, when, at the end of the third of these unforgettable Sonaten-Abende [sonata evenings], the entire hall, moved, electrified, madly applauded Busoni and Ysaÿe, heaping recall after recall, shouting, stamping...’<sup>8</sup> Ysaÿe earned similar approval in London some years later: ‘On April 20, Messrs. Eugene Ysaÿe and Raoul Pugno gave the first of three recitals devoted to Beethoven’s Sonatas for violin and pianoforte, at Queen’s Hall. Once again, these artists excited the greatest admiration, not only on account of their individual excellence but by reason of their well-nigh perfect ensemble.’<sup>9</sup> Ysaÿe’s violin playing is considered in more depth in chapter 3.

Since his youth Ysaÿe also composed and, thereby, participated in the long tradition of the composer-performer. It dates back to at least the seventeenth century with composers, for the violin, such as Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) and Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644-1704) and spans the centuries via Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840) and Louis Spohr (1784-1859) to Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908) and Joseph Joachim (1831-1907). Most of Ysaÿe’s works involve a solo violin, from his eight early violin concertos to the mature *Dix Préludes pour solo violon*, Op. posthumous (also known as Op. 35),<sup>10</sup> although he also wrote some other works, notably the opera *Piére li houïeu*, which he finished shortly before his death in 1931. His best-known works, however, are the Six Sonatas, Op.

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<sup>6</sup> Ysaÿe was not Flemish but Walloon.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Mr. Robert Newman’s Symphony Concerts,’ *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 41, No. 685 (Mar. 1, 1900), p. 184.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Jamais on ne vit, au Cercle artistique, enthousiasme pareil à celui de samedi soir, quand, à l’issue du troisième de ses inoubliables Sonaten-Abende, la salle entière, émue, électrisée, acclamait follement Busoni et Ysaÿe, entassant rappel sur rappel, criant, trépignant...’ (in Stockhem 1990: 191).

<sup>9</sup> ‘London Concerts,’ *The Musical Times*, Vol. 51, No. 807 (May 1, 1910), p. 311.

<sup>10</sup> Ysaÿe foresaw thirteen preludes, of which drafts of only eleven were found (the sketch of the eleventh prelude is only present in embryonic form and could not be reconstructed). The preludes must have been written in about 1927/28 (see editorial note by Charles Radoux Rogier to Eugène Ysaÿe, *Dix Préludes pour solo violon*, Op. 35 (Bruxelles and Paris: Schott Frères, 1952), p. 9).

27, for Solo Violin. They ‘constitute,’ as his son puts it, ‘the best of a vibrant, artistic personality [... and] contain as much science as art.’<sup>11</sup> Similarly, David Oistrakh considers the Sonatas ‘of exceptional artistic value in the violin repertoire’ because ‘they open up new horizons in the history of violin virtuosity. [E]nrichment and development of the violin technique in the sonatas,’ Oistrakh argues, ‘has been achieved, not in divorcement from music, but in complete harmony with the artistic tasks.’<sup>12</sup> Progress was very important to Ysaÿe and, throughout his life, he strove to extend the musical and technical boundaries of his instrument. This, it might be argued, became one of the most important motors for his compositional activities.

But Ysaÿe’s importance to music history extends beyond his concern for and impact on violin playing. Through his close ties with a number of contemporary, mainly French and Belgian composers, including the circle around César Franck, as well as Claude Debussy and Gabriel Fauré, he shaped their music, for instance, through his encouragement of and practical advice on compositions for violin and his subsequent tireless promotion of them. Ernest Chausson’s *Poème*, Op. 25 for violin and orchestra (1896), for example, is known to have particularly benefitted from Ysaÿe’s input. The violinist’s importance to Debussy, on the other hand, is especially revealed in the latter’s letters. Following the 1894 all-Debussy concert at La Libre Esthétique, Debussy wrote to Chausson: ‘Ysaÿe played like an angel! And the quartet played with an emotion that it did not have in Paris [...].’<sup>13</sup> Debussy’s letter of 22 September 1894 to Ysaÿe also testifies that Ysaÿe inspired him: ‘My dear, great friend, [...] I am working on three nocturnes, for violin and orchestra [...] I hope that this will interest you and the enjoyment that you could have is the thing that interests me the most.’<sup>14</sup> Many composers dedicated works to Ysaÿe, from Franck (*Violin Sonata* (1886)) and Fauré (*Piano Quintet*, Op. 89 (1906)) to Sam Franko (*Méditation*, Op. 3/2 (1899)), from Claude Debussy (*String Quartet* Op. 10 (1893)) to Bernhard Dessau (*Capriccio*, Op. 45, for violin and piano (1910)).<sup>15</sup> Although those composers whose music he called ‘my aesthetic and spiritual nourishment,’<sup>16</sup> that is, the

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<sup>11</sup> A. Ysaÿe 1967: 13.

<sup>12</sup> In Ginsburg 1980: 331.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Ysaÿe a joué comme un ange! et le quatuor a donné une émotion qu’il n’avait pas eue à Paris [...].’ (Debussy [1980]: 64 (also in Stockhem 1990: 116)).

<sup>14</sup> ‘Mon cher grand ami, [...] Je travaille à trois nocturnes, pour violon principal et orchestre [...] J’espère que cela t’intéressera et le plaisir que tu pourras en avoir est la chose qui m’intéresse la plus’ (Debussy [1980]: 69).

<sup>15</sup> For a longer list of works dedicated to Ysaÿe, see Stockhem 1990: 241.

<sup>16</sup> ‘ma nourriture esthétique et spirituelle’ (in Christen 1947: 179).



composers around Franck as well as Debussy and Fauré, benefitted particularly from Ysaÿe's programming choices and promotion, his repertoire was vast, ranging from Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, to Edward Elgar and Edvard Grieg, to Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, Camille Saint-Saëns and Johan Svendsen, to Piotr Illich Tchaikovsky and Antonio Vivaldi, not to forget Arcangelo Corelli, Francesco Geminiani, Nicolò Paganini, Louis Spohr, Henri Vieuxtemps and Henryk Wieniawski, for Ysaÿe avowed that 'I have never cultivated a "speciality." I have played everything from Bach to Debussy, for real art should be international!'<sup>17</sup>

Ysaÿe's violin playing has been increasingly studied in recent years (as is considered in greater depth in the literature review) and his playing style and position in the history of violin playing are by now relatively well understood. His role in the inspiration and promotion of French and Belgian chamber music of his time is also gradually becoming better known. The latter is largely owing to Michel Stockhem's meticulous research published as *Eugène Ysaÿe et la musique de chambre* (1990) (see the literature review for a detailed consideration of this). However, despite the praise for Ysaÿe's music from musicians, such as David Oistrakh, and the fact that his works, especially the Six Sonatas Op. 27, are gradually being absorbed into the standard violin repertoire, Ysaÿe's compositional style has so far not been studied in depth. This seems unfortunate because although his works themselves have not had a great historical impact, they are of considerable interest as they reveal important aspects of his aesthetic and stylistic priorities and development. Further insights into these would very likely inform future research on the violinist's artistic identity, and especially on his impact on wider musical developments. In addition, Ysaÿe's compositional style is interesting, versatile and engaging as is argued throughout the present thesis with respect to Op. 27. His thoughtful engagement with history, the remarkable extension of violinistic means and his striking imaginativeness, all contribute to making the Sonatas as gratifying for the ears as for the mind.

It is, therefore, the vision of the present thesis, on the one hand, to develop a better understanding of Ysaÿe's artistic identity and aesthetic disposition through the study of his compositional style in the Sonatas Op. 27, and, on the other, to offer new insights that may lead to future research into his impact on wider musical developments. The Sonatas have been chosen because, written towards the end of his life when his

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<sup>17</sup> In Martens 1919: 6.

performing career had all but ended, they are mature works and contain, more or less consciously, Ysaÿe's legacy to future generations of violinists. Embedded in an imaginative and improvisatory musical fabric, different aspects of musical tradition interact and are expanded. This seems to reflect a particular focus in Ysaÿe's aesthetics: the conviction that the musical past, present and future are part of a constantly evolving process to which musicians, guided by their individual musical heritage, contribute.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part I is a historical and biographical contextualisation of Op. 27. Chapter 2 explores Ysaÿe's artistic identity, which, on the one hand, was deeply rooted in his violinistic vocation and, on the other, in the bonds he formed with a number of composers, notably with Franck and his followers. The third chapter discusses the background to the Sonatas, particularly Ysaÿe's reasons for writing them and the inspirations on which he drew. Part II examines the Sonatas themselves. Context and musical analysis complement each other. This is because when the discussion of Ysaÿe's compositional strategies and stylistic inclinations in Op. 27 are put into the historic-biographical context, they explain more fully the roots and purpose of his musical choices. For instance, material relating to his background provides an insight into the strong moral values behind Ysaÿe's development of new technical and expressive means for the violin and their roots in his conception of music history in general and the history of violin playing in particular (see below). In the conclusion, which reflects on Ysaÿe's aesthetic values, compositional idiom and understanding of music history, his artistic identity and position in music history are reconsidered. A summary of the different facets of his identity and aesthetic convictions leads to the final remarks of this thesis that reflect on the fundamental importance of the inseparability and continuity of past, present and future to his identity, thinking and composition.

While the chief contribution of this thesis lies in the extension of current understanding of Ysaÿe, it also contributes through the translation of passages, mostly of French ones, for the first time into English, thus extending their accessibility to non-Francophone scholars. As well as relating directly to Ysaÿe, a number of these texts concern the Belgian tradition of violin playing overall. They describe the Belgian tradition and distinguish it from the French rather than conflating the two. This is a view advocated by numerous renowned Belgian musicians and music scholars including José Quitin, Henri Vanhulst and not least Ysaÿe himself (see chapter 2), and of which it is, therefore, important to be aware.

## Literature review

The purpose of the literature review is to give an overview of research that has been undertaken as well as other relevant literature in a number of areas relating to Ysaÿe. The focal point is, of course, Ysaÿe himself. From there, the focus widens and moves outwards and sideward to explore topic areas more or less directly relevant to Ysaÿe and his Sonatas Op. 27. Like the present thesis, most of the literature reviewed is rooted in historical musicology although other musicological subdisciplines, notably performance practice, are also represented. The review covers two broad areas: first, studies relating to Ysaÿe, his musical and social context, including composers close to him and wider aesthetic considerations (notably the fantasia tradition and an interest in early music), and secondly, violin playing: the playing of Ysaÿe and of the dedicatees as well as performance practice more generally.

### Biographies and other studies on Ysaÿe

Initially, biographies have been studied to better understand Ysaÿe's life, aesthetics and artistic values as well as where and how they originated and developed. In this way, his wider artistic context can be established, including musicians and artistic currents to which he was close or to which he reacted. Since his death in 1931 a number of biographies on Ysaÿe have appeared. Most were written in the initial decade and a half after his death and are non-academic in nature. Perhaps the best known and to this day most cited Ysaÿe biography is that by his son Antoine. Understandably, the author's devotion to his father shines clearly through and his account of his father's life and work is somewhat romanticised. The book also incorporates much source material, such as excerpts from the violinist's notes, letters and homages to him. For the purposes of this thesis it is this source material that is of particular value. There are two different versions of the book. The first, *Ysaÿe: His Life, Work and Influence*, was published in English in 1947 with Bertram Ratcliffe.<sup>18</sup> The second was published in 1972 in French and is a condensed version of the English edition.<sup>19</sup> Although containing mostly the same information, the French edition adds some new items, such as a discography and a list of Ysaÿe's students.

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<sup>18</sup> Antoine Ysaÿe with Bertram Ratcliffe, *Ysaÿe: His Life, Work and Influence* ([s.l.]: Heinemann, 1947).

<sup>19</sup> Antoine Ysaÿe, *Eugène Ysaÿe* (Brussels: Editions Ysaÿe, 1972).

Ernest Christen's *Ysaÿe* seems closely related to A. Ysaÿe's first book in both its reverent tone and its content.<sup>20</sup> As Ysaÿe and Christen wrote at roughly the same time, used the same sources and were well acquainted, it is perhaps not surprising to find significant parallels in their books. However, as Christen was, as well as a lifelong friend, a former pupil of the violinist, his book offers a number of additional insights into Ysaÿe's teaching and aesthetics. Another family friend was José Quitin. His *Eugène Ysaÿe*, a very slim book, was the first Ysaÿe biography to appear.<sup>21</sup> It gives a brief biographical summary, followed by an impression of Ysaÿe as a person and also contains a part in which Quitin discusses Ysaÿe's main compositions and includes related comments by the violinist.

Although relying considerably on Antoine Ysaÿe's biography, Lev Ginsburg's *Prof. Lev Ginsburg's Ysaÿe* contains a number of additional features, such as a detailed chapter on Ysaÿe's activities in Russia and comments on Ysaÿe by David Oistrakh.<sup>22</sup> Ginsburg also considers both Ysaÿe's playing and compositional style to a degree. Maxime Benoît-Jeannin's *Eugène Ysaÿe: Le dernier romantique ou le sacre du violon* is the latest biography and takes the form of a novel.<sup>23</sup> Although it builds a more historically contextualised view of Ysaÿe's life than those of Antoine Ysaÿe or Christen, it is indebted to both authors. Benoît-Jeannin includes, for example, an anecdote of Ysaÿe's discovery by Vieuxtemps which comes from A. Ysaÿe. He also imagines scenes as they might have occurred, for instance, in concerts by the Bilse orchestra, which are rather reminiscent of Christen. A positive aspect of this book is that the author embeds Ysaÿe in his time and gives background information on places, such as Berlin, and on other composers, such as César Franck. However, being a novel (despite its bibliography and small appendices), the author inevitably takes poetic licence to make the storyline more attractive to the general reader.

This overview shows that, with the exception of Quitin's slim book, all biographies appear to rely on that of A. Ysaÿe and at least partially reproduce its strengths, such as certain source material, but also its problems, such as its romanticised view of Ysaÿe and the composers around him. The present thesis seeks to avoid a romanticisation of its subject. It is primarily focused on the artistic connections Ysaÿe made in life and how these might have affected his own aesthetic development. What is abundantly clear regardless of

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<sup>20</sup> Ernest Christen, *Ysaÿe*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1947).

<sup>21</sup> José Quitin, *Eugène Ysaÿe* (Brussels, [1938]).

<sup>22</sup> Lev Ginsburg, *Prof. Lev Ginsburg's Ysaÿe*, ed. Herbert R. Axelrod, transl. X. M. Danko (Neptune City, New Jersey: Paganiniana, 1980).

<sup>23</sup> Maxime Benoît-Jeannin, *Eugène Ysaÿe: Le dernier romantique ou le sacre du violon* (Brussels: Le Cri, 2001).

style of writing, is the importance of Franck and his circle as well as of Debussy, Fauré and Saint-Saëns to Ysaÿe's musical world. The importance of his teacher Vieuxtemps is also clearly revealed.

The final book about Ysaÿe's life, and perhaps the only strictly academic one, is *Ysaÿe et la musique de chambre* by Michel Stockhem.<sup>24</sup> The intention of this meticulous study is to document Ysaÿe's activities as a chamber musician and his importance in this area.<sup>25</sup> An initial biographical summary, which seeks to address the problems with respect to the tone and content of the existing biographies by avoiding idolatry and by correcting various kinds of mistakes, is followed by a very detailed account of Ysaÿe's lifelong activities as a chamber musician. Wanting to reconstitute musical life of the period with precision, Stockhem provides much valuable biographical and historical background. He is very often able to incorporate detailed information about concerts, including the compositions Ysaÿe performed, co-musicians, dates and places as well as relevant primary sources, such as letters and press reviews. This is especially true for Ysaÿe's activities in France and Belgium. Material pertaining to other countries varies but is, at times, somewhat sketchy. A notable example is the United States. Here, Stockhem passes over, for instance, Ysaÿe's activities in the realm of chamber music during the years he lived in the US (1917-1922) in a few sentences. Nevertheless, the book offers an invaluable insight into Ysaÿe's artistic personality and environment and is of enormous value to this thesis. It also confirms the importance of especially the composers around Franck, and for a time of Debussy, in Ysaÿe's life and shows the eclectic nature of Ysaÿe's chamber music repertoire. The author of the present thesis seeks to build on Stockhem's insights. However, rather than learning about Ysaÿe through his concert programmes and artistic partnerships, this author uses Ysaÿe's compositional style as a vehicle for learning about his aesthetic identity and artistic values. The insights gained from this enquiry are hoped to complement and supplement those of Stockhem and the biographies.

### **Ysaÿe's musical and social context**

A number of studies offer broad perspectives that paint some of the background against which Ysaÿe's artistic development took place. The broadest of these is Richard

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<sup>24</sup> Michel Stockhem, *Eugène Ysaÿe et la musique de chambre* (Liège: Pierre Mardaga, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 229.

Taruskin's six-volume *The Oxford History of Western Music*.<sup>26</sup> To date, it is the latest publication to attempt a comprehensive history of the art music of Europe and North America. Aware of music historiography's long and varied history, Taruskin sets out his approach, insisting 'on an eclectic multiplicity of approaches to observed phenomena and on greatly expanding the purview of what is observed.'<sup>27</sup> At the beginning of the first volume he explains that the series seeks to be not a survey, but a real history of the subject. By this he means, for example, that sources are not just cited but analysed. He also seeks to embrace a multiplicity of possibilities so as to establish 'causal explanation and technical explication.'<sup>28</sup>

Material relevant to Ysaÿe is found in volume 4, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* and within that volume in the chapters that deal with music in France up to the mid-1920s, that is, up until Ysaÿe had composed his Sonatas Op. 27. Although Taruskin does not discuss Ysaÿe himself, he has a particular view of the composers who influenced him. When discussing music in France around the turn of the century, Taruskin seems to show a distinct dislike for certain composers, notably the Franckists, as for him they were committing 'unconscious—or even worse, perhaps, obsessive—plagiarisms' from Wagner.<sup>29</sup> He seems scathing about their music and it is also largely left out of volume 3, *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, of *The Oxford History of Western Music*. Taruskin's view, however, seems limited. It is true that Franck and his pupils took significant inspiration from Wagner's music, especially harmonically. However, overall, much got absorbed, developed further and combined with other interests. It was this cross-fertilization (which Taruskin does not discuss), the author of the present thesis would argue, that was particularly influential on Ysaÿe. Two cases in point are an interest in music from before 1800, tangible in works, such as in Franck's *Prélude, choral et fugue* for piano (1884) and

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [n.d.]), (accessed 30 April 2018), <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/>.

<sup>27</sup> *Music from the Earliest Notations to the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford University Press. (New York, USA, [n.d.]), (accessed 30 April 2018), <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-miscMatter-021008.xml>.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Music from the Earliest Notations to the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford University Press. (New York, USA, [n.d.]), (accessed 30 April 2018), <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-miscMatter-021008.xml>.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Taruskin, 'Chapter 2 Getting Rid of Glue,' *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press (New York, USA, [n.d.]), (accessed 30 April 2018), <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/view/Volume4/actrade-9780195384840-chapter-002.xml>.

Vincent d'Indy's *Suite dans le style ancien*, for trumpet, two flutes and string quartet (1886), and an interest in one's ethnic roots, as in d'Indy's *Symphonie sur un chant montagnard français (Symphonie cévenole)*, for piano and orchestra (completed 1886). Moreover, the use of modal inflections becomes increasingly important, a topic that is further explored later in the present thesis.

Of another great influence on Ysaÿe, Debussy, on the other hand, Taruskin approves. He discusses Debussy's compositional style, such as his use of pentatonicism, the whole-tone scale, a certain scarcity of leading tones and the static quality his music seems to have at times. He also explains how the term Impressionism for his compositional style became accepted and might not be entirely unjustified in light of certain titles Debussy gave his music, such as in his two books of preludes and the *Nocturnes* (1897-99). Taruskin equally explores the Symbolist link and, in this connection, discusses Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1893-1902) in some depth, including his engagement and struggle with Wagner in it. However, Taruskin sees Debussy especially in terms of anti-Germanic reaction. The author of the present thesis is most interested in Debussy's compositional style, musical thinking and interest in the musical past beyond the spectre of Wagner and the Austro-German sphere of influence. Taruskin seems to emphasise Debussy's issues around Wagner at the cost of other topics he could have treated in more depth, such as his interest in early music and his compositional technique (beyond certain issues around harmony).

In chapter 8, 'Pathos Is Banned,' Taruskin argues that the twentieth century in Western art music began in the 1920s with Stravinsky's *Octet* (c1923) and his turn to what became known as (his) Neoclassicism. The aim was to strip music of all pathos, a demand, which is best understood in the context of the aftermath of the First World War, which, according to Taruskin, had killed not only millions of people but had also killed optimism and faith in progress and had left despondence and shock. Irony, black humour and cynicism replaced faith in humanity. Aesthetics in performance also changed with this loss of faith and trust to become more literal and less subjective. Taruskin emphasises the use of irony, especially stylistic irony, and joking. He closes the chapter with some quotations about Stravinsky's *Octet*, which confirm the latter's highly anti-Romantic, anti-expressive and pro-'objectivity' stance.

While Ysaÿe very much shared the horror at the destruction of the war, he did not react with a disillusionment to Romanticism. For him, music, the music he had known and to which he was committed, could and should bring peace, and he wished to use it for

these purposes during the war: 'Our best, our only means of making pacifist propaganda, that is to continue to diffuse our admirable art, whose secret language penetrates all hearts.'<sup>30</sup> He also stated that 'it is necessary to play the good, the beautiful and the true. A real virtuoso must have virtue, vigour, personal value, a vast culture. ... Have an *expressive technique*; even a semibreve must speak. Do not do anything that doesn't have as object poetry, the heart, the spirit.'<sup>31</sup> It is in comparing Taruskin's clearly argued chapter to Ysaÿe's own discourse that the extent to which the latter was out of phase with the latest aesthetic developments becomes especially clear.

When considering Ysaÿe's aesthetic roots, both Belgium and France are crucial. Having grown up and lived for most of his life in Belgium, Ysaÿe's native country formed the foundation for his identity. He was, for example, very keen to emphasise that he was a violinist of the Belgian school (see chapter 3). However, France also played a crucial role in his identity. Ysaÿe lived in Paris twice (1876-79 and 1883-86), and during both stays he came into close contact with progressive composers of the post-Franco-Prussian-War (1870/1) period, including Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Debussy and especially the circle around César Franck. Ysaÿe remained devoted to these composers for the rest of his life and his ties with France remained strong throughout.

The composers to whom he was close were heavily involved in the Société Nationale de Musique (SNM) in Paris, a musical society dealt with in Michel Duchesneau's 1997 study *L'Avant-garde musicale et ses sociétés à Paris de 1871 à 1939*.<sup>32</sup> An extension of his doctoral thesis, the book deals with four major progressive musical societies in Paris that emerged before World War Two: the Société Nationale de Musique, the Société Musicale Indépendante (SMI), Sérénade and Triton. Duchesneau explains each society's aesthetic orientation, internal politics and programming as well as the changing historical and political context in which it existed. Furthermore, the societies, which, to an extent, supplanted each other, are considered in relation to each other. Duchesneau's account of the Société Nationale de Musique is of most value in relation to Ysaÿe because of the four musical societies discussed, this is the only one with which he was involved. It was founded in 1871 by some of the composers who were to become his friends, including Camille

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<sup>30</sup> 'Notre meilleur, notre seul moyen de faire de la propagande pacifiste, c'est de continuer à diffuser notre art admirable dont le langage secret pénètre tous les cœurs' (in Christen 1947: 161).

<sup>31</sup> 'il faut jouer le bien, le beau, le vrai. Un vrai virtuose doit avoir une vertu, une vigueur, une valeur personnelle, une vaste culture. ... 'Ayez une *technique expressive*; une quadruple croche même doit parler. Ne faites rien qui n'ait comme objet la poésie, le cœur, l'esprit' (in Christen 1947: 80-81).

<sup>32</sup> Michel Duchesneau, *L'Avant-garde musicale et ses sociétés à Paris de 1871 à 1939* (Sprimont, Belgium: Pierre Mardaga, 1997).



Saint-Saëns, Gabriel Fauré and César Franck, with the aim of developing a new French musical tradition, innovative and of high quality, away from the spectacles of grand operas and operettas. The Société Nationale came to be dominated by the Franckists and served as an important organisation for the dissemination of their music. Duchesneau's perceptive account of the aesthetics propounded and the politics at issue as well as the gradual evolution of these two factors, offers a significant amount of insight into the aesthetic and political thinking to which Ysaÿe was exposed and in which he matured.

Whereas Duchesneau focuses on the four musical societies but covers the entire period of the Third Republic, in *Composing the Citizen*, Jann Pasler only deals with its first half, up to about 1900.<sup>33</sup> However, she casts her net wider by examining French musico-political life more generally. The book offers important insights into the musical and political world Ysaÿe entered when he came to Paris and sheds new light on the political and cultural atmosphere in which the aesthetics and value systems of his composer friends developed, who became so important to Ysaÿe's life and creative activities. Her book likewise contextualises these composers' creative efforts as well as their musical activities. *Composing the Citizen* offers a broad view of musical culture in early Third-Republic France. Pasler, therefore, refers to many academic studies on aspects on which the book touches, for example, institutions, such as on the Opera Garnier, the Conservatoire and the Société Nationale de Musique; on individual composers, such as Franck, Fauré and Debussy; as well as on other, relatively broad academic studies, such as on music and society from the Second Empire to the 1920s, the state's relationship with art more widely and the musical past. An even wider context in which she embeds her book is that of European musical developments. Such literature complements her book. In addition, *Composing the Citizen* directly complements two studies by Jane Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* and *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914-1940* (see below). It almost forms a sort of prequel to Fulcher's books, which deal with roughly the second half of the Third Republic, that is, since just before 1900. Although the individual slants of the books are slightly different, they all deal with music and its politics and, together, offer an overview of the interplay of music and political culture in Third-Republic France.

In *Composing the Citizen*, Pasler wishes specifically to explore the value of music to the French and how music was seen to contribute to 'composing' the citizen. To better

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<sup>33</sup> Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

explain the complex and mutable relationship between music, civic life and politics, she introduces the concept of the *utilité publique* of music, that is, of its social relevance to both the nation and the individual. She, thus, leads the reader through the utilisation of music in political power struggles, notably between Republicans and Monarchists, and in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair; explains its use in inculcating positive habits, customs and Republican values; as well as its role in rebuilding national pride, such as in the exportation of French opera after the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. In the 1890s, Pasler also observes a reinterpretation of music's utility for the benefit of non-political purposes and a relaxation of musical censorship as well as new concepts of what the public utility of music encompassed. Concert programmes tended to feature a relatively large amount of new music, and music from before 1800, including religious music, was also revived and drawn on by composers. She argues that it was in this period just before 1900 that the roots of modernism were laid. This is a different interpretation to Taruskin, who cites the 1920s as the beginning of the 'real' twentieth century. Pasler's account, on the other hand, seems to echo more with the arguments Barbara Kelly advances in *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France* (see below).

While also interested in music from before 1800 and still aesthetically not outdated as a follower of a Franckist aesthetic, to Ysaÿe, musical value does not seem to have resided in the political. Rather, music seems to have been more akin to the religious: it was divine, not merely human.<sup>34</sup> It is, therefore, difficult to see how he could have approved of the use of music for political purposes when it was something spiritual to him. Besides offering a glimpse of the divine, the only other purpose music might perhaps have served was as spiritual edification and peace building.<sup>35</sup> That Ysaÿe was Belgian rather than French might have contributed to his not viewing music as political, which seems to be so embedded in specifically French musical culture at this time.

Jane Fulcher's *French Cultural Politics & Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War*<sup>36</sup> and *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914-1940*<sup>37</sup> appear to be the first volumes of a projected larger series of books leading from the

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<sup>34</sup> See Christen 1947: 164.

<sup>35</sup> See Christen 1947: 161.

<sup>36</sup> Jane F. Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> Jane F. Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2005).

Dreyfus Affair to post-colonialist France.<sup>38</sup> In *French Cultural Politics & Music*, Fulcher explores the penetration of and interaction between musical and political culture in the period between 1899 and 1914. Inextricably bound together in this period, music in France served as a symbol for political convictions and was affected in a multitude of ways. Fulcher's overarching argument centres on the ever-increasing conflict between the political Left and Right and the increasing ascension of the latter up to the First World War as well as on the rise of Anti-Semitism in France. She leads the reader through the labyrinth of musical and political factions, their connections and mutability. Politicians, musicians, journalists and other writers on music were all important players in this cultural battle. Several major themes emerge. However, with respect to Ysaÿe, Fulcher's discussions around the place of d'Indy and the Schola Cantorum as well as of Debussy in French musico-political life are particularly significant. D'Indy, she argues, was an anti-Dreyfusard, nationalist and aristocrat who sought to preserve 'tradition.'<sup>39</sup> In 1894, d'Indy, together with Charles Bordes and Alexandre Guilmant, set up the Schola Cantorum as a competing institution to the Republican Paris Conservatoire. The Schola, which became highly influential, taught music history, church music, counterpoint and genres, such as the symphony and the string quartet. Music was seen as a means of moral education. Fulcher contrasts this with the Conservatoire, which tended to be pro-Dreyfusard and educated its students to become performers and composers often related to the stage and opera. Music history as a discipline was quasi absent at the time. As for Debussy, Fulcher is particularly interested in his response to the rising nationalism and observes that he moved politically more to the Right and held rather nationalist views. She argues that, while his political convictions did influence his work, his response to these as well as to the political climate were highly individual.<sup>40</sup>

The sequel to *French Cultural Politics & Music* is *The Composer as Intellectual* and considers the period 1914 to 1940. This time, Fulcher focuses perhaps even more explicitly on the responses of composers to the evolving cultural and political ideology of the day. The interpenetration of music and politics lies again at the heart of the book, but this time the author is particularly interested in how French composers responded to the

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<sup>38</sup> *Renegotiating French Identity: Musical Culture and Creativity in France During Vichy and the German Occupation* is forthcoming in 2018 from Oxford University Press and *New Music as an Ideological Enunciation from Postwar to Post-Colonialist France* is a current project (see <https://smt.d.umich.edu/departments/musicology/JaneFulcher.htm>).

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, 1999: 21.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, 1999: 170-177.

manipulation by the state of culture and to its instrumentalization in the political discourse of the day. To this end, she discusses some of the major composers of the time through the concept of the 'intellectual.' An intellectual would be somebody who serves to orient society, is qualified to do so through past and present occupations, and who has gained renown in their field of expertise, Fulcher argues. This could be, for example, science, philosophy, art or, indeed, music. Fulcher hopes to establish the political, ideological and cultural conflicts as well as especially composers' intellectual responses so as to re-contextualise those works that survived the abstraction of their original historical nexus. The works that have survived this decontextualization, she considers 'great' (her inverted commas).

For the purpose of the present thesis, it is the discussions of d'Indy and Debussy that are of most interest again. Fulcher's expansive cultural and political perspective helps to better appreciate the composers' wider environment and, therefore, to better understand how this environment shaped their political views and aesthetics as well as how these composers shaped their environment. Also, her approach puts the composers, to an extent, into relation with each other. When the author of the present thesis compares Ysaÿe's thought and aesthetic with that of many of his French colleagues as discussed by Fulcher, it appears that Ysaÿe was more reluctant to mix music and politics. Also, he does not seem to have been as politicised as many of his French colleagues. A patriotic Belgian who wholeheartedly loved his country, Ysaÿe, unlike d'Indy and later also Debussy, does not seem to have held nationalist views, that is, he did not put his country above other countries and races. Rather, he seems to have considered music to transcend politics and national boundaries and to be able to spread peace.<sup>41</sup>

Barbara L. Kelly's *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913-1939* covers roughly the same period as Fulcher's *The Composer as Intellectual*.<sup>42</sup> Going beyond Fulcher's focus on composers' political engagement and issues around nationalism, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France* is of major importance as it presents a nuanced study of French musical Modernism. Kelly firstly challenges the common perception of the interwar period as entirely separated by an aesthetic chasm caused by the war. She argues that there was a certain amount of continuity between the generations of Debussy and those that followed, such as a preoccupation with sonority, counterpoint, a *style dépouillé*

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<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Martens 1919: 6 and Christen 1947: 161.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara L. Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913-1939* (Woodbridge (Suffolk) and Rochester (New York): The Boydell Press, 2013).

(‘stripped-down style’), classicism and melody. Resistance to pressure to conform was also characteristic. She shows that there was a constant tension and give-and-take between continuity and rupture. Leading the reader through the various struggles and their factions, such as the struggle around how to remember Debussy both in France and abroad, and the shifting allegiances, Kelly explores how certain consensus emerged. She also shows that the reputation of the 1920s as a purely frivolous period is reductionist and argues that a strain of religious thought and a working through of the trauma of World War One were equally preoccupations in the interwar period. In addition, there were a number of compositions that achieved quasi unanimous acclaim beyond musical factions, notably Stravinsky’s *Les Noces*, Francis Poulenc’s *Les Biches* and Georges Auric’s *Les Fâcheux*. Thus, a deep consensus pervaded the period despite the overt aesthetic differences. Kelly’s study is important because it challenges the received view of the interwar years. She goes beyond the more common discussions around the Neoclassicism of the 1920s and is, therefore, able to expose deeper aesthetic values. In this way, she also provides an important corrective to studies, such as Taruskin’s (see above), that offer a somewhat limited view of the period by focusing mostly on a certain frivolity and use of irony in the music of such early modernist composers.

Because the musical cultures of France and Belgium were, of course, closely intertwined, Kelly’s study, while not directly touching on Ysaÿe and his native country, does help to explain the musical and cultural environment in which he composed his Violin Sonatas. However, given the close ties between France and Belgium, it would have been useful had Belgium been mentioned, although this might have been beyond the scope of Kelly’s book. For instance, although the Belgian Paul Collaer is mentioned on several occasions, there is no reference to his activities in his native country promoting the French composers Kelly discusses. Yet, Collaer’s activities in Belgium and France were intertwined. He not only offered an important outlet for the French musical *avant-garde*, he also had German and Austrian composers performed in which the French composers Kelly discusses showed significant interest. Robert Wangermée and Henri Vanhulst, for example, note that between 1921 and 1934, Paul Collaer, as impresario of the Pro Arte concerts in Brussels, was instrumental in presenting ‘works by young composers such as Milhaud and Poulenc before they were heard in France, as well as many works by Stravinsky, Satie, Bartók,

Hindemith, Berg and others.<sup>43</sup> Music by contemporary German composers and those from what had been the Austro-Hungarian Empire was difficult to obtain in France due to the ill feelings towards these countries caused by the war. Therefore, Collaer's concerts must have been of major importance to a number of the composers Kelly discusses.

Overall, Duchesneau's, Pasler's, Fulcher's and Kelly's broad views and approaches complement each other as well as other studies discussed in this literature review that focus more narrowly on a single composer and their music. Together, they paint a larger picture of musical life in France against which to understand the more specific studies. They also suggest interesting research topics for the future that are beyond the scope of the present thesis, such as how Belgian political and musical life might have been intertwined around the turn of the twentieth century. Such a project would likely be fruitful because in the decades before World War One, the social and political climate in Belgium, too, proved particularly conducive to the arts. The rich cultural, political and social atmosphere in Belgium, especially in Brussels, is well captured in *Belgium, The Golden Decades, 1880-1914* edited by Jane Block.<sup>44</sup> Although music is not specifically considered, the book provides valuable context for Ysaÿe's aesthetics by elaborating on important aspects of the society and artistic milieu in which he was immersed. The book contains six essays. Each focuses on a relatively specific topic relating to the artistic progressive in Belgium, such as an aspect of an individual artist's work or of an artistic genre, which is discussed in relation to the broader social and political circumstances in the country. The progressive art salons of Les XX (1884-93) and its successor La Libre Esthétique (1894-1914), run by Octave Maus, take a central position. Maus, a fervent Wagnerian, sought to present and promote the innovative in all the arts at his salons and to demonstrate the union of the different art forms. Thus, in addition to the visual arts, the salons also hosted concerts and lectures. Ysaÿe participated in the concerts at the salons as did his friend d'Indy. Through d'Indy's involvement especially, the concerts became a space in which the composers of the Société Nationale de Musique were able to showcase their works and regularly be heard in Brussels also. Some years after Maus's death, his wife Madeleine compiled her book *Trente années de lutte pour l'art* in tribute to her late husband.<sup>45</sup> It

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<sup>43</sup> See Robert Wangermée and Henri Vanhulst (2001), 'Brussels,' *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000004203> [Accessed 14 Dec. 2017].

<sup>44</sup> Jane Block (ed.), *Belgium, The Golden Decades, 1880-1914* (New York: P. Lang, c1997).

<sup>45</sup> Madeleine Octave Maus, *Trente années de lutte pour l'art, 1884-1914*, 2nd edn. (Brussels: Editions Lebeer Hossmann, 1980).

provides a detailed record of the activities of Les XX and La Libre Esthétique, listing the events, participating artists and musicians as well as concert programmes, lectures, and also press cuttings and letters between her husband and participants. M. Maus equally discusses aesthetic, ideological and historical issues although, understandably, her account is very much imbued with loyalty to her spouse and nostalgia for the times.

The musical life in what is now the French-speaking part of Belgium (with Brussels) from medieval times to the 1970s is described in the two volumes of *La Musique en Wallonie et à Bruxelles*, edited by Robert Wangermée and Philippe Mercier.<sup>46</sup> This is an update of its 1950 predecessor *La Musique en Belgique du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, edited by Ernest Closson and Charles van den Borren, although music in the Flemish parts of Belgium is not discussed in the newer books.<sup>47</sup> The first volume of the newer title covers musical life and creativity in Brussels and Wallonia until the eighteenth century, while the second deals with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both volumes cover a wide range of topics. Areas of particular interest are those most directly relevant to Ysaÿe, notably violin playing, concert life and composers, especially Franck, in the decades around 1900. However, a serious drawback of the volumes is that they lack exact citations of the sources they use. This limits their value to academic research. Although together, the three books on Belgium discussed provide a reasonable overview of Ysaÿe's cultural environment, in comparison to the rich literature on French musical life, existing literature considering musical life from a Belgian perspective is quite limited. A key way in which the thesis of the present author is making an original contribution is by addressing this imbalance.

### **Composers close to Ysaÿe and influences**

Moving on to the composers to whom Ysaÿe was close, pride of place must be given to Franck and the group of composers around him. Ysaÿe's involvement with and loyalty to Franck and his circle is well documented. The group as a whole is discussed by Laurence Davies in *César Franck and His Circle*.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, Davies's writing is filled with value judgements that are not backed up by illustrations of how he arrived at his opinions. Furthermore, the book only deals with compositional issues, including style, in a

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<sup>46</sup> Robert Wangermée and Philippe Mercier (eds.), *La Musique en Wallonie et à Bruxelles*, (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1980-82).

<sup>47</sup> Ernest Closson and Charles van den Borren (eds.), *La Musique en Belgique du Moyen Âge à nos jours* (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, [1950]).

<sup>48</sup> Laurence Davies, *César Franck and His Circle* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970).

very cursory fashion. This is regrettable because such a study could have served as a synopsis of and introduction to this highly influential group of musicians. The chapter 'César Franck' by Philippe Mercier in *La Musique en Wallonie et à Bruxelles*, Vol. 2 (discussed above), on the other hand, offers an informative synopsis of Franck's life, music and compositional style. It comments on a number of important works and outlines typical stylistic and technical characteristics, notably cyclicism, harmony (chromaticism, tonal organisation and structure) and form. It is, therefore, more helpful than Davies as an introduction to Franck.

Joël-Marie Fauquet's writing is much more nuanced and his *César Franck* provides a comprehensive biography of the composer in his social and artistic context.<sup>49</sup> The book also provides insights that relate to Franck's circle of followers, for example d'Indy's artistic and political thinking and activity. Seeking to challenge and move away from received opinion, which is largely based on the mythical image fostered by d'Indy in particular, Fauquet re-evaluates Franck historically and aesthetically. He underpins his thoughts and judgements with a broad spectrum of contemporaneous and early twentieth-century voices. His musical discussions avoid highly detailed technical analysis of individual compositions in favour of a more global appraisal of a work's stylistic and technical characteristics. With this book, Fauquet offers a deeper insight into the musical and philosophical environment in which Ysaÿe developed and felt so at home. The thesis of the present author aims to extend this examination by contributing to a better understanding of Ysaÿe's relationship with Franck and his aesthetic and, thereby, sheds new light on another aspect of Franck's life.

Vincent d'Indy, with whom Ysaÿe maintained a lifelong relationship, was, of course, at the heart of the Franck circle and its evolution. Through composers' and other musicians' keen acceptance of as well as others' opposition to his ideas, d'Indy, too, became instrumental in shaping the development of French musical life as a whole, notably through his directorship at the Schola Cantorum, which he had co-founded, and his intensive and influential involvement in the Société Nationale de Musique. A useful introduction to d'Indy's life and times is Andrew Thomson's biography, *D'Indy and His World*.<sup>50</sup> Much more sympathetic to d'Indy and the Franckists than Davies, Thomson seeks to be fair to d'Indy and his art rather than condemnatory because of the latter's somewhat difficult character and right-wing worldviews. He also avoids painting d'Indy as a cold

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<sup>49</sup> Joël-Marie Fauquet, *César Franck* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Thomson, *D'Indy and His World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).



rationalist who was inhibited by a grandmother who tends to be described as tyrannical. Of course, d'Indy's relationship with Franck holds an important position in the book, but even more space is given to the Schola Cantorum, which was crucial to his life. However, like many of d'Indy's relationships, his relationship with Ysaÿe is given surprisingly short shrift. Also, Thomson only discusses d'Indy's orchestral works so as to not overcharge the book with musical examples, but, also on the grounds that he personally prefers the orchestral over the chamber works. This seems an odd way of choosing what to include in an academic book.<sup>51</sup> The author, therefore, misses, above all, the important chamber works of the years before the composer's death. Nevertheless, Thomson's book is of interest to this thesis, albeit in a relatively oblique way, in that it portrays this interesting and multifaceted man. It enables this reader to draw parallels and find contradictions between d'Indy and Ysaÿe and, hence, to become clearer about Ysaÿe's aesthetics and their origins.

A more detailed study of d'Indy's life and music is offered in *Vincent d'Indy et son temps*.<sup>52</sup> Edited by Manuela Schwartz, the book grew out of a conference of the same name organised in 2002 at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. It deals with a wide range of subject matter and addresses socio-political, aesthetic and stylistic topics, including d'Indy's teaching and historical views. The chapters 'Du "métier à l'art:" L'Enseignement de Vincent d'Indy' (pp. 101-110) by Renata Suchowiejko and 'La Musique de chambre de la période d'Agay et le néo-classicisme' (pp. 151-170) by Lucile Thoyer are especially relevant in the context of this thesis. Starting from d'Indy's *Cours de composition*, Suchowiejko examines the complex and often apparently contradictory aesthetic and moral values that informed d'Indy's musical activities. Thoyer considers d'Indy's late chamber music (1924-29), which is roughly contemporary with Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas. She especially comments on the stylistic condensation and his greater use of Baroque forms, which are new for d'Indy, and which are both key characteristics of the recently emerging French Neoclassic aesthetic. However, because d'Indy's music does not show certain major hallmarks of Neoclassicism – he neither uses parody nor rejects the Romantic tradition – Thoyer prefers to describe his music as Neobaroque. Interestingly, these very tendencies are also present in Ysaÿe's Sonatas as is shown throughout the present thesis. Together, the diverse contributions in this book convey an excellent picture

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<sup>51</sup> See Thomson 1996: ix.

<sup>52</sup> Manuela Schwartz and Myriam Chimènes (eds.), *Vincent d'Indy et son temps* (Sprimont: Pierre Mardaga, c2006).

of the highly complex, versatile, controversial and influential musical figure that d'Indy was.

Another complex personality to whom Ysaÿe had personal ties is Claude Debussy. Despite a degree of personal and aesthetic estrangement from the composer over time, Ysaÿe always held his music in great esteem and often incorporated debussyste qualities in his own compositions. Debussy literature is, of course, vast, covering a plethora of topics and approaches. Consequently, only a relatively small selection of the many excellent books can be mentioned here. Of the more recent biographical studies, François Lesure's *Claude Debussy: Biographe critique*, deserves special mention for its thoroughness and detail.<sup>53</sup> Based on Debussy's correspondence and on the catalogue of his œuvre, Lesure seeks to chronicle Debussy's life in all its facets.<sup>54</sup> He explains that he does not wish to analyse Debussy's music or to make personal aesthetic judgements. Rather, his study seeks to 'furnish the elements for an [musical] analysis, conceived [...] as a means to grasp the genesis and the succession of works, as much as the power relations that gave birth to them and that exerted their power around them.'<sup>55</sup> In addition to giving an excellent picture of Debussy's life, personality and, most importantly, of the composer and each of his works, Lesure sheds new light on the reasons behind the increasing estrangement of Debussy and Ysaÿe, which was caused by Ysaÿe's disapproval of Debussy's adulterous behaviour and his treatment of his first wife Gaby. Moreover, Lesure's careful establishment of Debussy's aesthetic and personal development helps to compare it to that of Ysaÿe.

A further way of 'meeting' Debussy is through reading the extant letters he wrote and received. *Correspondance (1872-1918)*, edited by François Lesure and Denis Herlin, is the first book to publish Debussy's general correspondence.<sup>56</sup> Previous books only covered certain topics, such as the letters between Debussy and Paul-Jean Toulet<sup>57</sup> and those with Gabriele d'Annunzio.<sup>58</sup> Building on Lesure's first collection of Debussy letters *Claude*

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<sup>53</sup> François Lesure, *Claude Debussy: Biographe critique* ([Paris]: Klincksieck, 1994).

<sup>54</sup> See Lesure 1994: 7.

<sup>55</sup> 'fournir les éléments d'une analyse, conçu [...] comme un moyen de saisir la genèse et la succession des œuvres, autant que les rapports de forces qui leur donnent naissance et qui s'exercent autour d'elles' (Lesure 1994: 456-7).

<sup>56</sup> Claude Debussy, *Correspondance (1872-1918)*, eds. François Lesure and Denis Herlin ([Paris]: Gallimard, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Claude Debussy and Paul-Jean Toulet, *Correspondance de Claude Debussy et P.-J. Toulet* (Paris, 1929).

<sup>58</sup> Claude Debussy et Gabriele d'Annunzio, *Claude Debussy et Gabriele d'Annunzio. Correspondance*, ed. Guy Tosi (Paris, [1948]).

*Debussy – Lettres 1884-1918*, the new publication seeks to be as complete as possible and includes letters to friends, family, writers, musicians, editors and benefactors among others.<sup>59</sup> The letters are introduced by a preface by François Lesure, in which he reflects on Debussy as a man and musician through his letters. This is followed by a brief history of the correspondence, its provenance as well as editing criteria and challenges written by Denis Herlin. Mainly consisting of letters by Debussy, a number of responses by correspondents are also included. The book, thus, contains 3076 letters, among which five are addressed to Ysaÿe (pp. 177-178, 222-223, 325-327, 333 and 812) and one is a response by Ysaÿe (pp. 327-329). For the purpose of this thesis, the letters to and from Ysaÿe are particularly valuable because they provide first-hand insight into Ysaÿe's relationship with the composer. Other letters in which Ysaÿe's name occurs, such as in correspondence with Ernest Chausson, provide further understanding of the connection between the two musicians.

Among the monographs that focus largely on Debussy's music are *Claude Debussy and Twentieth-Century Music* by Arthur B. Wenk, *Debussy in Proportion* by Roy Howat and *Claude Debussy: La Musique à vif* by Christian Goubault. In *Claude Debussy and Twentieth-Century Music* Wenk traces Debussy's compositional style and its development.<sup>60</sup> Focussing on techniques central to his music, Wenk argues that Debussy extends and undermines musical tradition rather than outright rejecting it. He seeks to show how Debussy modifies the perception of the music, for instance, when he elevates timbre from an element subordinated to melodic-rhythmic-harmonic considerations to a structural element.<sup>61</sup> In the last chapter, Wenk reflects on Debussy's achievements, which he considers to lie particularly in the areas of tonality, form and time, and sound. He reflects on Debussy's impact on posterity and briefly touches on ways in which he feels different composers, such as Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Varèse and Xenakis, have drawn on Debussy's innovations. The book offers a helpful overview of Debussy's style, although Wenk's rather taxonomic approach is perhaps best taken with a grain of salt in light of the complexity of Debussy's oeuvre and his strong aversion to highly detailed analysis and the systemising of his music.

In *Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis*, on the other hand, Roy Howat concentrates on one aspect of Debussy's music: the proportional schemes discernible in

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<sup>59</sup> Claude Debussy, *Claude Debussy – Lettres 1884-1918*, ed. François Lesure (Paris: Hermann, [1980]).

<sup>60</sup> Arthur B. Wenk, *Claude Debussy and Twentieth-Century Music* (Boston: Twayne, 1983).

<sup>61</sup> See Wenk 1983: 124.

many of Debussy's works, which he pursues in great depth.<sup>62</sup> He demonstrates often intricate designs that are based on the Golden Section and Fibonacci Series. Among the works he explicates are *La Mer* (1903-1905) and *L'Isle joyeuse* (1903-1904). Ysaÿe, of course, is known to have valued and favoured certain works of Debussy, such as the String Quartet Op. 10, however, the few comments of Ysaÿe on Debussy's music that have been transmitted do not touch on deeper musical issues. It is, therefore, impossible to know if Ysaÿe had any inkling of Debussy's intricate proportional schemes. In addition, Debussy was quite secretive about the compositional processes he employed and it is, therefore, doubtful that Ysaÿe knew about the matter.

In *Claude Debussy: La Musique à vif*, Christian Goubault seeks to bring alive Debussy as a person completely suffused with music.<sup>63</sup> Not conceived as a biography, each chapter addresses a specific topic that Goubault considers of particular relevance to Debussy's music and personality. Chapters are headed by a brief quotation of the composer that sets the tone for the following discussions. The book reflects on, for example, the subjects from which Debussy drew inspiration for his works, including art, poetry and nature, as well as the orient and its music. Also discussed are the difficulties he experienced in finishing compositions and his many aborted musical projects. There is a chapter each on form and on harmony. Debussy's piano music, orchestral music and songs, as well as his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* are equally discussed. Finally, the impact of Debussy's music on his contemporaries and on posterity is considered.

Other writers who have undertaken major analytic studies include Richard S. Parks, who approaches Debussy's music largely through set theory,<sup>64</sup> and, Mark DeVoto, who, in *Debussy and the Veil of Tonality: Essays on His Music* reflects on aspects he deems particularly important to giving Debussy's multifaceted music its unique identity.<sup>65</sup> He repeatedly considers Debussy's use of tonality while also touching on, among other issues, motivic and thematic processes, structure, form and texture. In addition, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* by Robert P. Morgan deserves to be mentioned because it gives a good overview over musical

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<sup>62</sup> Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>63</sup> Christian Goubault, *Claude Debussy: La Musique à vif* ([Paris?]: Editions Minerve, c2002).

<sup>64</sup> Richard S. Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, c1989).

<sup>65</sup> Mark DeVoto, *Debussy and the Veil of Tonality: Essays on His Music* (Hillside, N.Y.: Pendragon, 2004).

developments on both continents, particularly in the early twentieth century.<sup>66</sup> Attentive to the evolving cultural and historical context, Morgan elaborates on a significant number of topics and individual composers (including Debussy) and touches on many others. The two parts of the book which deal with the early part of the century until World War II provide an effective overview of the complex musical setting in which Ysaÿe wrote his Sonatas.

The final and newest monograph discussed here, *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier*, is again by Roy Howat.<sup>67</sup> In it, he explores some of the piano music of these four composers. He chooses four major composers so as to be able to explore their music in some depth while keeping in view a bigger historical and musical picture. An important goal of this book is to evoke the composers' sound world and experience of their music so as to help the performer and listener to hear it more as the composer did and to perform it idiomatically. Of the composers treated in this book, Debussy was perhaps closest to Ysaÿe, at least until the late 1890s, and had the greatest impact on the violinist. Howat begins the book by guiding the listener through his reasoning of why the term 'Impressionism' is well suited to some of Debussy's and Ravel's music and, in their own ways, also to that of Fauré and Chabrier. He touches on issues, such as colour play, form and architectural evocations, and is particularly concerned with showing that French music of the time has a precise form and structure. Howat then discusses the shared musical heritage of and possible influences on the four composers in question. Chopin's legacy is considered in some detail and Chabrier is described as complementary to Chopin, especially in his use of colour and brilliant orchestration, and as the initiator of modern French piano music and influence on the young Debussy. The latter's interest in Oriental music and its impact on his own music and that of his descendants is well known but explored some more. Influences of Spain and Russia, which were also considered to be exotic, are examined again, too. Of the past, the *clavecinists* stand out in importance to the four composers, as do Schumann, Mendelssohn, Weber, Liszt and Wagner. Rhythm is explored next, notably the subtle play with rhythm and melody that seems on the surface to be simple in form but upon further study reveals intricate rhythmical patterns.

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<sup>66</sup> Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York and London: Norton & Company, 1991).

<sup>67</sup> Roy Howat, *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

Issues on which Howat elaborates, such as drawing on the exotic, an interest in music from before 1800 and a preoccupation with colour, are also recurring themes in Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas and are discussed in the analytical part of the present thesis. In addition, in his own way, Ysaÿe also plays with such parameters as rhythm, metre, melody, harmony and colour. He does this to create often idiosyncratic forms that are carefully calculated and balanced so as to sound improvisatory yet be coherent. Beyond confirming Ysaÿe's aesthetic closeness to the composers with whom he associated, including Debussy and Fauré, such shared preoccupations with the composers Howat discusses show how Ysaÿe takes part in a wider tradition of French music.

In addition to monographs, a range of notable collections of essays on Debussy have appeared within the last two decades. These include, but are not limited to, *Debussy Studies*, *Debussy and His World*, *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, *Rethinking Debussy* and *Regards sur Debussy* and are discussed here in chronological order. *Debussy Studies*, edited by Richard Langham Smith, is especially significant in its contribution to source studies because it sheds additional light on Debussy's compositional processes and apparent musical intentions by studying sketches, manuscripts and printed editions that contain his corrections.<sup>68</sup> For example, Myriam Chimènes studies the process of Debussy's creation of timbre in his orchestral composition through extant scores and letters. While focussing on *Jeux*, she also briefly comments on other works, such as the *Nocturnes*. She concludes that timbre is integrated into the music and fused with it only at an intermediate stage, which means that 'the entire sound phenomenon is therefore not completely inherent in what we call the germ of the musical idea.'<sup>69</sup> Denis Herlin shows that the 1930 edition of *Sirènes*, which is still mostly used today, is a hybrid of two scores of the piece that were differently annotated by Debussy, each containing its own logic. He, therefore, advocates avoiding the 1930 edition and instead publishing two separate versions of *Sirènes*. Roy Howat examines the notation and complex performance instructions in Debussy's piano music. This leads him to argue that Debussy's manuscript scores are scrupulously notated. However, Howat notes, because Debussy is at times breaking established engraving conventions, this has led to some misinterpretation of his music by both engravers and performers. All three authors conclude that Debussy seemed to look for a sound ideal that could and would be created in an ideal interpretation. The increased awareness of Debussy's conception of timbre and interpretation assists in the evaluation of

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<sup>68</sup> Richard Langham Smith (ed.), *Debussy Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>69</sup> Chimènes 1997: 25.

debussyste qualities in Ysaÿe's Op. 27. In addition to these three essays, other contributions concern, for example, Debussy's relationship with the texts he set, the reception of his music in England from 1901 to 1914, his long friendship with Eric Satie and a consideration of some of his lesser known artistic tastes.

*Debussy and His World*, edited by Jane F. Fulcher, accentuates Debussy's complexity both as a person and an artist.<sup>70</sup> Through a broad range of subjects and approaches, the contributors assess his lifelong personal and artistic evolution and explorations, as well as the social and cultural environment within which these took place. A recurring theme is Debussy's rejection of dogma and his independence of mind. The topics of the contributions that focus on Debussy's compositions range from his Rome Cantatas all the way to his last Sonatas. These are complemented by considerations of turn-of-the-century Paris, including its musical institutions and their politics, while the last two chapters offer documents that support the arguments of previous chapters.

Shortly after *Debussy and His World*, *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, edited by Simon Trezise, appeared.<sup>71</sup> The book, which is divided into four parts, offers a valuable survey of important aspects of Debussy's life and music, while also incorporating new insights into and approaches to studying the composer and his works. Part One, 'Man, musician and culture,' begins by creating a picture of Debussy's character and personality, his beliefs and tastes as well as his social and artistic environment in turn-of-the-century Paris. The greater insight afforded here into Debussy, his art and cultural background is an important asset when seeking to understand the relationship between him and Ysaÿe. The second part, 'Musical explorations,' examines some facets of Debussy's aesthetic outlook and development as reflected, for instance, in his vocal music and his rendering of nature. Part three, 'Musical techniques,' comprises theoretical and analytical essays, of which the first two chapters are of most interest for the purposes of the present thesis. Chapter 9, 'Debussy's tonality: a formal perspective' by Boyd Pomeroy, examines how the relationship between tonality and other parts of the formal process, notably thematic processes, both connects Debussy's music with earlier traditions and sets it apart. Chapter 10, 'The Debussy sound: colour, texture, gesture' by Mark DeVoto, explores the interaction between sound, colour, texture and gesture in Debussy's music as well as the development of their

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<sup>70</sup> Jane F. Fulcher (ed.), *Debussy and His World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>71</sup> Simon Trezise (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

interaction over the years. Here, too, Debussy's compositional processes, despite their originality, are noted to have clearly grown out of those of his predecessors and parallels can be drawn to Ysaÿe's Sonatas Op. 27. In the final part, 'Performance and assessment,' chapter 13, 'Debussy in Performance' by Charles Timbrell, is of most interest to the present thesis. It explores some of Debussy's expectations and intentions for his music through relevant sound recordings, including his own. It, thereby, offers some insight into what Ysaÿe might have heard when listening to Debussy's playing.

*Rethinking Debussy*, edited by Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon, continues the reappraisal of Debussy's life and music, seeking to fill lacunae in Debussy research and to offer new perspectives on the composer and his works, often with the help of newly available source material.<sup>72</sup> The book comprises four parts. Part I deals with Debussy's formative years. Part II is entirely devoted to *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Part III, entitled 'Career and Creativity,' first examines the impact of Debussy's money worries on his creativity, while Robert Orledge reflects on the reconstruction and orchestration he undertook of Debussy's unfinished opera *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Part IV is devoted to reception history. James R. Briscoe argues for the importance of Debussy's music to the beginning of modernism in the USA, while Marianne Wheeldon examines the *Tombeau de Claude Debussy* that appeared in 1920 in the *La Revue Musicale*. Wheeldon finds the composer to be remembered for his earlier compositions and to be associated with Greek and Roman myth. His late music and his desire to be associated with Rameau and Couperin, on the other hand, are passed over, Wheeldon finds. This parallels Ysaÿe's own perception of Debussy's œuvre in that he also tended to remember the earlier compositions and somewhat dismiss the later pieces, such as the Violin Sonata.<sup>73</sup>

*Regards sur Debussy* edited by Myriam Chimènes and Alexandra Laederich, too, contains a wide range of contributions on Debussy and his music, and, like *Debussy Studies*, it emerged from a Debussy colloquium.<sup>74</sup> This markedly multidisciplinary book has five parts ('Politics and Literature,' 'Theatre and Songs,' 'Interpretation,' 'Thinking Composition,' and 'Reception and Legacy'), with essays frequently straddling several subject areas.<sup>75</sup> Overall *Regards sur Debussy* contributes new insights and views to Debussy

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<sup>72</sup> Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon (eds.), *Rethinking Debussy* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>73</sup> See Martens 1919: 6.

<sup>74</sup> Myriam Chimènes and Alexandra Laederich (eds.), *Regards sur Debussy* ([Paris]: Fayard, 2013).

<sup>75</sup> 'Politique et littérature,' 'Théâtre et mélodies,' 'Interprétations,' 'Penser la composition' and 'Réception et héritage.'



scholarship. These help to see some aspects of Debussy's character, aesthetic and music in new light and challenge received opinion. Julien Dubruque and Jean-Claire Vançon, for instance, re-evaluate the importance Rameau had for Debussy and conclude that Rameau was first of all a term to Debussy that allowed him to elaborate his aesthetics. Like his contemporaries, Debussy valued grace, charm and elegance in Rameau's work. However, the authors of this chapter argue that this leaves out the 'real' Rameau, who was also a male and tragic figure. Moreover, it contradicts the view Rameau's contemporaries had of him. Michael Fend, on the other hand, returns to Debussy's attraction to the music of South-East Asia. He argues that, for Debussy, the assimilation of Javanese gamelan and Annamite theatre was a profound self-discovery and that, singular among French composers, he slowly assimilated the new experiences he made at the 1889 exhibition rather than passively imitating the music he heard there. However, it might be argued that most important for the present thesis are the two chapters on Debussy's own sound recordings. Roy Howat and Mylène Dubiau-Feuillerac each look at Debussy's own 1904 recordings with Mary Garden of some of his *mélodies* and shed new light on their interpretation. The two chapters consider, for example, how these recordings were or were not faithful to the printed score and why, while also sharing thoughts on performance practice at the time more generally. These two chapters offer some insights into what Ysaÿe would have heard when listening to Debussy, especially as they are close to the time of the friendship between the two men.

### **Nineteenth century, fantasia tradition and interest in early music**

Despite his affinity with Debussy and living well into the twentieth century, Ysaÿe maintained deep roots in the nineteenth century all his life. Especially drawn to Franck and Henri Vieuxtemps,<sup>76</sup> he explicitly identified as a Romantic.<sup>77</sup> His discourse, too, clearly reflects Romantic ideals, notably an expressive aesthetic in which the individual artist is privileged to convey the ineffable (see chapter 3). Ysaÿe's musical idiom equally testifies to this affinity as is discussed in Part II of the present thesis. Suffice it to say here that what is particularly characteristic of his writing is the improvisatory quality with which he imbues his compositions, and many of his pieces could perhaps be described as fantasia-like. Moreover, he conceived of the Sonatas as musical poems in which the violin is left to its

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<sup>76</sup> See, for example, A. Ysaÿe 1947: 160 and 23 respectively.

<sup>77</sup> In Ysaÿe 1968: 8.

fantasy, which is further explored in chapter 3.<sup>78</sup> It is with impressions and verbal cues such as these that the exploration of the fantasia as a genre emblematic of Romanticism by Jean-Pierre Bartoli and Jeanne Roudet comes to mind. In *L'Essor du romantisme: La Fantaisie pour clavier de Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach à Franz Liszt*, the authors explore the keyboard fantasia between about 1750 and 1850, describing its aesthetics, philosophy and technical characteristics as well as outlining its long history and development.<sup>79</sup>

They argue that the significance of the fantasia to musical developments during the period in question tends to be underestimated today. By contrast, they regard the fantasia as the very genre that spread what would be the core values of Romanticism, including the importance of subjectivity, the poetic and genius. Moreover, the fantasia increasingly permeated other genres, such as the Sonata, which led to their eventual fusion with the former, such as found in works by Schumann and Liszt. Therefore, Bartoli and Roudet deem the fantasia as a vector for the musical aesthetics between about 1750 and 1850 (indeed beyond, to Scriabin and Debussy) and consider these years as a unified period. This proposition is, in their eyes, validated by the importance of the genre and its aesthetic values outside music throughout the entire period from Rousseau to ETA Hoffmann and Victor Hugo.

Bartoli's and Roudet's discussion of the fantasia tradition, thus, puts Ysaÿe's aesthetic values and compositional style into a larger historical context and suggests that this tradition forms an important part of his musical heritage. Consequently, the fantasia tradition forms an important part of the background against which it is possible to better understand and evaluate Op. 27. It also explains some of Ysaÿe's compositional choices and aesthetic values. Moreover, it contributes to a better understanding of the historical and aesthetic milieu in which Ysaÿe was raised and in which he matured. Therefore, a more acute awareness of the fantasia tradition and its historical importance helps to examine Ysaÿe's Sonatas more deeply by giving them a technical, aesthetic and historical framework. It is also valuable when exploring the aesthetic coherence of the work – a work that intensively engages with different aspects of musical tradition – and, therefore, holds important clues to Ysaÿe's aesthetics and thinking and, hence, to his artistic identity.

Like many composers at the time, Ysaÿe felt drawn to music from before the nineteenth century. He especially engaged with Baroque music, which he performed,

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<sup>78</sup> See Christen 1947: 195.

<sup>79</sup> Jean-Pierre Bartoli and Jeanne Roudet, *L'Essor du romantisme: La Fantaisie pour clavier de Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach à Franz Liszt* (France: Vrin, 2013).

occasionally transcribed and on which he drew in a number of his compositions. The increasing return to musical material and devices from before the nineteenth century is traced in detail by Scott Messing in *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic*.<sup>80</sup> The book is an important predecessor to Barbara Kelly's *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France*, which also discusses neoclassical trends but within wider modernist developments (for a full discussion see above). It is Messing's contention that, although the term 'Neoclassicism' is notoriously ambiguous and lacks a consistent usage, to understand the music of the period more fully, it is indispensable to grasp the concept's evolving meaning for individuals at the time.<sup>81</sup> He discusses aesthetic developments both in France and in the Austro-German sphere but emphasises France. The Austro-German sphere is considered separately and to a lesser extent. The book commences with late-nineteenth-century France and carefully leads through the labyrinth of gradual changes and concurrently existing variations in musical style, thought and ideology, aesthetics and terminology. Messing establishes a quite specific meaning of the term Neoclassicism, observing that it became very much associated with Stravinsky and possessed strong anti-Romantic and anti-Germanic tendencies. Compositions, he explains, tend to evoke pre-nineteenth century music by adopting associated melodic, rhythmic and structural gestures. But at the same time, they employ compositional techniques associated with the twentieth century, such as extended tonality, including the octatonic scale, and abrupt juxtaposition of material and timbres. Thus, the music accommodates both innovation and tradition, in which the old material is often treated with a degree of irony. Recurrent aesthetic themes might be summarised as an aspiration to objectivity, simplicity and spontaneity.<sup>82</sup>

Because France and the Austro-German sphere were central to the development of the concept of Neoclassicism as described by Messing, he understandably largely limits himself to these two areas. Although, or perhaps because, Messing's focus is so specific, his study creates a framework that helps to distinguish different ways in which composers, irrespective of their nationality or country of residence, drew on early music. Therefore, even if musical developments in Belgium are not directly addressed, the book nevertheless provides a useful point of departure from which to interpret Ysaÿe's use of early music in

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<sup>80</sup> Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester (New York): University of Rochester Press, 1996).

<sup>81</sup> See 1996: xiii, 88-89 and 154.

<sup>82</sup> See Messing 1996: 85, 88-89 and 112-114.

Op. 27 and his connection to (or disconnection from) this international artistic current. Accordingly, this thesis adopts Messing's usage of the term Neoclassicism.

Specifically Belgian developments in music between the wars, including wider Neoclassical trends, are sketched out by Philippe Dewonck in 'Les Compositeurs d'entre les deux guerres' in *La Musique en Wallonie et à Bruxelles* (discussed above).<sup>83</sup> Dewonck appears to greatly value musical *avant-gardism* and innovation, and throughout the chapter he condemns the vast majority of Belgian composers as outmoded and unoriginal, especially those who followed in Franck's footsteps. Although written from a very personal and somewhat dogmatic perspective, the chapter nevertheless gives an overview of compositional developments in Belgium between the wars, thus providing some insight into the context in which Ysaÿe wrote Op. 27. The thesis of the present author seeks to redress the bias of the chapter to some extent by showing how one Franck admirer, Ysaÿe, did write original music of value, even in the 1920s.

### **Performance practice, sound recordings, violin playing and individual violinists**

The examination of the recordings Ysaÿe made in the 1910s contributes further insight into his artistic identity. Moreover, they reveal significant changes in performance practice over the course of the last century. Among the growing literature on performance practice studied through sound recordings, two books in particular stand out: *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* and *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, both by Robert Philip. Because they explore differences and gradual changes in instrumental performance, notably in violin playing, as well as Ysaÿe's playing and its relationship to the practices of his time, they contribute significantly to the evaluation of Ysaÿe and his Sonatas.

*Early Recordings and Musical Style* examines aspects of performance practice as audible on recordings from the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>84</sup> To this end, Philip focuses on three topics: rhythm, vibrato and *portamento*, because, as he argues, these three areas have particularly changed since the early twentieth century. Philip offers detailed insights into both performance practice (style and conventions) of the time and the playing of individual artists beyond what can be gathered from written sources. He also

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<sup>83</sup> Philippe Dewonck, 'Les Compositeurs d'entre les deux guerres,' *La Musique en Wallonie et à Bruxelles*, Robert Wangermée et Philippe Mercier (eds.) Vol. II (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1980-82), pp. 379-408.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

explains concurrent differences and successive changes in practices as well as avenues to evaluating performances in light of their time. By considering both comments on performance and the recordings themselves, Philip also shows that it is not possible to reliably reconstruct performance practice and individual styles through written sources as statements may be misleading or misunderstood. Moreover, many aspects of performance do not tend to be captured in words.

*Performing Music in the Age of Recording* builds on the first book.<sup>85</sup> Here, Philip shifts the emphasis from a detailed analysis of recorded performances to a consideration of the relationship between recording(s) and changes in musical style and expectations. Topics include the recording process with its gradual changes from the earliest acoustic recordings to CDs as well as its artistic and social effects, for example, an increasing drive towards technical accuracy and greater unity in orchestral and ensemble playing. Philip also includes a chapter on musical culture before the advent of sound recording. Moreover, he calls into question the view that there exists a source of absolute authority in matters of performance style, be it that of the composer, a performing tradition handed down by renowned teachers or the historical performance revival. Rather, he argues that all sources need careful interpretation and demonstrates the partially informative and potentially misleading nature of words as well as a significant degree of flexibility and individuality in approach in practice by both composers and performers. He further emphasises the importance of assessing the technical and personal circumstances of a recording before judging the playing itself.

Philip's books provide an effective framework for the study of performance style in the context of its time and are invaluable to the development of a fuller understanding of Ysaÿe's Sonatas, his artistic personality and musical environment. Significantly for this thesis, they offer a methodology of close listening for studying recordings, including those of Ysaÿe and the dedicatees. They also explore some of the key differences in performance practice between the beginning of the twentieth century and today, such as in bowing and vibrato. These are issues to which particular attention is given in the present thesis. They are not only important to consider when seeking to understand the playing of Ysaÿe and the dedicatees, but also when appreciating how his own performance style and that of the dedicatees might be enshrined in the score of Op. 27. It is by further evaluating Ysaÿe's violinistic personality that the present thesis goes beyond Philip.

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<sup>85</sup> Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

The Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM) was an AHRC project that ran from 2004 to 2009.<sup>86</sup> Promoting the study of sound recordings, it encompassed a wide range of approaches, such as computational analysis, online discographies and the study of historical and modern recordings. In addition, there were a number of specific research projects and a large bibliography was compiled. The website contains a substantial pool of information and suggested approaches to the researcher, and for this thesis it has been an important point of orientation. One of the resources from the project is Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's eBook *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance*.<sup>87</sup> An important reason for the analysis of musical performance is, for Leech-Wilkinson, to find out why and how music moves us humans. In this book, the author offers some ways of studying performance because he feels it is the performer who invests a piece of music with its most specific meaning and, therefore, needs to be studied in more detail. Starting from recorded performances, Leech-Wilkinson examines the kind of evidence they offer and discusses in some detail the way performance style has changed over the years. Chapter 5 deals with violin performance and is, hence, relevant to this thesis, although it considers mostly violinists later than Ysaÿe and leaves him out of the discussion. In chapter 7, Leech-Wilkinson reflects on why and how performance style gradually changes, a theoretical consideration that helps to develop a better understanding of some of the issues at hand in the present thesis. The computational analysis that follows, while no doubt valuable and interesting, is not really applicable to this thesis. Sound examples are included as relevant in this eBook.

*The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, edited by Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and John Rink, sets out to explain how, since its invention, sound recording has both reflected and shaped music itself, how it is produced and how it is heard.<sup>88</sup> Not limited to Western art music, the book also considers other kinds of music, such as popular music and jazz. The chapters cover a range of complementary topics and perspectives, and are interspersed with short essays, mostly from practitioners. The choice of topics is informed by the objective to cover the main areas necessary to develop an understanding of recording and recordings. These include, for instance, discussions around performer, producer and sound engineer as well as their collaboration in the studio. Other

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<sup>86</sup> <http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/index.html>.

<sup>87</sup> Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance* (London: CHARM, 2009), <http://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/studies/chapters/intro.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and John Rink (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

contributions pertain to aspects of the past and the gradual development of the recording industry and technology, such as their influence on and interaction with performers, listeners and institutions over time. The study and evaluation of the recordings themselves is also varied. Here, chapters, for example, deal with the location of recordings and accurate interpretation of what is heard, methods of analysing recordings as well as reflections on changing performance styles. The different contributions aid the researcher's self-reflection of how they listen to musical recordings and what to be aware of when interpreting their listening experience, be it of sound recordings made recently or further in the past. The book, thus, complements and builds on Robert Philip's studies and supplements the eBook by Leech-Wilkinson (discussed above).

Literature that pertains to violin playing around the turn of the twentieth century and to the dedicatees of Ysaÿe's Sonatas abounds. It ranges from biographies and memoirs for the general reader to highly scholarly material. Some sources offer relatively general overviews of violinists and/or violin playing, while others relate to more specific subject areas. Margaret Campbell's *The Great Violinists*, for example, sketches out the musical lives and careers of major violinists over the centuries.<sup>89</sup> Teacher-pupil relationships and schools of violin playing figure prominently, giving the book a relatively coherent storyline that also allows for some comments on stylistic changes and developments in playing. The book first and foremost aims at the music lover rather than the academic. It is likely to be for this reason that, among other things, technical detail is kept to a minimum and anecdotes appear somewhat emphasised. However, among Campbell's sources are interviews not otherwise available, given to her by a number of eminent musicians, such as Josef Gingold's reflections on Ysaÿe's playing and teaching.

In *Grosse Geiger unserer Zeit*, Joachim W. Hartnack seeks to trace the development of violin playing in the twentieth century. He discusses many important violinists of the twentieth century, that is, until the mid-1970s when the book appeared.<sup>90</sup> The author offers his insights into the playing and musical personalities of many of the greatest violinists of the century based on live concerts and/or recordings. However, there are a number of difficulties with this book. For one thing, some facts are simply wrong. For instance, Hartnack states that in 'In 1870, he [Ysaÿe] became a pupil of Vieuxtemps in Brussels. However, three years later, he [Vieuxtemps] had to give up teaching; a stroke had

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<sup>89</sup> Margaret Campbell, *The Great Violinists* (London: Elek: Granada, 1980).

<sup>90</sup> Joachim W. Hartnack, *Grosse Geiger unserer Zeit* (Zürich: Atlantis [c1977]).

paralysed the left side of his body.<sup>91</sup> This is not so: not until 1876 was Ysaÿe able to study with Vieuxtemps and this was not in Brussels but in Paris (see chapter 2). Another problem is that Hartnack does not give references and at times does not acknowledge authors he cites, such as Carl Flesch, for example: ‘As violinist, Enesco embodied – expressed in an exaggerated manner – a strange mix of virtuosic gypsy and conservative university professor’ (see chapter 3 of this thesis).<sup>92</sup> Also, Hartnack calls Ysaÿe’s bow grip with the little finger raised off the wood (*abgespreizt*), ‘Maetzchen’ (antics or gimmickry). He also complains that others had copied this grip, including Jasha Heifetz.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps one could call a statement couched in such derogatory language and of such eminent violinists unfortunate and presumptuous. Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings (and more), the book does offer at times interesting perceptions of performers relevant to this thesis, such as Ysaÿe, Szigeti, Thibaud, Enescu and Kreisler. Many more books on violinists exist, such as Henry Roth’s *Violin Virtuosos*<sup>94</sup> and Boris Schwarz’s *Great Masters of the Violin*.<sup>95</sup>

*String Mastery* brings together a series of interviews conducted by Frederick H. Martens with violinists residing in or visiting the USA at the time, among which was Ysaÿe (see below).<sup>96</sup> They share their thinking on a wide range of topics related to violin playing, including instrumental technique, aesthetics, musicianship, teaching and practising. Among the interviewees were two of the violinists to whom Ysaÿe dedicated one of his Op. 27 Sonatas: Kreisler (No. 4) and Thibaud (No. 2).

Carl Flesch’s *The Memoirs of Carl Flesch* contain a wealth of penetrating observations of and reflections on violin playing and many of its primary exponents. Of these, in the context of this thesis, his comments on Ysaÿe, Szigeti, Thibaud, Enescu and Kreisler are particularly relevant.<sup>97</sup> Joseph Szigeti’s *With Strings Attached* resembles, to an extent, Flesch’s memoirs in that it chronicles, among other things, the author’s reflections

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<sup>91</sup> ‘1870 wurde er [Ysaÿe] in Brüssel Schüler von Vieuxtemps, der allerdings drei Jahre später das Lehramt aufgeben mußte; ein Schlaganfall hatte ihn linksseitig gelähmt’ (1977: 59).

<sup>92</sup> ‘Als Geiger stellte Enesco – überspitzt ausgedrückt – eine eigenartige Mischung von virtuosem Zigeuner und konservativem Hochschulprofessor dar’ (1977: 119).

<sup>93</sup> See 1977: 59.

<sup>94</sup> Henry Roth *Violin Virtuosos: From Paganini to the 21st century* (Los Angeles, Calif.: California Classics Books: c1997, 1998 [printing]).

<sup>95</sup> Boris Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin: From Corelli and Vivaldi to Stern, Zukerman, and Perlman* (New York: Simon and Shuster, c1983).

<sup>96</sup> Frederick H. Martens, *Violin Mastery; Talks with Master Violinists and Teachers, Comprising Interviews with Ysaÿe, Kreisler, Elman, Auer, Thibaud, Heifetz, Hartmann, Maud Powell and Others* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1919).

<sup>97</sup> Carl Flesch, *The Memoirs of Carl Flesch*, eds. Hans Keller and Carl Flesch, trans. Hans Keller, Centenary Edition (Harlow: Bois de Boulogne, 1973).



on violin playing and major violinists.<sup>98</sup> Especially valuable here are Szigeti's remarks on Ysaÿe and the Sonata the latter dedicated to him. Moreover, this book, as well as *Szigeti on the Violin*, offers first-hand insight into Szigeti's musical thinking and artistic identity, which both seem to have deeply impressed Ysaÿe (see chapter 3).<sup>99</sup>

Among the biographical literature regarding the dedicatees can be found Christian Goubault's *Jacques Thibaud (1880-1953): Violoniste français*, which is an informative book that offers a range of interesting details on Thibaud himself but also on his relationship with and admiration for Ysaÿe and on his connection with other violinists, such as George Enescu.<sup>100</sup> Even Mathieu Crickboom and Manuel Quiroga get a short mention, which is very rare. Goubault's book includes a non-exhaustive discography and a chronological overview of Thibaud's life. *George Enescu: His Life and Music* by Noel Malcolm charts Enescu's life with an emphasis on his compositional output.<sup>101</sup> Malcolm is not a professional musicologist or musician, but his book gives a wealth of information about Enescu's life and music, including musical examples, a list of his compositions and of recordings he made, as well as a bibliography. The book is important because it is the first full study of Enescu in English. It explains Enescu's aesthetics and ideas about music. In the first chapter, Malcolm even explains some important aspects of Rumanian folk music and includes quotations on the topic by Enescu. For the purpose of this thesis this is valuable background information that can help to interpret allusions Ysaÿe may have made to Enescu and his native country in the Sonata that is dedicated to him.

Like A. Ysaÿe's biography of his father, Louis P. Lochner's biography of Kreisler, *Fritz Kreisler*, is a somewhat romanticised account of the violinist that is characterised by the author's devotion to the subject.<sup>102</sup> But, like the Ysaÿe biography, this book, too, includes a wealth of quotations from conversations, letters and other source material, such as concert reviews. For the purpose of this thesis, it is this material that holds the greatest interest. Another biography is Amy Biancolli's *Fritz Kreisler: Love's Sorrow, Love's Joy*.<sup>103</sup> It is meant as an update to Lochner's biography, adding some material, such as a new picture of Kreisler's wife Harriet and the couple's relationship, as well as correcting some

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<sup>98</sup> Joseph Szigeti, *With Strings Attached: Reminiscences and Reflections*, 2nd ed. rev. and enlarged (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1967).

<sup>99</sup> Joseph Szigeti, *Szigeti on the Violin* (London: Cassell, 1969).

<sup>100</sup> Christian Goubault, *Jacques Thibaud (1880-1953): Violoniste français* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1988).

<sup>101</sup> Noel Malcolm, *George Enescu: His Life and Music* (Folkestone, Kent: Toccata Press, 1990).

<sup>102</sup> Louis P. Lochner, *Fritz Kreisler* (New York: Macmillan, 1950).

<sup>103</sup> Amy Biancolli *Fritz Kreisler: Love's Sorrow, Love's Joy* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1998).

inaccuracies that had crept into Lochner's book. Biancolli's biography sits curiously between being an academic book and one for the general public. It seems quite well researched and includes much source material, which is of interest to this thesis. In addition, it contains endnotes, a chronology of Kreisler's life, a bibliography and an excellent discography, which was compiled by Eric Wen. The discography is, again, of use for the present thesis. At the same time, Biancolli chooses to write in a relatively informal style, which sits oddly with the academic resources. For instance, on page 14 she writes that Kreisler 'retired smack in its [the twentieth century's] middle.' There are also significant problems with the book. For example, her portrayal of Ysaÿe almost seems like a caricature. For instance, Biancolli claims that Ysaÿe's rendition of Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 5 'is simply a big, flashy, outrageously entertaining piece of work.'<sup>104</sup> She also cites George Bernhard Shaw as a detractor of Ysaÿe. While the latter was true at the beginning of Ysaÿe's career, Shaw was soon converted to a staunch supporter of Ysaÿe. Biancolli, thus, distorts some facts and the author of the present thesis seeks to correct her views with respect to Ysaÿe, whom this author sees as a highly original player and great technician.

Information on Mathieu Crickboom and on Manuel Quiroga is very limited, especially in English. Nevertheless, in her doctoral thesis *The Works of Manuel Quiroga: A Catalogue*, Ana Luque Fernández has prepared an inventory of Quiroga's compositions.<sup>105</sup> Preceded by a biographic and artistic sketch of the violinist, her work brings to light the musical legacy of this relatively little-known artist. Material on Crickboom is even more sparse and comes mainly from A. Ysaÿe's biography of his father (see above). There is also an entry on Crickboom in *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*, edited by A. Eaglefield-Hull.<sup>106</sup> Contrary to Eaglefield-Hull's more general *Dictionary, An Encyclopedia of the Violin* by Alberto Bachmann focuses exclusively on the violin.<sup>107</sup> It is meant to be a comprehensive reference work on the instrument, covering all topics relevant to understanding the instrument and its music. Most discussions are kept relatively short, offering more of an overview than an in-depth discussion. The book is aimed at teachers, students and violin lovers. It is mentioned here because not only was the author a student

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<sup>104</sup> Biancolli 1998: 58.

<sup>105</sup> Ana Luque Fernández, 'The Works of Manuel Quiroga: A Catalogue' (DMA Thesis, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, 2002) [http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-1205101-103814/unrestricted/Luque\\_Fernandez\\_dis.pdf](http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-1205101-103814/unrestricted/Luque_Fernandez_dis.pdf).

<sup>106</sup> A. Eaglefield-Hull (ed.), *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musician* ([n.l.]: J. M. Dent, 1924).

<sup>107</sup> Alfredo Bachmann, *An Encyclopedia of the Violin* (New York: Da Capo, 1966 printing 1988).

of Ysaÿe, but Ysaÿe also provided the introduction to the original edition and fully endorsed the work. The *Encyclopedia* can be divided into three main parts. The first part covers diverse topics relating to the instrument itself, such as its origins, its construction, the bow and famous makers. The next area deals with violin playing, touching on different aspects of bowing, left-hand technique and aesthetic questions. The final, somewhat miscellaneous part comprises a glossary of musical terms, a list of literature on the violin and one of repertoire for the instrument, as well as annotated alphabetical lists of major violinists and string quartets. Violin collecting and sound recordings are also discussed.

*The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, edited by Robin Stowell, also presents a survey of the violin and its history but does not seek to be comprehensive.<sup>108</sup> Contributions map out the history of violin playing and key violinists, and deal with aspects of technique, teaching, performance practice and repertoire. Folk music and jazz are also considered, and the first two chapters are devoted to the instrument and its development. In line with the purpose of the *Cambridge Companion* series, the book offers a well-rounded introduction to its topic as well as to this thesis. It also serves as a solid foundation from which to conduct further research.

*Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* by David Milsom seeks to offer new perspectives on performance styles in the late nineteenth century.<sup>109</sup> This, the author hopes, will facilitate further stylistic experimentation by today's violinists and influence their performance. Milsom bases his study on performance treatises and early sound recordings and organises the book around chapters two to five (phrasing, *portamento*, vibrato, and tempo and rhythm). He also examines in each chapter the relationship between what the treatises and theoretical sources say and what early recordings show. Before this, however, the first chapter introduces the idea of schools of violin playing, in this case the 'German' and 'Franco-Belgian' schools, which form the basis for his research. The last chapter discusses the philosophical underpinnings, that is, aesthetics and ideals, of violin playing in the late nineteenth century. A CD with historical performances as well as two tracks of his own comes with the book. The former serve to illustrate the examples in the body of the book, the latter seek to show how an early twenty-first century

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<sup>108</sup> Robin Stowell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>109</sup> David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* (Aldershot and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2003).

performance can be informed by a historical awareness of the styles current in the late nineteenth century. The appendices deal mostly with tempo fluctuations and a little (and quite unexplained) with *portamento* but, strangely, not with vibrato, the other important topic in this book. Milsom's careful study of treatises and early recordings offers additional insights to Philip into playing styles in the late nineteenth century and, therefore, furnishes important background information to the contextual chapters of the present study. The thesis of the present author, on the other hand, also deals with Ysaÿe's violinistic writing and, therefore, goes beyond Milsom's study.

Not unlike Milsom, whose doctoral student he was, Ilias Devetzoglou employs a practice-based approach in his doctoral thesis 'Violin Playing in France 1870-1930: A Practice-Based Study of Performing Practices in French Violin Music from Fauré to Ravel' to the study of violin performance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in France.<sup>110</sup> He examines printed documents on violin performance of the period, composers' notation in their musical scores and editorial indications, which he combines with the study of contemporaneous sound recordings and films of various renowned violinists of the period in question. Based on these findings, the author, a violinist himself, makes recordings of his own performances of repertoire ranging from Fauré to Ravel. These he also justifies in a written commentary. Overall, a practice-based approach to violin performance around the turn of the twentieth century is an interesting project for the reasons given by the author, notably the possibility that practical experimentation may lead to new insights into the performance style of the time (p. 7). For the study of Ysaÿe's Violin Sonatas Op. 27, Devetzoglou's thesis is of interest especially for the treatment of Ysaÿe's playing (who was, however, Belgian, not French).

However, some aspects of the work seem problematic. For example, the author speaks about 'the need to unlearn, or at least temporarily ignore, his stylistic and technical "upbringing" in order to understand [Ysaÿe's] style without preconceptions.'<sup>111</sup> While it may be possible, to an extent, to unlearn numerous playing habits and learn to ignore somewhat one's technical and stylistic practices, to imagine it possible to understand an earlier performance style 'without preconceptions' seems misguided. It is the contention of the author of the present thesis that experiences and habits, once acquired, cannot

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<sup>110</sup> Ilias Devetzoglou, 'Violin Playing in France 1870-1930: A Practice-Based Study of Performing Practices in French Violin Music from Fauré to Ravel' (PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, Leeds UK, 2010).

<sup>111</sup> Devetzoglou 2010: 33.

possibly be forgotten. Also, today's environment and life experiences are very different from Ysaÿe's time, so our perception of a piece of music or musical style, it may be argued, is quite different. For instance, today's availability of music at almost any time, such as on the push of a button, in shops and in restaurants, contrasts with the experience Ysaÿe and his contemporaries would have had. This is because before the development of sound recording into a mass industry, listening to music, apart from music making at home, was not such a frequent experience and, for most people, it was quite special.

In her doctoral thesis 'Selected Students of Leopold Auer – A Study in Violin Performance-Practice,' Ruth Elizabeth Rodrigues traces the influence of Leopold Auer throughout the earlier part of the twentieth century on the Russian and American violin schools which he is reputed to have established.<sup>112</sup> Having carefully examined less well-known exponents of the two schools, she concludes that their playing reflects Auer's teaching in various ways, but that each student also developed a unique style that diverged from their teacher. Moreover, Rodrigues demonstrates an influence of Joachim and the German school on Auer and his students in both countries. However, Rodrigues' thesis also contains some small inaccuracies. For instance, Jascha Heifetz studied with Auer in St. Petersburg not in the United States (p. 2), Charles de Bériot was Belgian not French (p. 26) and Ysaÿe's vibrato was not continuous (p. 80). Yet, in light of the quality of the thesis as a whole, these are very minor blemishes. In particular, her reflections on schools of violin playing and her technical discussions on, for example, vibrato, phrasing and *portamento*, are of high quality and of interest to the study of Ysaÿe's playing. The thesis of the present author further contributes to an understanding of violin playing around the turn of the twentieth century by elaborating on the Belgian violin school. It also shows Ysaÿe to play in a style with highly nuanced vibrato, *portamento* and tone colour as well as with flexible bow speeds and supple *rubato*. His playing is further characterised by particular fantasy and a highly disciplined technique, which are, interestingly, attributes that equally pertain to his compositional style as is shown in Part II of the present thesis.

### **Ysaÿe in his own words**

Because Ysaÿe's artistic identity and musical activities were so fundamentally shaped by his violinistic vocation, closer consideration of violinistic issues are indispensable to grasping more fully Ysaÿe's sense of identity and his aspirations in Op. 27. In addition to

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<sup>112</sup> Ruth Elizabeth Rodrigues, 'Selected Students of Leopold Auer – A Study in Violin Performance-Practice' (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, Birmingham (UK), 2009).

the more general monographs on Ysaÿe discussed above, two sources, which, according to the authors, are entirely based on Ysaÿe's own words, deal specifically with his approach to violin playing. The first is the interview Ysaÿe gave to Frederick H. Martens in about 1918, 'The Tools of Violin Mastery.'<sup>113</sup> It is part of the latter's *Violin Mastery; Talks with Master Violinists and Teachers [...]* (discussed above). Ysaÿe speaks of his admiration for Vieuxtemps, of the fusion and evolution of virtuosic technique and musical expressiveness he had accomplished. The violinistic goals Ysaÿe describes for himself are consistent with the qualities he valued in Vieuxtemps: to extend the technical and expressive possibilities of his instrument so as to express new musical and technical ideas and continually expand musical expressivity. Ysaÿe believed that in the artist's playing 'the spirit is to express itself without restraint' to communicate the gamut of emotions and that the violinist 'must play his violin as Pan played his flute!'<sup>114</sup> The second document, 'Henri Vieuxtemps mon maître,'<sup>115</sup> arranged and edited by Paul André in 1968, is based on Ysaÿe's notes for a speech he gave at the celebrations of Vieuxtemps's centenary in Verviers in 1920.<sup>116</sup> He expresses views very similar to those in the interview with Martens a little earlier.

Although Ysaÿe's discourses in the interview and the speech are consistent, it is important to bear in mind that both were carefully prepared and edited for publication by another person. Ysaÿe's discourses have, therefore, been inflected by the editors and need to be evaluated as such. Despite this caveat, the consistency of both texts does suggest some reliability because in all likelihood Martens and André were unconnected, although it is possible that André had access to Martens' book. Nevertheless, born in 1905, André was quite young when Martens died in 1932. They lived on different continents (Europe and America respectively) and were neither commissioned by the same person nor relying on the same sources. Therefore, the texts probably accurately reflect Ysaÿe's views, values and aesthetics as he expressed them at the time. This, in turn, helps to evaluate the likely reliability of quotations of Ysaÿe, where, as in the biographies, citation of sources tends to be limited.

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<sup>113</sup> Frederick Herman Martens, 'Eugène Ysaÿe: The Tools of Violin Mastery,' *Violin Mastery; Talks with Master Violinists and Teachers, Comprising Interviews with Ysaÿe, Kreisler, Elman, Auer, Thibaud, Heifetz, Hartmann, Maud Powell and Others* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1919).

<sup>114</sup> See Martens 1919: 7, 9 and 12.

<sup>115</sup> Eugène Ysaÿe, 'Henri Vieuxtemps mon maître,' ed. Paul André, *Les Cahiers Ysaÿe* No. 1 (Brussels: Editions Ysaÿe, 1968).

<sup>116</sup> <http://vieuxtemps.kbr.be/fr/vieApres1881.html> [accessed 14 November 2015]

## Theses on Ysaÿe

Finally, a number of doctoral theses relevant to Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas Op. 27 have been written. Among these are Bertram Greenspan's 'The Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin and Musical Legacy of Eugène Ysaÿe,'<sup>117</sup> Karen Hoatson's 'Culmination of the Belgian Violin Tradition: The Innovative Style of Eugène Ysaÿe,'<sup>118</sup> Ray Iwazumi's 'The Six Sonates Pour Violon Seul, Op. 27'<sup>119</sup> and Manshan Yang's 'The Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin by Eugène Ysaÿe: A Study in Dedication and Interpretation.'<sup>120</sup> Greenspan was the first to analyse the Sonatas' musical content. The analyses themselves are very much descriptive despite some contextualisation of Ysaÿe's compositional style in the conclusion of the thesis. Nonetheless, Greenspan provides a useful starting point from which to explore Op. 27 in more depth. Hoatson's thesis is explicitly geared towards present-day performers and composers to whom she hopes her thesis gives an impetus to study Ysaÿe's compositions. She first discusses two earlier works, the Mazurka 'Dans le lointain,' Op. 11 No. 3,<sup>121</sup> and 'Rêve d'enfant,' Op. 14, and then the First Sonata of Op. 27. Her perceptive study contains a range of pertinent insights into Ysaÿe's violinistic and compositional style and technique on which the author of the present thesis builds.

Iwazumi is mainly concerned with reconstituting Ysaÿe's thought processes during the composition and editing of the Sonatas. For this purpose, he traces their development by means of a number of manuscripts and published editions. He also gives a critical commentary in the form of an appendix of corrections and other revisions to the Schott edition of the Sonatas. The earlier sketches are useful to the present thesis to help evaluate if or to what extent Ysaÿe's editing changed stylistic aspects of a given movement or Sonata. In her thesis, Yang asks if it is possible to recognise commonalities between performances of Op. 27 by violinists whose teachers studied with Ysaÿe as opposed to those without the connection. She also analyses to what extent the violinists follow Ysaÿe's performance instructions and why and to what extent they may have made other choices. To this end she selects the recordings of three students of Ysaÿe and three violinists that

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<sup>117</sup> Bertram Greenspan, 'The Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin and Musical Legacy of Eugène Ysaÿe' (DMA Thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1969).

<sup>118</sup> Karen Hoatson, 'Culmination of the Belgian Violin Tradition: The Innovative Style of Eugène Ysaÿe' (DMA Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1999).

<sup>119</sup> Ray Iwazumi, 'The Six Sonates Pour Violon Seul, Op. 27' (DMA Thesis, Juilliard School, New York, 2004).

<sup>120</sup> Manshan Yang, 'The Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin by Eugène Ysaÿe: A Study in Dedication and Interpretation' (DMA Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington [New Zealand], 2016).

<sup>121</sup> Also known as 'Lointain passé.'

are not connected to him. Yang concentrates on Sonatas two, three and four on the grounds that they are the most performed. The author offers the present thesis stimulating perspectives, especially on the performance practice of the Sonatas. The present thesis positions itself in this lineage of theses that deal with Ysaÿe's playing and/or his music. New ground is broken by offering a study of the entire sonata cycle Op. 27 in terms of compositional style and, more specifically, the stylistic fluidity inherent in it. To this end, this thesis takes a two-pronged approach: it combines the study of his musical background (including his playing) with that of his music (as discussed further in the methodology).



## Methodology

### PART I: Contextual Discussion

The contextual discussion focuses on the two most dominant influences on Ysaÿe's artistic identity, his violinistic vocation and his lifelong commitment to the innovative French and Belgian composers of his youth, above all to Franck and his circle. Also considered in this context is his thinking around music history and its evolution as a whole, as well as his understanding of what it meant to him to be, as he described himself, a 'Romantic.'<sup>122</sup> The high esteem in which Ysaÿe held the musical past and his interest in music from before the nineteenth century are acknowledged, too. All research undertaken was desk-based. Archival research included the study of sound recordings, concert reviews, autobiographical material and letters. Other methods relevant to this thesis relate to historiography, biography and aesthetics as well as to performance practice and reception studies. However, although this study draws on a range of approaches, ultimately, it is historical in its orientation.

Ysaÿe's violinistic background is discussed first, in particular his bond with Vieuxtemps and the Belgian tradition of violin playing. The role Vieuxtemps played in Ysaÿe's life and his esteem for and devotion to his teacher are explored in this context. The two principal sources here are Ysaÿe's speech 'Henri Vieuxtemps mon maître' (1968) and his interview with Frederick H. Martens (1919). In these documents Ysaÿe also reflects on the history of violin playing, the constant need for both musical continuity and progress and, moreover, on his identity as a specifically Belgian violinist as well as on his artistic aspirations as performer and composer.

An overview of contemporaneous violin playing, which in many ways differed from that of today, then serves to contextualise Ysaÿe's outlook. Central to this overview is the study of early recordings and literature on performance practice. Recordings are studied using close-listening techniques derived from Robert Philip's work (see literature review) and take into account a wide range of factors, from style and conventions of the time to technical and personal circumstances in which a recording was made. Accounts of contemporary witnesses and their reflections, especially of Joseph Szigeti and Carl Flesch, contribute important insights into performance practice at the time as well as into the playing and artistic personalities of individual violinists. Also considered are differences between the national traditions of Belgium, France and the Austro-German sphere, which

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<sup>122</sup> See E. Ysaÿe 1968: 8.

were, although gradually diminishing, still relatively distinctive. The experience of the author of the present thesis as a violinist has proven indispensable to the discernment of the finer nuances in the different violinists' performances.

Three areas in which differences between the turn of the last century and today, as well as between national traditions are particularly revealed are in the use of vibrato, *portamento* and bowing technique. For instance, compared to today, vibrato was used far less and *portamento* far more. In addition, vibrato tended to be less prominent and the bowing style broader in violinists of Austro-German education than in those of French or Belgian training. Consequently, these issues form the heart of the discussion. Also outlined is the cultural atmosphere Ysaÿe initially faced, an atmosphere in which Joseph Joachim and Pablo de Sarasate were the violinistic celebrities against whom all other violinists were measured.

The second major determinant of Ysaÿe's artistic identity and life's work, his lifelong commitment to the modern French and Belgian composers of his youth, is explored next. Ysaÿe's own discourse is used to convey the importance to his aesthetic and artistic maturation especially of Franck and his circle as well as of Debussy. Biographical and historical material complements this discourse. It illustrates Ysaÿe's personal and aesthetic bond with these composers and also outlines their musical environment and activities, in which the Société Nationale de Musique, Les XX and the latter's successor La Libre Esthétique were central.

Before the analytic discussion of Part II, Ysaÿe's motivations for the composition of the Six Sonatas and his ambitions for the work are explored. Both the immediate impetus for the cycle and the wider circumstances that shaped its conception are taken into account. Considered are the deep sense of alienation he felt by the 1920s and his strong, unchanged aesthetic and ethical aspirations for music, notably for its beauty, logic, expressiveness and progress. As before, his own words are used as the starting point. A brief sketch of his personal circumstances contextualises the discussion. These include the changed Belgian musical culture to which he returned in the early 1920s from the United States, the failure of the orchestral *Concerts Ysaÿe*, and the need for Ysaÿe to face the end of his career as a violin virtuoso.

Particular attention is given to violinistic issues as Ysaÿe's commitment to the violin virtuoso tradition was central to his intentions for Op. 27. Because of his stated desire to incorporate characteristics of each dedicatee's playing in their respective Sonata, some of the key characteristics of each dedicatee's musical personality and playing are identified. A

principally archival approach combines the evaluation of selected recordings and literature, such as concert reviews, comments by eminent contemporary violinists and autobiographical material. However, it is Ysaÿe's own playing style that undoubtedly had the greatest impact on the Sonatas. His playing is explored through a close reading of the musical score of Op. 27 and through listening to his sound recordings. In particular, the two recordings of his own compositions, 'Rêve d'enfant,' Op. 14 and the Mazurka in B minor, Op. 11 No. 3, as well as Wagner's 'Preislied' and Vieuxtemps's Rondino are examined. The score of the Sonatas provides valuable information about his technique as well as about musical and interpretative matters. Consideration is given to a range of issues, among them, fingering preferences, playing of chords and phrasing as well as to technical and colouristic innovations. However, it is not possible to notate all the subtleties that constitute a player's artistry, such as unwritten conventions and nuances as well as spontaneous gestures. These are much better, if also imperfectly, transmitted by recordings. Therefore, the study of Ysaÿe's recordings complements that of the score. Drawing again on Philip's close-listening techniques, *portamento*, vibrato, *rubato*, and nuances of colouring and phrasing are examined.

Moreover, broader principles of violin playing are evaluated through literature on performance practice and by analysing sound recordings of the period in question. The approach in this thesis does not include technological means, such as computerised analytical tools. Rather, it focuses on a subjective interpretation of the listener, be it composers, performers, critics, scholars or music lovers. The impressions of the author of this thesis are also included. This approach has been chosen for two reasons. First, it is designed to capture the human experience as much as possible rather than to create scientific abstracts of any kind. This is because when Ysaÿe wrote Op. 27 with the dedicatees' and his own playing in mind, he relied on the artistic experience of their and his own playing. Also, a fuller performance analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis and merits its own study.

## **PART II: Analysis**

The purpose of the analysis is to explore in more detail stylistic and violinistic elements as well as compositional strategies in the Sonatas through which Ysaÿe seeks to incorporate and build on the musical past and present within the context of his individual musical heritage. Each chapter opens with an overview of the Sonata, commenting on striking characteristics, compositional strategies and readily audible influences. Particularly

noted are the multifaceted, seemingly improvisatory idiom and the stylistic fluidity manifest in all Sonatas. The improvisatory nature of the music brings to mind the fantasia, a genre that has a long tradition of highly prizing inspiration, invention and subjective licence. A likely link to this genre is supported by Ysaÿe's comments as transmitted, for instance, by Christen. Ysaÿe states, for example, that he let 'free improvisation reign' when composing Op. 27.<sup>123</sup>

To help assess the relationship between Op. 27 and the fantasia tradition, the latter is briefly discussed in its own right. Its historical importance, associated thought and aesthetics are considered, as are musical conventions and characteristic compositional processes. The contextual account of the fantasia tradition is developed mainly with the help of Bartoli and Roudet's study of the genre (see literature review). Although the authors are primarily concerned with the free (that is, not based on pre-existing popular melodies) fantasia for keyboard other than organ, they trace and describe the genre's wider ideology, aesthetic and musical qualities. Moreover, they show it to be a vector of an aesthetic important to the history of music well beyond the relatively narrow confines of the repertoire examined. It is, therefore, in relation to these broader issues that Bartoli and Roudet's study is of particular value to the development of a better understanding of Ysaÿe's artistic identity and relationship with musical tradition.

In addition, Ysaÿe's prominent engagement in the Sonatas with music from before 1800 is considered in its own right as well as in the context of the 1920s. The term Neobaroque is chosen to describe his use of elements borrowed from Bach and the Baroque. It is distinguished from the concept of Neoclassicism as described in Messing (1988) (see literature review) because Ysaÿe embeds his references to music from before the nineteenth century in his usual idiom that is based in the late nineteenth century.

Each Sonata is examined in turn. Allusions, both stylistic and work-specific, are explored as are compositional processes and violinistic issues. Of particular interest is the interplay of these dimensions. The nature of stylistic and work-specific allusions is identified with the help of elements, such as melody, harmony and rhythm, as well as through compositional techniques, genre and timbre. For instance, the Baroque might partly be evoked through compositional techniques, such as counterpoint, and genres associated with the period, such as the *sonata da chiesa*. The compositional processes contributing to the continuity/change paradigm relate particularly to the music's

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<sup>123</sup> 'j'ai laissé voguer une libre improvisation' (in Christen 1947: 195).

improvisatory quality. Considered here are notably the widespread use of ambiguities, for instance, of harmony, metre and form, and their balancing with the creation of coherence through, among other things, relatively simple large-scale harmonic schemes, recurring motivic-thematic material and the music's firm footing in the nineteenth century, especially harmonically. Also shown is Ysaÿe's varied approach to the sonata as a genre and the breadth of his imagination and exploration in the cycle as a whole, especially with respect to his engagement with music history (past, present and future). In order to capture the variety of musical phenomena and individual qualities of each Sonata, a range of analytical techniques is drawn upon. These include stylistic analysis, formal analysis, motivic-thematic analysis and Roman-letter harmonic analysis.

After better understanding how Ysaÿe expresses his musical heritage, historical position and aesthetic aspirations through stylistic choices and compositional processes, the contribution of violin technique to the interaction of past, present and future is considered in more depth. Explored is especially the extension of existing violin technique through which he accommodates new harmonic and stylistic elements and musical effects in a range of musical contexts. Particular uses of fingering and/or bowing as well as the creation and/or novel use of timbre on a single violin are among the issues considered.

## Chapter 2: Ysaÿe's identity

This chapter provides a biographical contextualisation of Ysaÿe's artistic identity, an identity that remained deeply rooted in the nineteenth century.<sup>124</sup> It particularly focuses on two key aspects: his vocation as a violinist and his lifelong commitment to the modern French and Belgian music of his youth, above all to that of Franck and his circle.

### Ysaÿe and the violin

Ysaÿe initially learned to play the violin under the tutelage of his father. Aged seven, he moved on to the Liège Conservatoire, where he first studied with Désiré Heynberg and later with Rodolphe Massart. Subsequently, Ysaÿe was granted a stipend from the province of Liège through Théodore Radoux, the director of the Liège Conservatoire, to study with Vieuxtemps in Brussels. However, his prospective teacher had fallen ill and had left Brussels for Paris. He was replaced by Henryk Wieniawski with whom Ysaÿe studied privately for a year instead.<sup>125</sup>

Although Wieniawski must have been of some importance in Ysaÿe's life, curiously, he is relatively absent from Ysaÿe's discourse that has been transmitted to posterity. However, his significance to his former student can be glimpsed from a few of the latter's remarks. For instance, in the interview with Martens, Ysaÿe discusses his past experience of teaching at Godinne (his summer home in Belgium) and plans to teach in the USA, noting that '[t]his was and will be a labor of love, for the compositions of Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski especially are so inspiring and yet, as a rule, they are so badly played – without grandeur or beauty, with no thought of the traditional interpretation – that they seem the piecework of technic factories!'<sup>126</sup>

Other comments also point to Wieniawski's importance to Ysaÿe's artistic development. The latter's friend José Quitin, for instance, surmises with respect to Ysaÿe's violinistic development that

Rodolphe Massart, Ysaÿe's first teacher in Liège, a teacher to whom he always remained very grateful, put down the foundations of his musical and violinistic education. Wieniawski perfected his technique and gave him the fire that his

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<sup>124</sup> See E. Ysaÿe 1968: 8.

<sup>125</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 14-16.

<sup>126</sup> In Martens 1919: 11.

passionate nature emphasised marvellously. Vieuxtemps tempered the excesses of this overly generous nature with his classical education, his style simple and noble at the same time. Finally, Rubinstein, in turn, instils in him an unwavering rhythm at the same time as an extreme concern with nuances. He, thus, has a profound influence on Ysaÿe's temperament.<sup>127</sup>

Before coming to Vieuxtemps, Anton Rubinstein deserves mention. It seems that Rubinstein, a friend of both Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps, was particularly valuable to Ysaÿe in terms of truly starting the latter's solo career, notably in Norway and Russia.<sup>128</sup> However, although there are some hints at how Rubinstein may have influenced Ysaÿe's musical aesthetics (see the quote above), there is no specific information on whether and how that influence was present.

In 1876 Ysaÿe was able to move to Paris for three years to study with Vieuxtemps.<sup>129</sup> He always revered Vieuxtemps and his own violinistic identity was profoundly shaped by his teacher. The deep feelings, affection and admiration for him are clearly conveyed in the speech Ysaÿe gave during the commemoration of Vieuxtemps's 100th birthday in 1920. Together with Corelli and Viotti, he considered Vieuxtemps to be the most important violinist, calling the three a 'trinity'.<sup>130</sup> Ysaÿe described Vieuxtemps's playing as having possessed grace, spirit, suppleness and continuity of sound, as well as depth in sustained passages. He believed these qualities to have originated with Vieuxtemps's studies with Bériot but attributed the expansiveness and the majesty of his playing, 'the soul in the bow'<sup>131</sup> as he calls it, to the influence of Bériot's first wife, the famous singer Maria Malibran.<sup>132</sup>

Ysaÿe also greatly praised Vieuxtemps as a composer, considering him to have possessed exceptional artistic integrity and the 'double genius'<sup>133</sup> of the nineteenth-century composer-performer tradition.<sup>134</sup> He emphasised the importance of his teacher to

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<sup>127</sup> Rodolphe Massart, le premier maître d'Ysaÿe à Liège, maître auquel il conserva toujours une grande reconnaissance, avait posé les bases de son éducation musicale et violonistique. Wieniawski avait perfectionné sa technique et lui avait donné le brio que sa fouguese nature mettait merveilleusement en valeur. Vieuxtemps avait tempéré les excès de cette nature trop généreuse avec son enseignement classique, son style simple et noble à la fois. Enfin, Rubinstein, à son tour, lui insuffle un rythme inébranlable, en même temps qu'un extrême souci des nuances. Il a ainsi une profonde influence sur le tempérament d'Ysaÿe (Quitin 1938: 8).

<sup>128</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 17-18 and 62.

<sup>129</sup> See, for example, Stockhem 1990: 14-16.

<sup>130</sup> See E. Ysaÿe 1968: 9.

<sup>131</sup> 'l'âme dans l'archet' (see E. Ysaÿe 1968: 10-11).

<sup>132</sup> See E. Ysaÿe 1968: 9-11.

<sup>133</sup> 'double génie'

<sup>134</sup> See E. Ysaÿe 1968: 7.

the development of musical expressiveness and virtuosity, as well as his ability to make the violin resonate.<sup>135</sup> In Vieuxtemps's first five violin concertos, for example, Ysaÿe finds '[...] the most immense monuments and, if I dare say, the most perfect ones of our art [...].'<sup>136</sup> He goes on to praise aspects he felt to be innovative, such as a richly coloured *bariolage* passage before the *coda* in the first movement of the First Concerto, as well as the variety of timbres.<sup>137</sup> In the Fourth Concerto he admires, among other things, 'the nature of the crescendo, in short, [...] the *climax* that is established.'<sup>138</sup> He further praises the work's symphonic writing in the *tuttis* and the novel formal plan which, he believes, for the first time, incorporated cyclicism in a violin concerto (between the cadenza of the first movement, the slow movement and the finale).<sup>139</sup> Another quality Ysaÿe identifies and was deeply attracted to was Vieuxtemps's ability to fuse complementary stylistic aspects, combining tradition and innovation, instrumental technique and expressiveness:

The art of Henri Vieuxtemps is made of a large form; of new runs; of details and designs of a variety and richness before him unknown. If Corelli, Viotti, de Bériot were his teachers; if they opened him the path, he walked it without guide – striding with assurance and confidence. The greatest part of the art created after Paganini that is of interest is attributable to Vieuxtemps. His œuvre summarises all the efforts of his predecessors. It forms a completed cycle. Thanks to his creative powers, which have no other sources than themselves, Vieuxtemps concludes the monument erected by the predecessors; he reinforces the foundations and renders them immortal. [...]

One does not need to be surprised that the Romantic that I was and that I remain would be attracted through his natural penchants towards Corelli, Geminiani (one of the most beautiful poets of the violin), Nardini, Viotti, de Bériot, Léonard, Vieuxtemps – who all were essentially 'expressives.'

With our great man, moreover, the conception differs from that of Tartini, Locatelli, Paganini. He would write, as they did, runs, difficult passages, sound combinations of every kind. But he would add feelings, colours; he would create paintings evoking joy and pain. There would be the language of life. In short, an entire poetics. This is how Vieuxtemps would integrate himself with the expressives mentioned. The literary tendencies of the moment would help him for their part. All while guarding, on the outside, the great lines of classicism, he would proceed with the evolution of which he has dreamed. He would proceed with it through masterful finds of his science and through the ingenious inspirations of his heart. Such is his œuvre. It is reforming and progressive. [...]<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> 'Il n'y a pas, en effet, de musique écrite pour violon qui le fasse mieux sonner' (E. Ysaÿe 1968: 9).

<sup>136</sup> '[...] les monuments les plus vastes, et, si j'ose dire, les plus parfaits de notre art [...]' (E. Ysaÿe 1968: 14).

<sup>137</sup> See E. Ysaÿe 1968: 22.

<sup>138</sup> 'la nature du crescendo, bref, [...] le *climax* institué' (E. Ysaÿe 1968: 28).

<sup>139</sup> E. Ysaÿe 1968: 29.

<sup>140</sup> L'art d'Henri Vieuxtemps est fait d'une forme large; de traits nouveaux; de détails et de dessins dont la variété et la richesse étaient avant lui inconnues. Si Corelli, Viotti, de Bériot furent ses maîtres; s'ils lui ouvert la voie, il y a marché sans guide – d'un pas assuré et confiant. La plus grande partie de ce que l'art post-paganinien crée d'intéressant est due à Vieuxtemps. Son œuvre résume tous les efforts de ses devanciers. Elle forme un cycle accompli. Grâce à ses forces créatrices, qui



Ysaÿe articulated violinistic ideals in his own playing very similar to those he found in Vieuxtemps. For instance, Ernest Christen recalls him to have made comments in his teaching, such as '[p]ossess an *expressive technique*; even a semibreve must speak. Don't do anything that does not have as objective poetry, the heart, the spirit. The worker of the fingers must also be the labourer of thought. One should be able to say: – This artist paints our life, the divine; he translates our sentiments and is at one with us.'<sup>141</sup> And: 'One plays without knowing what one does. In other words, it is another, superior I who plays, and it is the universal that penetrates us, directs us and raises us above ourselves.'<sup>142</sup> Stressing the importance of phrasing and the right type and amount of vibrato Ysaÿe cautioned: 'That the note be not subject to any alteration! [...] Do not always vibrate, but always be vibrant.'<sup>143</sup> Christen also remembers his teacher's technique to have been 'prodigious, he wanted it perfect; not as an end, but as a means of expression'<sup>144</sup> but, nevertheless, to warn that '[t]he instrument is not the objective, even less so the instrumentalist.'<sup>145</sup> In his compositions, too, Ysaÿe seeks to intimately link the expressive and the technical. He states, for instance, that he was seeking to write 'for and through the violin,'<sup>146</sup> explaining that Beethoven, who was not primarily a string player, wrote for the violin and Vieuxtemps, as a violin virtuoso, wrote through the violin.

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n'ont d'autres sources qu'elles-mêmes, Vieuxtemps achève le monument érigé par les anciens; il en affermit les bases et le rend impérissable. [...]  
 Il ne faut être surpris que le romantique, tel que je fus et tel que je reste, soit attiré par ses penchants naturels vers l'art des Corelli, Geminiani (un des plus beaux poètes du violon), Nardini, Viotti, de Bériot, Léonard, Vieuxtemps – qui, tous, furent essentiellement des 'expressifs.'  
 Chez notre grand homme, au demeurant, la conception diffère de celle de Tartini, Locatelli, Paganini. Il écrira comme eux des traits, des passages difficiles, des combinaisons sonores de tous genres. Mais il y ajoutera des sentiments, des couleurs; il en fera des tableaux évoquant des joies et des douleurs. Il y aura là le langage de la vie. Bref, toute une poésie. Ainsi, Vieuxtemps s'intégrera aux expressifs précités. Les tendances littéraires et poétiques du moment l'y aideront pour leur part. Tout en gardant, extérieurement, les grandes lignes du classicisme, il opérera l'évolution qu'il a rêvée. Il l'opérera par les magistrales trouvailles de sa science et par les géniales inspirations de son cœur. Telle est son œuvre. Elle est réformatrice et progressiste. [...] (E. Ysaÿe 1968: 7-8).

<sup>141</sup> '[a]yez une *technique expressive*; une quadruple croche même doit parler. Ne faites rien qui n'ait comme objet la poésie, le cœur, l'esprit. Le travailleur des doigts est aussi l'ouvrier de la pensée. Il faut qu'on puisse dire: – Cet artiste peint notre vie, la divine; il traduit nos sentiments et ne fait qu'un avec nous' (in Christen 1947: 81).

<sup>142</sup> 'On joue sans savoir ce qu'on fait. Autrement dit, c'est un autre moi supérieur qui joue et c'est l'être universel qui nous pénètre, nous dirige et nous relève à nous-mêmes' (in Christen 1947: 83).

<sup>143</sup> 'Que la note ne subisse aucune altération! [...] Ne vibrez pas toujours, mais soyez toujours vibrants' (in Christen 1947: 76-77).

<sup>144</sup> 'prodigieuse, il la voulait parfaite; non comme but, mais comme moyen d'expression' (1947: 75).

<sup>145</sup> '[I]'instrument n'est pas le but, encore moins l'instrumentiste' (in Christen 1947: 80).

<sup>146</sup> 'pour le violon et par le violon' (in Quitin 1938: 35).

To Ysaÿe, Vieuxtemps's mastery of the instrument meant that his compositions would make full use of and also extend the technical and expressive means of the violin. He was inspired by the possibilities of the instrument.

Beethoven [on the other hand] writes not what his imagination would dictate him if it would dialogue with the instrument, but that which it dictated to him without the assistance of the partner that originates in the workshops of the violin maker.

We are, therefore, here in the presence of two fundamentally distinct compositions; composition for the violin and composition through the violin. The two ways are, however, not at all exclusive. They complete each other. Sometimes they pass from one to the other – the first causing the second as through a celestial inspiration. The ideal is their reunion in a synthesis where the musical genius accords in every way with the instrumental genius. [...] Vieuxtemps, he too, dreamed of a harmonious equilibrium of the two factors. But he had to transform and renovate the violin technique. To create a soul for it, to render it more expressive. His musical conception made itself felt in the efforts accomplished in this reformative task.<sup>147</sup>

Elsewhere, Ysaÿe notes that his own *Poème élégiaque* (c1895) was a work with which he was particularly content. This was because he felt that it 'marks a definite step in my work as a composer for it contains clear evidence of my desire to link music and virtuosity—the true virtuosity which had been neglected since the instrumentalists, departing from the example set them by the early masters, had ceased composing themselves and had left this art to those who ignored the resources of the violin.'<sup>148</sup> Moreover, seeking to continue the quest for progress he admired in his teacher, Ysaÿe 'tried to find new technical ways and means of expression in my [that is, his] own compositions.'<sup>149</sup> He states, for instance, that he hoped to have developed new technical and musical ideas in a *Divertiment* for violin and orchestra he wrote.<sup>150</sup> Ysaÿe was especially interested in innovative harmonies, arguing that 'new technical formulas are

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<sup>147</sup> Beethoven [on the other hand] écrit non pas ce que lui dicterait son imagination, si elle dialoguait avec l'instrument, mais ce qu'elle peut lui dicter sans le concours du partenaire issu des ateliers de lutherie.

Nous voilà donc en présence de deux compositions fondamentalement distinctes: la composition *pour* le violon et la composition *par* le violon. Les deux manières ne sont toutefois nullement exclusives. Elles se complètent. Elles passent quelquefois de l'un à l'autre – la première amenant la seconde, comme par une intuition divinatrice. L'idéal est leur réunion dans une synthèse où le génie musical s'accorde en tous points avec le génie instrumental.

[...] Vieuxtemps, lui aussi, rêva d'associer dans un harmonieux équilibre les deux facteurs. Mais il eut à transformer et à rénover la technique du violon. A lui créer une âme, pour la rendre plus expressive. Sa conception musicale se ressentira des efforts accomplis dans cette tâche réformatrice (E. Ysaÿe 1968: 15).

<sup>148</sup> In A. Ysaÿe 1947: 218.

<sup>149</sup> In Martens 1919: 9.

<sup>150</sup> See Martens 1919: 9-10.

always evolved out of and follow after harmonic discoveries.<sup>151</sup> He welcomed these discoveries, which he ascribed to Debussy and his successors, and notes that '[i]n the days of Viotti and Rode the harmonic possibilities were more limited – they had only a few chords, and hardly any chords of the ninth. But now harmonic material for the development of a new violin technic is there: I have some violin studies, in ms., which I may publish some day, devoted to that end.'<sup>152</sup>

When considering national violin schools, Ysaÿe emphasised the existence of a Belgian violin school and a French violin school, as opposed to a Franco-Belgian school. In the interview with Frederick Martens, for example, he states: 'Incidentally, speaking of schools of violin playing, I find that there is a great tendency to confuse the Belgian and the French. This should not be so. They are distinct, though the latter has undoubtedly been formed and influenced by the former. Many of the great violin names, – Vieuxtemps, Léonard, Marsick, Remi, Parent, du Broux, Musin, Thomson, – are all Belgian.'<sup>153</sup>

Ysaÿe's view is far from unique. In the current *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, for instance, Henri Vanhulst argues that through the sheer number of great Belgian violinists alone the identification of a Belgian violin school is justified: 'Without doubt, Belgium has produced the greatest number of internationally renowned violinists so that one can speak of a Belgian violin school.'<sup>154</sup> In the preface of the exposition catalogue to *L'Ecole belge de Violon*, José Quitin traces the origins and main characteristics of this school back to around 1840.<sup>155</sup>

Born circa 1840, it [the Belgian School] has inserted itself between the French and German Schools, making the synthesis between their qualities and adding a fullness of sound and an expressive power of an intensity wholly new at that time. During three quarters of a century, the Belgian School [...] plays a leading role in the evolution of the technique and literature of the violin.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> In Martens 1919: 10.

<sup>152</sup> In Martens 1919: 10.

<sup>153</sup> In Martens 1919: 3-4.

<sup>154</sup> 'Zweifellos hat Belgien die größte Zahl international bekannter Violinisten hervorgebracht, so daß man von einer belg. Geigenschule sprechen kann' (*Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Kassel and London: Bärenreiter, c1994- )).

<sup>155</sup> See Bernard Huys (ed.), *L'Ecole belge de Violon: Catalogue de l'exposition*, preface by José Quitin (Brussels: Bibliotheque Royale Albert 1er, 1978).

<sup>156</sup> Née vers 1840, elle [l'Ecole belge] s'est insérée entre les Ecoles française et allemande, opérant la synthèse de leurs qualités et y ajoutant une ampleur sonore et un pouvoir expressif d'une intensité toute nouvelle à cette époque. Pendant trois quarts de siècle, l'Ecole belge [...] joue un rôle directeur dans l'évolution de la technique et de la littérature du violon (Quitin 1978: XXVIII).

Within the Belgian school, he distinguishes two main branches, a Liège branch led by Vieuxtemps and Hubert Léonard, and a Brussels branch led by Bériot. Quitin explains that the Belgian violin school was largely founded on the Liège school, which he describes as having been ‘characterised by the breadth of the sound, the “length” of the bow and its variety, expressive intensity of the play, virtuosity put in the service of music. On other levels, let us also note an extraordinary facility of sight reading and the constant practice of chamber music, above all the quartet, which keeps the Belgian violinists in contact with the works of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann.’<sup>157</sup> The Brussels branch, on the other hand, Quitin characterises as more heavily influenced by the French school, that is, greater emphasis is placed on grace, a great variety of bow strokes and a gallant character.<sup>158</sup>

Together with his teacher Bériot and his student Ysaÿe, Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881), a native of Verviers (in the Province of Liège), was one of the most important representatives of the Belgian violin school. Between 1829 and 1831 he studied with Bériot, whom he later described as having been a father figure to him: ‘Bériot was a second father to me; I became his constant occupation. He attached himself especially to instilling in me the respect and taste of the old masters, introduced me to the beauties of Corelli, Tartini, Viotti, Rode, Kreutzer, etc., etc. He taught me to admire them and to regard them as models.’<sup>159</sup> However, in 1831 Bériot left Brussels to go on a concert tour, leaving his young student behind and without any further violin lessons: ‘And it is thus that from the age of eleven (1831) I have not had one violin lesson. I continued to work, to meditate on the ancients, to compare them to the moderns, to bring them together, unite them through what seemed to me to be beautiful and great.’<sup>160</sup> Vieuxtemps soon took up his own travels, encountering many renowned musicians and gathering valuable artistic

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<sup>157</sup> ‘caractérisé par l’ampleur du son, la “longueur” de l’archet et sa variété, l’intensité expressive du jeu, la virtuosité mise au service de la musique. Sur d’autres plans, notons encore une extraordinaire facilité de lecture à vue et la pratique constante de la musique de chambre, surtout du quatuor, qui maintient les violonistes belges en contact avec les œuvres de Beethoven, de Schubert, de Schumann’ (Quitin 1978: XXI-XXII and XXV). (For more information on the topic see José Quitin, ‘Interprètes et virtuoses: L’Ecole du violon,’ *La Musique en Wallonie et à Bruxelles*, Robert Wangermée and Philippe Mercier (eds.), 2 Vols. (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1980-82)).

<sup>158</sup> See Quitin 1978: XVII.

<sup>159</sup> ‘Bériot fut pour moi un second père; je devins sa préoccupation constante. Il s’attacha surtout à m’inspirer le respect et le goût des anciens maîtres, m’initia aux beautés des Corelli, Tartini, Viotti, Rode, Kreutzer, etc., etc. Il m’enseigna à les admirer et à les regarder comme des modèles’ (in Maurice Kufferath, *Henri Vieuxtemps. Sa Vie et son œuvre* (Brussels 1882: 6)).

<sup>160</sup> ‘Et c’est ainsi que depuis l’âge de onze ans (1831) je n’ai plus eu une leçon de violon. J’ai continué à travailler, à méditer les anciens, à leur comparer les modernes, à les rapprocher, les unir en ce qu’ils m’ont paru avoir de beau et de grand’ (in Kufferath 1882: 7).

experience. In particular, Louis Spohr, whom he met in 1833, made a lasting impression on the young violinist: 'What sound! What style! What charm! He was for me of an extreme goodness and from that moment on our friendship only ended with his death.'<sup>161</sup> According to Maurice Kufferath, Vieuxtemps's musicianship and playing style came about as a result of the diverse influences to which he was exposed and which he absorbed in his youth. He explains that

[t]he influence of de Bériot on his [Vieuxtemps's] violinistic talent was not absorbing, and his playing so superior, so original, was the result rather of a comparative study of the different violin schools fashionable at his beginnings. He took from Spohr something of his grand style, along with what he preserved of the elegiac elegance and seductive charm of the Belgian master. Paganini impressed him in particular; he communicated to him, he too, a spark of his stunning and spiritual virtuosity; but Vieuxtemps knew him too little from their frequentation to have resulted in more than a very lively impression, profound with truth, but not at all decisive. Schools so different and their qualities so diverse, Vieuxtemps created his own manner in which one could find the quintessence of each of the great virtuosos.

As composer, Vieuxtemps educated himself through a similar process. [...] <sup>162</sup>

Quitin describes Vieuxtemps's playing in similar terms: 'His play excelled through a warm tone, full and nuanced, impeccable intonation, varied bowing technique and a great mastery of all forms of staccato.'<sup>163</sup> Although Vieuxtemps's compositions do appear to necessitate such qualities in order to gain their fullest effectiveness, it is difficult to corroborate accounts of his playing because, of course, there are no sound recordings of his playing or, for that matter, of that of Bériot.

Before examining some examples of the playing styles of individual Belgian violinists, violin playing around the turn of the twentieth century more widely is discussed.

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<sup>161</sup> 'Quel son! quel style! quel charme! Il fut pour moi d'une bonté extrême et de ce moment nos relations amicales n'ont cessé qu'avec sa mort' (in Kufferath 1882: 7).

<sup>162</sup> L'influence de de Bériot sur son [Vieuxtemps's] talent de violoniste n'a pas été absorbante, et son jeu si supérieur, si original fut le résultat plutôt d'une étude comparé des différentes écoles de violon en vogue à ses débuts. Il avait pris à Spohr quelque chose de son large style, de même qu'il avait conservé de ses études avec de Bériot l'élégance élégiaque et le charme séduisant du maître belge. Paganini surtout l'impressionna; il lui communiqua, lui aussi, une étincelle de son étourdissante et spirituelle virtuosité; mais Vieuxtemps le connut trop peu pour qu'il résultat de leur fréquentation plus qu'une impression très-vive, profonde à la vérité, mais nullement décisive. D'écoles si différentes et de qualités si diverses, Vieuxtemps se fit une manière à lui où l'on pouvait retrouver la quintessence de chacun de ces grands virtuoses.

Comme compositeur, Vieuxtemps s'était formé par un procédé analogue. [...] (Kufferath 1882: 103).

<sup>163</sup> 'Son jeu excellait par un ton chaleureux, ample et nuancé, une intonation impeccable, une technique d'archet variée et une grande maîtrise de toutes les formes du staccato' (see Huys 1978: 27-28).

This is so that the specificities of the Belgian violin school and its overlap with other schools can be appreciated both in theory and, as far as possible, in practice.

### **Contemporaneous violin playing**

As noted above, in the nineteenth century, relatively distinct schools of violin playing coexisted, of which the two most important ones are generally known as the German and Franco-Belgian schools.<sup>164</sup> A third major school that came into existence in the late nineteenth century was the Russian violin school led by Leopold Auer, a Hungarian working at the St Petersburg Conservatoire between 1868 and 1917. However, as it does not have any immediate relevance to this thesis, it is not further discussed here.<sup>165</sup> A brief overview is going to summarise some of the stylistic and technical qualities that characterised German, French and Belgian playing, so as to provide a historical context in which to interpret Ysaÿe's playing. Some of the differences between the schools can usefully be illustrated by their different approaches to bowing technique, vibrato and *portamento*. However, before that, some words of caution are required. As the previous discussion has already illustrated, not everybody agrees on how to class the schools and where the boundaries are between them, notably in Belgium, where the separation of the closely related but not identical French and Belgian schools is often strongly favoured (see above).

The term 'German' violin school presents another problem. Germany as a nation state did not exist until 1871. Rather, from 1815 to 1866 the German-speaking lands, including, for example, free cities like Hamburg and Bremen, kingdoms, such as Hannover, and duchies, such as Braunschweig, as well as the multi-ethnic Austrian Empire, formed a confederation that represented less a political nation than the idea of a cultural nation. In the newly founded German Nation in 1871 Austrian territories were not included. Instead, the Austrian Empire, which had become the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867, became a separate, if still diverse, entity.<sup>166</sup>

Many of the major exponents of the 'German' violin school came from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, notably Joseph Joachim, Hungarian by birth, who virtually epitomises

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<sup>164</sup> For a brief account of the genesis of the term 'Franco-Belgian violin school' see Devetzoglou 2010: 3-4.

<sup>165</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the Russian violin school see Ruth Elizabeth Rodrigues, 'Selected Students of Leopold Auer – A Study in Violin Performance-Practice' (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, Birmingham (UK), 2009).

<sup>166</sup> See <http://www.bpb.de/izpb/142639/karten> and <http://www.staatsbuergerschaft.gv.at/index.php?id=35>.

the so-called German school, Arnold Rosé (a Rumanian-born Austrian violinist) and his quartet, as well as the Bohemian Quartet. To account more accurately for the role in and contribution of violinists such as these to the 'German' school, it is henceforth referred to as the Austro-German violin school in this thesis. Moreover, the influence of these schools, despite their names, extended to other countries. In England, for example, many players adopted versions of the Austro-German style,<sup>167</sup> while French and Belgian playing was highly prevalent in Poland, albeit not exclusively so.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, distinctions between schools were not absolute.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, characteristic technical and aesthetic tendencies in the French and Belgian schools on the one hand, and in Austro-German playing styles on the other, can be discerned, especially in the areas noted above: vibrato, bowing technique and, to an extent, *portamento*.<sup>170</sup>

Differences in playing styles between the French and Belgian, and Austro-German violin schools are perhaps best conceptualised as more or less pronounced tendencies, that, with the dawn of the twentieth century, gradually faded.<sup>171</sup> Robert Philip has suggested that around the turn of the twentieth century the Austro-German violin school still tended to favour an older approach to violin playing, which went back to the early part of the nineteenth century, whereas French and Belgian players inclined towards more progressive practices. Stylistically, Austro-German playing was, therefore, felt to be more traditional. Phrases tended to be relatively long and bowing rather wide (partly because the bow largely remained on the string), while vibrato was very restrained. French and Belgian players, on the other hand, were likely to prefer a more brilliant and powerful style with a greater variety of articulation and bow strokes, including various kinds of bouncing bowing.<sup>172</sup> The Austro-German style tended to be reputed as tasteful and strictly devoted

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<sup>167</sup> In Philip 2004: 192.

<sup>168</sup> See Magdalena Rut, 'The Influence of the Franco-Belgian Violin School on Violin Didactics in Poland,' *Revue belge de Musicologie*, Vol. 60, Actes du colloque international: Les Relations musicales entre Bruxelles et la Pologne 1800-1950 (2006), pp. 131-140.

<sup>169</sup> See Philip 2004: 191.

<sup>170</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of these and other areas, such as articulation, dynamics and phrasing, see, for example, Rodrigues (2009) and Milsom (2003).

<sup>171</sup> For reasons behind changes in playing style and a decrease in national differences see, for example, Philip (2004) chapter 1, especially pp. 22-25 (on diversity in musicians' demeanour and their playing styles before the rise of sound recording and its decline); chapter 6, especially pp. 193 - 195 (on changes in violin playing) and pp. 201-203 (on reasons for and consequences of a change towards a globalised style).

<sup>172</sup> See Philip 2004: 192-193.

to musical principles, while French and Belgian playing was, at times, derided as frivolous and superficial by their detractors across the Rhine.<sup>173</sup>

Until the late nineteenth century, vibrato was considered an ornamentation, a special effect to be used sparingly and only on occasional notes. Its effect was likened by Pierre Baillot, as by many others including Louis Spohr, to a voice 'when it is strongly touched by emotion' and was to be used for the purpose of expressive emphasis. Habitual use was strongly discouraged. Bériot, for instance, warned that the artist 'must only use [vibrato] with the greatest moderation.'<sup>174</sup> Thus, attitudes to the device in France, Belgium and the Austro-German sphere were very similar. By the late nineteenth century, however, differences were emerging as vibrato became increasingly employed in French and Belgian but not in Austro-German playing.<sup>175</sup> This change went hand in hand with a more powerful and varied bowing style and tended, for a time, to be linked to the schools' differing stylistic approaches to violin playing.<sup>176</sup> Then, during the early decades of the twentieth century, vibrato became increasingly seen, as it is today, as an integral part of tone production, where it is used nearly at all times (with the exception of the historically informed performance movement (HIP)). It also became more intense. The origins of the modern vibrato are somewhat uncertain and cannot be clearly ascribed to a single school, though Kreisler's influence was immense. But as Philip rightly observes, 'Fritz Kreisler [was] an Austrian taught by the Parisian Massart' and agrees with Flesch that Kreisler's vibrato was probably his own creation.<sup>177</sup>

The use of *portamento* showed the opposite trend to that of vibrato. Much employed during the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries, often routinely for shifting, its use significantly decreased thereafter. It was a technique that was seen to link string-playing and singing and was often recommended to be applied in the manner a good singer would do.<sup>178</sup> Leopold Auer, for example, recommends that '[i]n order to develop your judgement as to the proper and improper use of *portamento*, observe the manner in which it is used by good singers and by poor ones.'<sup>179</sup> Ideas of when and how to use *portamento* seem to have been relatively similar across the three schools. Shifts were

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<sup>173</sup> See Milsom 2003: 22 and Clive Brown, 'Bowling Styles, Vibrato and Portamento in Nineteenth-Century Violin Playing,' *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 113 No. 1 (1988), p.106.

<sup>174</sup> See Philip 1992: 208-209.

<sup>175</sup> See Brown 1988: 110-111.

<sup>176</sup> See Philip 2004: 192.

<sup>177</sup> See Philip 1992: 108 and 2004: 193-194.

<sup>178</sup> See Philip 1992: 143.

<sup>179</sup> In Philip 1992: 143.



either to be made with the same finger or, on a shift up, with the finger that had played the last note and then is substituted by the finger needed next. For downwards shifts the procedure was probably similar, only reversed. Shifts, in which the finger that stops the note in the new position is used to slide, were frowned upon.<sup>180</sup> Flesch calls this *L-portamento* and shifts in which the finger that played the last note slides before being substituted with the new one, *B-portamento*. Later in the nineteenth century, players of the French and Belgian schools began to also employ *L-portamento*, a practice that was still considered unacceptable in the Austro-German tradition into the early twentieth century.<sup>181</sup> However, Flesch remarks in the 1920s that

a gulf which cannot be bridged yawns between theory and practice. It is a fact that among the great violinists of our day there is not one who does not more or less frequently use the L-portamento. A refusal to accept it, therefore, amounts to a condemnation of all modern violin playing and its representatives, beginning with Ysaÿe, and it is questionable whether there are any who would go so far.<sup>182</sup>

As noted above, the Austro-German school and the French and Belgian schools differed in their approaches to bowing. In the former, the elbow was held quite low with the fingers close together and at approximately a right angle to the stick, resulting in a tone production that was relatively limited. The bowing style also tended to be more sustained. Violinists of the French and Belgian schools, on the other hand, raised their elbow more and tilted the hand towards the index finger. This method allows the player to create a more intense, or larger, tone and also facilitates the use of various bouncing bow strokes, such as *spiccato* and *ricochet*, and the greatly nuanced bow speeds and timbres favoured in these traditions.<sup>183</sup> The inclination towards more sustained bowing seems to have originated with Viotti in France and had been perpetuated by Spohr in Germany. In both France and Belgium, on the other hand, the popularity of lighter bowing with more bouncing bow strokes developed especially through the influence of Paganini. By the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, differences gradually began to diminish as a more versatile bowing technique with a wider range of bow strokes was also

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<sup>180</sup> See Brown 1988: 124.

<sup>181</sup> See Brown 1988: 126 and Philip 1992: 144-145.

<sup>182</sup> In Philip 1992: 144 (from *The Art of Violin Playing*, trans. F. H. Martens (New York: Carl Fischer, 1924-30) I, p. 30).

<sup>183</sup> See Philip 2004: 191-193.

taken up by Austro-German players, even if more sustained bowing was still often preferred for the Austro-German Classics, such as Beethoven.<sup>184</sup>

The following discussion briefly exemplifies some of the broad national tendencies in technique and style through selected sound recordings. It also demonstrates the limitations of such categorisation due to overlapping national schools and individualities of violinists. In addition, all violinists that are discussed play with a significant amount of flexibility in tempo and rhythm. Therefore, differences tend to occur more between individual violinists than between national schools. However, this subject is not pursued further here as it goes beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>185</sup>

The Austro-German violin school is represented here by Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) and Arnold Rosé (1863-1946) who were both considered to be major exponents of this school. Joachim's importance is further discussed below. Arnold Rosé (1863-1946) was a renowned string quartet player with his formation the Rosé Quartet, the leader of the Vienna Philharmonic and a teacher.<sup>186</sup> The French violin school is represented by Lucien Capet (1873-1928) and Paul Viardot (1857-1941), while Jacques Thibaud, as the dedicatee of Ysaÿe's Second Sonata, is discussed in the next chapter. Mostly educated at the Paris Conservatoire, Capet was a renowned interpreter and an influential teacher, particularly known for his bowing technique.<sup>187</sup> A recording of Viardot is discussed because he was a nearly exact contemporary of Ysaÿe and both recorded Wieniawski's Mazurka, Op. 19 No. 1. A direct comparison is, therefore, possible with the proviso that the date of Viardot's recording is 1900, that is over a decade earlier than that of Ysaÿe and, moreover, towards the very beginning of the history of recorded sound and, in the words of Jerome F. Weber, before the 'beginning of recorded sound as a serious medium' in 1902.<sup>188</sup>

Unfortunately, none of Ysaÿe's most notable contemporary compatriots, such as Martin Marsick, César Thomson, Ovide Musin, Guillaume Remy and even the younger Mathieu Crickboom, seem to have made any recordings. Some of Ysaÿe's own recordings are discussed in more depth in the next chapter. While early recordings of members of the Belgian violin school are sparse, two distinguished violinists who are somewhat younger

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<sup>184</sup> See Brown 1988: 110.

<sup>185</sup> For further discussion see, for example, Philip (1992 and 2004).

<sup>186</sup> See 'Arnold Rosé,' *The Musical Times*, Vol. 87, No. 1243 (Sep., 1946), p. 286.

<sup>187</sup> See Johnson 2010.

<sup>188</sup> Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume, Jerome F. Weber, John Borwick, and D.E.L. Shorter. 'Recorded sound,' *Grove Music Online*, (accessed 5 May 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026294>.

did leave some recordings. They are Alfred Dubois (1898-1949), an Ysaÿe student, and Henri Koch (1903-1969). However, because of their younger age their playing was entirely formed in the early twentieth century when differences between schools gradually became minimal. For this reason, it is very problematic to include them in the sample. However, in the face of a lack of older players it is inevitable. Nevertheless, it is likely that some traits are still somewhat discernible. As a result, the following discussion unfortunately compares much more validly Austro-German and French playing than Belgian playing around the turn of the twentieth century. It is hoped that this defect is to some extent counteracted by the above discussion of Belgian violin playing.

To better ascertain stylistic differences between national schools and individuals, where possible, similar kinds of repertoire have been chosen, such as works by the same composer. This is because players frequently adjusted their style to the repertoire they performed. However, given the limited number of recordings made in the early twentieth century, the choice is somewhat restricted. The recordings chosen are listed in tables 2.1. to 2.6.

**Table 2.1. – Table of recordings: Joseph Joachim<sup>189</sup>**

<b>Work</b>	<b>Recording reference</b>
J. S. Bach Adagio BWV 1001	Matrix number: mx 204y Original issue number: G&T 047903; Pearl GEM 101 (1903)
J. S. Bach Tempo di Bourrée BWV 1002	Matrix number: 205y Original issue number: G&T 047904 (1903)
J. Joachim Romanze	with unidentified (piano) BD3 Opal (1903)
J. Brahms Hungarian Dance No. 1	with unidentified (piano) Matrix number: 219y (1903)
J. Brahms Hungarian Dance No. 2	with unidentified (piano) Matrix number: 217y (217y) Original issue numbers: HMV (Gramophone) D 803 and G&T 047905 (1903)

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<sup>189</sup> Recording references are not always complete. This is because there is not always all information available.

**Table 2.2. – Table of recordings: Arnold Rosé**

<b>Work</b>	<b>Recording reference</b>
J. S. Bach Adagio BWV 1001	Matrix number: CA 48 Original issue number: HMV 2016 (1928)
L. van Beethoven Romanze in F (truncated)	with unidentified (piano) Arbiter Records 148: 'Arnold Rosé: First Violin of Vienna' (rec. 1909 (remastered 2014))
J. Brahms Hungarian Dance No. 5	with unidentified (piano) Matrix number: 14681u Original issue number: 47973 (1909)
H. Wieniawski, Polonaise brillante	with unidentified (piano) Matrix number: 15233u Original issue number: 47983 (1909) (on Naxos)
L. van Beethoven Quartets Op. 18/4, Op. 74/10, Op. 131/14	Rosé Quartet Czech HMV ES 388/90 (1927)

**Table 2.3. – Table of recordings: Lucien Capet**

<b>Work</b>	<b>Recording reference</b>
C. Franck Piano Quintet	Capet String Quartet with Marcel Ciampi (piano) Original issue number: 15102-06 (1927)
C. Debussy String Quartet	Capet String Quartet Original issue number: D15085-88 (1927)
W. A. Mozart 'Dissonance' Quartet	Capet String Quartet Matrix number: WLX563, 564, 565, 567, 568, 569, 570 Original issue number: Columbia D 15110/3 (15110, 15111, 15112, 15113) (1927)
J. Haydn 'Lark' Quartet	Capet String Quartet Matrix number: WL 1238, 1239, 1240, 1241, 1242, 1243 Original issue number: Columbia D 13070/2 (1370, 1371, 1372) (1927)
L. van Beethoven String Op. 18/5	Capet String Quartet Matrix number: WL or L 1244, 1245, 1246, 1247, 1248, 1249, 1250, 1251 [both Columbia releases] Original issue number: 1659/62 (1659, 1660, 1661, 1662)
L. van Beethoven String Quartet Op. 131	Matrix number: LX (WLX) 543, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 557, 558) Original issue number: Columbia L 2272/6 (2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276) (1927)

**Table 2.4. – Table of recordings: Paul Viardot**

<b>Work</b>	<b>Recording reference</b>
H. Wieniawski Mazurka for Violin and Piano, Op. 19 No. 1 (a 2 mins excerpt)	with unidentified (piano) Original issue number: SEQ23A Testament (1900)

**Table 2.5. – Table of recordings: Alfred Dubois**

<b>Work</b>	<b>Recording reference</b>
C. Franck Violin Sonata	with Marcel Maas (piano) Matrix number: WLBX 46-53 Original issue number: Columbia LFX 77/80 (1931)
L. van Beethoven Violin Sonata Op. 30/2 (1st movement – abridged)	with Marcel Maas (piano) Original issue number: Columbia DFX 195/7 (1936)
E. Ysaÿe ‘Rêve d’enfant’	with M. F. Goeyens (piano) Matrix number: WLX 927 Original issue number: Columbia D 15175 (1927?)
J. S. Bach Sonata No. 4 in C minor, BWV 1017	with Marcel Maas (piano) Original issue number: Columbia 68144D (1933)
H. Vieuxtemps Concerto No. 5	with Brussels Conservatoire Orchestra under Desiré Defauw Original issue number: 15085-88 [1927]

**Table 2.6. – Table of recordings: Henri Koch**

<b>Work</b>	<b>Recording reference</b>
G. Lekeu Violin Sonata	with André Dumortier (piano) Original issue number: Polydor 516549/52 (1932)
C. Franck Violin Sonata	with Charles van Lancker (piano) (Original issue number?): S1 Lumen

All the violinists use some vibrato and, to a greater or lesser degree, it is more narrow and faster than today. It seems that the younger the player, the more vibrato he uses, with Dubois and Koch constantly vibrating though still more narrowly than is common today. Joachim uses a fine quiver for extra expressivity, notably for sweetness and on selected long notes, but less audibly than Ysaÿe.<sup>190</sup> Rosé's vibrato is generally more narrow and faster than today, but it is variable and seems to depend on the character and genre of the piece more than on the composer. For instance, in Beethoven's Quartets, he vibrates less than in Beethoven's Romanze. In the other solo pieces, Rosé also employs more vibrato than in the Quartets. Sometimes, such as in the Romanze, its absence even feels like a special effect (for instance, b. 21, timecode 0:42-0:43). In Wieniawski's Polonaise in D major, Rosé's vibrato is finer than that in Viardot's interpretation of Wieniawski's Mazurka, Op. 19 No. 1. Nevertheless, in Wieniawski's Mazurka, Viardot's vibrato is also relatively fine, fast and almost continuous though a little wider not only than Rosé's but also than Ysaÿe's vibrato in the same Mazurka (the latter's vibrato is discussed further in chapter 3). In relation to Ysaÿe, born the year after Viardot, it is perhaps somewhat less varied but the amount is quite similar. Capet and his quartet use vibrato extensively, but it still does not appear to be an integral part of their tone, but rather, an expressive means to an end. The amount and intensity of the device are determined by the character of the individual work or passage. In some loud passages, the quartet also use vibrato to project the sound. In addition, it tends to be more narrow than today.

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<sup>190</sup> See also Dorottya Fabian, 'The Recordings of Joachim, Ysaÿe and Sarasate in Light of Their Reception by Nineteenth-Century British Critics', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (December 2006), pp. 189-211.



All players use *portamento* rather extensively and all tailor both the amount and the speed to the musical context. However, it tends to be employed much less in fast passages because there, too much would likely sound messy. Sometimes *L-portamenti* occur, again, depending on the musical context. For instance, as Fabian notes, it is likely that Joachim uses it to evoke the gypsy music of his native Hungary.<sup>191</sup> The same is probably true for Rosé, born in Rumania. However, *L-portamento* occurs even in Beethoven's Romanze (b. 26, timecode 1:03-1:04). It is noticeable that the *portamento* of players representing the Austro-German school can, at times, feel less shaped and heavier than that of French and Belgian players. One reason for this is that *portamento* can be subtly shaped by flexible bowing, in terms of bow pressure and speed for example. It is because of the more flexible bowing technique of French and Belgian players and the relatively broad bowing of the Austro-Germans (see below), that the *portamento* of the latter can seem heavier and less shaped than that of the former. *Portamento* and bowing styles, thus, tend to be related.

All the violinists vary their bowing according to the character of the music. However, overall, the two Austro-German players seem to employ a more sustained and somewhat weightier bowing style. A good example of this relatively weighty bowing is Joachim's recording of Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 2. When Austro-German players do come off the string, they often take the bow off in an apparently deliberate way or bounce it with more weight (for instance, in Joachim's interpretation of Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 2, bars 59-61, timecode 1:44-1:46). This tendency is also audible in Joachim's rendering of Bach's Bourrée BWV 1002, in which he uses a relatively weighty, off-the-string *staccato* for much of the piece. The weightiness may have been increased by the Bourrée's chordal nature as Joachim seeks to play the chords mostly in one.

Although Rosé was 32 years younger than Joachim, he and his quartet took a similar approach in Beethoven's String Quartets. His and his colleagues' bowing style and phrasing are often quite sustained although the players do vary the former and employ, at times, off-the-string strokes. The latter vary. In the first movement of Beethoven's Quartet Op. 18 No. 4, for instance, their bows come off the string often. However, the bowing tends to have less a bouncing quality; rather, the players seem to stay relatively near the string (hear, for example, the exposition of the movement (bb. 1-77, timecode 0:00-2:19)). This approach seems to be typical of the quartet. An example of a deliberate-sounding off-

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<sup>191</sup> 2006: 204.

the-string bowing occurs in bars 21 and 23 (timecode 0:39-0:44), in the first violin. The choice of quite conservative bowing may have had to do with the tradition of performing the Austro-German Classics and the high esteem in which string quartets were held, especially those by Beethoven. They were credited with being of spiritual significance and 'a conduit to God.'<sup>192</sup> In the solo repertoire Rosé recorded and that was sampled, he mostly employs a wider range of bowing and more off-the-string strokes than in the Beethoven Quartets.

Wieniawski's Polonaise in D major is of particular interest, too, because Rosé's interpretation can be meaningfully compared to that of Viardot and Ysaÿe, who recorded Wieniawski's Mazurka, Op. 19 No. 1. Like his colleagues, Rosé employs a range of bow strokes, often off the string, and his playing is very energetic. Nevertheless, here, too, his playing sounds slightly weightier than that of Viardot and even more than that of Ysaÿe. Viardot varies the weight of his sound, perhaps more than Rosé, so that the playing in more virtuosic passages is characterised by lightness and a faster bow, while the more singing sections are weightier and the bow tends to be drawn more slowly according to the character of the music. Viardot, like Ysaÿe, creates a sense of buoyancy in the fast passages by using not only a fast bow but also fast *portamento* (for instance, bb. 44-55, timecode 0:57-1:08). He seems to use vibrato to a similar degree in more virtuosic and more singing sections.

The bowing of Capet and his String Quartet very much depends on the character of the work. In Debussy's String Quartet Op. 10, for example, they employ a particularly great range of articulation in bowing. In the Austro-German Classics, their approach is equally varied. For example, in the last movement of Haydn's 'Lark' Quartet, they often use slightly off-the-string bowings and the first movement of Beethoven's Quartet Op. 18 No. 5 is distinguished by much playing in which the bow comes very much off the string. In Beethoven's Quartet Op. 131, on the other hand, their bowing is quite sustained, for instance, in the first two movements. When comparing the recordings of Beethoven's Quartet Op. 131 by the Capets and by the Rosés, the Rosés' interpretation seems at times a little more weighty than that of the Capets, as in the second movement. This is likely to be partly due to their bowing style, phrasing and articulation, which are somewhat more sustained. Also, their vibrato differs. The Capet Quartet seem to use it more and it tends to be a little wider, especially as dynamics increase. Although both formations use the device

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<sup>192</sup> See, for example, Johnson 2010: 41-42.

still more or less in the nineteenth-century manner as an embellishment, the Capet Quartet seem to have moved somewhat further towards its modern use as an integral part of tone production. A more varied and often lighter bow together with a greater use of vibrato could have been interpreted as a difference in the profundity of the interpretation, that is, of a less profound performance. On the other hand, the Rosés' more sustained style and slightly less modern use of vibrato must have given an impression of greater profundity, authenticity and adherence to tradition, at least for audiences in the Austro-German sphere until the early part of the twentieth century. This seems to be suggested by Johnson when she writes:

It was not until return performances around 1911 and 1913 that the German public began to accept the French interpretation as authentic. In a review of a 1913 concert by the Capet Quartet, Berlin critic Alfons Laugwitz wrote: 'Must it be repeated one more time that late Beethoven is more easily accessible after they have been presented to us by the brilliance of the playing of the French, after they have served us with the profound subconscious philosophy of which our compatriots have made their study?'<sup>193</sup>

In Franck's Violin Sonata Dubois's tone is intense, warm and singing, and his bow does indeed sound 'long.' He presumably achieves this by drawing it slowly with good contact with the string. In Ysaÿe's 'Rêve d'enfant' his tone is very sustained, too. His constant vibrato also contributes to the singing quality of his sound. His style does not seem to vary much according to the repertoire or even the character of the music. He seems to play Bach's Sonata No. 4 in C minor and Vieuxtemps's Violin Concerto No. 5 in a very similar style. Koch also plays with a very sustained sound in the violin sonatas by Lekeu and Franck. However, the works call almost exclusively for sustained bowing. Because Koch did not record pieces of a different character, it is impossible to tell how much he changed his style according to the repertoire he was performing.

In summary, it may be said that vibrato seems to differ not so much between violin schools but depends more on when a given violinist was born. From the small sample just discussed it could be argued that, approximately, the later the year of birth, the greater the amount and the more modern a vibrato a violinist tended to use. The two Belgian violinists who used constant vibrato are those born around the turn of the twentieth century. That this is not a traditional characteristic of the Belgian violin school shows Ysaÿe's own

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<sup>193</sup> Johnson 2010: 42 and Mahaim in Johnson trans. Kelley Johnson (Ivan Mahaim, *Naissance et renaissance des dernier quatuors* (Paris: Desclée de Brower, 1964), p. 257).

recordings in which he clearly makes a selective use of the device. Furthermore, although limited, the evidence suggests that the Austro-Germans, at least in Beethoven's String Quartets but likely also in other chamber music by their compatriots, took a relatively more conservative approach with limited vibrato and more sustained bowing. *Portamento* does not differ significantly between schools. Overall, the Austro-German violinists tended to play a little more weightily and with more sustained bowing. However, most performers vary their style according to the repertoire or character of a work.

### **Joseph Joachim and Pablo de Sarasate**

In order to place Ysaÿe in his wider historical context, two violinists need mention: Joachim and Pablo de Sarasate. They were violinistic celebrities against whom all other violinists were measured, including Ysaÿe. Joachim, as was suggested in the above discussion, can be considered to have been one of the most influential violinists of all times. His influence stems both from his performing career as a soloist and string quartet player, and as a teacher at the Hochschule in Berlin. He also conducted. His biography is well known and will not be repeated here.<sup>194</sup> What is important in the context of this thesis is his quasi-universal importance not only in Germany but also abroad.

In her extensive biography of Joachim, Beatrix Borchard explains that Joachim 'distinguished himself, according to contemporary judgements, especially in later years not through a sensuous sound, like, for example, his competitors Pablo Sarasate and Fritz Kreisler. For him [...] it was not "sensuous seduction," but "spiritual penetration" that was in the foreground of the interpretation.'<sup>195</sup> The last sentence contains the quintessence of Joachim's artistic persona. As a soloist, his interpretations of the Austro-German Classics, from Bach to Brahms, tended to be considered authoritative. With regard to, for example, Bach, Borchard writes: 'Shaped by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, his theory teacher Moritz Hauptmann, the violinist Ferdinand David as well as through Robert Schumann, Joseph Joachim counted already early on as one of the most important Bach interpreters of his time. [...] Thereby, his fame rested mainly on the interpretation of a single piece, precisely

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<sup>194</sup> See, for example, Beatrix Borchard, *Stimme und Geige: Amalie und Joseph Joachim* (Wien, Köln and Weimar: Boehlau Verlag, 2005).

<sup>195</sup> 'zeichnete sich, zeitgenössischen Urteilen zufolge, vor allem in späteren Jahren nicht durch einen sinnlichen Ton aus, wie beispielsweise seine Konkurrenten Pablo Sarasate und Fritz Kreisler. Für ihn [...] stand nicht "sinnliche Verführung", sondern "geistige Durchdringung" im Vordergrund der Interpretation' (2005: 507).

the *Chaconne*.<sup>196</sup> Contemporary sources confirm: 'Nowadays the *Chaconne* is in the repertory of every violinist, but if it is so, the first practical performer of the movement is also the greatest, for in Joachim's interpretation there is a depth of musical significance which is not to be found among the younger players, [...].'<sup>197</sup> And Adolph Kohut adds: 'If one compares Joseph Joachim's violin playing with that of his greatest rivals before and after him, he absolutely needs to be awarded the palm of victory.'<sup>198</sup>

The authority Joachim's performances of Beethoven's Violin Concerto held is summarised well in Ysaÿe's private notes:

As we associate Chopin's Funeral March with Rubinstein so we associate the Beethoven Concerto with Joachim. It is forty years since the Hungarian master played this composition, little known before his time, and he played it so well that he now seems part of it. It was he, I may say, who showed it to the world as a masterpiece. Without this ideal interpretation the work might have been lost among those compositions which are placed on one side and forgotten. He revived it, transfigured it, increased its measure. It was a consecration, a sort of Bayreuth on a reduced scale, in which tradition was perpetuated and made beautiful and strong. The artist has now only to follow the line indicated in order to reach his aim, without losing anything of his own personality or sinking his individuality in that of Joachim. Joachim's interpretation was as a mirror in which the power of Beethoven was reflected.<sup>199</sup>

During the address to the celebrations for the sixtieth anniversary of his first appearance in England, the esteem in which Joachim was held by large segments of musicians and audiences was expressed thus, attesting also to Joachim's perceived qualities:

The welcome we offer you is alike for the artist who commands every power of the trained hand, and for the musician whose consummate knowledge and profound reverence for his art have uniformly guided his execution in the path of the sincerest interpretation. Your first thoughts as a performer have ever been for the composer and not for yourself. In no hour have you yielded to the temptation of mere personal display, and the weight of your precepts in one of the greatest musical

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<sup>196</sup> 'Geprägt durch Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, seinen Theorielehrer Moritz Hauptmann, den Geiger Ferdinand David sowie durch Robert Schumann, galt Joseph Joachim schon früh als einer der wichtigsten Bach-Interpreten seiner Zeit. [...] Dabei beruhte sein Ruhm im wesentlichen auf der Interpretation eines einzigen Stückes von Bach, eben der *Chaconne*' (2005: 503).

<sup>197</sup> John Alexander Fuller-Maitland, *Joseph Joachim* (London: John Lane: The Bodley Head, 1905), p. 25.

<sup>198</sup> 'Vergleicht man Joseph Joachims Geigenspiel mit demjenigen seiner großen Rivalen vor und nach ihm, so muss ihm unbedingt die Palme des Siegs zuerkannt werden' (Adolph Kohut (Dr), *Joseph Joachim: Ein Lebens- und Künstlerbild: Festschrift zu seinem 60. Geburtstage, am 28. Juni 1891* (Berlin: A. Glas, 1891), p. 92).

<sup>199</sup> In A. Ysaÿe 1947: 211.

schools of Europe is augmented by the absolute fidelity with which your example illustrates them.<sup>200</sup>

It is against this background that Ysaÿe had to assert himself and withstand comparison as a violinist and virtuoso. At first Ysaÿe found it difficult to compete successfully with Joachim's strong artistic personality for the favour of audiences, or, perhaps more so, the critics. For example, an anonymous critic writes thus in *The Musical Times* in 1889:

Other works in the programme were the Overture to 'Prometheus' and Beethoven's Violin Concerto; the last-named serving for the debut of the Belgian violinist, Mr. Ysaye, whose success in gaining the applause of his audience we now have to record. Mr. Ysaye is essentially a virtuoso, and does not hesitate to appear in that character even when engaged upon a classical work. Some of his tours de force are really astonishing, and worthy of all possible admiration in their proper place. But we may be allowed to doubt whether they should be made in connection with Beethoven's Concerto. Mr. Ysaye more legitimately won the approval of his audience in Saint-Sains's [sic] Rondo Capriccioso, where he was quite at home. [...] <sup>201</sup>

It is likely that this critique implies a comparison with Joachim's interpretations of the Beethoven Concerto as Borchard notes that the Beethoven Concerto was most linked in the minds of many music lovers, critics and musicians with Joachim and his interpretation.<sup>202</sup> This must have made it difficult for newcomers to distinguish themselves with their own interpretation of the work. But by 1901 the critics had relented, so that in a review of an Edinburgh concert one critic wrote that '[a]t the concert of January 29 the bright particular star was M. Ysaye, who gave an ideal performance of the Beethoven Violin Concerto, [...]'.<sup>203</sup> Ysaÿe had asserted himself.

As quartet players, the Ysaÿe Quartet also had to withstand comparison. For instance, Charles Maclean wrote in the column 'Music in London' in the *Zeitschrift der Internationale[n] Musikgesellschaft*, August 1901 (p. 340) that '[t]he style differs from that of the Quartet from Berlin entirely like an organ equipped with several solo voices differs from an organ equipped principally with foundation voices.<sup>204</sup> The Belgian *L'Art Moderne* finds that '[...] now the Belgian Quartet ranks, in the appreciation of artists, at the side of

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<sup>200</sup> Extract from the printed speech of the Diamond Jubilee of Dr. Joseph Joachim's First Appearance in England 1844-1904: Reception in Honour of Dr. Joachim (Queen's Hall, London, 1904).

<sup>201</sup> *The Musical Times*, Vol. 30, No. 556 (June 1., 1889), p. 342.

<sup>202</sup> See Borchard 2005: 509.

<sup>203</sup> *The Musical Times and Singing Circular*, Vol. 42, No. 697 (March 1., 1901), p. 191.

<sup>204</sup> '[I]e style diffère de celui du Quatuor de Berlin tout comme un orgue muni de plusieurs jeux de solo diffère d'un orgue équipé principalement de jeux de fond' (In Stockhem 1990: 137).

the famous and universally reputed Joachim Quartet. That, which the latter did for old music, the other realised for the works of the contemporary French school. Each in its domain, the one and the other have been of unforgettable service to art.<sup>205</sup> And *La Fédération Artistique* (19 January 1896) comments that ‘the [Ysaÿe] Quartet has preserved with him [with Marchot as second violin instead of Crickboom] its special characteristics among the famous quartets, including that of Joachim, wiser, more essentially classical, perhaps, but certainly playing with less momentum, less ardour.’<sup>206</sup>

Ysaÿe admired Joachim. As a young man, he was given the opportunity to play together with his pianist friend Franz Krezma to Joachim, who approvingly called the duo ‘the two splendid chaps.’<sup>207</sup> But it seems that despite this meeting, the two violinists did not have much personal contact, though it is likely that they occasionally attended each other’s concerts.<sup>208</sup> Perhaps the most famous encounter is captured in a letter from Irma Saenger-Sethe to the Ysaÿe family:

The first time that Ysaÿe played the Brahms Concerto in public was at Dresden in 1903 or 1904, and he, who as a general rule was acclaimed by the German public, hardly had any success with the Brahms. He said afterwards that it was one of the few times in his life that he had heard the sound of his own footsteps as he walked off the platform, yet he had worked on the interpretation for several years. He had an entirely different approach from that of Joachim, and even, maybe, from that of Brahms himself.

Only one person came to congratulate him after the concert: Joachim. Visibly moved, he embraced him, saying: ‘You have shown me an entirely new Concerto. If it is more the Concerto of Ysaÿe than of Brahms it is equally beautiful. You must not have any hesitation in imposing your own interpretation’.<sup>209</sup>

Thus, Joachim was a constant background presence for Ysaÿe because, on the one hand, Ysaÿe greatly admired him and, on the other, he was constantly compared to his illustrious colleague.

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<sup>205</sup> ‘[...] désormais le Quatuor belge prend rang, dans l’appréciation des artistes, à côté du fameux et universellement réputé Quatuor Joachim. Ce que ce dernier a fait pour la musique ancienne, l’autre l’a réalisé pour les œuvres de l’école française contemporaine. Chacun dans son domaine, l’un et l’autre ont rendu à l’art un service inoubliable’ (*L’Art Moderne*, 29 May 1892, p. 170 (also in Stockhem 1990: 105)).

<sup>206</sup> ‘le quatuor [Ysaÿe] a conservé avec lui [with Marchot as second violin instead of Crickboom] sa caractéristique spéciale parmi les quatuors célèbres, y compris celui de Joachim, plus sage, plus essentiellement classique, peut-être, mais à coup sûr jouant avec moins d’élan, moins de fougue’ (in Stockhem 1990: 122).

<sup>207</sup> ‘die zwei famosen Kerle’ (see Stockhem 1990: 17).

<sup>208</sup> See A. Ysaÿe 1947: 15 and 29.

<sup>209</sup> In A. Ysaÿe 1947: 237.

The other violinist with whom every violinist had to contend was the suave Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908). Ysaÿe admired him, especially his technique. In Ysaÿe's violin class at the Brussels Conservatoire, his pupil Ernest Christen recalls him saying: 'An excellent technique must become the most natural thing, to the point of making itself forgotten: – That is the technique of Sarasate! ... Go, listen to him!'<sup>210</sup> But the musical personalities of Sarasate and Ysaÿe were extremely different. Bernard Shaw felt that Sarasate 'never interprets anything: he plays it beautifully, and that is all. He is always alert, swift, clear, refined, certain, scrupulously attentive and quite unaffected.'<sup>211</sup> Ysaÿe, on the other hand, had a large artistic personality. His obituary in *The Musical Times*, for example, reads:

His playing was probably the most vivid and personal that had been heard at the time. It may be said to have placed the principle of self-expression on a level with that of truth to the composer, or even to have placed it higher, and thus to have boldly vaunted an attitude that has always received more censure than approval. Ysaÿe expressed his personal attitude with an intensity, amounting to genius, that bowed to no artistic code, and he backed it with a power of technique that was unsurpassed as sheer fiddling, and was, moreover, highly original in itself.<sup>212</sup>

It is very difficult to compare Sarasate and Ysaÿe, or for that matter Joachim and Ysaÿe, but perhaps Stockhem is not mistaken in saying that 'Ysaÿe liberated the art of interpretation of the yoke of classicism; he created the synthesis between technical perfection and profundity of conception, between the art of a Sarasate and of a Joachim; but this synthesis did not happen without a certain disrespect of the [musical] text, a certain arbitrariness in the agogic [...].'<sup>213</sup> Thus, it may be said that Ysaÿe incorporated the priorities of Sarasate and Joachim into his own playing and strong musical personality.

However, it was not only Ysaÿe who very much respected Sarasate, but also Joachim and Sarasate who had mutual respect for each other. As Custodia Plantón notes, the two violinists each dedicated a composition to the other: Joachim's *Variations in E* are dedicated to Sarasate and Sarasate's *Danzas españolas*, Op. 21 to Joachim.<sup>214</sup> Thus, there

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<sup>210</sup> 'Un mécanisme excellent doit devenir la chose la plus naturelle, au point de se faire oublier : – C'est la technique de Sarasate ! ... Allez l'entendre!' (in Christen 1947: 75).

<sup>211</sup> Shaw (ed. Laurence) 1981: [644].

<sup>212</sup> 01 June 1931, Vol. 72, No. 1060: p. 559.

<sup>213</sup> 'Ysaÿe avait libéré l'art de l'interprétation du joug du classicisme, il avait fait la synthèse entre perfection technique et profondeur de conception, entre l'art d'un Sarasate et d'un Joachim; mais cette synthèse ne se faisait pas sans un certain irrespect du texte, un certain arbitraire dans l'agogique [...]' (1990: 170).

<sup>214</sup> *Pablo Sarasate (1844-1908)* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 2000), p. 57.



is some degree of relationship between all three violinists, and by the time Ysaÿe died he had long become as esteemed as Sarasate and Joachim. He was 'held to be one of the great violinists of all time, the compeer, to the 19th century, of Sarasate and Joachim.'<sup>215</sup>

### French and Belgian composers

The second part of this chapter examines Ysaÿe's lifelong commitment to the modern French and Belgian music of his youth, above all to that of Franck and his circle. Ysaÿe stayed in Paris twice for a prolonged period. The first time, 1876-79, he studied with Vieuxtemps (see the first part of this chapter). He then went to Germany to be concert master of the Bilsse orchestra (which later became the Berlin Philharmonic) in Berlin. After about three years, in 1883, he returned to Paris until, in 1886, he married and took up a teaching post at the Brussels Conservatoire.<sup>216</sup> In Paris he renewed his ties with old acquaintances, such as Saint-Saëns, and forged new ones, especially in the circle around Franck, whose centre of gravity was the Société Nationale de Musique.<sup>217</sup> Ysaÿe spent much of his time with the Franck circle, and as Pierre de Bréville remembers:

In 1884, the year of the great musical frenzy, he came nearly every day to Charles Bordes and his brother Lucien, in their mezzanine in the rue Rochefoucauld, where he met Fischer, Mariotti, Rivarde, the future Mme Bordes-Péna [sic.], to play all kinds of classical and modern chamber music. And we were keen listeners: Henri Duparc, Vincent d'Indy, Chabrier, often César Franck, Lalo, Fauré, Chausson... We began at 4pm and finished circa 2am. We only paused to joyfully go for dinner at the 'Truie qui file' or to a bar-restaurant in the rue de la Bruyère, which counted among its regular clients Guiraud and Stephen Heller. It is there that we learned of Debussy's Prix de Rome. Ah! What lovely times for art and the artists. Ysaÿe was magnificent, Dionysian – a Bacchus of Vinci – generous, enthusiastic...<sup>218</sup>

It was during these two stays that Ysaÿe formed personal and artistic bonds that would prove decisive for the rest of his life. Ysaÿe admired and loved Franck, his

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<sup>215</sup> *Musical Times*, 01 June 1931, Vol. 72, No. 1060, p. 559.

<sup>216</sup> See, for instance, Stockhem (1990) and A. Ysaÿe (1947) for biographical information.

<sup>217</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 16 and 19.

<sup>218</sup> En 1884, l'année de la grande frénésie musicale, il venait presque chaque jour chez Charles Bordes et son frère Lucien, dans leur entresol de la rue Rochefoucauld, où il retrouvait Fischer, Mariotti, Rivarde, la future Mme Bordes-Péna (*sic*), pour jouer toute la musique de chambre classique et moderne. Et nous étions d'assidus auditeurs: Henri Duparc, Vincent d'Indy, Chabrier, souvent César Franck, Lalo, Fauré, Chausson... On commençait à quatre heures du soir pour finir vers deux heures du matin. On ne s'interrompait que pour aller diner joyeusement en bande à la 'Truie qui file' ou dans un débit-restaurant de la rue de la Bruyère, qui comptait parmi ses clients réguliers Guiraud et Stephen Heller. C'est là que nous apprîmes le Prix de Rome de Debussy. Ah! le joli temps pour l'art et les artistes. Ysaÿe était magnifique, dionysiaque—un Bacchus de Vinci—généreux, enthousiaste... (Gustave Samazeuilh, 'Eugène Ysaÿe', *Courrier Musical*, 1<sup>er</sup> juin 1931 (in Stockhem 1990: 65)).

compatriot, immensely: ‘— What a man! I sensed in him the inspired suave. He was for a long time unknown. I helped him to reveal his creations that the public received with jeers. Neither his harmonic science, nor his dramatic proceedings found mercy in the face of a quasi unanimous incomprehension.’<sup>219</sup> And: ‘I stand, above all, by Franck.’<sup>220</sup> Ysaÿe kept the link to the circle around Franck throughout his life and it was thus that he became a staunch defender of the aesthetically progressive music of his early adulthood. Christen writes that Ysaÿe ‘estimated that the dissemination of these misunderstood novelties still “served posterity more than the virtuoso’s triumphs.”’<sup>221</sup> And he felt pride in achieving the broader dissemination of new works as well as a sense of personal enrichment:

Without doubt have I promoted new works, which I loved and which I admired, an effort, and I accept that history will give me credit for it. But if one speaks of influence, it needs to be said that it was reciprocal. The works, which I had the pleasure to reveal have constituted for me the aesthetic and spiritual nourishment without which I would have exclusively remained in my shell as a violin virtuoso, and which I don’t deny. Franck, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Debussy, d’Indy, Chausson, Duparc, Bordes, Magnard, Lekeu, Ropartz, Dalcroze and many others were for me guides and educators perhaps without them knowing. We are even if one can ever be in friendships.<sup>222</sup>

Ysaÿe’s friendship with Franck and his circle not only increased his interest in modern music, that is, music contemporary to him, but it also had an impact on his own compositional style. This personal enrichment that Ysaÿe experienced is palpable in his compositions from the *Poème Élégiacque*, Op. 12 (c1895) onwards. Compositional devices that suggest an influence of the Franckists include Ysaÿe’s highly expressive and lyrical writing combined with a great deal of modulation, chromaticism and modality within the

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<sup>219</sup> ‘—Quel homme! Je sentis en lui le suave inspiré. Il fut longtemps un grand inconnu. J’aidai à révéler ses créations que le public accueillit avec des ricanements. Ni sa science harmonique, ni son procédé dramatique ne trouvaient grâce devant l’incompréhension quasi unanime’ (in Christen 1947: 62).

<sup>220</sup> ‘Je me tiens à Franck, surtout’ (in Christen 1947: 63).

<sup>221</sup> ‘[j]l estimait que la diffusion de ces nouveautés encore incomprises “servirait davantage la postérité que ses triomphes de virtuose”’ (1947: 60).

<sup>222</sup> Sans doute, ai-je accompli en faveur des œuvres nouvelles, que j’aimais et que j’admirais, un effort et j’accepte que l’histoire m’en donne crédit. Mais si l’on parle d’influence, il faut dire que celle-ci a été réciproque. Les œuvres que j’ai eu le bonheur de révéler ont constitué pour moi la nourriture esthétique et spirituelle sans laquelle je serais resté exclusivement dans ma carcasse de virtuose violoniste, et que je ne renie pas. Franck, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Debussy, d’Indy, Chausson, Duparc, Bordes, Magnard, Lekeu, Ropartz, Dalcroze et bien d’autres ont été pour moi des guides et des éducateurs sans qu’ils s’en doutassent peut-être. Nous sommes quittes si peuvent jamais l’être des amitiés (in Christen 1947: 179).

traditional tonal system that add to the expressiveness of his music. Moreover, he frequently chooses cyclical forms.

Important Belgian venues where Franck and the composers to whom Ysaÿe was close could have their music performed became Les XX (1883-1893) and its successor La Libre Esthétique (1894-1914). They were Brussels-based art salons organised by the lawyer Octave Maus and united the most progressive and very diverse artists, writers and musicians. The salons were founded in reaction to the government-funded art salons, which were deemed by these artists to be too conservative and intolerant of total artistic freedom.<sup>223</sup> Of international scope, artists included, for example, Auguste Rodin, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Claude Monet and Camille Pissaro. Lectures and concerts were given in the exhibition space. Lectures included 'Richard Wagner' by Catulle Mendès, 'Le Laid dans l'art' by J. F. Raffaëlli and 'L'Aristocratie intellectuelle' by Camille Mauclair.<sup>224</sup> Concerts were at first not as innovative as the other arts, but that changed in 1888 with the arrival of d'Indy as an organiser of the concerts. He programmed the music that was heard at the Société Nationale de Musique, such as his own Trio Op. 29, the *Elégie* by Fauré and Franck's Violin Sonata.<sup>225</sup> From then on concerts were very closely related to those at the Société Nationale de Musique, that is, the programmes mostly included works by the 'jeune école française' of the late 1800s, such as the Franck circle, Fauré and Debussy. Ysaÿe became very involved with these salons and appeared regularly with his string quartet, the Ysaÿe Quartet, which was founded in February 1889 and closely related to Les XX, until, in 1897, it was dissolved for various reasons, one of which being that Ysaÿe had become too busy with his solo career. He, therefore, needed to stop his involvement with La Libre Esthétique and only returned once in the season of 1901-2.<sup>226</sup> The beginning of World War One brought the end of the salon.

Another of the composer heard at Les XX and La Libre Esthétique was Debussy. Ysaÿe and Debussy had an amicable relationship for years. Debussy was very pleased with Ysaÿe's interest in his music and asked him for advice on several occasions, notably for the *Nocturnes* (1897-99) and *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1893-1902). In a letter to Ernest Chausson, Debussy hints at the relationship he had with Ysaÿe and their mutual feelings of sympathy and friendship. He writes:

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<sup>223</sup> See Jane Block, *Belgium: The Golden Decades* (New York: P. Lang, c1997), pp. 2-3.

<sup>224</sup> See Madeleine Octave Maus, *Trente années de lutte pour l'art, 1884-1914*, 2nd edn. (Brussels: Editions Lebeer Hossmann, 1980), pp. 15, 31, 39, 51 and 188.

<sup>225</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 76-77.

<sup>226</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 75-76, 127 and 138.

[...] I have made a short journey to Brussels, as this city had no other interest for me than that it contains Ysaÿe, my first visit was for him, whilst I won't surprise you much when saying that he veritably screamed with joy when seeing me and pressed me against his vast chest while he addressed me as 'tu' like his little brother; after which I had to give him news of everyone, particularly of you, of whom I unfortunately could only speak according to letters. Then, frenetic music making, and in one memorable evening I played successively the five poems, *La Damoiselle élue*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, I was as hoarse as if I had sold newspapers on the boulevard. *Pelléas* had the honour of softening the hearts of the young people, English it seemed; as for Ysaÿe, it was a delirium, and I can't really tell you what he said to me! Your 'quartet' equally pleased him and is in the process of being studied.<sup>227</sup>

Debussy's own Quartet is dedicated to the Ysaÿe Quartet, and Debussy was very appreciative of Ysaÿe's involvement in performing the premiere at the Société Nationale de Musique and, a little later, at La Libre Esthétique.<sup>228</sup> Debussy was especially pleased with the concert at La Libre Esthétique, which was a mixed concert of chamber and orchestral music: 'Ysaÿe played like an angel! And the quartet contributed an emotion it had not had in Paris, the admirable orchestra, all the people there who came simply for the pleasure showed an eagerness to understand that was truly touching.'<sup>229</sup> Debussy also planned to write his three *Nocturnes* that were originally intended to be for violin and orchestra for Ysaÿe: 'To that would be added *Trois Nocturnes* for violin and orchestra, written for Eugène Ysaÿe, a man I love and admire. Moreover, these *Nocturnes* can only be played by him: if Apollo himself asked me for them, I would be obliged to refuse him! What do you say to that?'<sup>230</sup> Debussy was eager to please Ysaÿe it appears and they were very close as their *tutoiement* shows. Also, Debussy addressed Ysaÿe as 'Mon cher grand ami' ('My dear great

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<sup>227</sup> [...] j'ai fait un court voyage à Bruxelles, comme cette ville n'avait d'autre intérêt pour moi que de contenir Ysaÿe, ma première visite fut pour lui, alors que je ne vous étonnerai pas beaucoup en disant qu'il a poussé de véritables hurlements de joie en me voyant et m'a serré sur sa vaste poitrine en me tutoyant comme son petit frère; après quoi, il a fallu que je lui donne des nouvelles de tout le monde, en particulier de vous, dont, hélas je n'ai pu parler que d'après des correspondances, puis, musique forcenée, et dans une soirée mémorable j'ai joué successivement les cinq poèmes, *La Damoiselle élue*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, j'étais enrôlé comme si j'avais vendu des journaux sur le boulevard. *Pelléas* a eu l'honneur d'attendrir des jeunes personnes, anglaises il paraît, quant à Ysaÿe, c'était du délire, et je ne peux vraiment pas redire ce qu'il m'a dit! Votre 'quatuor' lui a également plu, et il est en train de le faire étudier (Lesure (ed.) 1980: 60 (also in Stockhem)).

<sup>228</sup> See Stockem 1990: 113.

<sup>229</sup> 'Ysaÿe a joué comme un ange! et le quatuor a donné une émotion qu'il n'avait pas eue à Paris, l'orchestre admirable, tous ces gens-là qui venaient simplement pour le plaisir ont mis une ardeur à comprendre vraiment touchante' (Lesure (ed.) 1980: 64).

<sup>230</sup> 'A cela, s'ajouteraient *Trois Nocturnes* pour violon et orchestre, écrits pour Eugène Ysaÿe, un homme que j'aime et que j'admire. D'ailleurs ces *Nocturnes* ne peuvent être joués que par lui: Apollon lui-même me les demanderait que je serais obligé de les lui refuser! Qu'est-ce que tu dis de cela?' (Lesure (ed.) 1980: 83).

friend') and 'Cher grand ami' ('Dear great friend') in two letters reproduced by Lesure. In addition, we learn from the letter of 13 October 1896 that Ysaÿe cared for Debussy's music, here *Pelléas*, and Debussy's appreciation thereof: 'I am infinitely touched by your kind letter and what it contains of amicable concern for Pelléas and Mélisande, poor little beings, so difficult to present in the world, because, [even] with a godfather like you, this world does not want to let itself be convinced.'<sup>231</sup> As with the Franckists, Ysaÿe not only performed Debussy's music but also gathered inspiration for his own compositions:

I have tried to find new technical ways and means of expression in my own compositions. For example, I have written a *Divertiment* for violin and orchestra in which I believe I have embodied new thoughts and ideas, and have attempted to give violin technic a broader scope of life and vigor. [...]

We have the scale of Debussy and his successors to draw upon, their new chords and successions of fourths and fifths – for new technical formulas are always evolved out of and follow after new harmonic discoveries – though there is as yet no violin method which gives a fingering for the whole-tone scale.<sup>232</sup>

While it is not certain that Ysaÿe's use of more modern compositional devices, such as the whole-tone scale, is directly due to his contact with Debussy, it is likely that it had some bearing on it. Whatever the case may be, he adopted a range of compositional devices reminiscent of Debussy as is shown in Part II.

### **Interest in music from before 1800 and in progress**

Like many of his contemporaries, Ysaÿe was very interested in music from before 1800 and had great respect for his predecessors. He is likely to have absorbed at least some of this respect and interest from Vieuxtemps who himself, as quoted above, was taught by Bériot to admire his forerunners and consider them models. However, it is unclear when exactly Ysaÿe developed this relationship with the past and if it originated with his studies with Vieuxtemps or if, perhaps, earlier teachers or experiences had already awakened it. Ysaÿe's admiration for earlier violinist-composers, such as Arcangelo Corelli, Francesco Geminiani, Pietro Nardini and Giovanni Battista Viotti, has already been discussed. Another composer Ysaÿe greatly admired and who, of course, was also a violinist, was J. S. Bach. He often performed his music, especially the Chaconne, BWV 1004,

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<sup>231</sup> 'je suis infiniment touché de ta bonne lettre et de ce qu'elle renferme d'inquiétude amicale pour Pelléas et Mélisande, pauvres petits êtres si difficiles à présenter dans le monde, puisque, avec un parrain tel que toi, ce monde ne veut pas se laisser convaincre' (in Lesure (ed.) 1980: 83).

<sup>232</sup> In Martens 1919: 9-10.

and the Adagio and Fuga, BWV 1001, from the Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin.<sup>233</sup> Ysaÿe felt inspired to seek to emulate Bach and Baroque music more widely, for example, in his Sonata for Two Violins (1915) and, as is shown in Part II, the Six Sonatas Op. 27. He also worked with some early music, such as Pietro Locatelli's *Le Tombeau* Sonata in F major, Op. 6/7 (rediscovered and harmonised) (1926), Nicolò Pasquali's Sonata in A minor, Op. 1/4 (reviewed and harmonised) (1926) and Jean-Philippe Rameau's Suite of pieces (adapted) (1926).

Even when young, Ysaÿe's budding interest for music other than the virtuoso repertoire seems to have made itself felt. For example, with respect to his 1882 concert tour to Russia, Vasily Bezekirsky, a Russian violinist who had studied with Hubert Léonard in Brussels, remarked: 'Ysaÿe played a great number of serious works on my violin while I accompanied him on the piano.'<sup>234</sup> Although it is not quite clear what Bezekirsky means by 'serious works' ('œuvres sérieuses'), it can be surmised that what they played together differed somewhat from what was normally played at concerts, such as salon and virtuoso pieces or violin concertos with piano reductions. Moreover, Stockhem found that during a chamber music concert on 5 May 1883 in Kiev and organised by the Société Russe de Musique, Ysaÿe played Bach's G minor Fuga BWV 1001 without Schumann's piano accompaniment, which was quite forward-looking for the time.<sup>235</sup>

The composers to whom Ysaÿe was close, including the Franck circle and Debussy, were also very interested in music from before 1800, an interest that had been growing throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>236</sup> For example, Vincent d'Indy, who might be described as the leading figure in the Franck circle, especially after Franck's death, co-founded the Schola Cantorum in Paris with Charles Bordes and Alexandre Guilmant in 1894. The institution was set up to promote Palestrinian polyphony and Gregorian chant in the setting of the Catholic liturgy. However, the Schola soon developed into a full conservatoire with both compositional and instrumental pathways. Music history was an important part of the curriculum and d'Indy's manual *Cours de composition* treats the history of music as well as more technical compositional issues.<sup>237</sup> The interest in music of

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<sup>233</sup> The Bach performances in chamber music settings are charted by Stockhem (1990).

<sup>234</sup> 'Ysaÿe joua un grand nombre d'œuvres sérieuses sur mon violon pendant que je l'accompagnais au piano' (in Stockhem 1990: 64).

<sup>235</sup> 1990: 64.

<sup>236</sup> On this phenomenon, see Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>237</sup> On the Schola Cantorum, see Andrew Thomson, *D'Indy and his World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

the eighteenth-century and earlier as well as music history manifested itself in some of d'Indy's compositions as well, such as in the *Suite dans le style ancien*, Op. 24 (1886) and the *Madrigal à deux voix*, Op. 94 (1928). Franck himself was also interested in the Baroque. Perhaps the most famous work that reflects this interest is his *Prélude, choral et fugue* for piano (1884).

Debussy, too, showed great interest in music of the Baroque. As early as 1883-84 he wrote the *Première suite* for orchestra and *Pour le piano* (1894-1901), and as late as 1915 the Cello Sonata and the Sonata for flute, viola and harp (1915). He also frequently employed features of Baroque music, such as movement types and counterpoint, and edited Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera, *Les fêtes des Polymnie* (1745). Debussy's fondness for early music shows itself in his writing, both in prose and letters. He seems to have especially loved and admired François Couperin and Rameau.<sup>238</sup> Scott Messing explains that

[t]he development of French musicology between Debussy's early piano pieces and his late sonatas was relevant to the composer's evolving style. Before 1900, Debussy found his models for the French classical tradition through works of his contemporaries, whereas the emergent presence of musical historicism nurtured an aesthetic already disposed towards that legacy. Debussy discovered in Rameau and François Couperin those characteristics that were congenial to his style. He found traits of the eighteenth century which he accommodated [*sic.*] to his own language and, at the same time, confirmed the legitimacy of his cultural heritage.<sup>239</sup>

Ysaÿe's friend Saint-Saëns had a great interest in music from before 1800 as well. Messing calls him '[t]he first major French composer to utilize the dance idioms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.'<sup>240</sup> He wrote, for instance, a *Suite* for orchestra (1863) and one for cello and orchestra (1862), a *Gavotte* (1871) and a *Bourrée* (c1888). Saint-Saëns was also the series' editor of the *Œuvres complètes* of Rameau.<sup>241</sup>

One important reason for drawing on early music, particularly for French composers, was that by around the turn of the twentieth century French nationalism was on the rise. Messing explains that the '[f]avorable acceptance of German music by French composers became increasingly inadmissible after 1900, abetted by the atrophying political relationship between the two countries.'<sup>242</sup> Bach and Beethoven were not

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<sup>238</sup> See Messing 1996: 44-46 and 48.

<sup>239</sup> Messing 1996: 48.

<sup>240</sup> 1996: 25.

<sup>241</sup> See Messing 1996: 45.

<sup>242</sup> 1996: 15.

considered German but international and, therefore, acceptable.<sup>243</sup> This is an important difference compared to Ysaÿe, who, although a proud Belgian, felt that ‘real art should be international.’<sup>244</sup> He wanted to create peace through music: ‘Our best, our only means to make pacifist propaganda [it is war time], is to continue to disseminate our admirable art of which the secret language penetrates all hearts.’<sup>245</sup> However, this ideological difference does not seem to have caused a rift between him and his friends. It is, moreover, likely that the contact with the circle around Franck and d’Indy, and perhaps also Debussy and Saint-Saëns, gave Ysaÿe an impetus to concern himself more with music from before 1800.

In addition to music from before 1800, Ysaÿe equally attached great importance to fostering musical progress. He felt that, as a violin virtuoso, it was his responsibility to contribute to it through the development of new violin technique and means of expression.<sup>246</sup> He took his lead from Vieuxtemps whom he considered ‘[i]n wealth of technical development, in true musical expressiveness [to have been] master.’<sup>247</sup> An aspect of Vieuxtemps’s artistic personality Ysaÿe particularly admired was that ‘[h]is œuvre summarises all the efforts of his predecessors. It forms a complete cycle. Thanks to his creative powers, which have no other sources but themselves, Vieuxtemps concludes the monument erected by the ancients; he reinforces the basis and renders it immortal.’<sup>248</sup> Ysaÿe was quite clear that musical progress always comes through technical progress, not the other way round.<sup>249</sup> He argued that ‘[...] new works conceived only from the musical point of view bring about the stagnation of technical discovery, the invention of new passages, of novel harmonic wealth of combination is not encouraged.’<sup>250</sup> And: ‘if art is to progress, the technical and mechanical element must not, of course, be neglected.’<sup>251</sup> Technical innovation is, in his opinion, prompted by the need to render new harmonic processes and effects on the instrument: ‘for new technical formulas are evolved out of

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<sup>243</sup> See, for example, Vincent d’Indy, *Cours de composition musicale rédigé avec la collaboration d’Auguste Sérieyx. D’après les notes prises aux Classes de Composition de la Schola Cantorum en 1899-1900*, Vol. 2, Part 1 (Paris: Durand, [1902-33]).

<sup>244</sup> See Martens 1919: 6 and E. Ysaÿe 1968: 32.

<sup>245</sup> Notre meilleur, notre seul moyen de faire de la propagande pacifiste, c’est de continuer à diffuser notre art admirable dont le langage secret pénètre tous les cœurs (see Christen 1947: 161).

<sup>246</sup> See Martens 1919: 9.

<sup>247</sup> In Martens 1919: 3.

<sup>248</sup> ‘[s]on œuvre résume tous les efforts de ses devanciers. Elle forme un cycle accompli. Grace à ses forces créatrices, qui n’ont d’autres sources qu’elles-mêmes, Vieuxtemps achève le monument érigé par les anciens; il en affermit les bases et les rend impérissable’ (E. Ysaÿe 1968: 7).

<sup>249</sup> E. Ysaÿe 1968: 9.

<sup>250</sup> In Martens 1919: 9.

<sup>251</sup> In Martens 1919: 12.



and follow after new discoveries.<sup>252</sup> However, the ultimate purpose of technical progress was to achieve greater musical expressiveness.<sup>253</sup>

It appears that Ysaÿe did not fight against Vieuxtemps's aesthetic influence but fully embraced it, letting it become part of his personality and letting it stimulate and guide his own artistic explorations and maturation. When young, he went through a phase of modelling his own compositions on those of his teacher. His two early *Polonaises*, written in 1881 and 1885, for instance, bear witness to Vieuxtemps's influence on the young Ysaÿe. Later Ysaÿe commented that '[e]verything in it imitates Vieuxtemps; nothing [is] new.'<sup>254</sup> But as Ysaÿe valued originality and novelty, he soon developed a more personal and progressive compositional style. With the *Poème élégiaque* (1894) and its lush harmonies, improvisatory style and virtuosic demands Ysaÿe felt he was finding his own voice: 'I think that "Poème Élégiaque" marks a definite step in my work as a composer for it contains clear evidence of my desire to link music and virtuosity—the true virtuosity which had been neglected since the instrumentalists, departing from the example set them by the early masters, had ceased composing themselves and had left this art to those who ignored the resources of the violin.'<sup>255</sup> As the compositional style of *Poème élégiaque* suggests, in his quest for progress Ysaÿe felt, as mentioned above, inspired by the 'jeune école française,'<sup>256</sup> as Quitin calls it, that is, by many of the composers who had been involved in the Société Nationale de Musique, such as Franck, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Debussy, d'Indy, Chausson and Lekeu. As Ysaÿe's artistic development continued, he also began to incorporate and extend compositional methods and forms from the Baroque. This culminated in the Six Sonatas Op. 27.

In 1894 when Ysaÿe wrote the *Poème élégiaque*, la 'jeune école française' was still quite novel and at the forefront of musical developments. Franck's Violin Sonata had only been played in public for about eight years, d'Indy had just about written but not premiered his opera *Fervaal* (1893-95), Debussy's String Quartet Op. 10 (1893) had only recently been written, and Chausson had to yet written his own *Poème* for violin and orchestra (1896). With respect to the *Poème*, Chausson followed in Ysaÿe's footsteps as it was Ysaÿe who had invented the genre of a poem for violin and orchestra as far as it is possible to ascertain.

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<sup>252</sup> In Martens 1919: 10.

<sup>253</sup> See Martens 1919: 9-10.

<sup>254</sup> '[t]out y est à l'imitation de Vieuxtemps; rien de nouveau' (in Christen 1947: 194).

<sup>255</sup> In A. Ysaÿe 1947: 218.

<sup>256</sup> Quitin 1938: 10.

However, over the years the Franckist aesthetic and even that of Debussy became increasingly considered part of the establishment and new musical currents developed. In France, for example, Les Six emerged; in the Austro-German sphere atonality and expressionism flourished; Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* was premiered in 1913; and by the 1920s serialism and neoclassicism were gaining ground.

But Ysaÿe remained loyal to the composers of his youth: 'Perhaps there are at this time new and ignored geniuses, like him [Franck]. I keep to the gods of my former chapels, judged [to be] so extravagant at their dawn. I stand, above all, by Franck.'<sup>257</sup> Ysaÿe was very disappointed in the new musical currents and, at the same time, sad that he was unable to understand the new aesthetics:

This cubism, this futurism, do they not hide an impotence or an inability to tend to the detail – as our fathers did – to follow a logic, a rationale, a reason, an equilibrium, a harmony? Does one not need to fear that these aggravations lead to the end of the reign of beauty? I experience a sense of discomfort when hearing these things. The art which seemed to me like a single and perpetually unfinished monument to which each generation, each school comes and contributes their stone, should it have said its last word? [...] Have I become an old creature to the point that I who was an evolutionist or a revolutionary all my life, I only see chaos in the current productions? ...

I doubt. Perhaps I am at the end of my breath, have finished my life cycle.

I suffer! From the bottom of my heart, I wish to be wrong.

Decrying systematically the current music without trying to penetrate it, without making the effort to grasp its aims... No! That would be to disavow myself and to destroy the meaning of my own struggles.

The truth is that I am too far outside the movement ...<sup>258</sup>

Ysaÿe wanted to understand the younger generation of composers and missed the artistic contact with them: 'The youth does not come to me anymore. I need to hear its

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<sup>257</sup> 'Peut-être y a-t-il à cette heure des génies nouveaux et méconnus, comme lui [Franck]. Je m'en tiens aux dieux de mes anciennes chapelles, jugé si extravagants à leur aurore. Je me tiens à Franck, surtout' (in Christen 1947: 63).

<sup>258</sup> Ce cubisme, ce futurisme, ne cachent-ils pas une impuissance ou une incapacité à soigner le détail—comme le faisaient nos pères—à suivre une logique, une raison, un équilibre, une harmonie? Ne faut-il pas craindre que ces exaspérations ne préludent à la fin du règne de la beauté? J'éprouve une sensation de malaise à l'audition de ces choses. L'art qui m'apparaissait comme un monument unique et perpétuellement inachevé, auquel chaque génération, chaque école viennent apporter leur pierre, aurait-il dit son dernier mot? [...] Suis-je donc devenu une vieille bête au point que moi qui fus toute ma vie un évolutionniste ou un révolutionnaire, je ne vois rien qu'un chaos dans les productions actuelles?...

Je doute. Peut-être suis-je à bout de souffle, ayant accompli mon cycle.

Je souffre! Du fond de moi-même, je souhaite d'avoir tort.

Décrier systématiquement la musique actuelle sans tenter de la pénétrer, sans faire l'effort d'en saisir les buts... Non! Ce serait me renier moi-même et détruire le sens de mes propres luttes.

La vérité est que je suis trop en dehors du mouvement... (in Christen 1947: 180-181).

heart beat, to know its true aesthetic aspirations and to glimpse, where the necessary contact point is between past and the present.<sup>259</sup> At the same time he had a firm vision of what progress meant for him: 'This powerful art [that is, violin playing], that must only serve music, is no more now than the servant of rantings without greatness. Modernism? Certainly. But it is necessary to find new forms that restore the interest it deserves to the violin.'<sup>260</sup> In other words, as handed down to him from Vieuxtemps and from his composer friends in the late 1800s (see earlier in this chapter), Ysaÿe wanted to merge past and present, while creating new musical and technical paths for the future. On the surface, this desire as well as his intense interest in music from before 1800 did not essentially differ from some of the new musical currents, especially from Neoclassicism, which developed into a major force after World War I.

The term 'Neoclassicism' is difficult to define but is used in this thesis in the way in which Scott Messing uses it.<sup>261</sup> Moreover, it is explained here from the French point of view although the Austro-German sphere also had composers whose music could, perhaps, be described as Neoclassical, such as Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School.<sup>262</sup> The French point of view is taken because Ysaÿe's links were much stronger with France than with Germany or Austria. Neoclassicism was very much a reaction against the immediate past and became associated with Stravinsky in 1923. Composers frequently alluded to or quoted pre-1800 works. Some of the more modern compositional and stylistic means that were employed include extended tonality, such as the octatonic scale, and modality. Parody and distortion of the traits of earlier music were also characteristic, as were small ensembles, wit, directness and acerbity. These means were used as an antidote to the Romanticism and Expressionism of the recent past that were experienced as flabby and self-indulgent by these composers.<sup>263</sup> Perhaps the most important differences between Neoclassicism and uses of the past that originated in the late nineteenth century are the

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<sup>259</sup> 'La jeunesse ne vient plus à moi. J'ai besoin de sentir battre son cœur, de connaître ses vraies aspirations esthétiques et d'entrevoir où se trouve le point de contact nécessaire entre le passé et le présent' (in Christen 1947: 181).

<sup>260</sup> 'Cet art puissant, qui ne devrait servir que la musique, n'est plus maintenant que le valet d'élucubrations sans grandeur. Du modernisme? Certes. Mais il faut trouver des formes nouvelles qui restituent au violon l'intérêt qu'il mérite' (in Christen 1947: 194).

<sup>261</sup> See Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 1996).

<sup>262</sup> For further discussion of this topic see Messing (1996).

<sup>263</sup> See Arnold Whittall. "Neo-classicism." *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, (accessed January 31, 2017), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/19723>.

elements of rejection of post-1800 music, distortion, parody and the economy of means in terms of scoring and musical simplicity.

It may be little wonder that Ysaÿe could not identify with this current, given that the latter elements, notably the rejection of Romanticism and the use of parody, were entirely alien to him. After all, as shown, he defined himself as a Romantic and had the utmost reverence for composers and instrumentalists of all generations, be it the Franckists, Viotti or Corelli. Thus, although like the Neoclassicists he felt the need to relate himself to the past while creating innovations and envisaging musical progress, his idea of relating himself to the past was rather different. Unlike the composers who wrote in a Neoclassical style, Ysaÿe does not seem to have felt a tension between past and present. Rather, he appears to have still related to the past in a way that musicians in the late nineteenth century did and some musicians also into the twentieth, such as those in the Franck circle. Equally contrary to Neoclassicist ideals is that Ysaÿe was very worried about the lack of beauty in modern music.<sup>264</sup> His music is perhaps best described as lush and definitely not as acerbic. To Ysaÿe, feeling and expressiveness in music were crucial as he repeatedly stated. For example:

In general the Poème has always appealed to me, [...] it favours the expression of feeling without being subject to the restrictions of the Concerto form; it can be lyrical or dramatic and is in essence half romantic, half impressionistic. It comprises light and shadow and every intervening shade; the composer is able to paint what he wishes without keeping within any rigid framework. In a word the Poème is a picture painted without a model.<sup>265</sup>

As a result of these differences between Ysaÿe and Neoclassical composers, his use of music from before 1800 cannot be called Neoclassical but is better described as Neobaroque. The latter is defined, for the purpose of this thesis, as a use of aspects of the Baroque, such as specific forms and genres, but in a context of a later musical idiom. Examples include Debussy's *Suite bergamasque* (c1890, rev. 1905), d'Indy's *Suite dans le style ancien* (1886) and Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin* (1914–17). Ysaÿe's Neobaroque tendencies are discussed in depth in Part II.

This chapter has examined Ysaÿe's artistic identity by exploring the historical background and the changing aesthetic climate in which he lived and worked. In the first part of the chapter, Ysaÿe's violinistic education and development were discussed. The

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<sup>264</sup> See Christen 1947: 180.

<sup>265</sup> In A. Ysaÿe 1947: 218.

wider context of violin playing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has also been considered with a view to Ysaÿe's place therein. His teacher Vieuxtemps was especially important in shaping Ysaÿe's identity and violinistic ideals. In addition to the violin tradition, which Ysaÿe inherited through Vieuxtemps, he was also inspired by the composers around Franck and, to a lesser degree, by Debussy. Becoming involved with them as a young man, Ysaÿe remained faithful to their aesthetic values all his life. He also shared a contemporary interest in music from before 1800.

Having explored Ysaÿe's values and ideals, it has become clear that he considered music history to be a continuum of which he was a part. It was vital to him to contribute to the development of music without breaking with either past or present. For instance, he felt beauty and expressiveness to be of great importance. To him as a violinist, progress meant the invention of new violin technique so as to render new musical ideas and increase the violin's potential for being expressive. However, as the twentieth century commenced, Ysaÿe found himself increasingly marginalised as his values, which were based in the late nineteenth century, were gradually becoming unfashionable. New musical currents emerged, notably Neoclassicism, with composers such as Stravinsky and Les Six from whom Ysaÿe felt alienated. Having set the background against which Ysaÿe composed his Six Sonatas, the next chapter of this thesis discusses the gestation of the cycle.

## Chapter 3: Towards Op. 27

As discussed in the previous chapter, by the 1920s Ysaÿe had lost touch with the latest musical developments but was still as keen as ever to promote musical and violinistic progress. With the Sonatas Op. 27 he wanted to build on his predecessors and merge past, present and future in a very personal, explorative way that would fuse virtuosity and musical interest. He was extremely concerned with composing music that offered what he considered true progress. This chapter initially returns to Ysaÿe's musical ideals, such as beauty and expressiveness, as well as his view of music history as a continuum. It examines ways in which his convictions are best placed into musical tradition. In light of his aesthetic objectives, the fantasia tradition comes to mind. As will be shown, Ysaÿe's own discourse with respect to Op. 27 strengthens this impression. This is followed by a brief discussion of how Ysaÿe came to write the Sonatas. Then the dedicatees' violinistic personalities and connections to Ysaÿe are considered, because in each Sonata, Ysaÿe endeavoured to include some of the musical character of its dedicatee. Finally, Ysaÿe's own playing style is examined by means of selected recordings and the study of the score of Op. 27.

### Fantasia Tradition

As observed at the end of the previous chapter, Ysaÿe treasured feeling and expressiveness in music as well as an improvisatory manner of writing. This expresses itself in many of his compositions, notably his musical poems, such as the *Poème élégiaque*, Op. 12, for violin and orchestra (c1895) and *Exil*, Op. 25, for string orchestra (1917). He cherished the freedom of the musical poem and desired to enshrine it in Op. 27. Improvisatory and multifaceted in nature, the Sonatas seem to suggest a link to the fantasia tradition, which is supported by Ysaÿe's own statements, such as:

I let free improvisation prevail. Each sonata [in Op. 27] constitutes a kind of small poem, in which I leave the violin to its fantasy. I wanted to link musical interest to the great, the true virtuosity, which has been too neglected since instrumentalists do not dare to write anymore and relinquish this concern to those who are unaware

of the resources, of the profession's secrets. I could have called these sonatas Caprices;<sup>266</sup> but one would have seen in them an analogy to Locatelli and Paganini.<sup>267</sup>

Jean-Pierre Bartoli and Jeanne Roudet trace the development of the fantasia tradition in some detail although mainly with regard to the free fantasia (that is, not based on pre-existing well-known melodies) for keyboard other than organ.<sup>268</sup> Suffice it to say here, as an introduction to the following discussion, that the fantasy tradition, which, in its different manifestations was already in existence in the sixteenth century, plays a vital role in J. S. Bach's oeuvre for solo violin, too. Many, if not most, movements of the Six Sonatas and Partitas are, to a greater or lesser degree, improvisatory. This quality is particularly noticeable, for instance, in the preludes to the fugues in each of the Sonatas (Adagio, Grave and Adagio respectively). In the Adagio from the First Sonata and the Grave from the Second, Bach weaves arabesques and embellishments between connecting chords and different voices. The Adagio of the Third Sonata, on the other hand, takes on a two-note motif (a dotted quaver followed by a semiquaver a second higher) on which the entire movement becomes based. It is supported by chords which, in their richness, give the piece a kaleidoscopic harmonic colouring.

Catherine Coppola argues that the fantasia genre is often underestimated and misjudged although it was relatively popular with composers. As an example, she cites Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky's *Fancesca da Rimini*, a symphonic fantasia after Dante for orchestra (1876).<sup>269</sup> Bartoli and Roudet concur and explain that around the turn of the nineteenth century an aesthetic of the individual and subjective developed and became the basis of Romanticism. Bartoli and Roudet place the later development of the fantasia tradition, through the later eighteenth century into the nineteenth century, within the context of the development of Romanticism. At its core lay values, which they summarise as the idealisation of genius, free inspiration, sensitivity, sentiment, expressiveness, the sublime and transcendence of physical reality.<sup>270</sup> They observe that the ideal of the

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<sup>266</sup> Bartoli and Roudet note that in the French sphere of influence the term 'fantasy' as used in the Germanic tradition was often substituted by 'caprice' (see 2013: 11).

<sup>267</sup> j'ai laissé voguer une libre improvisation. Chaque sonate [in Op. 27] constitue une sorte de petit poème où je laisse le violon à sa fantaisie. J'ai voulu associer l'intérêt musical à celui de la grande, de la vraie virtuosité, trop négligée depuis que les instrumentistes n'osent plus écrire et abandonnent ce soin à ceux qui ignorent les ressources, les secrets du métier. J'aurais pu appeler ces sonates, Caprices; mais on y aurait vu une analogie avec Locatelli et Paganini (in Christen 1947: 195-96).

<sup>268</sup> See Bartoli and Roudet 2013: 11.

<sup>269</sup> See Coppola 1998: 169.

<sup>270</sup> Many published discussions of Romanticism exist. Among these are Carmen Lavin and Ian Donnachie (eds.), *From Enlightenment to Romanticism*, Anthology 1 (Manchester: Manchester

Romantic artist was to 'poeticise' (to instil a poetic feeling rather than to put into verse) the arts and literature.<sup>271</sup> Because instrumental music is not limited by words in its expressiveness, it became considered the highest of the Romantic arts. 'But in this superior art, it is, above all, the genre of the fantasia – as an objective realisation of spontaneity and natural access to the absolute above rationality – which becomes the archetype of creation.'<sup>272</sup> And:

[T]hrough its abstract virtue as instrumental music, and above all other genres, the fantasia and what we have designated as *improvisatory writing* in their capacity of being pure presence of the creative spirit, do neither represent the sentiments nor the secrets of the world, even the most inexpressible among them: they are their direct *incarnation*. Rejecting the 'restricted meaning' of the allegory in favour of 'the infinite and inexhaustible interpretation' of the symbol as immanence of the absolute, the Romantic aesthetic finds its ideal in music and very particularly in the instrumental fantasia. [...] When the spirit of the fantasia dissolves into the other genres, Romanticism also arrives at its zenith.<sup>273</sup>

In fact, some writers, such as A. B. Marx, consider it, in its most masterful realisation, as the most evolved and perfect musical genre, transcending the sonata.<sup>274</sup> Marx establishes a hierarchy of compositional genres, rating them in inverse order, with eight being the most perfect:

- '1) introduction
- 2) sonata-rondo
- 3) motivic and cyclic sonata form

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University Press in association with the Open University, 2003); Carmen Lavin and Ian Donnachie (eds.), *From Enlightenment to Romanticism*, Anthology 2 (Manchester: Manchester University Press in association with the Open University, 2004), and Robert Wilkinson, 'Two Conceptions of Art,' *New Conceptions of Art and the Artist* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2005), pp. 9-69.

<sup>271</sup> For further discussion of the poetic in music see, for example, Julian Rushton, 'Music and the Poetic,' *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>272</sup> 'Mais dans cet art supérieur, c'est avant tout le genre de la fantaisie – en tant que réalisation objective de la spontanéité et accès naturel à l'absolu au-delà du rationnel – qui devient l'archétype de la création' (Bartoli and Roudet 2013: 345-346 (quotation), see also 23-40 and 344-346).

<sup>273</sup> [P]ar sa vertu abstraite, en tant que musique instrumentale, et par-dessus tout autre genre, la fantaisie et ce que nous avons désigné par l'*écriture improvisatrice* dans leur capacité à être pure présence de l'esprit créateur, ne représentent pas les sentiments ni les secrets du monde, même les plus indicibles d'entre eux: ils en sont la directe *incarnation*. Rejetant la 'signification restreinte' de l'allégorie au profit de 'l'interprétation infinie et inépuisable' du symbole comme immanence de l'absolu, l'esthétique romantique trouve son idéal dans la musique et tout particulièrement dans la fantaisie instrumentale. [...] Lorsque l'esprit de fantaisie se dilue dans les autres genres, c'est aussi le romantisme qui arrive à son zénith (Bartoli and Roudet 2013: 347 (internal quotation marks added by Bartoli and Roudet with reference to Le Blanc, Margantin and Schefer)).

<sup>274</sup> See Catherine Coppola, 'The Elusive Fantasy: Genre, Form and Program in Tchaikovsky's "Francesca da Rimini,"' *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Autumn, 1998), pp. 177-178.



- 4) combination of various movements into a larger whole
- 5) the sonata in two movements
- 6) the sonata with more movements
- 7) the unusual arrangement of the sonata
- 8) the fantasy'<sup>275</sup>

However, despite its long history and the esteem in which some music theorists and composers held it, the fantasia has a problematic reputation, for instance, as a negation of form, as not definable and as a non-genre (*Nicht-Form*) as Hugo Riemann called it. This is because its forms are so varied and cannot be easily defined. A fantasy can be sectional, take aspects of, for instance, Sonata, ternary, rondo and variation form, and often consists of a mixture of forms.<sup>276</sup> Coppola argues that, as a result, different parameters are necessary to describe the fantasia. She determines that it would, perhaps, be better to describe the fantasia as characterised by certain processes, notably 'the overall structure's relationship to established forms; developmental processes; types of interruption; and methods of linkage.'<sup>277</sup> Developmental processes are often extensive; interruptive procedures include thematic discontinuities and juxtaposition of materials; and methods of linkage is often to do with thematic networks rather than with the traditional key schemes of sonata form.<sup>278</sup> Pieces which she has examined include the third movement of Franck's Violin Sonata (1886), a work to which Ysaÿe was particularly attached, Max Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* for violin and orchestra (1880) and *Après une lecture du Dante* (c1853) by Franz Liszt.<sup>279</sup> Bartoli and Roudet also name pieces, such as the *Fantasie* Op. 18 (c1805) by Johann Nepomuk Hummel and the *Fantasie* Op. 17 (1836-38) by Robert Schumann.<sup>280</sup>

### **Gestation of Op. 27**

Having clarified some of the fundamental aesthetic ideals and located them as essentially rooted in the fantasia tradition, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to the genesis of Op. 27, the musical and violinistic personalities of the dedicatees and Ysaÿe's own playing. One day in 1923, Ysaÿe attended a concert given in Brussels by his friend

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<sup>275</sup> In Coppola 1998: 176-177.

<sup>276</sup> See Coppola 1998: 170.

<sup>277</sup> See Coppola 1998: 170-171.

<sup>278</sup> See Coppola 1998: 171-173.

<sup>279</sup> See Coppola 1998: 172.

<sup>280</sup> For a full discussion of these works see Bartoli and Roudet 2013: 285-316.

Joseph Szigeti, in which the latter played a Bach Solo Sonata, most likely the first in G minor BWV 1001.<sup>281</sup> Ysaÿe was most admiring of Szigeti's consummate artistry, explaining that 'I found in Szigeti that rare combination of the musician and the virtuoso. As an artist he seemed conscious of a high mission into which he put all his faith, and he placed his technique entirely at the service of musical expression.'<sup>282</sup> As a result, Ysaÿe decided to write sonatas for solo violin of his own although it seems likely that he had at least been thinking about doing so for some time, or, as his son puts it, the Sonatas had been 'in spiritual formation for many years.'<sup>283</sup> Ysaÿe was particularly inspired by Szigeti's playing of the Bach and he, like many musicians, admired the composer greatly: 'Bach's genius intimidates him who would like to follow in the footsteps of his Sonatas and Partitas. There is a pinnacle and it will never be a question of surpassing it.'<sup>284</sup> Despite Ysaÿe's awe for the composer, he decided to rise to the challenge and to write his own set of sonatas: the Six Sonatas, Op. 27, for Solo Violin. Indeed, he makes use of many stylistic traits of the Baroque in general and allusions to Bach's Sonatas and Partitas in particular. In addition, he decided, as a result of the strong impression Szigeti's performance had left on him, to dedicate each Sonata to a different younger violinist and to allude to aspects of their playing style as well as to their personality: 'When one hears an artist like Szigeti who is able to accommodate his playing to the rectangular lines of the great classics as easily as he can to the expressive melodies of the romantics, one feels how absorbing it would be to compose a work for the violin whilst keeping ever before one the style of one particular violinist.'<sup>285</sup> The dedicatees for each Sonata as shown in table 3.1. are:

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<sup>281</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 220, A. Ysaÿe 1947: 222 and Iwazumi 2004: 9.

<sup>282</sup> In A. Ysaÿe 1947: 222.

<sup>283</sup> 'en gestation spirituelle durant des longues années' (see A. Ysaÿe 1967: 3).

<sup>284</sup> 'Le génie de Bach effraie celui qui voudrait suivre la voie de ses sonates et partitas. Il y a là un sommet et il ne sera jamais question de le dépasser' (in A. Ysaÿe 1967: 4).

<sup>285</sup> In A. Ysaÿe 1947: 223.

**Table 3.1. – Table of dedicatees**

<b>Sonata</b>	<b>Dedicatee</b>
No. 1	Joseph Szigeti (1892-1973)
No. 2	Jacques Thibaud (1880-1953)
No. 3	Georges Enescu (1881-1955)
No. 4	Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962)
No. 5	Mathieu Crickboom (1871-1947)
No. 6	Manuel Quiroga (1892-1961)

First, the playing style of the dedicatees, their artistic personality and their relationship with Ysaÿe are examined as this will make it possible to assess what, if any, of their qualities are represented in their Sonata. This is followed by a discussion of Ysaÿe's own playing, which, of course, also had a great impact on the Sonatas. The chapter ends with some remarks on Ysaÿe's ideas for Op. 27, which lead into Part II, the analytical discussion of each Sonata.

### **The dedicatees**

Joseph Szigeti was a Hungarian violinist. He studied at the Budapest Academy under Jenő Hubay but, according to Carl Flesch, did not belong to any violin school because he had too individual a musical personality.<sup>286</sup> A violinist of world-renown, he championed contemporary music and works that were relatively unknown, such as the Sonata for Violin and Piano, No. 4 by Charles Ives (rec. 1942; with Andor Foldes (piano))<sup>287</sup> and the Violin Concerto by Alban Berg (rec. 1945; with NBC Symphony Orchestra, conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos).<sup>288</sup> Many violin works were dedicated to him, including Béla Bartók's Rhapsody No. 1 (1928-29) and *Contrasts* (1938). In addition, Szigeti was a reformer of concert programmes. He states that he fought to be able to include, for instance, entire Bach Solo Sonatas in his concerts. At that time, it was still usually individual movements of Bach that were played at a concert.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> see Flesch 1973: 330-332.

<sup>287</sup> Matrix number: ARS 2457-58, Original issue number: New Music Quarterly 1612.

<sup>288</sup> BD1-BD2 MUSIC & ARTS (no more information provided).

<sup>289</sup> See Szigeti 1967: 53.

As a violinist, Szigeti felt loyal to his teacher Hubay and declined an offer to study with Joseph Joachim partly for that reason and partly because he felt Joachim to be too remote a figure as a violin teacher. He also disliked that he taught only verbally, without his violin.<sup>290</sup> Szigeti did not follow the more modern practice of keeping the bow arm relatively high though his vibrato was fairly constant. His low bow arm, according to Flesch, resulted sometimes in a rasping or scratching sound. However, overall Flesch praises Szigeti's innovative concert programmes and characterises him as strongly and sincerely feeling, aware of his idiosyncrasy and an important musical personality.<sup>291</sup>

Many musicians and critics were very impressed by Szigeti's interpretations. Vincent Persichetti, an American composer, pianist and teacher, for example, enthuses about Szigeti's recording of Ernest Bloch's Violin Concerto and *Baal Shem* in the following terms:<sup>292</sup>

This distinguished violinist can guide an entire orchestra over structural elevations, yet fit modestly into the background at musically appropriate times. His warm G string and brassy E are right for both works and each phrase is turned with a natural grace and concentrated thought. His playing has depth and breadth, dignity and authority. This eminent artist knows what the music is about and is one of the few performers who is not using technical brilliance for tawdry musical ends.<sup>293</sup>

An at times rasping sound and a strong feeling and expressivity can both be corroborated through listening to Szigeti's recordings. An example is his 1935 recording of Sergei Prokofiev's Violin Concerto in D major (1916-17) (rec. 1935; London Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor Thomas Beecham).<sup>294</sup> In the first movement, for instance, there are passages of vibrant sound that feel alive and might be described as possessing at times a lighter and ethereal, at times a weightier and earthy beauty. On occasions, for instance, in the first and second movements, rasping can be perceived on loud notes (an example is bb. 14-15 in the second movement, timecode 0:22-0:24). However, where this occurs, it seems

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<sup>290</sup> See Szigeti 1967: 54-55.

<sup>291</sup> See Flesch 1973: 330-332.

<sup>292</sup> Persichetti is referring to Ernest Bloch, Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (with the orchestra of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, conductor Charles Munch), Columbia ML 4679, Columbia Matrix/Runout (Side A): XLP 6627-38, Matrix/Runout (Side B): XLP 6620-3A [1953?] (a reissue of the 1939 recording, Matrix number: CLX 2134-5, 2143-8, Original issue number: Columbia LX 819 to 822).

<sup>293</sup> 'Bloch: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. Baal Shem by Joseph Szigeti, Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, Charles Munch, Andor Farkas and Ernest Bloch,' *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Jan., 1954), pp. 121-122, Published by: Oxford University Press, p. 121.

<sup>294</sup> Matrix number: CAX 7583-7587 & LX 433-35, Original issue number: Columbia LX 433-35/Columbia (France) LFX 402-404/Columbia Masterworks M 244.

to be within the character of the music. While the cause of this could be that the microphone was too near to Szigeti, this is not very likely because on other occasions loud notes do not have extraneous noise.

Despite such occasional scratching, Szigeti was renowned for his polish and style, and his tone was described by the critic Alexander Ruppas as 'satisfyingly full, woody, elastic, and extraordinarily equal on all four strings.'<sup>295</sup> Szigeti achieved world fame through his reputation as a scholarly performer of the great composers, such as W. A. Mozart, Prokofiev and Bartók.<sup>296</sup> The author of the present thesis finds the elasticity, vitality and energy in Szigeti's playing remarkable. His tone is singing but varied. It has a large range, extending from an ethereal *piano* to a very intense *forte*. These qualities can, for instance, be found in his recording of the Beethoven Violin Concerto, Op. 61 (1806) (rec. 1932; with the British Symphony Orchestra, conductor Bruno Walter).<sup>297</sup>

Szigeti's attitude to Ysaÿe was one of great respect and the latter's playing made a vivid impression on Szigeti. He thought that Ysaÿe 'was perhaps the last representative of the truly grand manner of violin-playing, the living link with Vieuxtemps, the dedicatee of the César Franck Sonata and of Chausson's Poème, and the first interpreter of the Debussy Quartet, [...].'<sup>298</sup> Szigeti also loved the Sonata dedicated to him, although he did have some doubts about its purely musical value and that of the set of Sonatas as a whole. Nevertheless, he found them extremely important as a testament of Ysaÿe's elusive playing style:

His Solo Sonatas, the first of which, the one in G minor, he dedicated to me, probably are more important as a violinistic testament than as a creative effort that can stand the critical evaluation in cold blood. What gives them significance is that they are a repository of the ingredients of the playing style of this incomparable interpreter. [...]

A glance at some of the pages showed me that here indeed was a work in the making that would permit later generations to reconstruct a style of playing of which the inadequate Ysaÿe recordings give us barely a hint.<sup>299</sup>

Szigeti also estimated '[...]' that these sonatas were more to Ysaÿe than yet another work would be to a composer whose *prime* function was creating. They were, perhaps, a

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<sup>295</sup> In Campbell 1980: 163-164.

<sup>296</sup> See Campbell 1980: 163-164.

<sup>297</sup> Original issue number: Columbia LX 174-178 (175, 176, 177).

<sup>298</sup> Szigeti 1967: 117.

<sup>299</sup> Szigeti 1967: 116-118.

subconscious attempt on his part to perpetuate his own elusive *playing* style.<sup>300</sup> And: 'He was well aware of the importance of his intensely individual double-stop, chord, and 'across-the-strings-sweep' techniques in the history of violin playing.'<sup>301</sup> Szigeti performed the Sonata dedicated to him many times in public, in his words, 'in most music capitals,' including in Brussels.<sup>302</sup>

Jacques Thibaud was the foremost French violinist of his time according to Flesch.<sup>303</sup> Thibaud was both a soloist and a chamber musician. In the latter role, he formed the much-famed trio, founded in 1905, with Pablo Casals (1876-1973) and Alfred Cortot (1877-1962).<sup>304</sup> Thibaud was a good friend of Ysaÿe, who also served him as a mentor. They often played chamber music in Ysaÿe's home with two other visitors, Fritz Kreisler and Casals.<sup>305</sup>

Thibaud's playing was renowned for its sensual quality and elegance and he considered, beside Ysaÿe, the suave Sarasate to be his ideal.<sup>306</sup> Flesch characterised his sound as not big but fascinating to the listener through its sweetness and seductiveness.<sup>307</sup> Expanding on this point, Flesch explains that

It is always an artist's character that provides the master key to an understanding of his art. To the young Thibaud, women were everything. However unconsciously, his art as well as his thoughts and actions were dominated by the eternal feminine. His playing was imbued with his yearning for sensual pleasure, with an unchastity that was all the more seductive for its refinement. What a change from the ideals pursued by Joachim and even by Ysaÿe in their youth! However, times change manners. Thibaud's violin playing expressed the spirit of the turning century, of the fin de siècle.<sup>308</sup>

Flesch praises especially Thibaud's bowing technique and highly nuanced tone. He further notes that a peculiarity of the latter's left-hand technique was to begin a long note from slightly below pitch and also argues that Thibaud's musical personality was most suited to French music, such as that of Ernest Chausson, César Franck, Camille Saint-Saëns and Eduard Lalo.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Szigeti 1967: 118.

<sup>301</sup> Szigeti 1967: 118.

<sup>302</sup> Szigeti 1967: 117 and A. Ysaÿe 1967: 5.

<sup>303</sup> See 1973: 198.

<sup>304</sup> See Campbell 1980: 129.

<sup>305</sup> See Iwazumi 2004: 45.

<sup>306</sup> See Iwazumi 2004: 45.

<sup>307</sup> See Flesch 1973: 196.

<sup>308</sup> Flesch 1973: 197.

<sup>309</sup> See Flesch 1973: 196-197.

Joachim Hartnack describes Thibaud's sound as having a sweetness of a cantilena and a melting vibrato. Beauty and internalisation (Verinnerlichung) were combined in his playing. Hartnack feels that Thibaud's sound was not large but silken and slightly nasal. It was light and translucent, like pastel. In fact, Ysaÿe felt that he could always learn something from Thibaud (and from Kreisler).<sup>310</sup> Ysaÿe's sentiment is understandable. To the author of the present thesis, Thibaud's playing sounds disarming and has an innocence. A recording that shows this characteristic amply is the third movement of Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5 (rec. 1941; with the Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, conductor Charles Munch),<sup>311</sup> and parts of the Franck Sonata, particularly the last movement (1929; with Alfred Cortot (piano)).<sup>312</sup>

Thibaud's Mozart playing was extraordinary, as can also be witnessed in the recording of the E flat major Violin Concerto (1926; with unnamed orchestra, conductor Malcom Sargent) (however, it is not certain that the concerto is actually by Mozart).<sup>313</sup> Thibaud's playing tends to be straightforward without any airs yet utterly charming. This author agrees with Hartnack that Thibaud's sound is pastel and translucent, devoid of overly emotional attributes and slender. However, it also appears fervent, despite its delicacy, and the passion is certainly there although perhaps often understated. In Chausson's *Poème* (rec. 1941; with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, conductor Ernest Ansermet) Thibaud plays, in addition, with an inexpressible longing. Perhaps Louis Vierne, organist at Notre Dame, Paris, and music critic for some time, sums up the Thibaud reception of his time when he writes about Thibaud's appearance at the Salle Gaveau in the *Courrier Musical* (1 January 1921, pp. 44-45) that '[i]t is that this figure of an artist is one of the most characteristic of our time: a rich nature made of elegance, of ease, of fine and spontaneous musicality. He has, to the highest degree, what it takes to seduce. And then, he is one who is very much from here; through the clarity and spontaneity of his interpretation, through the quality of his emotion, through the exactness of his accent, he reveals decisively his race; no one can have a doubt.'<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> See Hartnack 1977: 87-89.

<sup>311</sup> No matrix number, Original issue number HMV DB 5142-4.

<sup>312</sup> Matrix number: CS 3724-31, Original issue number: HMV DB 1347-1350.

<sup>313</sup> D1 S1 BD2 BIDDULPH (no more information provided).

<sup>314</sup> C'est que cette figure d'artiste est l'une des plus caractéristique de notre temps: riche nature fait d'élégance, de facilité, de musicalité fine et primesautière, elle a au suprême degré ce qu'il faut pour séduire. Et puis, celle-ci est bien de chez nous; par la clarté et la spontanéité de son interprétation, par la qualité de son émotion, par la justesse de son accent, il révèle péremptoirement sa race; nul ne peut s'y méprendre (in Christian Goubault, *Jacques Thibaud (1880-*

The Rumanian George Enescu, another friend and admirer of Ysaÿe, was a student of Joseph Hellmesberger and Martin Marsick.<sup>315</sup> He was a great Rumanian musician who was especially surprising in his versatility. His main profession was as a violinist and pedagogue, but he was also a pianist, conductor and, especially, a composer.<sup>316</sup> Perhaps Enescu's most famous pupil was Yehudi Menuhin, who never ceased to extol the value of his teacher and thanks to whom Enescu is remembered as an inspirational teacher.<sup>317</sup> Menuhin said of Enescu: 'Enesco wasn't just a teacher; indeed, he never so described himself. He was the sustaining hand of providence, the inspiration that bore me aloft....'<sup>318</sup> And: 'What I received from him—by compelling example, not by word—was the note transformed into vital message, the phrase given shape and meaning, the structure of music made vivid.'<sup>319</sup> One American critic remarked astutely that because Enescu was such a versatile musician—and also because he did not enjoy playing the violin very much—he did not see himself first and foremost as a violin virtuoso. He preferred to interpret the music rather than to display his technical ability and, essentially, himself.<sup>320</sup>

In London, Enescu enjoyed success as well. Expectations were high for his concert at the Music Society in the St. John's Institute, Westminster, in January 1933, because one of his orchestral works had been well-received at a Promenade concert some years before. The *Musical Times* reports that

[a] numerous audience testified to the fact that M. Enesco's early essay was not forgotten, and that his appearance had roused considerable expectations. These were not disappointed. The Sonata for violin and pianoforte [by Enesco himself] he played with Mlle. Yvonne Arnaud is not a work of great originality, the influence of various French schools being much more in evidence here than it is in Enesco's String Octet, which London had never heard. But innate good taste, sound musicianship, and an admirable performance prevented the interest from flagging at any point. If some periods aroused suspicion as to their racial affinities, there was much one could admire without reservation.

M. Enesco chose Bach's Sonata in C major for violin alone in which to prove his abilities as a violinist. He succeeded better than had been expected from one who has been trained far from the centres of the Bach culture. Technically his playing was immaculate; the reading very serious and thoughtful. F. B.<sup>321</sup>

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1953): *Violoniste français*, Préface de Yehudi Menuhin, Discographie de Gerald Drieu (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1988), pp. 62-63).

<sup>315</sup> See Campbell 1980: 132.

<sup>316</sup> See Flesch 1973: 178.

<sup>317</sup> See Iwazumi 2004: 64.

<sup>318</sup> 2001: 69.

<sup>319</sup> 2001: 72.

<sup>320</sup> See Campbell 1980: 133.

<sup>321</sup> London Concerts, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 74, No. 1080 (February 1933), p. 169.



Flesch, on the other hand, was somewhat disappointed, because he felt that Enescu had not lived up to the promises of his extraordinary musical gifts. His comments give valuable insight into Enescu's violin playing and artistic character:

Originally he seemed to display a highly attractive combination of gypsy daredevilry and cultivated artistry, based on an extraordinary talent for the instrument. But in later years a strange cleavage seemed to develop between these two qualities, in so far as both his playing and his programmes alternated between a capricious and shallow virtuoso attitude on the one hand and a deliberately dry and scholastic pseudo-classicism on the other. In those days he was unable to weld together the individual elements of his artistic character.<sup>322</sup>

However, on another occasion Flesch noted that Enescu's 'feeling was genuine, deep and alive, his technical basis solid, his mixture of thought and emotion well balanced, and I came to the conclusion that he was one of the most attractive artistic characters of our time.'<sup>323</sup> Flesch was not the only person to perceive a cleavage in Enescu's musical character. Hartnack, for instance, calls Enescu 'a strange mix of virtuosic gypsy and a conservative university professor.' However, he is less reserved than Flesch about Enescu's ability to weld the two sides of his character successfully together. He finds that these opposite traits come together through an artistic clarity and a fundamental musicality that is rare to find to such an extent.<sup>324</sup> Flesch, moreover, notes that, at times Enescu had a propensity towards mystical expression, which occasionally lead to extremely soft *pianissimos*.

The author of this thesis concurs with this assessment. For example, Enescu's interpretation of Corelli's *La Folia* ([rec. 1929]; with Sanford Schlusel (piano)) seems to be one of his most beautiful artistic achievements.<sup>325</sup> Slower parts have a wonderful warmth and are very sensuous. The entire work appears heart-felt. Flesch describes Enescu's fingers as touching the strings at an acute angle and, thus, being able to attain a non-metallic, smooth, velvety tone. Perhaps it is partly this that gives the slow sections of the Corelli the warm sound, such as at the beginning of the piece (for instance, variation 1, timecode 1:00-1:31). Other parts Enescu imbues with great energy and, rather than

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<sup>322</sup> Flesch 1973: 179.

<sup>323</sup> Flesch 1973: 180.

<sup>324</sup> See Hartnack 1977: 119.

<sup>325</sup> Matrix number: 98627-1 & 98628-3.

employing the velvety tone, he changes to a more brassy tone, such as in variation 4 (especially timecode 2:38-2:47).

The parallels between 'gypsy' playing and Enescu's playing seem to be particularly clear in his Third Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 25, 'dans le caractère populaire roumain' (rec. 1943; with Dinu Lipatti (piano)).<sup>326</sup> Some of the parallels pertain to elasticity of tempo and rhythm, tone colour and inflection of pitches.<sup>327</sup> Elasticity of tempo and rhythm are often achieved through the ornamentation. At times, ornaments feel faster or freer than written (for instance, first movement, b. 5, timecode 0:15-0:16) although Enescu is painstaking in notating rhythm. They may also be or appear to be double dotted in rhythm or *appoggiatura*-like (as in b. 3, timecode 0:07-0:08). As a result, the ornaments contribute significantly to the sense of freedom. Tone colour ranges again from warm, soft and ethereal hues all the way to a loud, brassy and slightly scratchy tone. *Portamento* also adds to colouristic effects as well as to the elasticity of tempo and rhythm and the inflection of pitches. Inflection of pitches also occurs in the ways that Flesch described, that is, a tone begins slightly lower and is then pulled up (for instance, in b. 6 also of the first movement, timecode 0:20).

The Viennese virtuoso Fritz Kreisler was one of the best-loved and most influential violinists in history. It is often suggested, such as by Campbell, that Kreisler did not practise.<sup>328</sup> While it is true that he practised little in terms of technical exercises and repertoire he would play in an upcoming concert, he had practised much in his youth. Kreisler himself says about this: 'Yet it is precisely if one practises well in youth that the fingers should retain their suppleness in later years.'<sup>329</sup> This is how he rationalised not practising much as an adult. However, he did spend much time making and composing music and Louis P. Lochner called him 'a veritable glutton for making, composing, arranging, transcribing, and orchestrating music.'<sup>330</sup>

One musician Kreisler greatly admired was Ysaÿe, and the admiration was mutual. They became lifelong friends at the very beginning of the century. Kreisler said of Ysaÿe's playing that 'Ysaÿe bears a message, a great message, and you must follow closely to receive it. He does not deliver it every time he plays, but when he does, it is wonderful!'<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Profil, Edition Günter Hänssler LC13287.

<sup>327</sup> See Fabian 2006: 204.

<sup>328</sup> See 1980: 121.

<sup>329</sup> In Lochner 1950: 85.

<sup>330</sup> Lochner 1950: 85.

<sup>331</sup> In Lochner 1950: 57-58.

Kreisler always looked forward to meeting Ysaÿe every summer in Paris. There he, Ysaÿe, Casals and Thibaud played chamber music together just for themselves.<sup>332</sup>

Kreisler left a legacy through the newness of his playing style and his many recordings, as well as through his compositions of short genre pieces and cadenzas. He recorded much of the mainstream repertoire as well as genre pieces, such as his own. These recordings give an excellent insight into his musicianship. His own compositions are, as Iwazumi puts it, 'durable crystallisations of charm and elegance' and provide us with radiant, small repertoire for recitals and encores.<sup>333</sup> Kreisler's playing style was initially not appreciated; however, eventually, sometime after the turn of the century, his popularity began to increase dramatically. Flesch explains Kreisler's rise to fame thus:

The source of what seemed to be Kreisler's initial inferiority and of his later superiority consists in his having forestalled the taste of the time; he already intuitively divined it when the listeners were not yet ready for it.<sup>334</sup>

His vibrato was responsible for his initial unfavourable reception as it gave an impression to the contemporary audience of being exaggerated, unrhythmic and unmusical. This vibrato was new. Nearly constant, he used it on most notes, even on relatively inexpressive or short ones. In addition, his vibrato was broader and more intense than customary. It is necessary to remember that still in the 1880s, when Kreisler first appeared, a slight oscillation of the finger, called *Bebung*, was mainly used rather than modern vibrato. Moreover, this almost inaudible *Bebung* was only employed on more expressive notes. Fast passages were kept sounding dry on purpose.<sup>335</sup> Kreisler himself said of the origins of his vibrato:

I believe Massart liked me because I played in the style of Wieniawski. You will recall that Wieniawski intensified the vibrato and brought it to heights never before achieved, so that it became known as the 'French vibrato.' Vieuxtemps also took it up, and after him Eugène Ysaÿe, who became its greatest exponent, and I. Joseph Joachim, for instance, disdained it.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> See Campbell 1980: 124.

<sup>333</sup> 2004: 80.

<sup>334</sup> Flesch 1973: 120.

<sup>335</sup> See Flesch 1973: 120. *Bebung* is explained in Johann Georg Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, Band 1 (Leipzig 1771), p. 136.

<sup>336</sup> In Philip 1992: 210.

However, as Philip points out, this quote testifies to Kreisler's personal views because he had never heard Wieniawski or Vieuxtemps. Philip also notes that 'there is no reason to suppose that Wieniawski's "French vibrato" was continuous, even assuming it was unusually prominent for the period.' Ysaÿe's vibrato was not continuous either, even in cantabile passages. It was also less prominent than that of Kreisler.<sup>337</sup>

Flesch believes that Kreisler let his style be mainly determined by musical considerations and an inner compulsion, but he never lost his 'unique beauty of tone, which breathed out his inner feeling as a flower breathes off its scent. The quality of his tone was unmistakable, incomparable and unequalled.'<sup>338</sup> Regarding the bow, Flesch notes that Kreisler did not use its whole length, but rather put some additional pressure on it so that normally the tone would become slightly rough. However, he regulated this with his vibrato, which has the power to erase some potential roughness. Also, he had a special *élan* in certain rhythmic bowings. 'Sonority and rhythm are the firm bases on which towered the edifice of his art' Flesch believed.<sup>339</sup> Hartnack adds that Kreisler's artistic ideals were harmony and equilibrium, and he surmises that these were responsible for Kreisler's so-called 'golden tone.' In addition, he always had, to some degree, a Viennese salon attitude which Hartnack considers partly responsible for Kreisler's charm.<sup>340</sup> By 'Viennese salon attitude' Hartnack presumably means that Kreisler was a little easy-going in his attitude, although this is speculation as Hartnack does not explain himself. To this relatively comprehensive characterisation of Kreisler's playing could be added that a certain humanity and compassionate nature seems to show through in his playing and that he plays utterly soulfully, unpretentiously and fervently.

However, the downside of Kreisler's playing was a not always accurate intonation as can be heard on various recordings, such as in the 'Méditation' from Jules Massenet's *Thais* (rec. 1910; with George Falkenstein (piano)) (bb. 54-56, timecode 2:42-2:49)<sup>341</sup> as well as in *Liebesleid* (rec. 1910; with George Falkenstein (piano)) (bb. 5-8, timecode 0:08-0:10).<sup>342</sup> Nevertheless, Flesch was overall very well disposed towards Kreisler and summarises his importance thus:

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<sup>337</sup> See Philip 1992: 210-211.

<sup>338</sup> Flesch 1973: 120-121.

<sup>339</sup> See Flesch 1973: 121-122.

<sup>340</sup> 1977: 134-135.

<sup>341</sup> BD10 Naxos, Matrix number: C8944 – 2.

<sup>342</sup> BD14 NAXOS, Matrix number: C-89442 – 2, Original issue number: Victor 74333.

When all is said and done, Kreisler has been the most important figure for us violinists since Ysaÿe's decline; he has fundamentally influenced the development of our art as no other violinist of his time has done. In the history of violin playing he will live not only as an artist whose genius stimulated and expanded the art, but also as a most valuable symbol of a whole epoch. As a man, finally, despite his unheard-of success, he has always remained simple and kind-hearted.<sup>343</sup>

And Lionel Tertis, the great English viola player, enthused:

For me the experience of hearing him was like falling in love. His glowing tone, his vibrato, unique and inexpressively beautiful, his phrasing which in everything he played was so wonderful and so peculiarly his own, his extraordinarily fine bowing and left-hand technique, his attitude at once highly strung and assured, the passionate sincerity of his interpretations—all this made me follow him around like a dog wherever he played in this country.<sup>344</sup>

Ysaÿe considered his compatriot Mathieu Crickboom (1871-1947) his best student.<sup>345</sup> Unfortunately, not much is known about Crickboom. Biographers have not yet felt the need to chronicle his life and achievements, and he did not leave any sound recordings either. Three descriptions of his aesthetics and playing are found in Antoine Ysaÿe's biography of his father (1947), in *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*,<sup>346</sup> and in a letter by Ernest Chausson to Eugène Ysaÿe, but none of them is, unfortunately, very detailed. A. Ysaÿe writes that Crickboom 'followed the aesthetic and interpretative ideas of Joachim, and applied them to the principles of technique taught him by Ysaÿe. He had much of Ysaÿe's sure bowing, rhythmical power, and full rich tone. With a high conception of an artistic mission Crickboom refused to be drawn into social activities, and affirmed that the artist belonged before all to his art.'<sup>347</sup> And part of the entry in the dictionary reads: 'As a violinist he is perfect in technique and poetical interpretation. His instructive works are models of their kind (*Le Violon théorique et pratique*, 5 volumes; *La Technique du Violon*, 4 Volumes). As a composer, he does not claim any great originality, but his work is distinguished by a certain elegance.'<sup>348</sup>

Chausson writes to Ysaÿe about a concert in 1893, in which Crickboom played the Violin Concerto No. 3 by Camille Saint-Saëns.

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<sup>343</sup> 1973: 125.

<sup>344</sup> 1991: 19-20.

<sup>345</sup> See Iwazumi 2004: 105.

<sup>346</sup> Ed. A. Eaglefield-Hull ([n.l.]: J. M. Dent, 1924.

<sup>347</sup> A. Ysaÿe 1947: 231.

<sup>348</sup> 1924: 104-105.

I have just left the casino where I have heard Crickboom play the Third Concerto by Saint-Saëns (for you know that we have already been in Royan for about three weeks). I still have the manner in which I have heard you execute this same piece in my ear, and I was, therefore, very difficult to please. Well, I was extremely pleased. Crickboom played not only as a consummate virtuoso but like a real and great artist. I am sure to give you great pleasure telling you this good news and I write before going to bed. At first, he seemed to me slightly nervous, which is not surprising, since it was the first time he played this work in public, and with orchestra. But he mastered himself quickly; he played simply deliciously in the last two movements. An exquisite taste and a penetrating sonority, full of charm. I cannot judge the pure virtuosity that securely; it seemed to me wonderful. He has already authority; he will have even more with some more years.<sup>349</sup>

Although Chausson's description does not tell us much about Crickboom's aesthetics, it does inform about his quality of playing. Regrettably, not much information about his playing style and aesthetics can be gleaned from these paragraphs. However, that Ysaÿe considered him his best student and dedicated the Fifth Sonata to him, with the others having all been dedicated to exceptional violinists, might indicate that he probably was of a similar calibre. Moreover, Ysaÿe made Crickboom second violin in his famous string quartet. Besides being a performer, Crickboom is the author of many études and exercises. Some of his technical and perhaps even musical characteristics might possibly be retraced in those though this is beyond the scope of this thesis. As alluded to in the dictionary entry, Crickboom did not only compose études. For instance, his unpublished Sonata for violin and piano was played by Eugène Ysaÿe and his brother Théophile in a concert at La Libre Esthétique on 15 April 1896. In addition, Crickboom was a dedicated pedagogue, attested to not least by the many studies he wrote. When still under the tutelage of Ysaÿe, he took the latter's class at the Conservatoire when his teacher was absent. Later, he spent eight years, from 1896 to 1904, in Barcelona, where he was, beside a quartet player and conductor, a teacher at the conservatoire. Upon his return to Belgium he taught in Brussels.<sup>350</sup> While still being a member of the Ysaÿe Quartet, Crickboom

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<sup>349</sup> [J]e [Chausson] sors à l'instant du Casino où j'ai entendu Crickboom jouer le troisième concerto de Saint-Saëns (car tu sais que nous sommes à Royan depuis déjà environ trois semaines). J'avais encore dans l'oreille la manière dont je t'avais entendu exécuter ce même morceau au Conservatoire et j'étais par cela même très difficile à contenter. Eh bien, j'ai été extrêmement content. Crickboom a joué non seulement en virtuose consommé, mais comme un véritable et grand artiste; je suis certain de te faire grand plaisir en t'annonçant cette bonne nouvelle et je t'écris avant d'aller me coucher. Au début, il m'a paru un peu nerveux, ce qui n'est pas étonnant puisque c'est la première fois qu'il jouait cette œuvre en public, et avec orchestre. Mais il s'est vite remis; il a été tout simplement délicieux dans les deux derniers mouvements. Un gout exquis et une sonorité pénétrante, pleine de charme. Je ne puis pas juger aussi sûrement la virtuosité pure; elle m'a paru merveilleuse. Il a déjà de l'autorité; il en aura davantage avec quelques années de plus (in Stockhem 1988: 255).

<sup>350</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 124, 27, 140 and 195.

founded his own string quartet. Although personnel changed frequently, it achieved international standard. One of the musicians Crickboom engaged in his quartet while in Barcelona was the young Pablo Casals.<sup>351</sup>

Manuel Quiroga, was a French-educated Galician violinist. He studied in Paris under Edouard Nadaud for two years and also received some lessons from Thibaud. After his studies, he remained in Paris and was a part of the Spanish artistic community there, where musicians, such as Manuel de Falla, Casals and Enrique Granados were active. Quiroga was another of Ysaÿe's friends and the dedicatee of the last Sonata. He, too, had an international career as a virtuoso and toured all over Europe and the Americas. He was considered by many critics 'the finest successor of Pablo de Sarasate'<sup>352</sup> and his playing was admired by such great violinists as Ysaÿe, Kreisler, Heifetz and Enescu. Like Sarasate, his intonation and technique were reputed to be flawless but with an expressiveness and emotion similar to that of Kreisler.<sup>353</sup> This is confirmed by Antoine Ysaÿe: 'It is in remembering the Spanish violinist's playing, which reminded him of Sarasate, that the master conceived his last sonata for unaccompanied violin. [...] Here, even more than in the others, the master endeavours to adapt the violinistic writing to the playing of the artist to whom the work is dedicated.'<sup>354</sup> And a reviewer in *The Musical Times* in 1921 stated approvingly: 'The next Subscription Concert [in Bradford], on December 10, was by the Hallé Orchestra under Sir Henry Wood. Señor Manuel Quiroga was the soloist in Lalo's "Symphonie Espagnole," in which his deftness of execution and refined style were well displayed [...].'<sup>355</sup>

His various recordings seem to confirm that Quiroga's playing style sounds indeed deft. He uses an intense vibrato that is reminiscent of that of Kreisler and his sound is strong with clear dynamics. He also employs the *rubato* and *portamento* so common at the time. His playing sounds passionate, possibly because of the intense, albeit not continuous, vibrato, free *rubato* and intense sound. He also varies his bowing attacks considerably, depending on the character of the piece he plays. Regarding his bowing, for example, his bow changes and the off-the-string bowing sound very daring, spontaneous and not necessarily flawless. Sometimes bow speed seems quite high, which adds to the impression of a strong temperament, especially when the tone is intense. The 'Zapateado' from Pablo

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<sup>351</sup> see Stockhem 1990: 140 and 240.

<sup>352</sup> Luque Fernández 2002: 1, 2 and 9.

<sup>353</sup> See Luque Fernández 2002: 17.

<sup>354</sup> A. Ysaÿe 1967: 12.

<sup>355</sup> 'Music in the Provinces,' *The Musical Times* (January 1, 1921), pp. 48-59 (p.58).

de Sarasate's *Spanish Dances*, Op. 23 No. 2 (rec. 1928; with Mme Quiroga (piano)) provides a good example of this manner of playing.<sup>356</sup> At other times, where the character of the piece is more sensuous, Quiroga's bowing is very smooth and his tone singing, such as in the slow part of Wieniawski's 'Souvenir de Moscou,' (rec. 1912; with Mme Quiroga (piano)) (bb. 46-81, timecode 0:00-1:49).<sup>357</sup>

Quiroga was not only a superb violinist, but he also composed and painted. He was a gifted caricaturist and portrayed, among others, his friend Ysaÿe.<sup>358</sup> Most of his compositions are short pieces, cadenzas, études and arrangements, often with a distinctly Spanish flair. His most distinctly Spanish music is contained in Spanish dances, like the two *Jotas*, but he also goes beyond the confines of Spain itself and branches out into other Hispanic dances, like the guajira, a Cuban dance.<sup>359</sup> His various Spanish and Hispanically flavoured works are listed in Ana Luque Fernández's catalogue of Quiroga's works.<sup>360</sup> In technique they tend to be not unlike pieces by Kreisler and Sarasate. Another aspect of Quiroga's activity was his contribution to the revival of Baroque compositions, promoting eighteenth-century Spanish music by composers, such as José Herrando, and more modern music by composers, such as Sarasate, Joaquín Turina and Manuel de Falla. However, it appears that Quiroga never performed his Ysaÿe Sonata in public. In 1937, Quiroga had an accident, which ended his career. Henceforth, he dedicated himself to composition and painting.<sup>361</sup>

### **Ysaÿe's playing style and violinistic approach to the composition of the Sonatas**

As mentioned, Ysaÿe's playing style had a major impact on his compositions. It is, therefore, important to listen to his playing. In 1912 to 1914 he recorded a number of pieces, although the recordings have some limitations. Ysaÿe was slightly past his prime at the age of 54 and had developed problems with his right hand, which had a tremor and was cramping at times, impairing his playing.<sup>362</sup> Also, recording technology and conditions were quite primitive at the time. Sound was, for example, gathered mechanically before

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<sup>356</sup> 'The Great Violinists,' Vol. 5, Symposium SYMCD 1131.

<sup>357</sup> 'The Great Violinists,' Vol. 5, Symposium SYMCD 1131.

<sup>358</sup> See Luque Fernández 2002: 14.

<sup>359</sup> See William Gradante, 'Guajira,' *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, (accessed February 9, 2017),

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/11889>.

<sup>360</sup> See Luque Fernández 2002: 20-63.

<sup>361</sup> See Luque Fernández 2002: 2, 12, 14 and 15.

<sup>362</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 36-37.



the advent of electrical recording, which meant that the sound was gathered by one or more large horns to be transmitted to an apparatus which engraved the wave form of the sound into soft wax on a disc or cylinder. This was done without electrical amplification so that the musicians needed to be close to the horn(s) in order to be heard. Also, the equipment was very limited in range and frequency, and coupled with this was the need to play in certain ways so as to avoid the mechanism malfunctioning. Being in a small room cramped around a horn and having to bear in mind the machinery and its technical constraints (and there were other challenges as well) was an uncomfortable condition to be in for the musicians. As a result, their recordings tend to be a limited reflection of their actual playing capabilities.<sup>363</sup> However, these recordings still provide much evidence about the way musicians were playing at the time and also what music making must have been like in the mid-to-late nineteenth century when many recording musicians had been educated, for example in terms of *rubato*, *portamento*, vibrato, bowing styles and, to an extent even tone colour, voicing (for a piano), ensemble playing and other aspects.<sup>364</sup> The following discussion restricts itself to the recordings of Ysaÿe's 'Rêve d'enfant,' Op. 14 and his Mazurka in B minor 'Dans le Lointain,' Op. 11 No. 3, the only two pieces of his own composition he recorded, as well as to Wagner's 'Prize Song' and Vieuxtemps's Rondino. A full discussion of all his recordings is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.

'Rêve d'enfant,' Op. 14 is a small piece for violin and piano which Ysaÿe composed in 1901 and recorded in 1913 (with Camille Decreus (piano)).<sup>365</sup> For Quitin, it belongs to a group of Ysaÿe's works he describes as 'sentimental.'<sup>366</sup> He writes that '[i]f we want to *take stock* of the instrumental works of Ysaÿe, we find that wherever he lets his heart sing without preoccupying himself with technique, he achieves a full and generous lyricism which renders his works very charming and beautiful. That will be the *Poème d'Hiver, Exil,*

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<sup>363</sup> See Philip 2004: 26-28. For more background information on the recording process see, especially chapter 2.

<sup>364</sup> See Philip 2004: 232 and Philip 1992: 207-228.

<sup>365</sup> BD9 SYMPOSIUM, Matrix number: 36522.

<sup>366</sup> Quitin categorises Ysaÿe's works somewhat teleologically into four different groups: '1. Les œuvres purement sentimentales. 2. Celles où le souci de joindre la virtuosité à la musicalité se fait jour. 3. Les œuvres de technique pure. 4. Son opéra *Pier li Houïeu*. Signalons que le classement correspond à l'ordre chronologique des compositions. Nous voyons ainsi Ysaÿe évoluer vers la technique pure au violon en réaction contre l'abandon progressif de ce souci par les violonistes au cours de ces dernières années.'

['1. The purely sentimental works. 2. Those where the concern of joining virtuosity with musicality arises. 3. The purely technical works. 4. His opera *Pier li Houïeu*. Let us also signal that the classing corresponds to the chronological order of the compositions. We, thus, see Ysaÿe evolving towards pure technique on the violin as a reaction against the progressive abandonment of this concern by violinists in these last years.'](1938: 36).

*Lointain passé* and *Rêve d'enfant*, a marvellous miniature of finesse and delicacy.<sup>367</sup> In this quiet little piece, Ysaÿe shows his tender and calm side with warm, dark tone colours even though colouring was quite difficult to record due to the larger number of partials required to realise differentiated colouring effects and the limitations of, for example, the range of frequencies and dynamics in acoustical recording.<sup>368</sup> However, despite such limitations Ysaÿe's recording does manage to reproduce something of his style. The darker sound probably stems from both bowing technique and putting the left-hand fingers down on the string with the meaty part. The bow is drawn slowly but still with different bow speeds and the music breathes despite the slow speed. Ysaÿe imbues his interpretation with flexibility deriving from a supple *rubato* without exaggeration. The flexible bow speeds are tailored to the individual phrases and even to single notes. On most notes he vibrates though not on all. Where he does vibrate, he varies his vibrato according to the desired character of the music. However, it is never large but always quite fine, relatively fast yet transparent. Another characteristic is that Ysaÿe plays, like players of the time, with considerable *portamento*, and his *portamenti* are always subtle and in accordance with the musical expression. In 'Rêve d'enfant' they are frequently quite slow and deliberate. He tends to take some time from the note before the slide and often includes a little *rubato* (for instance, b. 13, timecode 0:41-0:42). But neither the *rubato* nor the *portamento* take away from the extraordinary length of his phrases. They feel almost continuous.

The character of Ysaÿe's Mazurka, in B minor, Op. 11 No. 3, described by Quitin as belonging to the same sentimental category of Ysaÿe's compositions, could not be more different in character from that of 'Rêve d'enfant'.<sup>369</sup> In this recording from 1912 also with Camille Decreus (piano), Ysaÿe proves to have great velocity, ease and lightness of his left hand.<sup>370</sup> There seems to be so much happiness and buoyancy in both the piece and his playing, though not without some changes to a more wistful character. His phrasing, and sometimes also his rhythm, seem rather spontaneous (although some of it was probably carefully planned) through the *rubato* he applies, and through his fine, subtly varied and diverse vibrato. His *rubato* also appears as if spontaneous although Ysaÿe is quite

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<sup>367</sup> '[s]i nous voulons *faire le point* dans l'œuvre instrumentale d'Ysaÿe, nous constaterons que, partout où il laisse chanter son cœur sans se préoccuper de la technique, il atteint à un lyrisme ample et généreux qui rend ses œuvres très attachantes et très belles. Ce seront le *Poème d'Hiver*, *Exil*, *Lointain passé* et *Rêve d'enfant*, une miniature merveilleuse de fini et de délicatesse.' (Quitin 1938: 47-48).

<sup>368</sup> See Day 2000: 9 and Philip 2004: 27.

<sup>369</sup> See Quitin 1938: 48.

<sup>370</sup> 4 DELTA.

disciplined about returning to the beat the piano keeps throughout. At times, all he does is bend a short figure slightly to create, for example, urgency or relaxation and a speaking quality (for example, bb. 67 and 71, timecodes 1:24 and 1:28-1:29). He also succeeds in creating urgency through being a tiny bit before the piano (this is a common device in players of that time) (for instance, bb. 48-55, timecode 0:57-1:07). It gives the impression that the violin leads and the piano adjusts around any subtle tempo fluctuations. In this Mazurka Ysaÿe uses a good deal of *portamento*, some slow, some fast; some stressed, some unstressed. However, as in 'Rêve d'enfant,' it is always an integral part of the musical expression. Furthermore, and as before, the bowing breathes. Bow speed varies considerably even within a single bow stroke and bow changes are sometimes smooth and sometimes rather energetic. Ysaÿe's playing has a speaking quality besides also being of a singing disposition. Overall his tone sounds very fresh, vivid and clear and could even be described as innocent or naive in this piece. There are some changes to a slightly deeper colour.

Compared to 'Rêve d'enfant,' Wagner's 'Prize Song' (rec. 1912; with Camille Decreus (piano)) is lighter in timbre but the entirely unforced expressive intensity as well as the melodic flow and feeling of freedom are quite similar.<sup>371</sup> The 'Prize Song' is wistful, tender and reflective in character. Vibrato is fine and almost continuous but varied in speed and prominence, while rhythm and metre have, as ever in Ysaÿe, the typical elastic quality. *Portamento* is, as before, varied and employed for expressive purposes. The piece is relatively homogenous in character. Vieuxtemps's Rondino (rec. 1912; with Camille Decreus (piano)) on the other hand, comprises many different characters, which range from easy-going and playful, to wistful and to passionate.<sup>372</sup> The variety of characters allows Ysaÿe to show the breadth of his musical character and expressive versatility. He vibrates a little less than in Wagner but the vibrato is very varied and his playing is always alive. He also displays the usual elasticity of tempo and rhythm that lends his playing a feeling of continuous flow and which helps the music to breathe. At the same time, some passages are incisive and exactly in time, for instance, when the runs precede a longer note, such as at the beginning (except for the occasionally lengthened first note of a run) (for instance, bb. 8-17, timecode 0:04-0:23).

Together, the four pieces discussed offer a good overview of Ysaÿe as a performer and give an idea of the range of expressiveness and the breadth of his musical character

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<sup>371</sup> BD13 SYMPOSIUM (1912), Matrix number: 36526.

<sup>372</sup> 1 DELTA.

and expressive versatility of which he was capable. To summarise the above findings: Ysaÿe's playing gives a sense of freedom and the music is in constant flow. This is closely related to the elasticity of tempo and rhythm with which he imbues the pieces he interprets. In addition, Ysaÿe's varied vibrato, including the lack thereof, his *portamento* and the wide range of timbre give his playing an extraordinary breadth and intensity of expressiveness. As shown in Part II of this thesis, these are some of the characteristics written into the Sonatas, whether explicitly as instructions and notation, or implicitly in that the music will have difficulties coming into its own without the performer employing these qualities. The last word of this discussion shall belong to Charles Van den Borren, who aptly sums up Ysaÿe's playing when he writes that Ysaÿe 'realises, in his playing the most perfect union of fullness of sound, immateriality, intensity and expressive gradation of feeling'.<sup>373</sup>

The other method of learning directly about Ysaÿe's violin playing is through reading some of the scores he annotated, for instance, that of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. This would provide valuable information about his technique as well as about musical and interpretative matters.<sup>374</sup> However, for the purpose of this thesis it is much more important that the published score of Op. 27 does include Ysaÿe's own fingerings, idiosyncratic signs and annotations. The score provides many important insights into his playing style, and his musical and technical suggestions provide some, if tentative, answers to his aesthetics.<sup>375</sup> For instance, there are many indications that might suggest *rubato* and elasticity of tempo, such as *cédez*.<sup>376</sup> One example of the latter occurs in bar 18 of the Grave of the First Sonata. The tempo slows up slightly with a *crescendo* and a little climax with which a new thematic development is introduced. Another such indication is *sans hâte* (b. 43, third movement Op. 27/1, see example 3.1).

### **Example 3.1. – Ysaÿe, Allegretto poco scherzoso, Op. 27/1, bb. 42-43**

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<sup>373</sup> 'Ysaÿe,' in A. Eaglefield-Hull (ed.), *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians* (London, 1924) in Philip 2004: 193.

<sup>374</sup> A score of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas with Ysaÿe's annotations does exist but has proven unobtainable. It is held at the library of the Juilliard School of Music in the Mitchell Collection.

<sup>375</sup> For an in-depth study of Ysaÿe's sketches, manuscripts and editions of the Sonatas, as well as a critical commentary, see Ray Iwazumi, 'The Six Sonates Pour Violon Seul, Op. 27' (DMA Thesis, Juilliard School, New York, 2004).

<sup>376</sup> Eugène Ysaÿe, *Six Sonates, Op. 27 et une Etude posthume pour violon solo* (Brussels and Paris: Schott Frères, 1952).



This expression needs to be interpreted carefully because the statement is slightly ambiguous. Most likely, a slight slowing up is suggested (which is also written into the notation (the last, longer note of the bar), or perhaps Ysaÿe is simply trying to warn against hastening towards the following turn of phrase in bar 44. Other signs concern technical matters that have a knock-on effect on musical expression, such as the sign for using a whole bow (or as near to that as possible), |—|. However, the problem, of course, is that it is not possible to notate all the nuances that constitute a player’s artistry. These are much better, if also imperfectly, transmitted by recordings (if live performance is not feasible). Some questions that listening to recordings can answer have been touched on above as much as possible in the context of this thesis. These have offered some insights into Ysaÿe’s elusive playing style.

The following section deals with a number of more theoretical observations that are formulated from the printed score of Op. 27. It is concerned with the notation itself as well as the different meanings of the signs Ysaÿe uses. These are often innovative and imply, for example, certain phrasings and colourings as well as novel techniques, which are further explored in Part II. The signs and their implications have been described well by Karen D. Hoatson.<sup>377</sup> She also points out some of Ysaÿe’s predilections, such as for diminished seventh chords, dominant seventh and ninth chords and for passing tones that produce unusual intervals, such as augmented thirds or fifths, which all occur, for example, in the Grave of the First Sonata. She also brings up his chordal writing which often occurs around a melodic line in the inner voices and the development of fingerings for these chordal passages. This, in her considered opinion, has contributed greatly to the known polyphonic possibilities of the violin. Ysaÿe also developed original fingerings for what she calls ‘inconstant’ tonalities (by which she presumably means scales with, for example, major/minor thirds, that is, where the thirds change to give the tonality an ambiguity of mode).<sup>378</sup> Regarding fingerings, she explains that they are always chosen to best represent

<sup>377</sup> Karen D. Hoatson, ‘Culmination of the Belgian Violin Tradition—The Innovative Style of Eugène Ysaÿe’ (DMA Thesis: University of California, 1999).

<sup>378</sup> See Hoatson 1999: 11-14.

the music and are not necessarily the easiest option. For one thing, Ysaÿe's fingerings are chosen to support phrasing. In addition, different strings produce different colouristic effects, which are, in their own right, interesting but also bring out the mood of certain phrases and individual notes. Many fingerings imply *portamento* to connect two notes in a singing manner. Hoatson also gives some examples for her theories on fingerings. In the *Fugato* of the First Sonata, for example, Ysaÿe creates different colours through the use of *bariolage* (b. 92) as well as *bariolage* coupled with harmonics (b. 91). Furthermore, chosen from a plethora of examples, she believes quite rightly that in the Grave of the First Sonata (b. 27 (3)) playing higher up on the A string, rather than on the E string, gives a more covered and mellow sound.<sup>379</sup> She also gives an example for *portamento*, but this is less interesting because it was such a common device to use at the time that it is nothing that could identify Ysaÿe's playing and fingering as very different from those of his contemporaries except in quality, which cannot easily be notated. *Bariolage* is, of course, not a new technique either. Bach already used it, for instance, in his Preludio from the Third Partita, although combining it with harmonics would seem rather inventive. Also, seeking to enhance the music through fingerings that bring out the character of a passage or note is nothing new. What is without doubt though is that all of Ysaÿe's fingerings are utterly violinistic and do indeed support the character of the music. The question in what way his writing is innovative, is addressed in the following chapters. Suffice it to say here that he certainly is especially successful and imaginative at both composing for solo violin and providing excellent fingerings. His fingerings are always supported by the music itself because his writing is so idiomatic. Although the Sonatas are difficult, they are not awkward provided good fingerings are used. However, it should be safe to say that with Op. 27 Ysaÿe followed his motto that '[...] new works conceived only from the musical point of view bring about the stagnation of technical discovery, the invention of new passages, of novel harmonic wealth of combination is not encouraged. And a violinist owes it to himself to exploit the great possibilities of his own instrument. I have tried to find new technical ways and means of expression in my own compositions.'<sup>380</sup>

In this chapter, the direct stimulus for Ysaÿe's composition of Op. 27 has been discussed. Also examined were the artistic personality and playing style of each dedicatee as well as Ysaÿe's own playing. These characterisations will facilitate the discussion of violinistic issues in Part II, which include the exploration of technical and/or musical links

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<sup>379</sup> See Hoatson 1999: 31 and 33.

<sup>380</sup> 1919: 9.

between the dedicatees and their respective Sonata. The fantasia tradition, another crucial aspect of Op. 27, has equally been discussed. Together with the previous chapter, the major constituting factors of Ysaÿe's artistic personality and other aspects, notably the dedicatees and the fantasia tradition, that contributed first to the gestation and then the realisation of the sonata cycle have been considered. Therefore, the context has been created for the discussion of the Sonatas themselves.

## Part II: Analyses

Part I has discussed Ysaÿe's musical background and the importance of particular artistic currents to him. It has demonstrated his closeness to the Franck circle and his reverence for and identification with his violin teacher Vieuxtemps. It has also revealed his admiration for Bach and an interest in what today is classed as Baroque music, as well as his desire to innovate and pass on the violin tradition to the following generation of violinists. Furthermore, his respect for Debussy and much of his music was discussed. Part II explores Ysaÿe's identity as reflected in the Sonatas. To this end, the stylistic influences apparent in the Sonatas are studied as well as the ways in which Ysaÿe integrates and engages with them. Also examined is the cycle's improvisatory quality, which is elicited in part through the use of various ambiguities, such as in melody, harmony, rhythm, metre and phrasing as well as in style. It gives the music a fluid feeling and is reminiscent of the fantasia tradition as discussed in Part I. Thus, upon listening to Op. 27, the stylistic diversity and multifaceted nature within and between Sonatas stands out.

The underlying idiom bears resemblance to the styles of Franck and his circle and, more widely, the late nineteenth century. The Franckists are singled out because of certain musical qualities they cultivated and which Ysaÿe seems to have shared with them. For example, the highly chromatic and modally inflected harmony, an often cyclic form, an interest in counterpoint and heightened expressiveness (largely elicited by the harmony) are all characteristics shared, to a greater or lesser extent, by Franck and his followers. Of course, each characteristic in and of itself does not exclusively point to Franck as many composers employed them. However, it is their accumulation that makes Op. 27 stylistically reminiscent of Franck and his group. Allusions to Bach and the Baroque are embedded in this idiom. Baroque influences in the works of composers at the time were, of course, common. One notable example by Franck is his *Prélude, choral et fugue* (1884) for piano. In Ysaÿe's case, he employs genres and forms reminiscent of the Baroque as well as direct allusions to Bach. As he also felt a certain affinity to Debussy, he found it important to discover ways in which to render a debussyste sound world, including corresponding harmonies.

The violin tradition as passed down to him by his teacher Vieuxtemps is partly reflected in the virtuosity with which Op. 27 is saturated. The use of counterpoint, creation of quickly alternating sonorities and demanding passage work are all points in case. The



technique required is thus greatly demanding and very varied. At the same time, the music remains expressive, which is signalled in the score through the many requests for a wide range of dynamics, articulations and other, rarer annotations, such as *cédez*. In addition, the different Sonatas contain violinistic innovations. These range from the use of counterpoint in the context of his highly chromatic and modally inflected harmonic idiom, to occurrences of quarter-tones, to debussyste effects, such as the possibility of rendering a whole-tone scale in parallel sixths with fingerings that avoid extraneous sounds (see chapter 4). These innovations, in Ysaÿe's view, follow the spirit of *Vieuxtemps*, which he felt includes the constant quest to enlarge the violin's technique and potential for expressiveness.

While Ysaÿe developed these technical and musical innovations in the spirit of *Vieuxtemps*, they were also meant to connect him to the generation(s) of violinists and composers that would follow him by offering them new technical and musical means to increase musical expressiveness and beauty in their own compositions and performances. The generation after Ysaÿe is also addressed through the dedications of the Sonatas to younger violinists and through the incorporation of something of their personality and playing style in their Sonata. For instance, the Fourth Sonata, dedicated to Kreisler, contains allusions to his own music, while the Third and Sixth make reference to the dedicatees' nationality (Enescu's Rumanian and Quiroga's Spanish heritage respectively).

Each Sonata is explored in turn because of their striking individuality in terms of character, stylistic combination and ways of drawing on different idioms. However, each Sonata is coherent in its own way and so is the set despite the often significant differences between Sonatas. Qualities that create this coherence include their foundation in the late nineteenth century and an idiom reminiscent of the group around Franck with the above-mentioned very chromatic and modally inflected harmony and the ambiguities, notably in melody, harmony, rhythm, metre and form. These characteristics also produce the improvisatory character of each Sonata and the cycle as a whole. Other sources of coherence include the work's rootedness in the violin-virtuoso tradition. Furthermore, references to the Baroque are an important recurrent feature, as are, even though to a lesser degree, more modern, largely debussyste tendencies. Ysaÿe's idiom is consistently stylistically fluid, imaginative and multifaceted. This offers another layer of cohesion. With Op. 27, Ysaÿe demonstrates a high level of imaginativeness and craftsmanship.

The First Sonata is overwhelmingly written in a Neobaroque idiom, including the extensive use of counterpoint and references to Bach's G-minor Violin Sonata BWV 1001,

such as the genre of a *sonata da chiesa* and the harmonic scheme. Ysaÿe embeds the Baroque characteristics in his typical late-nineteenth-century style. Debussyste reminiscences are also woven into the fabric of Ysaÿe's Sonata, largely in the form of the whole-tone scale and creation of novel timbre as discussed in chapter 4. Like the First Sonata, the Second and Fourth are conceived in a Neobaroque style. However, both are reminiscent of a suite rather than, as the First, of a *sonata da chiesa*. Also, there is not a great deal of debussyste influence. The Second Sonata is unique in that Ysaÿe uses quotations because he normally paraphrases rather than quotes. The quotations are taken from the Preludio of Bach's Third Partita BWV 1006 and from the *Dies Irae* of the Mass of the Dead. Especially the *Dies Irae* pervades the entire Sonata. Ysaÿe's Fourth Sonata takes more clearly the French Baroque as a starting point with its frequent imitations of *style brisé* and small trills. In addition, the dedicatee Kreisler is alluded to through references to his *Praeludium und Allegro* (1910) in the Finale.

In Enescu's Sonata (No. 3), Ysaÿe seems to create a somewhat exotic feeling with suggestions of a more or less imaginary Rumanian style as reflected, for instance, in some of the rhythms and embellishments. Unusually, he incorporates several quarter-tones in some arabesques. The Sonata dedicated to Quiroga (No. 6), which remains essentially in the confines of Ysaÿe's virtuosic and highly chromatic and modally inflected idiom, incorporates a habanera, that is, a Hispanic dance, which is most probably a *clin d'œil* to the dedicatee. The extreme virtuosity is likely to also be directed towards Quiroga, as he was known for his supreme virtuosic abilities. The Fifth Sonata is the most debussyste of all. Here, Ysaÿe creates a sound world very much in keeping with Debussy's own music, especially in the first movement. Timbre becomes an end in itself and ceases at times to be subordinated to melodic-rhythmic-harmonic considerations.

The musical analyses in this part demonstrate in more detail the ways in which Ysaÿe draws on his musical heritage in Op. 27. They show his ability to incorporate the different styles and traditions and to successfully merge and manipulate them. It is also argued that Ysaÿe's Sonatas, which, as suggested, are perhaps best identified as multifaceted, reveal a complex musical identity that is based on past tradition and that, in the present, seeks to prepare violinists and composers for the future. Op. 27, thus, illustrates Ysaÿe's desire and ability to balance continuity of traditional values and compositional techniques with change, that is innovation, notably in terms of violinistic originality. In Part II, each Sonata is discussed first in terms of the main characteristics of the Sonata. Then follows a more detailed discussion of these traits and Ysaÿe's way of

integrating them to compose a stylistically fluid and improvisatory yet coherent work. The Sonatas' links to the violin tradition and their dedicatee are equally explored.

## Chapter 4: Eugène Ysaÿe, Sonata Op. 27/1

Listening to Ysaÿe's First Sonata, the incorporation of allusions to Bach's G minor Solo Sonata BWV 1001 and the Baroque more generally into an overall idiom consistent with the late nineteenth century is conspicuous. The Sonata takes the form of a *sonata da chiesa* with the movements Grave, Fugato, Allegretto poco scherzoso and Finale con brio. It is modelled on Bach's Sonata of the same genre. The latter's movements are Adagio, Fuga, Siciliana and Presto. The overall key of G minor and the key scheme of the movements (g-g-B flat-g) are also modelled on Bach's Sonata. In addition, the Sonatas are both first sonatas and, therefore, take a similar place in each sonata cycle. Other characteristics are less specific, such as the prevalence of counterpoint. Though relatively rare in solo violin music, it is part of the very fabric of Baroque music. There also seem to be more subtle references, such as the subjects' similar shape in Bach's Fuga and Ysaÿe's Fugato. These more oblique traits tend to be understood as allusions to Bach's Sonata because of the more specific references. Initially, this chapter outlines the structure of each movement of Ysaÿe's First Sonata and discusses their relationship to its model, Bach's Sonata BWV 1001. It then considers the stylistic features apparent in the work, including its Neobaroque nature, a Debussy idiom, and the influence of Szigeti's playing style.

**Table 4.1. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/1, Grave**

<b>Structural position</b>	<b>Bars</b>	<b>Tonal area</b>	<b>Technique/musical content</b>	<b>Style</b>
Thematic area 1	1-11	G minor →C minor (touching on C major in b. 11)	Counterpoint	Neobaroque
Transition/embellishing material	11-14	Tonal flux	Arabesques	Chromatic and modally inflected idiom rooted in the late Romantic era, leaning towards a debussyste style but also somewhat reminiscent of Bach's Adagio because of its arabesques
	15-17	Whole-tone	Undulating parallel sixths	Debussyste
	18	Tonal flux	Scale-based bridge to thematic area 2	Late Romantic chromaticism
Thematic area 2	19- <i>circa</i> 29	B flat minor chord →tonal flux →D minor (b. 22) →tonal flux	Counterpoint	Neobaroque
Transition/embellishing material	29 (3)-34	Tonal flux	<i>Arpeggios</i>	Neobaroque (reminiscent of Chaconne BWV 1004)

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
Thematic area 3	35-38	G minor	As bb. 1-4 (partial recapitulation)	Neobaroque
Transition/embellishing material	39-41	Tonal flux	Arabesques similar to bb. 11-14, but the rhythm is simplified, avoiding triplets and remaining in even semiquavers	Chromatic and modally inflected idiom rooted in the late Romantic era, leaning towards debussyste style but also somewhat reminiscent of Bach's Adagio because of its arabesques
Coda	42-52	Chromaticism over a pedal <i>g</i>	Melodic-harmonic-rhythmic processes are subordinated to the creation and continuation of timbre as primary focus	Debussyste in focus on timbre, also use of <i>tremolo</i> and static harmony

As shown in the table, the Grave has three thematic areas of which the third is based on the first. The form of the movement might be described as modified ternary. All thematic areas are written in a Neobaroque idiom, that is, they combine references to Bach and the Baroque with a highly chromatic and modally inflected tonal harmony typical of the late nineteenth century and the circle around Franck. The same is true for the *arpeggios* in bars 29 (3) to 34, which are part of the transitional, or embellishing, material. They appear to be reminiscent of the *arpeggio* passages in Bach's Chaconne BWV 1004. Two more debussyste passages stand out. The first consists of undulating parallel sixths based on the whole-tone scale (bb. 15-17), a scale that frequently occurs in Debussy. The

second is the coda, where colouristic effect is the primary objective and melodic-harmonic-rhythmic processes are subordinated. Again, this is characteristic of Debussy's music.

**Table 4.2. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/1, Fugato**

<b>Structural position</b>	<b>Bars</b>	<b>Tonal area</b>	<b>Technique/musical content</b>	<b>Style</b>
Exposition	1-15 (1)	G minor → momentarily touches on B flat major	Fugal counterpoint	Neobaroque
Episode 1	15-30 (1)	Tonal flux with final modulation to D minor	Passage moving into <i>arpeggios</i>	Virtuoso tradition and Neobaroque (bb. 15-18 reminiscent of first episode in Fuga; <i>arpeggios</i> reminiscent of Chaconne BWV 1004)
Statement of subjects (SoS)	30-34 (1)	G minor	Fugal counterpoint	Neobaroque
Episode 2	34-42 (1)	Modulation to D minor	Chromatic ascent of four semiquavers each with a pedal <i>d</i>	Virtuoso tradition (esp. bb. 36ff)
SoS	42-48 (1)	Touches on D minor as a dominant chord within G minor → tonal flux	Fugal counterpoint	Neobaroque



Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
Episode 3	48-54 (1)	Tonal flux → B flat major	Mainly syncopation following out of previous accompaniment of subject (like <i>Fortspinnung</i> )	Neobaroque; ending; virtuoso tradition
SoS	54-63 (1)	B flat major, last entry C minor (bb. 61-62)	Fugal counterpoint	Neobaroque
Episode 4	63-73 (1)	Tonal flux → whole-tone	Runs/ <i>arpeggios</i> moving into whole-tone passage in thirds and sixths	Virtuoso tradition and additionally from b. 67 <i>debussyste</i>
SoS	73-77 (1)	G major	Chords	Neobaroque and/or virtuoso tradition
Episode 5	77-83 (1)		Chords, a free continuation of previous SoS	Neobaroque and virtuoso tradition
SoS	83-87 (1)	G minor → D minor	SoS woven into semiquaver triplets	Neobaroque
Episode 6	87-94 (1)	→ tonal flux, ends on <i>d</i>	Semiquaver triplets continued, ends in semiquavers: <i>bariolage</i> on <i>d</i>	Neobaroque
SoS	94 (2)- 104 (1)	G minor	Fugal counterpoint, moving to chords	Neobaroque moving into virtuoso tradition
Coda	104-112	G minor	<i>Arpeggios, stretto</i> in quavers but only indicated by initial	Virtuoso tradition

			interval, runs, chords in up to six voices	
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Like the Grave, the Fugato is largely written in a Neobaroque idiom. Neobaroque and virtuoso tradition go largely hand in hand; sometimes one predominates, sometimes the other. However, both are to some degree present throughout the Fugato. As in the Grave, there is a passage based on the whole-tone scale that stands out stylistically.

**Table 4.3. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/1, Allegretto poco scherzoso**

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
A	1-16 (1)	B flat major	Theme and its material spun out	Neobaroque
B	16-21	Tonal flux	Undulating parallel fifths and fourths, and augmented fifths and fourths	Debussyste
	22-27	G7/9 chord	<i>Arpeggios</i>	Virtuoso tradition
A'	28-49	E flat major	Development of thematic material	Neobaroque
C	49-60	E flat major via tonal flux and modulation to B flat major	Virtuosic passage leading to A'	Virtuoso tradition
A	61-76 (1)	B flat major	Almost literal return of A section	Neobaroque
Coda	76-80	B flat major	Based on thematic material	Neobaroque

In the Allegretto, too, Neobaroque and virtuoso tradition predominate. One stylistic exception occurs with the undulating parallel fifths and fourths, and augmented fifths and fourths in *pianissimo*. They appear more debussyste. The form of the movement might be described as a sort of rondo, in which the outer A sections are almost identical and the A' section develops thematic material (as does the coda). The two episodes, B and C, are largely composed of figuration.

**Table 4.4. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/1, Finale con brio**

<b>Structural position</b>	<b>Bars</b>	<b>Tonal area</b>	<b>Technique/musical content</b>	<b>Style</b>
First thematic area (A)	1-18	G minor	Chords and double-stops	Virtuoso tradition
Development 1	19-55	Tonal flux, but starts and ends on G minor	Passage work, some of which is thematically based	Virtuoso tradition
Return of bb. 1-7 (slightly modified and shortened) (A')	56-61	G minor (cut off on A7)	Chords and double-stops	Virtuoso tradition
Division between two halves	62	/	Rest	/
Development 2	63-81 (1)	Whole-tone moving to tonal flux	Whole-tone harmony moves into highly chromatic passage work	Debussyste and virtuoso tradition
	81 (2)-108 (1)	Tonal flux; move to G minor at the end	Passage work, some of which is thematically based	Virtuoso tradition
Thematic material to close (A'')	108-122	G minor	Chords and double-stops	Virtuoso tradition

In the Finale, the virtuoso tradition predominates and the compositional idiom bears the imprint of the late nineteenth century with its highly chromatic and modally inflected tonal harmony. This time, the passage that is based on the whole-tone scale stands out less because its environment also gives a more modern impression with its highly chromatic and virtuosic content, which contains a significant amount of dissonant, often tritonal, harmony.

One of the most striking features of this Sonata is that Ysaÿe integrates references to Bach and the Baroque into his own idiom, rooted as it is in the musical language of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with its highly chromatic and modally

inflected harmony and the various ambiguities, such as in melody, harmony, phrasing and rhythm. For instance, the beginning of the Grave is especially reminiscent of Bach's Adagio because of the contrapuntal texture and shape of the melodic line (see examples 4.1 and 4.2). The serious *Affekt* and the quasi-improvisatory musical fabric also contribute. The counterpoint in the Grave, as in the Adagio, is grounded in tonal harmony in which chords, like pillars, buttress the melodic line. The latter is woven into the chordal structure and, moving through the different voices, gives a somewhat sinuous impression. Moreover, the melodic line in the Grave, though less continuous and florid, more imitative in counterpoint as well as rhythmically less even than in the Adagio, tends to also emphasise stepwise movement.

**Example 4.1a. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Grave, Op. 27/1, bb. 1-4**

**Example 4.1b. – J. S. Bach, Adagio, BWV 1001, bb. 1-2**

These allusions are integrated into a context that is markedly chromatic as well as modally inflected (see example 4.1a above). From the very beginning, chromatic and seventh chords are widespread. Like the modal inflections which Ysaÿe employs, such as the Lydian fourth (the melodic *g sharp* in b. 1 (3), which is a passing note linking *g* and *a*), their function is often colouristic. A concern with timbre is characteristic of the period's

music, especially in the French sphere of influence.<sup>381</sup> The second bar serves to illustrate Ysaÿe's kaleidoscopic use of harmonic colour (see example 4.1 above). The bar consists of a gradually transforming and stabilising G major harmony.<sup>382</sup> As the sonority unfolds, the harmony slowly resolves from within and the colour progressively shifts. Only after the pure fifth *g-d* is distilled does the music move on to a C minor chord (b. 3 (1)).

Harmony, rhythm and metre work together to create the improvisatory quality of the music and its association with the fantasia tradition. The chromaticism is an important factor because it tends to obscure basic underlying harmonic progressions. For instance, the simple cadential nature of the initial phrase (bb. 1-5 (2)) is significantly blurred through chromatic alterations and added notes in chords and melody. Rhythmic and metric ambiguities intensify this effect. The melodic line is almost immediately syncopated and metre and phrasing do not entirely coincide either. The phrase is four and a half bars long and overlaps with the next, producing a three-quaver elision in bar 5. Bar 5 itself contains four crotchets rather than the three of the surrounding measures. In addition, the climax of the phrase falls on a metrically weak beat (b. 2 (2)). As a result, from the very beginning of the Grave, Ysaÿe creates a constant musical flux. Wagner's statement that the secret of musical form is the 'art of the finest gradual transition,'<sup>383</sup> (referring to the love-duet in *Tristan*, Act II) neatly encapsulates an important aspect of Ysaÿe's compositional approach. Compositional processes, such as these, are typical for the entire Sonata cycle. They emphasise Ysaÿe's identification with the late nineteenth century and illustrate important ways in which he tends to draw on and merge the Baroque with his own, nineteenth-century-based idiom throughout the Sonata. Associations with the Baroque often stem from the use of extensive counterpoint as well as from the integration of the musical genres typical of the Baroque.

Like the Grave, the Fugato integrates references to Bach, here his Fuga, and the Baroque into the highly chromatic idiom typical for Ysaÿe. Most conspicuously, the Fugato, like its counterpart the Fuga, is, of course, a fugal movement. Fugues for solo violin are extremely rare and only those by Bach are well-known. This leads to an association of Ysaÿe's piece with that of Bach. The two movements also share some other aspects. It could, for example, be argued that both subjects have a somewhat similar shape although

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<sup>381</sup> See Morgan 1991: 3-5; and Jean-Pierre Bartoli, *L'Harmonie classique et romantique (1750-1900): Éléments et évolution* (Clamecy (France): Minerve, 2001), pp. 179-203.

<sup>382</sup> The initial *b0/7* is interpreted as a *G7/9* without root.

<sup>383</sup> 'Kunst des feinsten allmählichen Überganges' (quoted in Carolyn Abbate, 'Wagner, "On Modulation," and "Tristan,"' *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Mar. 1989), pp. 33-58 (p. 43)).

Ysaÿe uses *legato* and Bach employs separate notes. In addition, the quaver with two semiquavers (b. 1 (3)) in Bach's subject is retrograded in Ysaÿe's Fugato also on the third beat of the subject (though here on the first beat of the second bar rather than the third crotchet in the first bar) (see examples 4.2a and b).

**Example 4.2a. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Fugato (Subject), Op. 27/1, bb. 1-3**



**Example 4.2b. – J. S. Bach, Fuga (Subject), BWV 1001, bb. 1-2**



The Fugato appears to be a fully-fledged fugue as far as possible on the violin, with a full exposition with real and tonal answers rotating (bb. 1-15 (1)), two *codettas* (bb. 3 (1+)-4 (2 (1+)) and bb. 6 (1+)-11 (1+)). The Fugato possesses four voices in the exposition, with one *codetta* between the first subject and its answer, and the second *codetta* between the second pair of subject and answer. There is no fixed countersubject. Subjects and episodes alternate in the remainder of the movement, and there are suggestions of *stretto* (bb. 94-100 and bb. 108-110 (1), the latter through the first two notes of the subject) as well as augmentation (bb. 102-104).

Ysaÿe integrates the allusions to Bach into his own idiom as described for the Grave. Accordingly, in the Fugato, too, the harmony is highly chromatic. For instance, chromaticism is already abundant in the exposition with the Neapolitan *a flat*. It serves as a pivot to an implied E flat major chord. In addition, both *codettas* proceed in semitones. This chromaticism creates an improvisatory ambience. In the second *codetta* (bb. 6-11 (1)), for example, the chromatic descent in what seem to be sighing motions is supported by a chordal substructure that contributes to a significantly chromatic harmony. It serves more as colouration than goal-oriented harmonic progression. More generally, harmonic processes in the entire piece are frequently veiled by chromaticism. This is the case, for instance, in bars 77 to 80 with the further development of the subject after its occurrence

in bars 73 to 76. In episodes, too, highly chromatic and tonally ambiguous harmony prevails, such as in bars 63 to 66, just before the whole-tone passage.

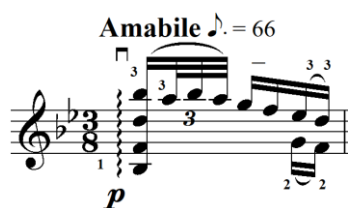
Bach's third movement of his Sonata BWV 1001, is a Siciliana. It is in B flat major, has a 12/8 metre and incorporates the dotted rhythm typical of the dance, here manifested as a dotted quaver followed by a semiquaver and a quaver. The piece has a lilting quality. Like the previous two movements of Ysaÿe's First Sonata, the third movement, the Allegretto poco scherzoso, shares a number of traits with Bach's Siciliana. Perhaps most importantly, it, too, has a gentle, lilting character and stands in the key of B flat major. Although the Allegretto is not called a siciliano or siciliana and does lack some of its attributes, such as the dotted rhythm, the 6/8 or 12/8 metre and the upbeat (which Bach's piece also lacks), it is somewhat similar in nature. This is mainly due to its calmness, grace, lilt, 3/8 metre and contrapuntal nature. The reminiscence of Bach's Siciliana is perhaps most pronounced in the theme of Ysaÿe's Allegretto, notably because the lilting feeling is strongest (largely created by the demisemiquaver triplet) and a recurring stepwise descending semiquaver fourth is shared by the two movements (see examples 4.3a and 4.3b). It first occurs in the first bar of both Bach's Siciliana and Ysaÿe's Allegretto and remains important throughout the pieces. In addition, the upper two voices in bar 1 in the Siciliana seem to have inspired the second part of the A section (bb. 9-16 (1)) of the Allegretto, more specifically, the recurring descending three-note figures consisting of two demisemiquavers followed by a semiquaver (which first appears in bar 4). They occur in parallel sixths (as in Bach) or, inverted, in parallel thirds (see examples 4.3a and 4.3c).

**Example 4.3a. – J. S. Bach, Siciliana, BWV 1001, b. 1**





**Example 4.3b. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Allegretto poco scherzoso, Op. 27/1, b. 1**



**Example 4.3c. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Allegretto poco scherzoso, Op. 27/1, b. 9**



In terms of its form, Bach's *Siciliana* is unusual for its genre in that, rather than consisting of the usual binary form, it is through-composed. Ysaÿe, on the other hand, chooses a rondo form, ABA'CAcoda. A minor difference between the two A sections is the repeat of the first half in the initial A section. The central section A', on the other hand, is a development of thematic material, whereas the two episodes largely consist of figuration. Ascending undulating parallel fifths and fourths, and augmented fifths and fourths form the first part of the first episode, while spun-out arpeggiated chords form the second. The second episode, which is also scale- and *arpeggio*-based, consists of virtuosic passage work. Both episodes are almost devoid of thematic material. The figuration in both passages bestows a dynamic, fantasia-like character, which is amplified by the passages' kaleidoscopic harmonic colour. The coda also develops thematic material. Because of the preponderance of the thematic material in the scheme of the movement, the *Allegretto* feels very unified. Bach's *Siciliana* is equally unified. Here, the first five quavers provide the raw material for much of the movement.

Like Bach's *Presto* BWV 1001, Ysaÿe's *Finale* is a fast, energetic and virtuosic closing movement to the *Sonata* and each has some imitative qualities. The time signature is 3/8 in both cases. Moreover, in Bach's *Presto* the time signature, although 3/8, feels at times somewhat as if it proceeds in two beats per bar or indeed in one beat per bar, such as at the beginning, for instance in bars 1 to 11, and especially in bars 9 to 11. Bach seems to play with this ambiguity throughout the piece, sometimes giving the feeling of three beats in the bar, sometimes of two and sometimes only of one. Ysaÿe also plays with

metric ambiguity. In his Finale, cross-rhythm figures especially in the theme but also at times in the more developmental material, notably from bar 8 onwards, into which the theme dissipates after the half-cadence in bar 7. Counterintuitive accents equally occur, notably in bars 33 to 34 and bars 37 to 38.

Perhaps Ysaÿe's use of a Neobaroque idiom serves, to a degree, as a reminiscence of Debussy too, as he also wrote in this style. Examples include *Pour le Piano* (1894-1901), the *Suite Bergamasque* (1905) and his *Préludes* (1909-13). However, as shown, Ysaÿe fuses characteristics of the Baroque with a style rooted in the late nineteenth century, whereas Debussy's own idiom was more obviously forward looking, that is, innovative in a range of areas, such as harmony, melody and timbre. He wanted to leave the nineteenth century behind. Ysaÿe, on the other hand, was proud of being deeply rooted in it which is evident from statements, such as his description of himself as a Romantic,<sup>384</sup> and his loyalty to Franck and his circle,<sup>385</sup> as was discussed in chapter 2. Notwithstanding Ysaÿe's identity as a Romantic, he also related to Debussy's music. In the Grave, there are two occasions when a debussyste style is clearly foregrounded: in bars 15 to 17 and in bars 42 to the end (see examples 4.4 and 4.5). Both passages abandon the strong emphasis on a late nineteenth-century aesthetic as well as the reminiscences of Bach and the Baroque.

**Example 4.4. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Grave, Op. 27/1, bb. 15-17**

<sup>384</sup> ' [...] le romantique, tel que je fus et tel que je reste [...] ' [ '[...] the Romantic, that I was and that I remain [...] ]' (see E. Ysaÿe 1968: 8).

<sup>385</sup> ' Franck, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Debussy, d'Indy, Chausson, Duparc, Bordes, Magnard, Lekeu, Ropartz, Dalcroze et bien d'autres ont été pour moi des guides et des éducateurs ' [ ' Franck, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Debussy, d'Indy, Chausson, Duparc, Bordes, Magnard, Lekeu, Ropartz, Dalcroze and others as well have been for me guides and educators ' ] (in Christen 1947: 179).

**Example 4.5. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Grave, Op. 27/1, bb. 42-52**

Stylistically they are very distinct. In bars 15 to 17 an evenly undulating whole-tone scale in parallel minor sixths creates a stylistic link to Debussy. Here, attention shifts from harmonic-thematic processes to the musical moment. Harmonic direction is suspended through the relatively sustained use of the whole-tone scale. In the absence of leading tones, melodic direction is also reduced, which the undulations with their parallel motion and the even rhythm further decrease. This creates a soft musical outline and a floating feeling so that the musical moment becomes the focus.

The whole-tone scale also appears in the Fugato (bb. 67-72 (except for the last note c in the second voice of b. 70)). It consists of scales and undulating motions of parallel major thirds and minor sixths. This is the only passage in the piece that is of overtly debussyste character. However, despite the undulation and contrary to the Grave, there is more direction because of the two scales, the greater range and the increasing dynamics. The bars move to a preliminary climax in bar 71. But without leading tones, again, harmonic processes are suspended. This contributes to an improvisatory feeling. Another contribution to the improvisatory ambience comes from the episodes through means, such as figuration (for example, bb. 36-41), *arpeggios* (for example, bb. 23-29 and bb. 104-108) and *bariolage* (bb. 19-20 and, it might be argued, despite the double stops, until b. 22; and

bb. 91-94 (1)). The Finale, similarly contains a whole-tone passage (bb. 63-69) that dissolves into highly chromatic material.

At the end of the Grave, the music's debussyste quality stems largely from the blending of timbre with chromaticism. The timbre itself, created by combining very soft *ponticello tremolo* with left-hand *pizzicato*, is novel. The dynamics are very soft and the music gradually fades out. However, though typical in Debussy, the use of distinctive timbres had become increasingly important during the nineteenth century, especially in France since Berlioz.<sup>386</sup> The stylistic proximity to Debussy stems notably from the importance Ysaÿe confers on tone-colour in these bars. This is because in Debussy's music, much more so compared to his predecessors, timbre often becomes a structural element to which melodic, harmonic and rhythmic considerations are subordinated.<sup>387</sup> In the final bars of the Grave, Ysaÿe similarly prioritises colour. Harmonic activity ceases and, remaining on G, a pedal (*g/g-d*) is introduced. Harmonic changes are limited to the surface and have an exclusively coloristic function. As frequently in Debussy, the musical fabric itself comprises distinctive layers. The two layers at the end of the Grave differ significantly in timbre, texture and rhythm, though each layer is homogenous within itself. Moreover, the construction of these bars might be described as somewhat 'additive' in that an initial four-note unit is gradually transformed through subtly changing repetitions.<sup>388</sup> This, again, is characteristic of a debussyste idiom. The additive construction causes the emphasis to be placed on the present moment and the musical surface, that is, again, away from deeper harmonic-thematic-rhythmic processes. These examples indicate that, in this Sonata, Ysaÿe's debussyste allusions are differentiated through harmonic organisation, phrase structure, rhythmic organisation and an absence of counterpoint. Also, on both occasions, there is no stylistic fusion. Another colouristic effect reminiscent of Debussy occurs in the Allegretto. Here, Ysaÿe weaves in a short passage of very soft, undulating rising fifths and fourths as well as augmented fifths and (perfect) fourths (see example 4.6). Again, timbre takes precedence over melodic, harmonic and rhythmic considerations.

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<sup>386</sup> See chapter 8 of the present thesis for a more in-depth discussion on Debussy's use of colour.

<sup>387</sup> For a discussion of Debussy's innovative use of colour see also, for example, Arthur B. Wenk, *Claude Debussy and Twentieth-Century Music* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), pp. 122-126.

<sup>388</sup> The term 'additive' has been adopted here following Robert Morgan who uses it to describe similar techniques in Debussy (see Morgan 1991: 48). See also chapter 8 of the present thesis.

**Example 4.6. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Op. 27/1, Allegretto poco scherzoso, bb. 16-21**

So far, the role of the violin tradition in the Sonata has only been touched on. Here too, Ysaÿe was deeply rooted in the nineteenth century but incorporates techniques associated with different periods. For instance, he creates fingering and bowing techniques that accommodate the use of counterpoint within his own highly chromatic and modally inflected harmonic idiom. Also, in the Grave, the *arpeggios* from bar 29 onwards as well as those in the Fugato towards the end in bars 104 to 107 could perhaps be considered allusions to the *arpeggios* in Bach's Chaconne BWV 1004 (bb. 89-120 and bb. 201-207). But, as Szigeti (quoted in Chapter 3) notes, the across-the-strings sweeping *arpeggios* are very much characteristic of Ysaÿe's own playing.

Innovations are perhaps most perceptible in the more contemporary, debussyste passages discussed earlier, that is, the whole-tone passages in the Grave, Fugato and Finale, as well as the *ponticello tremolo* with left-hand *pizzicato* (Grave, bb. 42-52) and the undulating fifths and fourths, and augmented fifths and perfect fourths in the Allegretto (bb. 16-21). In the first case, it is the fingering for the whole-tone sixths that is novel. It enables the clean playing of such passages, sidestepping undesired bowing noises from avoidable string changes and audible shifting. The innovative aspect of the ending, on the other hand, lies in the special sound quality created by the combination of *sul ponticello tremolo* with left-hand *pizzicato*. Both times, Ysaÿe enables the creation of effects on a single violin which were previously impossible or unknown. Particularly considering the increasing importance of both non-diatonic scales and sonority in music, he contributes two valuable assets for future composers to realise their musical intentions. The passage in the Allegretto (bb. 16-21), on the other hand, is likely more innovative in its sound and debussyste ambience than in violin technique. Thus, tradition and innovation constantly

interact on a technical level as much as they do on a stylistic level. The Sonata, of course, reflects the uniqueness of Ysaÿe's violinistic style in many other ways too, such as in the careful fingering, bowing, expression and *agogic* markings that concern matters of style and expressiveness much more than innovation.

A good deal of the technically innovative and challenging material occurs outside passages that relate to Bach and the Baroque or to a debussyste idiom. Rather, they are reminiscent of the nineteenth-century virtuoso tradition. A case in point is the passage of figurations from bar 49 onwards in the Allegretto. Unusually, it contains a quarter-tone in bar 54. Bar 53 descends chromatically in broken fourths and bar 54 continues this descent but in figures of broken and embellished tritones. About half-way through the bar, the intervals of the figures become smaller. It is here, that Ysaÿe employs the quarter-tone so as not to audibly disturb the underlying chromatic line (see example 4.7).

**Example 4.7. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Allegretto poco scherzoso, Op. 27/1, bb. 42-44**

The image shows a musical score for three staves, numbered 42, 43, and 44. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Staff 42 contains several triplet markings (3) and a 'V' marking above a note. Staff 43 begins with a forte 'f' dynamic and features sixteenth-note patterns with '6' markings below. Staff 44 continues with triplet markings (3) and includes a circled 'x' marking above a note.

Technical challenges are especially palpable in the Finale. Two examples will illustrate the point. First, the clean playing of the chords unbroken and at full speed (quaver = 132) in the thematic material is very difficult, and secondly, the fast, high tenths in bars 52 to 55 (1) are equally challenging. The latter are problematic for both left and right hand: for the left hand, issues with the intonation of the tenth are difficult to avoid, and for the right hand, to make these tenths sound clear and accented is equally difficult.

Again, the fantasia with its inherent freedom is well suited to Ysaÿe's objective to experiment with and explore the incorporation of a range of previous and current

violinistic achievements as well as innovations of his own.<sup>389</sup> In turn, the explorative nature of the technique strengthens the music's improvisatory feeling and, hence, its association with the fantasia tradition. Thus, style, technique and structure are intimately linked. Given that Ysaÿe considered violin technique and musical content to be inseparable and interdependent, the fantasia tradition inevitably accommodates violinistic issues as much as the musical content.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the dedication of the Sonatas to the younger violinists constitutes in itself a link with the future. Interestingly, although the immediate inspiration for the Sonatas stems from Szigeti's Bach playing, Ysaÿe also very much appreciated a rare ability he perceived in Szigeti to 'stretch his talent as well to accommodate the harsh modern voices'<sup>390</sup> and, thus, to convincingly perform the music of very different periods. By dedicating the initial Sonata to Szigeti and modelling it on the Bach Sonata he likely had heard Szigeti perform, Ysaÿe acknowledges the immediate inspiration he received from Szigeti's Bach performance. Moreover, Szigeti's stylistic versatility may have encouraged Ysaÿe to explore the interaction of different traditions in the sonata cycle. The dedication, therefore, also becomes a way in which Ysaÿe can bring different parts of history together.

Three examples from the Grave exemplify ways in which the First Sonata is reminiscent of Szigeti's playing style. First, the overall majestic, striding character of both Szigeti's rendition of the Adagio and the character of Ysaÿe's Grave are striking. Second, the variety of the chords' characters is one of Szigeti's special strengths. As one can hear on Szigeti's 1931 recording of Bach's G minor Sonata, the way and variety in which he approaches the interpretation of chords is reflected in the way chords might usefully be approached in Ysaÿe's Grave.<sup>391</sup> Szigeti breaks them often clearly, but not uniformly. Always sensitive to the musical context, he nuances, for instance, the weight and speed with which he breaks them. Certain chords he plays in one. Accordingly, some chords sound relatively soft while others are more forceful in character.

The variety of approaching chords seems to be written into the music by Ysaÿe through the rhythm and voicing. Faster chords are necessary, for instance, in the first bar, because of the syncopation and the repeated need to take the arm back quickly to a lower

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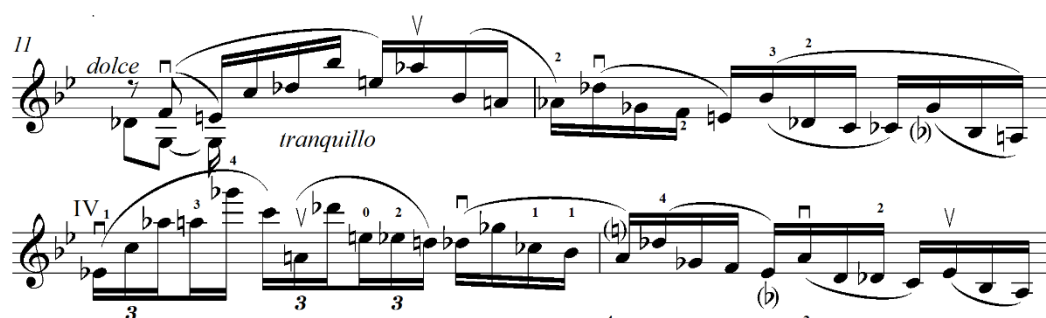
<sup>389</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of Ysaÿe's violin technique and technical contributions see Karen D. Hoatson, *Culmination of the Belgian Violin Tradition: The Innovative Style of Eugène Ysaÿe* (DMA Thesis, Los Angeles, University of California, 1999).

<sup>390</sup> 'assouplir son talent aussi bien aux voix âpretés modernes,' (in A. Ysaÿe 1967: 3-4).

<sup>391</sup> Matrix number: WAX5958-I, WAX5959-II, WAX5960-II, WAX5961-II, Original issue number: Columbia LX 127 and Columbia J 7825.

string. In bar 2, on the other hand, Ysaÿe shows how to break the chord of five voices. He indicates by means of brackets which notes are to be played together. Furthermore, sometimes Ysaÿe writes two consecutive double-stops that together constitute a regular chord and can be read as a ‘very’ broken chord (see example 4.1 above). The third example is a sensitive *rubato* for which Ysaÿe was, of course, renowned, too. It is helpful when bringing out different voices that are built into a single line. This is the case in bars 11 to 14 and 39 to 41 in the Grave (see example 4.8).

**Example 4.8. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Grave, Op. 27/1, bb. 11-14**



The arabesques also require subtle adjustments in tempo for their fluency to be brought out. The sensitivity, which would be advantageous for the *rubato* in these bars, is strongly reminiscent of the *rubato* and general expression achieved by Szigeti in Bach’s Adagio, for instance, in bars 18 to 20, where different voices are also implied (see example 4.9).

**Example 4.9. – J. S. Bach, Adagio, BWV 1001, bb. 18-20**



Although Szigeti’s playing of the Adagio is filled with *rubato* throughout, bars 19 to 20 are an especially telling example because here he combines the *rubato*, with less vibrato and



very soft dynamics. This gives an impression of more tender playing than has previously been the case. This would also suit the character of this part of the Grave well.

It would be incorrect to say that Szigeti's interpretation stands totally apart from all others of his time, there are, for example, a number of similarities between Szigeti's and Heifetz's interpretation of Bach's Adagio (rec. 1935).<sup>392</sup> However, as Szigeti's Bach was so highly regarded in his time and acknowledged by Ysaÿe to have been an inspiration for his own Sonatas, it seems reasonable to look for traces of influence of his playing style in Ysaÿe's First Sonata. Also, of course, it is possible that Ysaÿe's own interpretation showed parallels with that of Szigeti, though this cannot be proven or disproven because Ysaÿe left no recordings of Bach. It is difficult to tell apart what is Ysaÿe's own playing style and what he emulated from Szigeti. However, the point here is that these parallels with Szigeti's playing exist whether they were purposefully included or not.

In contrast to the Grave, Szigeti's playing of Bach's Fuga seems to have had much less influence on or parallels with Ysaÿe's Fugato. This is because in the latter mostly slurred bowing is indicated, while Szigeti plays all subject-related material of Bach's Fuga with short, detached, at times off-the-string bowing. Often chords are played in one, without breaking them, and can sound slightly rough with some extraneous noise. As a result, parallels between Szigeti's interpretation of Bach and Ysaÿe's Fugato are much more tentative and conjectural. However, it might be argued that the first episode of the Fugato (bb. 15ff) is reminiscent in mood of Szigeti's interpretation of bars 64 to 74 (1) in Bach's Fuga. Szigeti's playing gives the impression of tenderness by means of soft dynamics, a sweet tone (*dolce*), *legato* bowing and evenness in rhythm. These are qualities Ysaÿe also asks for in the Fugato's first episode (and more generally in about the first half of the piece). Perhaps there are even small reminiscences of Bach's piece in Ysaÿe's Fugato, such as the soft *arpeggios* in bars 23 to 29, which are anchored by a pedal *d*, and the figuration of bars 69 to 73 in the Fuga, which contains rising *arpeggios* on beats 1 and 3 and also a pedal *d*. The combination of the reminiscence in mood and the, although distant, resemblances in material create a sense that Ysaÿe incorporates traces of Szigeti's playing style in his Fugato. However, it is impossible to deduce if or to what degree Ysaÿe intended this first episode of the Fugato to sound like Szigeti's rendition of Bach's passage. It may equally be that Ysaÿe was simply following his own musical and violinistic ideas without

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<sup>392</sup> Victor, from a disc (previously unissued), Matrix number: mx 2EA-2600-2, 3001-1, 02-2, 03-2.

seeking to reflect Szigeti's style. There is simply not enough evidence throughout the Fugato to suppose that Ysaÿe had Szigeti's performance of Bach's Fuga in mind.

In Ysaÿe's Allegretto, as in Bach's Siciliana, Szigeti's ability to create ethereal *pianos* can come to the fore. Much of the piece is in *piano* or less, all the way to triple *piano*. In particular the debussyste floating harmonies in bars 16 to 20 would benefit from this ethereal sound. Ysaÿe's Finale is reminiscent of Szigeti's interpretation of Bach's Presto. The latter has rarely been recorded with such energy and speed and Ysaÿe's Finale shares the intensity and overall character of Szigeti's interpretation of the Presto. In addition, the fast, unbroken chords in the theme are reminiscent of Szigeti's performance of the chords in Bach's Fuga. But again, more evidence is needed to be able to say with certainty that Ysaÿe modelled the movement on Szigeti's playing of Bach.

To sum up, the foregoing discussion has identified a number of characteristics to be central to Ysaÿe's First Sonata. It has demonstrated ways in which Ysaÿe models his First Sonata on Bach's First Sonata BWV 1001, such as in genre, key scheme and contrapuntal technique, including fugal counterpoint. It has also considered other salient stylistic features, notably a Neobaroque character and a debussyste idiom as well as the influence of Szigeti's playing style. The Neobaroque character which underlies this Sonata fuses references to Bach and the Baroque with Ysaÿe's own idiom, which is characterised by various ambiguities, such as in rhythm and metre, as well as by a highly chromatic and modally inflected tonal harmony. Ysaÿe also incorporates references to a debussyste idiom through various means, such as suspension of harmonic direction, use of the whole-tone scale, timbre-based passages, undulations and arabesques. Finally, the chapter has shown the importance of the violin tradition to this Sonata. Ysaÿe creates new means and ways of technique and musical expression, such as the fingering for the parallel sixths of the whole-tone scale, and the timbre-based and chromatic end of the Grave. At the same time, he composed a work that seems to cater particularly well to Szigeti's playing style.

The way the music proceeds is imaginative and explorative. The different musical styles and traditions wax and wane within an improvisatory musical fabric. They often merge and are elaborated. The Sonata's stylistic fluidity, its multifaceted and often innovative nature, mirror Ysaÿe's belief in the continuity of history, the value and inseparability of past, present and future. It testifies to his commitment to balancing the continuation of musical tradition with making a unique and personal contribution to its development.

## Chapter 5: Eugène Ysaÿe, Sonata Op. 27/2

Although very different in character, Ysaÿe's Second Sonata with its movements 'Obsession,' 'Malinconia,' 'Danse des Ombres' and 'Les Furies' shares some attributes with his First. Bach and a Neobaroque idiom remain a most important preoccupation. The violin virtuoso tradition and its extension are, of course, integral to this Sonata, too, as is the highly chromatic and modally inflected tonal harmony. The Debussy idiom appears to be absent, though a more modern idiom, perhaps Stravinskian (of the *Rite of Spring*), seems to be represented in the last movement through dissonances coupled with juxtapositions. These parallels begin to suggest some important compositional and aesthetic characteristics of the entire cycle, one in which past, present and future combine to form a whole. However, an important difference between the First and Second Sonatas is Ysaÿe's use of quotation in the latter. In the first movement, he quotes fragments of Bach's Third Partita BWV 1006 and the first two phrases of the *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath) of the Requiem Mass. In the other movements, only the chant returns. It seems to function as a kind of *idée fixe* throughout the Sonata. This is the only Sonata in which Ysaÿe quotes music, in all the others he only alludes to pieces or styles. The Sonata can be interpreted as a Baroque suite with an introductory prelude, two slow dances and a fast finale that, although not an obvious dance movement, picks up important aspects of the prelude again. Also, 'Les Furies' can, perhaps, be thought of as a dance, too, here of the Furies of Greek and Roman mythology with the piece's wild, at times dissonant and somewhat disjointed content. Be it as it may, the Second Sonata complements the First because, as in Bach's Sonatas and Partitas, the First Sonata is a church sonata and the Second a suite or partita. First, this chapter outlines the structure of each movement of Ysaÿe's Second Sonata and discusses their relationship to Bach's Third Partita. This is followed by a consideration of the stylistic features apparent in the work, including quotations, its Neobaroque nature, a relatively modern idiom, and ways in which Ysaÿe's Sonata suits Thibaud's playing style.

**Table 5.1. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/2, ‘Obsession’**

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content		Style
Bach	1-2	E major		Quotation (beginning of Preludio)	Baroque
Ysaÿe	3-5	Tonal flux	<i>Moto perpetuo</i>	Material based on Preludio	Neobaroque (because it is based on Bach’s Preludio)
Bach	6-7	E major		Quotation (bb. 29-30)	Baroque
Ysaÿe	8-9	Tonal flux		Material based on Preludio	Neobaroque
Bach	10	E7		Quotation (b. 32)	Baroque
Ysaÿe	11-31 (1)	A minor →E minor		<i>Dies Irae</i> quoted and woven into musical fabric (bb. 20-28)	Neobaroque
Bach	31-32	C major		Quotation (bb. 29-30 transposed)	Baroque
Ysaÿe	33-42 (1)	Tonal flux (33-34) D minor modally inflected		Material based on Preludio and <i>Dies Irae</i> quoted and woven into musical fabric in bb. 37-38	Neobaroque
Bach	42	D		Embellished quotation	Baroque
Ysaÿe	43-53 54-70 (1)	Tonal flux A major as V of D minor →e →A Aeolian		Material based on Preludio, and <i>Dies Irae</i> quoted and woven into musical fabric from b. 64, canonically in both voices	Neobaroque
Bach	70-71	A minor		Quotation (bb. 136-137 transposed)	Baroque

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area		Technique/musical content	Style
Ysaÿe	72-73	Tonal flux		Material based on Preludio, and <i>Dies Irae</i> quoted in all but the first two bars, which are an almost literal quotation of bb. 3-5	Neobaroque
	74-84	A Aeolian →A minor			
Bach	85	A minor		Quotation (end of Preludio transposed)	Baroque

The entire 'Obsession' is modelled on Bach's Preludio. Both take the form of *quasi a moto perpetuo*. The quotations of the Preludio, which are marked by square-bracketed small notes, are meant to be intrusive and are answered by ferocious entries of Ysaÿe's own material in all bars but bar 11. In his own material, the *Dies Irae* is quoted intermittently.

**Table 5.2. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/2, 'Malinconia'**

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
Main piece	1-23	E minor (modally inflected) →B minor	Two voices throughout, contrapuntal, partly imitative	Neobaroque
Coda	To end	E Aeolian	<i>Dies Irae</i> chant, partly in mensural notation	Neomedieval

The 'Malinconia' appears to be modelled on the Loure of Bach's Third Partita, that is, on the movement following the Preludio. Although different in mode, the 'Malinconia' is in minor/Aeolian and the Loure in major, they are similar in character. This is because both are slow movements and share, for instance, the two-voice counterpoint and lilting character. The latter stems from the metre (6/8 in the 'Malinconia' and 6/4 in the Loure) and the long-short (crotchet followed by a quaver) pattern in the 'Malinconia' and the dotted rhythm of the thematic material in the Loure. In the body of the 'Malinconia' there

are no quotations although in the coda the plainchant appears. It has no accompaniment and stands out because it is written in mensural notation and without bar lines. Only the end returns to modern notation.

**Table 5.3. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/2, ‘Danse des Ombres’**

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
Theme	1-9	G major	<i>Dies Irae</i> (harmonised and rhythmised), <i>pizzicato</i>	Combines nineteenth-century virtuosity with counterpoint and chordal writing that refer back to J. S. Bach, while quoting the medieval chant
Variation 1	10-18	G major	Variations (from simpler to more complex); Modally inflected and chromatic but tonal harmony	Nineteenth century
Variation 2	19-27	G major		
Variation 3	28-36	G minor		
Variation 4	37-45	E minor →G major		
Variation 5	46-54	E minor		
Variation 6	55-64	E minor		
Theme	65-73	G major	<i>Dies Irae</i> (harmonised and rhythmised, slightly different from beginning), <i>arco</i>	Combines nineteenth-century virtuosity with counterpoint and chordal writing that refer back to J. S. Bach, while quoting the medieval chant

‘Danse des ombres,’ a sarabande, is written in the form of theme and variations.

The theme is based on the *Dies Irae*, which is largely located in the upper voice. At the end,

it returns in a slightly modified version from the introduction. The variations bear greater or lesser resemblance to the chant and are organised from simpler to more complex. The genre of the sarabande is an allusion to the Baroque though the style is more reminiscent of the later nineteenth century with its chromaticism, modal inflections and metric irregularities (the time signature is, for instance,  $3/4 = 5/4$ ). Also, the modal chant lends the piece a slightly archaic atmosphere.

**Table 5.4. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/2, ‘Les Furies’**

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
Material 1	1-26	Initial diminished g major seventh harmony moves to A minor (b. 10)	Introductory figures based on the diminished harmony (bb. 6-9 related to material 2); thematic material	Virtuoso tradition
Material 2	27-31	A Aeolian	Reminiscent of ‘Obsession’ with <i>Dies Irae</i> frequently woven in	From Requiem Mass (chant), cast in virtuoso context, but with references to Bach’s Preludio
Material 1	32-40	Tonal flux	Brief <i>Fortspinnung</i> of initial material	Virtuoso tradition
Material 2	41-47	F Aeolian	Reminiscent of ‘Obsession’ with <i>Dies Irae</i> frequently woven in; partly <i>ponticello</i>	From Requiem Mass (chant), cast in virtuoso context, but with references to Bach’s Preludio
Material 3	48-54	Tonally juxtaposed <i>arpeggios</i>	<i>Arpeggios</i> with echo effect between <i>ff</i> and <i>pp</i> ; tritone relations and static feeling	Almost Stravinskyian (the Stravinsky of <i>The Rite of Spring</i> ) due to the stark juxtapositions

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
Material 2	55-61	F sharp Aeolian	Reminiscent of 'Obsession' with <i>Dies Irae</i> frequently woven in; partly <i>ponticello</i>	From Requiem Mass (chant), cast in virtuoso context, but with references to Bach's Preludio
Material 3	62-69	Tonally juxtaposed <i>arpeggios</i>	<i>Arpeggios</i> with echo effect between <i>ff</i> and <i>pp</i> ; tritone relations and static feeling; partly <i>ponticello</i>	Almost Stravinskyian (the Stravinsky of <i>The Rite of Spring</i> ) due to the stark juxtaposition
Material 2	70-73	Tonal flux	Reminiscent of 'Obsession' with <i>Dies Irae</i> frequently woven in	From Requiem Mass (chant), cast in virtuoso context, but with references to Bach's Preludio
Bridge	74-78	Modulation to A minor	Based on both materials 1 and 2	Virtuoso tradition
Material 1	79-91	A minor	Reminiscent of 'Obsession' with <i>Dies Irae</i>	Virtuoso tradition
Material 2	92-98 (1)	A Aeolian →C Aeolian →A Aeolian	Reminiscent of 'Obsession' with <i>Dies Irae</i> frequently woven in	From Requiem Mass (chant), cast in virtuoso context, but with references to Bach's Preludio
Material 1	98 (2)-99	A minor	Based on material 1	Virtuoso tradition

'Les Furies,' like the 'Obsession,' bears in parts resemblance to Bach's Preludio and incorporates the *Dies Irae* in the Bach-like passages (material 2). Material 1 does not bear any resemblance to Bach and the Baroque. Rather, its virtuosic demands are in line with Ysaÿe's identity as a violin virtuoso at the turn of the twentieth century. Material 3, with its tritones and abrupt changes in dynamics, gives a sense of some of the music of the early



twentieth century, notably that of the Stravinsky of *The Rite of Spring* as is explained below.

In this Sonata Ysaÿe quotes the Preludio and the *Dies Irae* (the latter is associated with death). He does so in fundamentally different ways. In the case of the Preludio, various bars are quoted once or, at most, twice, and are confined to the 'Obsession.' They stand out because they tend to be separated from the environment through rests and contrasting dynamics as well as the afore-mentioned notation. By contrast, the first two phrases of the *Dies Irae* are quoted repeatedly. They occur, although not always in their entirety, throughout the Sonata. In the outer movements, they are woven into figuration reminiscent of Bach's Preludio and are, therefore, less conspicuous. Nevertheless, the chant is tonally set apart because it stands in the Aeolian mode as it lacks the leading tone *d sharp*. The Bach quotations function as intrusions into Ysaÿe's thinking; they reflect an obsession with Bach against which Ysaÿe struggles. The idea of the struggle, his son Antoine suggests, leads his father to the funereal chant *Dies Irae*.<sup>393</sup> Perhaps he had a sense of being punished and of being condemned to being obsessed with Bach or perhaps this movement is meant to be tongue-in-cheek.

The 'Malinconia' is the only movement in this Sonata in which the *Dies Irae* does not occur in the movement itself but is added at the end. The piece itself finishes with a half-cadence and only then is the chant added, finishing on the tonic *e*. However, because it is modal, the 'Malinconia' finishes in E Aeolian instead of standing in E minor like the rest of the piece. This is because the *Dies Irae*, here too, lacks the leading note *d sharp*. In the 'Danse des Ombres' the chant is harmonised, rhythmised and employed as theme. It is harmonised in G major. The theme recurs at the end of the piece almost literally. In the variations, the chant is at times easily perceptible, such as in the fourth variation, while in the sixth variation it seems absent though perhaps the head of the *Dies Irae* can be discerned in, for instance, the first bar. In 'Les Furies,' the chant is treated in a similar way to the 'Obsession' in that it is woven into the figuration of material 2 of the movement, that is, into the material reminiscent of Bach's Preludio.

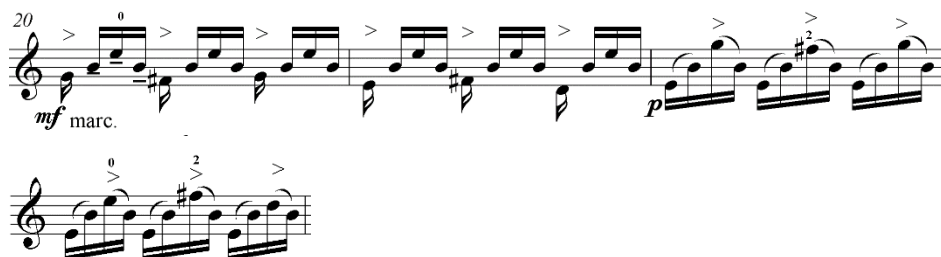
Bach and the Baroque remain important preoccupations in this Sonata. The 'Obsession,' for instance, is entirely modelled on Bach's Preludio and both are construed as a *moto perpetuo*. Ysaÿe retains Bach's texture of continuous semiquavers and makes

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<sup>393</sup> See A. Ysaÿe 1967: 6.

mostly use of figuration without double-stops. Pedals are abundant in both pieces and *bariolage* is also employed, notably in bars 27 to 30 and bars 60 to 69. In the 'Obsession,' both often occur during the quotations of the *Dies Irae*. Some pedals are relatively complex with more than one note, for example, from bar 20 onwards (see examples 5.1a and b).

**Example 5.1a. – Ysaÿe, 'Obsession,' Op. 27/2, bb. 20-23**



Perhaps such complex pedals have their origin in the figuration of the Preludio, for instance, from bar 17 onwards, although there, only the *e* is a true pedal (see example 5.1b). Whatever the case may be, all the pedals that accompany the *Dies Irae* endow it with a static quality, perhaps associated with death or feeling ruled by Bach.

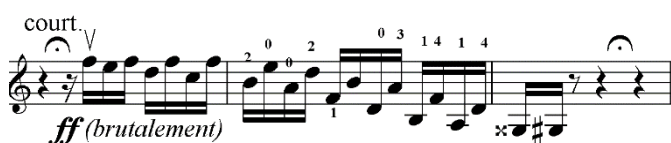
**Example 5.1b. – Bach, Preludio, BWV 1006, bb. 17-28**



Other material is related too. Bars 3 to 5 (see example 5.2a), for example, seem to paraphrase and fuse bar 1 with bars 3 to 4 of the Preludio (see example 5.2b) and distort

the intervals. Adding to this distortion with the ‘angry’ *fortissimo* with added accents, the ‘Obsession’ could not be further removed in character from the organ-like, well-balanced Preludio. Such melting together, paraphrasing, and melodic and harmonic distortion are the main means through which Ysaÿe achieves the persecutory character of the ‘Obsession.’ Additional means are dynamic contrasts and sudden rests.

**Example. 5.2a. – Ysaÿe, ‘Obsession,’ Op. 27/2, bb. 3-5**



**Example. 5.2b. – Bach, Preludio, BWV 1006, bb. 1-4**



Thus, in the ‘Obsession,’ a number of elements have been modified to deliberately distort the Baroque model: rests are inserted between Bach’s and Ysaÿe’s material, the harmonic idiom is changed and sudden dynamic outbursts of *fortissimo* recur. Unlike Bach’s diatonic harmony, that of Ysaÿe is strongly modally inflected through the *Dies Irae*. Moreover, passages are tonally ambiguous, such as the phrase in bars 3 to 5.

The ‘Malinconia’ does not possess any such distortions. Like the ‘Obsession,’ it is written in a Neobaroque style and seems to be modelled on its counterpart in Bach’s E major Partita, the Loure. ‘Malinconia’ and Loure are similar in character: both are graceful, slow dances, not unlike a siciliano or slow gigue, with their respective time signatures of 6/8 and 6/4, and their dotted, lilting rhythms. Although the Loure has sometimes an added third voice, both movements basically consist of two voices. The pieces are contrapuntal, and especially the ‘Malinconia’ comprises two independent voices throughout until the chant is introduced at the end. Here, the second voice changes into a pedal on the fifth that finally descends to the third. Moreover, in both pieces phrases are somewhat irregular though this is more pronounced in the ‘Malinconia.’ In the latter, the music ebbs and flows and is characterised by *Fortspinnung*. The phrasing contains a degree of ambiguity.

Nevertheless, it could perhaps be argued that the initial phrase, bars 1 to 6, suggests a five-bar phrase in each voice. The voices follow each other at one bar remove. The lower voice (bb. 1-5) begins and the upper voice (bb. 2-6) follows. The next phrase begins in bar 6 on beat 4 and ends in bar 12 on beat 1, thus comprising 6.5 bars. Bars 12 to 23, roughly the second half of the piece, are subdivided into bars 12 to 16 (4) and bars 17 with upbeat to 23. This is followed by the *Dies Irae*. The irregular phrases in a context of counterpoint are typical of both a loure and a slow gigue. However, there are also significant differences between Bach's Loure and Ysaÿe's 'Malinconia.' Ysaÿe's movement requires a mute, which would not have occurred in a solo piece of the Baroque. Also, the Loure stands in major and is diatonic, while the 'Malinconia' is conceived in minor and is modally inflected, tending towards E Aeolian. Finally, the addition at the end of the first two phrases of the *Dies Irae* chant in mensural notation is not idiomatic for a solo violin piece of the Baroque.

In the 'Danse des ombres' the theme is chorale-like, perhaps another allusion to Bach, and the genre is that of a sarabande. As Richard Hudson notes, the sarabande was '[o]ne of the most popular [...] Baroque instrumental dances and a standard movement, along with the allemande, courante and gigue, of the suite.'<sup>394</sup> Ysaÿe's 'Danse,' in common with some sarabandes, takes the form of theme and variations. It ends with a slightly modified restatement of the theme. According to Meredith Ellis Little, 'J.S. Bach composed more sarabandes than any other dance type.' Composers contemporary to Ysaÿe who wrote sarabandes include Debussy (the second movement of *Pour le piano* (1894–1901) and in *Images* (series 1) (1901–5), 'Hommage à Rameau').<sup>395</sup> Ysaÿe's idiom is, again, chromatic and modally inflected. The piece also has a double time signature of 3/4 = 5/4, which makes some of the phrasing ambiguous. Stylistic tendencies, such as chromaticism, modal inflection and fluid phrasing are also all part of Debussy's Neobaroque idiom.

The closing movement, 'Les Furies,' is the least Neobaroque piece in this Sonata. However, the more distant past is conjured up again by the inclusion of the *Dies Irae* as well as by the title 'Les Furies.' The use of the chant is particularly apt in this movement as the furies of Greek and Roman myth were deities of vengeance, while the *Dies Irae* embodies the day of judgement and God's wrath in the Catholic Requiem Mass.

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<sup>394</sup> See Richard Hudson and Meredith Ellis Little, 'Sarabande,' *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, (accessed 2 April 2017), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/24574>.

<sup>395</sup> See Richard Hudson and Meredith Ellis Little, 'Sarabande,' *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, (accessed 2 April 2017), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/24574>.

The *Dies Irae* passages are contrasted with the virtuosic, chromatic material 1, and the juxtaposed, dissonant *arpeggios* of material 3. Because of their stylistic difference from the chant passages, the latter stand out more than in the 'Obsession.' The only vague reminiscences of Bach and the Baroque occur in these passages that incorporate the chant. This is because they resemble the 'Obsession,' which is reminiscent of Bach's *Preludio* due to the continuous semiquavers and pedals that give a static sensation.

In addition, a more indirect influence of the French Baroque is likely to be present in two different ways. First, Bach's *Third Partita* has reminiscences of a French suite because not only do most of its movements carry French titles, but there is a French musical influence, especially obvious in the *Loure*, a French dance.<sup>396</sup> Secondly, Ysaÿe employs pictorial titles. Pictorial titles were used by French Baroque composers, for instance, by François Couperin (Le Grand) in his keyboard *Ordres*. This design was taken up by Debussy, among others, in his piano *Préludes* and Neobaroque suites of which the said sarabande 'Hommage à Rameau' is a part.

Beyond the pictorial titles, which, as shown, can equally be considered allusions to the Baroque in their own right, a debussyste idiom does not seem to be present in this Sonata. However, in the 'Obsession' and 'Les Furies,' a relatively modern idiom does seem to occur. In the 'Obsession,' it is limited to the violent outbursts after many of the Bach quotations, while in 'Les Furies,' they occur mainly in material 3 and are reminiscent of the Stravinsky of *The Rite of Spring*. Ysaÿe was familiar with at least some of Stravinsky's works as he performed the composer during his time in the USA as the conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (1918-1922).<sup>397</sup> However, it would, perhaps, be too much to speak of a direct allusion to Stravinsky in Ysaÿe's *Second Sonata*. Nevertheless, some parallels between Ysaÿe's 'Les Furies' and Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* can be discerned although *The Rite* is, of course, much more complex than 'Les Furies.' Some echoes of the former occur particularly in the interruption and juxtaposition of material. In the middle section of 'Les Furies,' especially, material is repeatedly juxtaposed. The basic material consists of soft figuration into which the *Dies Irae* is woven. It is contrasted with blocks of static, fast and mostly dissonant sextuplet-*arpeggios* a tritone apart. These also

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<sup>396</sup> Bach, of course, valued the French style and composers, including Marchand, Dandrieu, d'Anglebert, Clérambault and Lebègue (see, for instance, Herman J. Busch "'Für den deutschen solieden Sinn ... zu wenig consistente Nahrung" – Johann Sebastian Bach, Louis Marchand und die französische Tastenkunst,' *Französische Einflüsse auf deutsche Musiker im 18. Jahrhundert*, Arolser Beiträge zur Musikforschung 4 (STUDIO: Cologne, 1996)).

<sup>397</sup> See A. Ysaÿe 1947: 134.

incorporate dynamic contrasts between *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*. In 'Augurs of Spring: Dances of the Young Girls' from *The Rite*, for example, stark juxtaposition of material can also be observed. The beginning of the movement is a point in case. The first block (bb. 1-8) consists of loud, pulsating, non-directional chords in quavers on the same pitches, mostly in the strings and with added accents in the wind instruments. It returns several times and alternates with other material, such as that in bars 9 to 13 and bars 23 to 34. The former is softer, thinner in orchestration and largely based on *arpeggiation*. Woodwinds dominate while of the strings, only the celli remain. The latter consists initially of softer and then increasingly virtuosic material. Outbursts of the pulsating chords occur between these materials in bars 14 to 22 and from bar 35 onwards. Other similarities between the two pieces include a slightly irregular metre, which adds to the sense of unsettledness and interruption.

The utilisation of *sul ponticello* in 'Les Furies' is also neither in keeping with the Baroque nor is it used in solo violin music in the late nineteenth century. Although it appears, for instance, in Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912), this is a work for voice and ensemble rather than for unaccompanied violin. The technique is, therefore, innovative in the context of a work for solo violin and similar, but not identical, to the final bars of Ysaÿe's Grave of the previous Sonata where the music dies away. In *Les Furies*, *sul ponticello* is also only used in *pianissimo* passages but is part of the contrasts with the *fortissimos*. Sometimes it occurs in the context of the *Dies Irae*, sometimes in that of the *arpeggios*. The technique serves to unify the two materials to some degree while, at the same time, creating difference in the soft material of material 2. Ysaÿe, thus, increases the expressiveness and ability to create contrasts with a single violin.

Going further back in history, Ysaÿe's Second Sonata is in some ways reminiscent of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* (1830). For instance, like Berlioz, he employs an *idée fixe*. Its use becomes gradually clear during and after the 'Obsession.' Calling the first movement 'Obsession' seems itself a *clin d'œil* to Berlioz and his symphony. Also, 'Les Furies' recalls Berlioz's last movement, which represents the witches' sabbath. Both pieces express ferocity and frenzy and both employ the *Dies Irae*, though, unlike for Ysaÿe, for Berlioz it is not the *Dies Irae* that is the *idée fixe*. Finally, Ysaÿe's use of *sul ponticello* in the fourth movement finds its counterpart in Berlioz's fourth movement.

The *Dies Irae*, a sequence from the Mass of the Dead, has a long history of being included both in requiems and in secular music. The text goes back to Thomas of Celano (c1250) and signifies the day of God's judgement. The poem became gradually included

into the Requiem Mass from the fourteenth century onwards, and after the Council of Trent (1545-1563) polyphonic settings began to appear. From then on, composers increasingly appropriated the chant. Examples of composers who employed the *Dies Irae* in their requiems include Mozart, Berlioz and Verdi, although only in Berlioz's work does the plainchant melody itself occur. In the other two requiems, the text is set to new music.<sup>398</sup> In secular music, the chant is often utilised to evoke the 'supernatural, with wicked powers, with witches, madness, dreams, and the lower elements of darkness.'<sup>399</sup> Composers who incorporated the chant in secular music are, besides Berlioz, for instance, Liszt (*Totentanz* (1839-65)), Saint-Saëns (*Danse macabre* (1874)) and Rachmaninov (for instance, in the First Symphony (last movement) (1895), his Choral Symphony *Kolokola* (1913) and in the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* for piano and orchestra (1934)). Perhaps Ysaÿe's inclusion of the *Dies Irae* is a reference to Berlioz or to Saint-Saëns' and Liszt's dances, or perhaps the chant is (also) an allusion to the myth that Paganini was in league with the devil (which would link Ysaÿe's use of the *Dies Irae* to the later Rachmaninov *Rhapsody*).

As the First Sonata, the Second is firmly rooted in the violin virtuoso tradition. Technically demanding, it requires, for instance, velocity of fingers, playing in high positions and the use of double-stops and chords. Stylistically, the work involves the ability to perform sudden extreme dynamic changes and to convey abrupt changes in material, such as at the beginning of the first movement or the sudden change in the last movement from bar 47 to bar 48. It is also necessary to represent a degree of violence in the playing, such as in the answers to the intrusions in the 'Obsession,' as well as the ability to create calm passages ethereal in tone, such as in the 'Malinconia.' Finally, in the last movement in particular, the material based on the opening (material 1) calls for the virtuosity and panache associated with the bravura tradition. In many ways, therefore, the Second Sonata is a work that calls for extremes and needs a violinist who is capable of performing in this way.

It is interesting that Ysaÿe should have dedicated a sonata to Thibaud that has such violence in the outer movements because of his renown for sensuous, beautiful and elegant playing (see Chapter 3). However, Thibaud's 1929 recording of Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata, Op. 47 with Alfred Cortot challenges this reputation.<sup>400</sup> While it is true

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<sup>398</sup> See Robin Gregory, 'Dies irae', *Music & Letters*, 34 (1953), 133–9 (133-134).

<sup>399</sup> See Gregory 1953: 134.

<sup>400</sup> Matrix numbers.: CS 3716-23 (CS 3716-III, 3717-II, 3718-III, 3719-I, 3720-II, 3721-I, 3722-II, 3723-III), 1929, Original issue number: HMV (Gramophone) DB 1328-31.

that Thibaud's playing was often sensuous and elegant, in the Kreutzer Sonata he also shows another, stormier side to his playing and an ability to change suddenly between the two. Judging by Thibaud's recording of the Kreutzer Sonata, Ysaÿe's Second Sonata would have benefitted greatly from his playing style. The two outer movements, 'Obsession' and 'Les Furies,' would have suited him as they require great, often sudden changes in character, stretching from ghostly to stormy and passionate. The middle movements 'Malinconia' and 'Danse des Ombres' would have equally suited him. Needing a warm but light tone, elegant phrasing and a generally lyrical interpretation, it can be imagined that Thibaud's sweet cantilenas suit the long phrases that weave through both movements well. In the 'Malinconia,' the *sordino* adds tenderness to the piece as would Thibaud's delicate and relatively small vibrato in comparison with that of today's players.

This chapter has explored a number of characteristics central to Ysaÿe's Second Sonata. Its Neobaroque character stands out again. Ysaÿe's own fluid idiom with its chromatic and modally inflected harmony is, as in the First Sonata, combined with references to Bach and the Baroque. In addition to allusions to the past, Ysaÿe employs two types of quotations that relate to the past. Firstly, he takes various bars of Bach's Preludio and works his own 'Obsession' around them. The bars of the former stand clearly apart. The second quotation comes from the *Dies Irae* chant. It is woven into each movement except in the 'Malinconia' where it occurs at the end. The more modern but non-debussyste idiom arises in the two outer movements only. In the 'Obsession,' it is incorporated into the fabric of the piece but separated through volume, a less melodic character and more tonal flux than in its surroundings. In 'Les Furies,' on the other hand, the dissonant *arpeggios* are juxtaposed not only with their musical surroundings but also with each other. The oppositions create an almost Stravinskyian atmosphere.

As in the First Sonata, Ysaÿe plays with the idea of continuity and change in his music through fusion or juxtaposition of different styles. However, whereas in the First Sonata the past is fully integrated and so seems to function as something benevolent, in the Second Sonata Ysaÿe appears to explore the past as something constricting and persecutory to be escaped from, as suggested especially in the 'Obsession' by the stark contrasts between the Bach quotations and the other material. The *Dies Irae* further contributes to the sense of oppression by means of its association with death and the Final Judgement. Ysaÿe's first two Sonatas, thus, complement each other in certain ways. While both Sonatas work with past, present and future, like Bach's Sonatas, the first is a church sonata whereas the second is a suite. In the First Sonata influence seems an inspiration; in



the Second an intrusion. Ysaÿe successfully balances stylistic similarity and difference both within the Second Sonata and between the First and the Second. He also shows a desire to discover the musical possibilities inherent in his style. As in the First Sonata, he embeds his explorations in an improvisatory fabric that shows both fantasy and coherence.

## Chapter 6: Eugène Ysaÿe, Sonata Op. 27/3, *Ballade*

Unlike in the previous Sonatas, in the Third Sonata, which is conceived as a single movement, Ysaÿe does not prominently use a Neobaroque style. However, as before, the violin tradition as well as his highly chromatic and modally-inflected idiom with some debussyste inclinations are of major importance. Other aspects, too, are similar to the previous Sonatas, such as the tonal flux and ambiguous phrasing. Ysaÿe also extends the musical and technical means of his instrument again. Furthermore, his style is, once more, fantasia-like. In the Third Sonata, violin virtuosity is foregrounded and it is likely that the Rumanian nationality of the dedicatee Enescu as well as his musical personality had an impact on Ysaÿe's musical imagination. This chapter begins by summarising the structure as well as important characteristics of the Sonata. Stylistic commonalities with the previous two Sonatas are also noted. This is followed by a discussion of the poem-like character of the work. Form, *Fortspinnung* and timbre are also treated. Finally, the violin tradition and the work's connection to its dedicatee Enescu are explored.

**Table 6.1. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/3, *Ballade***

<b>Structural position</b>	<b>Bars</b>	<b>Tonal area</b>	<b>Technique/musical content</b>	<b>Style</b>
Recitative	1	Initially whole-tone scale, then non-tonal	Initially scale-like (ascending), then non-functional harmony with large melodic intervals and pronounced chromaticism	Initially debussyste, then an affinity with the Schoenberg of <i>Pierrot lunaire</i>
Introduction	2-11	Whole-tone inspired, then tonal flux, finally arriving on the dominant A major/minor	Double-stopped chords, unorthodox scales and rapid figuration	Virtuoso tradition
A section	12-43	D minor → tonal flux → A major/minor	Thematic exposition and some development, highly rhythmical	Virtuoso tradition, late nineteenth century (highly chromatic and modally inflected)
B section	44-95	Tonal flux beginning on <i>d</i>	Arabesques, <i>arpeggios</i> , <i>tremolando</i> ; clearly thematic material included in varied forms	Virtuoso tradition, reminiscent of debussyste style
A'	96-105	D minor	Thematic material recurs in similar rhythmic form as in A section but abbreviated and varied	Virtuoso tradition, late nineteenth century (highly chromatic and modally inflected)
Coda	106-126	Tonal flux, then move to D minor	Passage work with final return of thematic material (varied)	Virtuoso tradition

Conceived in one movement, the Third Sonata begins with a recitative-like prologue, which is notated without bar lines, in the style of a free fantasia or a cadenza. A further introductory, cadenza-like, but measured passage follows and leads into the main part of the Sonata. The form of the Sonata's main part is fluid and idiosyncratic but might loosely be described as modified ternary with suggestions of a rondo. Stylistically, Ysaÿe's idiom is very improvisatory and firmly rooted in the late nineteenth century with some debussyste influences. The music is, as in the previous two Sonatas, highly chromatic as well as modally inflected. In the two introductory passages, the whole-tone scale is important. In addition, following the use of the whole-tone scale, the initial recitative becomes non-tonal. This is the only time in the Sonatas Ysaÿe uses non-tonal harmony in a prolonged passage.

Perhaps the apparently free form with its recitative-like prologue and cadenza-like initial passage reflects the Sonata's title as a poem – a *Ballade*. Maurice J. E. Brown describes a musical ballade as 'an instrumental (normally piano) piece in a narrative style' first used by Chopin.<sup>401</sup> The ballade genre has never been confined to Chopin. Many other composers used it after him, although often with different results. They also developed the genre further. Examples of those who wrote piano ballades include Franz Liszt, Edvard Grieg, Gabriel Fauré and Johannes Brahms. Another form of the ballade is the orchestral ballade. In France, the most well-known composers of orchestral ballades are Paul Dukas, Franck, Henri Duparc and d'Indy. They all base their works on German literary ballads, such as Dukas's, which is based on Goethe's *Der Zauberlehrling*. This stands in contrast to Chopin's *Ballades*, for which the literary inspiration, if any, is unknown.<sup>402</sup>

In terms of the poetic genre, James Parakilas explains that '[a] ballad typically tells the story of someone who provokes and receives justice.'<sup>403</sup> It centres on one character, though other characters are brought in as necessary for the ballad to unfold. Following Claude Brémont's *Logique du récit*, Parakilas argues that the actor, initially the *agent*, turns into the *patient*, that is, someone acted upon. This is what he calls the *ballad process* (Parakilas' emphasis). In a ballad, a story is told in one sweep, with the initial event

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<sup>401</sup> Maurice J.E. Brown, 'Ballade (ii),' *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), (accessed 14 April 2017),

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/01885>.

<sup>402</sup> See James Parakilas, *Ballads Without Words: Chopin and the Tradition of the Instrumental Ballade* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1992), pp. 92 and 214.

<sup>403</sup> Parakilas 1992: 35.

containing the seeds for the conclusion. The structure drives to a climax at the end. This can have a fundamental influence on form and character of the instrumental ballade by suggesting, for instance, 'formation, reworking, and reappearance of musical material, the relationships of principal sections, and the overall rhythm and resolution of the work.'<sup>404</sup> Composers developed many different ways to represent narrative in instrumental music, although, as Parakilas notes, the problem all of them faced was how to represent the *ballad process*.<sup>405</sup>

Ysaÿe must have been familiar with a range of ballades, notably those by some of the composers in the circle of Franck, including Franck himself. However, it is Chopin's *Ballades* on which Ysaÿe seems to have drawn, especially with the theme head of the Sonata, which has an uncanny reminiscence of Chopin's *Ballade* No. 1, Op. 23 (c1835) (see examples 6.1a and 6.1b).

**Example 6.1a. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Op. 27/3, *Ballade*, b. 13**



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<sup>404</sup> Parakilas 1992: 39.

<sup>405</sup> See Parakilas 1992: 287-288.

Example 6.1b. – Frédéric Chopin, *Ballade No. 1* for piano, Op. 23, bb. 36-44

Clearly audible, it appears to be a direct reference to Chopin's famous masterwork, although Ysaÿe is not known to have directly confirmed this. Moreover, Ysaÿe, like Chopin, seems to proceed through thematic transformations, which is why the form of the Sonata seems to have elements of a rondo. Ysaÿe's *Ballade* takes the form of repetition and variation with episodic material. The work, thus, takes a fluid, idiosyncratic form that might be described as modified ternary with suggestions of a rondo, an initial unmeasured recitative and a cadenza-like introduction. The forceful, dotted rhythms of the theme that dominate the A and A' sections are in stark contrast to the lyrical B section. Here, the swiftness and evenness of the initial arabesques and *arpeggios* stand out, as does the change in dynamics from *sempre forte* to *piano dolce* and *calmato*. The various transformations of thematic elements are embedded in freer material that shows a less clear link to the theme but is still to some degree based on previous material, notably the arabesques at the beginning of the B section. The A' section brings some of the theme back in its original highly rhythmic form before it leads into the coda, which builds towards the climax at the end of the Sonata.

The use of returning thematic material, thematic transformation and the drive towards the climax at the end, in which thematic material is brought back in a distorted manner, does seem to be not unlike Parakilas' concept of *ballad process*. However, Ysaÿe frequently employs thematic transformation as discussed, for instance, in chapter 4 with

respect to the Allegretto poco scherzoso from the First Sonata. And, of course, thematic transformation was central to the circle of Franck. Equally, it is not rare to find movements that end with the climax, such as the Fugato of the same Sonata. Perhaps the most important point about the title of Ysaÿe's Sonata is that a ballad is, of course, a poem and the musical ballade is a musical poem with or without a programme. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ysaÿe felt that the musical poem especially suited his nature because he could give his fantasy free reign without having to abide by any rigid framework. In addition, he described the Sonatas Op. 27 as small poems. However, according to Antoine Ysaÿe, the Third Sonata, as the others, does not have a programme but is rhapsodic. He quotes his father as saying: 'I have left myself to my fantasy. The memory of my friendship and my admiration for Georges Enesco and the sessions we presented together for that delightful queen: Carmen Sylva, did the rest.'<sup>406</sup>

Ysaÿe creates an improvisatory fabric through the use of various kinds of ambiguities, including of harmony, metre, rhythm, melody and phrasing, the principles of which have been described in Chapter 4. Tonality, for instance, is in constant flux, especially in the B section and the coda, which adds to the improvisatory feeling of the Sonata. In addition, melody, phrasing and rhythm of the thematic material become modified. The whole music seems to be in an improvisatory flux, as if Ysaÿe leaves his fantasy to wander freely and to explore the possibilities of the violin in range, articulation, colour and expressiveness.

*Fortspinnung* is a very important form-giving factor in this Sonata. The Sonata's bar-long theme head is particularly significant (see example 6.1a above). It is based on a D minor chord that becomes chromatically and modally tinged through a chromatic continuation (b. 13). Much of the piece is based on the theme head, which is spun out and varied in an improvisatory manner, such as from bars 56 onwards (example 6.2).

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<sup>406</sup> 'Je me suis laissé aller à ma fantaisie. Le souvenir de mon amitié et de mon admiration pour Georges Enesco et des séances que nous avons données ensemble chez cette délicieuse reine: Carmen Sylva [Queen consort of the King of Rumania, who published many literary works (<http://www.carmensylva-fwa.de/en/introduction.html> [accessed 21 April 2017]), ont fait le reste' (in A. Ysaÿe 1967: 8).

Example 6.2. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Op. 27/3, *Ballade*, bb. 56-63

Spun out thematic material is interspersed with episodic material. It could be argued that these passages, too, are distantly related to the theme. A case in point is the beginning of the B section with its chromatic arabesques, which may be interpreted as relating to the theme head (see examples 6.1 above and 6.3a below). The former appear to be spun-out variations of the latter. Their chromaticism and narrow range, for example, seem not unlike the upper two voices of the theme head. The  $d'$  and  $a'$ , which function as the lower voices of a broken four-part chord in the head, might be suggested by the higher note in the arabesques – perhaps a kind of inversion.

Even the *molto moderato quasi lento* section (bb. 2-11) with its upward motion and initial intermittent dotted rhythm seems vaguely reminiscent of the theme, here of its introductory bar (b. 12). Out of the first two bars of this cadenza-like section arises the rest of the introductory part with its increasingly elaborate figuration that leads to a climax in bars 10 to 11. Its sparkling figures are formed of high double-stops amplified by an open  $a$  that creates a *bariolage* effect. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say which material is related to the theme and which is not because the transition between the two is fluid and



ambiguous. The initial recitative also uses *Fortspinnung* and is heavily based on spun on scales.

*Fortspinnung*, with its improvisatory style and thematic ambiguities, is entirely in keeping with Ysaÿe's compositional idiom. In addition, it refers to a number of styles and traditions and is, therefore, another way in which he fuses past and present as well as different traditions. For instance, his extensive use of the technique links him to nineteenth-century tradition, while in the nineteenth century *Fortspinnung* served as a more or less submerged Baroque influence. It also creates the improvisatory feeling so typical of works associated with the nineteenth-century virtuoso-composer tradition, including many by Chopin, such as his four *Ballades*, *Twenty-Four Preludes*, Op. 28 (1838-39) and various *Nocturnes*. In his Neobaroque works, such as the afore mentioned 'Homage à Rameau' and *Pour le Piano* (1894–1901), Debussy also employs it, which contributes yet another historical facet to the technique.

Ysaÿe's Third Sonata is directly linked with this virtuoso tradition. It requires, for example, great velocity of the left hand, the ability to portray a significant range of expressiveness from the strong, heavy, dance-like character of the beginning of the Allegro section, to the very soft arabesques and *tremolando* from bar 44 onwards. In addition, Ysaÿe employs, as in the Allegretto poco scherzoso of the First Sonata, quarter tones (bb. 6, 44 and 46) so as to not interrupt the pattern and, hence, the flow of the arabesques. The chromatic and modally-inflected idiom with its various ambiguities and emphases on timbre, such as the difference between the bright A and A' sections, and delicate B section, suggests a style related to French composers of around the turn of the twentieth century, in particular to Debussy, Fauré and the group around Franck.

Timbre is also emphasised in the introductory passages. For instance, both sections begin with what could be described with Quitin as a misty atmosphere. He describes Ysaÿe's music as normally beginning in a fog that gradually dissipates, like the fog which covers the river Meuse.<sup>407</sup> While not applicable to much of Op. 27, in the case of the Third Sonata this seems a very appropriate image for the beginning of the recitative as well as for the measured cadenza-like introduction. Especially the introduction (*molto moderato quasi lento*) moves from this 'mistiness' to a brilliance of timbre through a combination of increasing dynamics, passage work and rising pitch. The climax is reached in bars 10 to 11

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<sup>407</sup> See Quitin 1938: 35.

with the sparkling figures that employ high double-stops amplified by the open *a* that creates the *bariolage* effect.

Although, according to A. Ysaÿe, his father showed a certain lack of appreciation for or understanding of composers experimenting with atonality, such as Arnold Schoenberg, the recitative (with the exception of the first phrase up to the first fermata) is atonal and, with its wide intervals (such as major sevenths) and pronounced chromaticism, is reminiscent of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) and similar works.<sup>408</sup> *Glissandi*, which are implied or specified, such as between the second and third fermatas of the section, add to this impression. Colouristic effects in Ysaÿe's recitative are achieved through chromaticism, which creates kaleidoscopic hues, and large intervals. The latter generate a wealth of timbres because they entail changes of strings and/or position. These create individual contrasting or complementary timbres. For instance, a bright sound on the E-string may be coupled with the warm, velvety sound of a note in a higher position on the G-string. The large range of dynamics from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* also contributes again.

Violinistically, the work can perhaps be described as a *tour de force* of virtuosity. That said, it is clear that Ysaÿe equally sought to create a highly expressive work that makes use of a range of often contrasting material and rich colours. With this Sonata, compared to the previous two, Ysaÿe follows even more clearly in the footsteps of the *bravura* tradition which he had inherited through Vieuxtemps. This is because much of the work is written in the late nineteenth-century idiom characteristic of Ysaÿe. Novel ideas are also developed. For instance, the quarter-tones are again part of his innovative technique in the context of music for unaccompanied violin.

Ysaÿe may have also had Enescu's Rumanian nationality in mind when choosing the Sonata's title because in Rumania, ballades and epic songs were popular genres in traditional music.<sup>409</sup> Although not identical, in the West, too, ballads, such as Friedrich Schiller's *The Fight with the Dragon* (*Der Kampf mit dem Drachen*) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (*Der Zauberlehrling*) were popular. Therefore, in the ballad genre, Eastern and Western Europe meet. Whether Ysaÿe ever heard Rumanian folk music is unknown. However, on his many travels, he may well have heard Eastern

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<sup>408</sup> See A. Ysaÿe 1947: 134.

<sup>409</sup> Valentina Sandu-Dediu, et al., 'Romania,' *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford (University Press), (accessed 21 April, 2017), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/23736>.

European traditional bands and gypsy music. Also, Enescu might have demonstrated some of the music of his native country.

In the A section of Ysaÿe's Sonata that almost feels like a heavy dance, the rhythm of the theme head seems to be inspired by, or at least is reminiscent of, Rumanian traditional music (see example 6.1 above).<sup>410</sup> For instance, dotted rhythms and rhythms where some shorter notes are followed by a longer one are relatively frequent, and grace notes (normally *acciaccaturas*) are particularly common. Short *portamenti* and *glissandi* as singing or in shouts upwards but also at times downwards seem widespread, too. These techniques are consistent with the chromatic progression of the theme head in Ysaÿe's Sonata. Perhaps the touches of modality in this context are also partly inspired by the thought of Rumanian traditional music, though Ysaÿe, of course, uses modal inflections frequently. Other characteristics of this music include small ornamentations of trills and mordent-like figures. They seem to parallel or have possibly inspired the beginning of the B section of Ysaÿe's Sonata. It is as though he improvises on them by spinning them out (see example 6.3a below). It is also possible, even likely, however, that although Ysaÿe felt inspired by the 'exotic,' his 'Rumanian' idiom is mostly invented. There is nowhere a reference that he studied traditional Rumanian music. Moreover, at the time, many French composers created mostly invented evocations of 'exotic' places that have little to do with the real music of the place.<sup>411</sup> Well-known examples include Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* (1859, 1867-68, 1873-77), as well as Georges Bizet's *Carmen* (1873-74). Likewise, Debussy's various 'Spanish' pieces (such as 'La Soirée dans Grenade' from *Estampes* (1903)) are largely invented. However, Manuel de Falla noted that, nonetheless, 'Debussy knew Spain from his readings, from pictures, from songs, and from dances with songs danced by true Spanish dancers... The facts are that the character of the Spanish musical language had been assimilated by Debussy and this composer, who really did not know Spain, was thus able to write Spanish music spontaneously, perhaps unconsciously, at any rate in a way which was the envy of many who knew Spain only too well.'<sup>412</sup> Another reminiscence with respect to the arabesques in the B section is an apparent reference to Debussy's *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune* (see examples 3a and b).

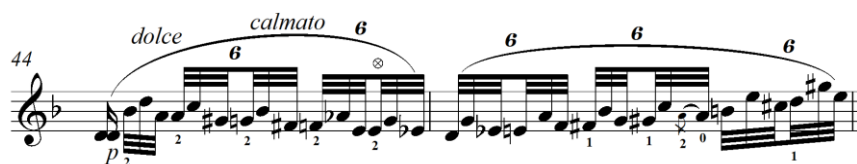
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<sup>410</sup> For an introductory discussion of Rumanian traditional music see Tiberiu Alexandru, *Romanian Folk Music*, trans. Constantin Stih-Boos, rev. trans. A. L. Lloyd (Bucharest: Musical Publishing House, 1980).

<sup>411</sup> For an in-depth discussion of exoticism in music see Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>412</sup> Manuel de Falla in Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy*, vol. 2 (London: Cassell, 1965), appendix B, pp. 254-261.

**Example 6.3a. – Eugène Ysaÿe, Op. 27/3, *Ballade*, bb. 44-45 (first two bars of the B section)**



**Example 6.3b. – Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune* (flute), b. 28**



Perhaps Ysaÿe saw, by borrowing from this piece, a way to refer to the 'other' who is far away, whether in culture (Rumania's traditional music) or in time (Roman myth). In any case, Ysaÿe follows a long tradition, as reference to the 'other,' to the 'exotic' in music has a long history, reaching back to at least the sixteenth century, if not the Middle Ages.<sup>413</sup> The exotic is defined by Ralph P. Locke as 'a place, people or social milieu that is (or is perceived or imagined to be) profoundly different from accepted local norms in its attitudes, customs and morals,' and exoticism is [t]he evocation thereof.<sup>414</sup> Locke explains that it does not matter if the place that is evoked is nearby or far away (in location and/or time); what is important is the sense of difference, of place and people being 'other.' Places can range from rural France (for a Parisian audience) to Japan, via sub-Saharan Africa. Often referenced were Hungarian gypsies, Spain (sometimes Spanish gypsies as in Bizet's *Carmen*), Turkey and the Middle East. The musical means that refer to such a place or people may be based on real music of a culture, such as some of the tunes that are

<sup>413</sup> Ralph P. Locke, 'Exoticism,' *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford (University Press), (accessed 15 March 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000045644>.

<sup>414</sup> Ralph P. Locke, 'Exoticism,' *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford (University Press), (accessed 15 March 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000045644>.

Japanese in origin in Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (1904-07),<sup>415</sup> or they may be partly or totally imagined as in the afore-mentioned *L'Après-midi d'un faune* by Debussy, as well as in the imaginary Ancient Greek exoticism in Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909-12). Typical ways of referencing include the use of modes and harmonies, including the pentatonic and whole-tone scales; the use of intense chromaticism; and arabesques – all are seen, for instance, in Debussy's *L'Après-midi*; as well as rhythmic and melodic patterns, for instance dance rhythms and folk-like melodies, such as the habanera in *Carmen*.<sup>416</sup> In purely musical terms, Ysaÿe does indeed seem to use many of these markers, as has been shown. Arabesques, modality and dance-like rhythms, for example, have all been discerned above. In addition to such musical references, references can also be extra-musical, for instance, by being conveyed via text or pictures, as is possible in an operatic setting or in programmatic symphonic works.<sup>417</sup> Perhaps the reference to the exotic could also be most clearly suggested in another document, such as a letter by the composer, or occur in a conversation they may have had. In the case of Ysaÿe's *Ballade*, it is Ysaÿe's son Antoine to whom he is said to have spoken about his inspiration stemming from the dedicatee Enescu and the queen as explained above.

With respect to Enescu, Flesch described him, as discussed in Chapter 3, as having very different sides to his musical persona, which he called 'gypsy daredevilry,' cultivated artistry and an ability to play with a mysterious expression.<sup>418</sup> The term 'gypsy daredevilry' is perhaps not to be understood literally; rather, Flesch might have used it as a metaphor to express Enescu's violinistic qualities. It is likely that he meant by the term that Enescu would at times play with great virtuosity and flamboyance. These are certainly characteristics that would suit much of the A and A' sections of the *Ballade* as well as the coda. A mysterious character would benefit the recitative and perhaps the beginning of the following measured section, as well as the majority of the B section. Thus, Enescu could have made use of the wide range of tone colour of which he was capable, from a loud and brassy sound to a soft, velvety and ethereal one. Enescu must have appreciated 'his' Sonata as he performed it on several occasions, such as in 1926 in Paris as a homage to

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<sup>415</sup> See Locke 2009: 59.

<sup>416</sup> For a fuller discussion of musical features that are, at times, used to evoke the exotic see Locke 2009: 51-54.

<sup>417</sup> See Locke 2009: 60-64.

<sup>418</sup> See Flesch 1973: 179.

Ysaÿe, who had just given master classes there at the *Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris*.<sup>419</sup>

The Third Sonata is similar to the previous two but also quite different. As before, it is very improvisatory, perhaps more openly so. Chromatic and modally-inflected tonal harmony as well as various ambiguities from harmony to phrasing are also prominent. However, there is little of the Neobaroque influence that was so prominent in the previous two Sonatas. Instead, the violin virtuoso tradition seems to take centre-stage. Ysaÿe appears, again, to concentrate on exploring the technical and expressive possibilities of his instrument. Stylistically, there are some debussyste reminiscences and suggestions of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, which are absorbed into the musical fabric of Ysaÿe's more Romantic idiom. The different style of the Third Sonata seems to be partly signalled by its conception as a single movement compared to the previous Sonatas with their four movements each and by its title. The Sonata can perhaps best be described as a fantasia and it is expressly a poem (a ballad, as the title suggests). Its form is ambiguous and Ysaÿe seems to have followed his imagination more palpably than before. This can be deduced, for instance, from its free form in which *Fortspinnung* plays a vital part, various ambiguities, abundant figuration and improvisatory nature. Enescu's playing style and Rumanian musical heritage seem to have had an influence, too. The Sonata calls for flamboyance and violinistic daring, as well as an ability to play very tenderly and in an ethereal manner, which are all characteristics Flesch attributes to Enescu. That said, these are, of course, also characteristics Ysaÿe demonstrated in his playing. Possible reminiscences of Rumanian traditional music occur especially in the theme head and at the beginning of the B section. Overall, this multifaceted Sonata may be described as a work that appears to spring 'solely from the fantasy and skill of the author who created it' (Luis de Milán, 1535–6).<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> See Stockhem 1990: 224.

<sup>420</sup> In Christopher D. S. Field, et al, 'Fantasia,' *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, (accessed April 17, 2017), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/40048>.

## Chapter 7: Eugène Ysaÿe, Sonata Op. 27/4

As the Second Sonata, the Fourth is suite-like. However, unlike in the former, no pictorial titles or quotations are used to unify this Sonata. Its three movements are Allemanda, Sarabande and Finale. The main style can be described, as in the initial two Sonatas, as Neobaroque. It is composed of Ysaÿe's habitual chromatic and modally inflected idiom with its various ambiguities, into which allusions to Bach and the Baroque are incorporated as explained in Chapter 4. All movements are, again, idiosyncratic in form, and they are cyclically unified. First, this chapter outlines the structure of each movement. It then discusses style, form and formal ambiguity of each piece and the Sonata as a whole. Stylistic reminiscences are also considered, as is the Sonata's cyclicism. Finally, the relationship between the work and its dedicatee Kreisler is examined.

**Table 7.1. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/4, Allemanda**

<b>Structural position</b>	<b>Bars</b>	<b>Tonal area</b>	<b>Technique/musical content</b>	<b>Style</b>
Introduction	1-7	E minor then tonal flux	<i>Arpeggios, style brisé</i>	Neobaroque (French); prelude
Theme	8-14 (1)	E minor	French overture style (first part) with counterpoint	Neobaroque (French)
Development/Bridge	14-20 (1)	E minor →B minor	Figures based on beginning of introduction and then on theme	Neobaroque (French)
Intermediate material	20-32	Tonal flux	Figuration/ <i>arpeggios</i>	Bach-like, reminiscent of Bach's Chaconne BWV 1004
Return of thematic material	33-42 (2)	F sharp minor →D major →B minor	French overture style (first part) with counterpoint	Neobaroque (French)
Intermediate material	42 (2)-65	E minor with some tonal flux	Counterpoint, loosely based on theme, fantasia-like	Neobaroque
Return of thematic material	66-69	E minor	French overture style (first part) with counterpoint	Neobaroque (French)

The table shows the Allemanda to be written entirely in a Neobaroque style although its form is not conventional. Rather than being binary, the Allemanda is through-composed. In addition, the movement consists of an introductory and a main part with some suggestion of a rondo.



**Table 7.2. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/4, Sarabande**

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
Part 1	1-11	Tonal flux (E minor and G	<i>Pizzicato</i> , counterpoint, <i>ostinato</i> , <i>style brisé</i>	Neobaroque (French)
Part 2	11 (3)-30	major are	<i>Arco</i> , counterpoint, <i>ostinato</i>	
Part 3	31-42	important)	<i>Arpeggios</i> reminiscent of Bach's Chaconne, <i>ostinato</i>	
End	43-46	G major with an E minor inflection	Two rising <i>arpeggios</i> followed by three <i>pizzicato</i> chords	

Like the Allemanda, the Sarabande is written in a Neobaroque style and is through-composed rather than having a binary form. It has a bar-long *ostinato* that is maintained throughout the movement in a literal way (see example 7.2a below) until bar 42, when Ysaÿe brings the movement to a close. A contrapuntal texture is spun around the *ostinato* of the Sarabande to create long phrases.

**Table 7.3. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/4, Finale**

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
A	1-23	E minor	<i>Moto perpetuo</i>	Neobaroque (French) and reminiscent of Kreisler's Allegro from <i>Praeludium und Allegro</i>
B	24-37	G major →E minor	French overture style (first part) with counterpoint, related to the Allemanda	Neobaroque (French)
A'	38-66	E minor →E major	<i>Moto perpetuo</i>	Neobaroque (French) and reminiscent of Kreisler's Allegro from <i>Praeludium und Allegro</i>

The Finale could be described as resembling a French overture that is inverted with lively but not fugal outer sections and a stately middle part based on the thematic material of the Allemanda. The outer sections are, in addition, reminiscent of Kreisler's Allegro from *Praeludium und Allegro* (1910) in terms of the *moto perpetuo* technique and some motivic reminiscences.

Ysaÿe, again, incorporates a range of elements of Baroque music into his own idiom, which, as described in Chapter 4, is improvisatory, based in chromatic and modally-inflected tonal harmony and includes various ambiguities, such as those in form, metre, phrasing and harmony. In this Sonata, the French Baroque is evoked through characteristics, such as the French overture style (slow part) in the Allemanda and the Finale. Perhaps Bach's B minor Allemanda BWV 1002, which has many of the rhythmic and melodic characteristics of a French overture, also influenced Ysaÿe to some extent. Another way in which the French Baroque is suggested is in the introduction of the Allemanda through evocations of *style brisé* (see example 7.1).

Example 7.1. – Ysaÿe, Allemanda, Op. 27/4, bb. 1-7

**Lento maestoso** ♩ = 72

In the Sarabande, too, the first two sections have a quality of *style brisé*. Initially, it is the *pizzicato* that evokes it (bb. 1-11). In the second section (bb. 11 (3)-30), a number of chords are indicated to be *arpegiated*, which creates a similar effect to that of the *pizzicato*. Finally, the mordents that occur interspersed in all three movements also hint at the French Baroque. This is particularly the case when the mordents occur as part of the French overture theme in the Allemanda and, in the Sarabande, in the context of the said *arco* section (bb. 20-30).

A very important part of Ysaÿe's Neobaroque idiom is the allusion to Debussy's Sarabande from *Pour le Piano* (1894–1901) in his own Sarabande. The first bars of the melody of Ysaÿe's Sarabande are reminiscent of the beginning of Debussy's piece. In addition, Ysaÿe's *ostinato* figure, which is transposed and modified in rhythm but, like that of Debussy, stresses the second beat, can be found in bar 9 of Debussy's Sarabande (see examples 2a and b).



The form of the Sarabande is ambiguous, too. Like the Allemanda, it is through-composed rather than a binary form and because it is entirely based on *Fortspinnung*, it has a very free and improvisatory feeling. There does not seem to be a fully-fledged theme. Instead, a bar-long *ostinato* serves as an anchor and gives the Sarabande a somewhat static feeling. Around it, a contrapuntal accompaniment of two voices is woven that contains what seem to be some melodic fragments, such as in the upper voice in the initial two bars and in bars 6 to 9. Traditional phrasing seems to have been avoided; rather, the music ebbs and flows. The *ostinato* is also helpful in unifying the three sections. The first two belong together in material though the first is played as *pizzicato*, while the second is bowed. The third part, on the other hand, is entirely composed of *arpeggios*. The change in material is attenuated by the continuing *ostinato*, which persists until shortly before the end and unifies the movement. Due to the *ostinato*, the Sarabande recalls a passacaglia or chaconne. However, the typical ground bass variations are absent. Instead, the two voices are woven around the *ostinato*. The overall key of the Sarabande is ambiguous, too, in that it hovers between E minor and G major.

The Finale is the only fast piece in the Sonata (with the exception of its inner section). Both previous movements have a subtitle that contains the instruction *lento*: for the Allemanda it is *Lento maestoso* and for the Sarabande *Quasi lento*. However, the Finale shares a number of elements with the two foregoing movements; for instance, it relies on *Fortspinnung*, is Neobaroque in style and has an idiosyncratic form. Another element all three movements share is the use of the above-mentioned mordents, which serve as a unifying factor in the Sonata. The Finale can be described as an ABA'Coda form although it is somewhat ambiguous in character. For instance, it might be interpreted, as suggested at the beginning of the chapter, as a kind of inverted French overture, if one accepts such a concept. By this is meant here that the slow opening section of the French overture with its stately dotted rhythm occurs after the fast, though not fugal, section. What can be described in the French overture as a codetta, which normally echoes the slow section, now echoes the fast one and is expanded by Ysaÿe, who adds a coda in keeping with the A and A' sections. The inner part is particularly interesting because, although it clearly refers to the serious and stately first movement with its French overture-like material, it is of a very different disposition. Instead of the majestic character, Ysaÿe asks for a playful and cheerful one (*Giocosamente e meno mosso*). Perhaps the entire movement is meant to be tongue-in-cheek not least because its form seems to be inside-out.

The genre of this Sonata is ambiguous, too, because, although identified as suite-like due to the titles and material of the pieces, the Sonata hovers between suite and sonata in other respects. This is because it contains only three movements rather than four or more and because the overall key scheme is ambiguous. If the Sarabande is considered to be in E minor, all three movements would be in the same key, which would be typical for a suite. However, if the Sarabande is read as being in G major, the relative major, this would be more suggestive of a sonata. The last movement is not related to a gigue or any other movement of a Baroque suite, except in its French overture-like middle section. This would suggest a sonata. However, some suites do not end with a gigue. A case in point is J. S. Bach's second keyboard Partita, which ends with a Capriccio. Therefore, by not using a dance as the movement, Ysaÿe contributes to the ambiguity of the overall genre of the work.

On the other hand, an important unifying factor in this Sonata is its cyclicism. Perhaps the most important aspect is the thematic recall in the Finale. Its middle section, as discussed, takes up the thematic material of the Allemanda. The use of the *ostinato* from the Sarabande is slightly more subtle. It appears in different ways in the Finale. The first literal appearance is in bars 2 and 3, where the *ostinato* is mainly highlighted by a mordent on its first note (see example 7.3).

**Example 7.3. – Ysaÿe, Finale, Op. 27/4, bb. 1-3**

**Presto ma non troppo**

Similar occurrences permeate the Finale and, towards the end of the piece in bars 60 to 61, the *ostinato* becomes very insistent and clearly dominates the musical context. It is characterised by double-stops (see example 7.4).

**Example 7.4. – Ysaÿe, Finale, Op. 27/4, bb. 60-61**



Allusions to the *ostinato* may involve a similarity in shape although the intervals do not quite match. A good example is the third beat of bar 1 in the Finale (see example 7.3 above). In the Allemanda, the *ostinato* seems to be alluded to as well, such as through the upbeats plus the first beat of the following bar at the beginning of the Allemanda (bb. 1 with upbeat-4 (1)) (see example 7.1 above). Other possible allusions may include the last two quavers of bar 9 (see example 7.5).

**Example 7.5. – Ysaÿe, Allemanda, Op. 27/4, bb. 9**



Finally, in bar 21, the *ostinato* occurs literally (see example 7.6).

**Example 7.6. – Ysaÿe, Allemanda, Op. 27/4, b. 21 (*ostinato* bracketed)**



Like all the Sonatas in Op. 27, this one is rooted in the violin tradition and makes virtuosic demands. A point in case are the *arpeggios* in the introductory part of the Allemanda. Yet, the technical difficulties in this Sonata are perhaps less acute than in some of the other works of the cycle. The *arpeggios* in the Sarabande and, to a degree, those in the Allemanda can again be described with Szigeti as Ysaÿe's characteristic across-the-strings sweeping *arpeggios* (see Chapter 3). However, perhaps the most important innovative aspect in violinistic terms is the *pizzicato* passage at the beginning of the

Sarabande. Such sustained *pizzicato* passages (of the right hand) in music for unaccompanied violin before Ysaÿe are not known. The passage's polyphonic nature makes it more complicated to perform because the violinist needs to voice the music properly so that the leading voices at any given moment and the *ostinato*, when appropriate, are brought out.

In terms of playing style, Ysaÿe's Sonata fits Kreisler well. It stands to reason that with his warm, glowing sound, sense of phrasing and sensitive *rubato*, he would have given a masterful performance of the Sonata. Each movement would, of course, have benefited from his playing style. Especially his use of constant vibrato cannot be taken for granted because in the early 1920s many violinists still played with a limited amount of vibrato as explained in Chapter 3. Kreisler's vibrato would have shaped his entire performance of the Sonata. For instance, in the first part of the Sarabande, vibrato on every note would have helped the *pizzicato* to carry and be warm and expressive. Without vibrato, the section can easily sound dry and small. Another example is the Allemanda, in which, especially in the thematic material, vibrato can bring out its majestic character by, on the one hand, increasing the travelling of sound to reach even the back of a concert hall, and, on the other, preventing the material from sounding coarse and forced. In the softer intermediate material, vibrato is also valuable because it can bring out the tender aspect of the music.

In the Sarabande, Ysaÿe even specifies the *pizzicato* section to be played *avec vibrations*. It is not entirely clear, however, what he had in mind when stipulating to play with vibrations. The only evident extra vibrations are those that can be created with vibrato. However, Ysaÿe does not specify vibrato but *vibrations*. Perhaps he means something larger than a merely technical instruction. It may be that he speaks of the need for technical and musical expressiveness in this section similar to when he asked his students to have 'an *expressive technique*; even a semibreve must speak.'<sup>421</sup>

In addition to these somewhat non-specific parallels between Ysaÿe's Sonata and Kreisler's playing style, Ysaÿe seems to also have made more concrete references to Kreisler's musicianship by incorporating allusions to the latter's *Praeludium und Allegro*. These occur in the outer sections of the Finale. For instance, both pieces share the key of E minor and the semiquaver *moto perpetuo* character (though not entirely strictly observed, especially in the case of Kreisler's Allegro) which might itself be an allusion to Nicolò Paganini's *Moto Perpetuo* for violin and orchestra (1831-2). And, while there are no

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<sup>421</sup> 'Ayez une *technique expressive*; une quadruple croche même doit parler.' (In Christen 1947: 81).



thematic quotations of the Allegro in Ysaÿe's Finale, or, for that matter of the Praeludium, there are clear allusions. For example, bars 10 to 12 are reminiscent of bar 126 (1), which Ysaÿe seems to have spun on (see examples 7.7a and b).

**Example 7.7a. – Ysaÿe, Finale, Op. 27/4, bb. 10-12**



**Example 7.7b. – Kreisler, Allegro, Praeludium und Allegro, b. 126**



Then there is the change of metre in bars 17 to 18 of Ysaÿe's Finale from the primary metre 5/4 to 3/4. The latter is the metre of Kreisler's Allegro. The musical content echoes that of bars 77 to 83 of the Allegro (see examples 7.8a and b).

**Example 7.8a. – Ysaÿe, Finale, Op. 27/4, bb. 17-18**



**Example 7.8b. – Kreisler, *Allegro, Præludium und Allegro*, bb. 77-83**



In addition, bar 54 of Ysaÿe's *Finale* is reminiscent of places, such as bars 85 (3) to 87 of Kreisler's *Allegro* (see examples 7.9a and b).

**Example 7.9a. – Ysaÿe, *Finale*, Op. 27/4, bb. 54**



**Example 7.9b. – Kreisler, *Allegro, Præludium und Allegro*, bb. 77-83**



Finally, in his own compositions, Kreisler often incorporated mordents, small trills and ornaments, such as in *Liebesfreud* (1910) and even more so in *La Précieuse* (1910), which he attributed respectively to Joseph Lanner and François Couperin. The large number of resemblances between Kreisler's piece and that of Ysaÿe are unlikely to be coincidence, especially as the *Sonata* is dedicated to Kreisler. The latter ascribed his *Præludium und Allegro* to Gaetano Pugnani (1731-1798), which was one of his practical jokes. Perhaps the jocular character of the middle section of Ysaÿe's *Finale* and its inverted

French-overture form could be described as a joke, too, and another *clin d'œil* to Kreisler, while the Neobaroque tone of Ysaÿe's entire Sonata is likely to also be an allusion to Kreisler's prolific composition of 'old' pieces.

This chapter has discussed the Sonata's link to the French Baroque and identified it as an important unifying factor in the work. However, again, Ysaÿe does not copy a style approximating that or those of the Baroque. Rather, and as in the first two Sonatas, he incorporates references into his own idiom, which identify it as a Neobaroque work. *Fortspinnung* is also an important element in all movements again. The allusion to Debussy's Neobaroque Sarabande strengthens the Neobaroque imprint of the Sonata. In this Sonata Ysaÿe's fantasy is particularly palpable in the forms of the movements as each piece differs significantly from the norm. None is binary; rather, each is through-composed. Their forms are ambiguous. The Allemanda's introductory bars are imitating free prelude, perhaps in the style of the French *clavecinists*. The main section of the piece is also prelude-like. The thematic material is similar to that of the first part of a French overture and occurs three times, which suggests an affinity to a rondo form. The bar-long *ostinato* unifies the Sarabande. In the first two parts, two lines are spun around it, at first in *pizzicato* and then bowed. The third part consists of the *arpeggios*. The Finale has been described as an inverted French overture because of its fast outer sections and slower inner section, which is based on the thematic material of the Allemanda. The coherence of the entire Sonata is not only guaranteed by its Neobaroque idiom but also by its cyclicism, especially the thematic recall in the last movement where the thematic material of the Allemanda and the *ostinato* of the Sarabande return. Virtuoso demands do not tend to be foregrounded in this Sonata; however, the initial *pizzicato* passage in the Sarabande is a novelty in music for unaccompanied violin. Although Ysaÿe's Sonata fits Kreisler's playing style well, the allusions to the latter's *Praeludium and Allegro* are likely to be more important or, rather, more specific, than any allusions to his playing. Ysaÿe's desire to keep each dedicatee in mind when composing 'their' Sonata seems, therefore, most palpable in these compositional references.

## Chapter 8: Eugène Ysaÿe, Sonata Op. 27/5

While the First, Second and Fourth Sonatas are largely Neobaroque in style and the Third emphasises the violin virtuoso tradition and the Rumanian nationality of its dedicatee Enescu, the Fifth Sonata, with its two movements 'L'Aurore' and 'Danse rustique,' is much more obviously written in a style associated with the early twentieth century and especially with Debussy. Ysaÿe's use of harmony, form and colour all seem to differ from the idiom familiar from the previous Sonatas. Nevertheless, Neobaroque qualities are also present, although these are less pronounced than in the three Sonatas mainly written in a Neobaroque style. Like the Fourth Sonata, the Fifth is unified cyclically. Both movements are interrelated in that they share a significant amount of material. The violin tradition is important again and Ysaÿe seems to experiment with violin technique that lets him render a style of a debussyste nature. Among other issues he explores are, as particularly in the First Sonata, debussyste colouristic effects. First, this chapter outlines the structure of each movement. It then examines the style of the Sonata, considering especially extended tonality, questions of form, the exploitation of colour and an apparent reference to 'Sirènes' from Debussy's *Trois Nocturnes* (1897-99). It also discusses Neobaroque traces in the work and deals with the Sonata's cyclicism. Finally, violinistic issues are considered again.

**Table 8.1. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/5, ‘L’Aurore’**

<b>Structural position</b>	<b>Bars</b>	<b>Tonal area</b>	<b>Technique/musical content</b>	<b>Style</b>
Beginning	1-5	G major with E minor inflection	Basic motif (bb. 1-3) with one variation (bb. 4-5) to comprise the motivic-thematic material for the entire movement	Debussyste (the <i>Fortspinnung</i> is also Neobaroque)
Main part of piece, moving towards climax at the end	6-13 (2)	Tonal flux with pentatonic overtones	Variation technique with <i>Fortspinnung</i>	
	13 (3)-15	Tonal flux	Reminiscence of Debussy’s ‘Sirènes’	
	16-21	B major →tonal flux →G major →B minor	Variations on and <i>Fortspinnung</i> of thematic material	
	22-28	Tonal flux	Variation and <i>Fortspinnung</i> of bb. 6-11	
	29-30	E major	Variations on thematic material, largely <i>arpeggios</i>	
	31-34	E major →G major →whole-tone →G major	Undulations of alternating fourths and fifths with descending chromatic scales in fourths	
	35-45 (1)	Tonal flux →G major	Variations on and <i>Fortspinnung</i> of thematic material with <i>arpeggios</i> based on bb. 29-30	

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content
Connection between main part of movement and the climactic ending	45 (2)-50	Tonal flux	Halfway between runs and <i>arpeggios</i> ; <i>Fortspinnung</i> , reminiscent of bb. 39 (1) and 40 (1)
Ending and climax	51-59	Centred on C major →G major for last chord	Sweeping <i>arpeggios</i> based on beginning and <i>Fortspinnung</i> of <i>arpeggios</i> in the main part, e.g. b. 29 (2).

The constructing principles of 'L'Aurore' are variation technique and *Fortspinnung*. The two are so closely interlinked that they cannot necessarily be separated. Moreover, although differences in material are distinguishable on a smaller scale, sometimes lasting only two bars, it is difficult to divide the piece into larger sections because there are no clear divisions along which to categorise parts. Rather, the movement is continuous in form. The only part that is clearly set off is the very beginning (bb. 1-5) which provides the material for most of the movement. The piece moves from soft and still towards the strong and bright climax at the end, which, given the piece's title Dawn or Sunrise in translation, might be interpreted as moving from daybreak to midday and the bright sun. 'L'Aurore' is perhaps the more openly debussyste of the two movements.

**Table 8.2. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/5, ‘Danse rustique’**

<b>Structural position</b>	<b>Bars</b>	<b>Tonal area</b>	<b>Technique/musical content</b>	<b>Style</b>
A section	1-8	G	Thematic material, largely in 5/4 metre, which gives uneven appearance because of metric irregularities	Ambiguous (some reminiscence of Ravel’s <i>Daphnis et Chloé</i> (1909-12), Part III, ‘Danse générale,’ and Vivaldi’s ‘Autumn’ (1723) from his <i>Four Seasons</i> )
	9-10	G	Undulating ascent and step-wise descent with embellishments	Debussyste/Neobaroque
	11-18	Tonal flux	Chordal material reminiscent of theme	Reminiscent of Debussy’s use of parallel chords, and especially of ‘La Cathédrale engloutie’ ( <i>Préludes</i> , Book 1 (1910))
	19-21	G	Thematic material	Ambiguous (some reminiscence of Ravel’s <i>Daphnis et Chloé</i> , Part III, ‘Danse générale’ and Vivaldi’s ‘Autumn’ from his <i>Four Seasons</i> )
B section	22-45 (1)	G (modally inflected) →tonal flux (with some whole-tone elements) →E minor	Undulations, mordent-like embellishments and figuration	Debussyste with some Neobaroque features
	45-51	E minor →tonal flux	Material related to theme embedded in figuration	Debussyste

	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	
	52-	Whole-tone	Scales and figuration	
	56 (1)	E major	Mainly <i>arpeggios</i> , based on 'L'Aurore' (bb. 29-30)	
	56 (2)-64	Tonal flux →G major	<i>Arpeggiated</i> double-stops followed by undulations and left-hand <i>pizzicato</i>	Debussyste and virtuoso tradition
A' section	65-90	G major →tonal flux →D Dorian	Thematic material (varied), interspersed with the <i>arpeggiated</i> figures familiar from 'L'Aurore,' then scale-based figuration	Debussyste and Neobaroque
	91-108	Tonal flux	Moves towards coda with theme-based triplet material, ending in figuration	Virtuoso tradition
Coda	109-126	G major →tonal flux →G major	Theme-based, almost <i>tremolo</i> , ending in figuration and final run	Virtuoso tradition

Contrary to 'L'Aurore,' 'Danse rustique' possesses a theme and has a modified ternary form, A-B-A'-Coda. Its overall key is G major despite the substantial tonal flux. The A and B sections are intimately linked through their material because the majority of the B section is based on bars 9 to 10. In addition, material related to the theme occurs once in the B section. Therefore, in each of the two parts material of the other appears. The A' section, on the other hand, combines thematic material with the *arpeggiated* figures familiar from 'L'Aurore.' This is one way in which the Sonata is cyclical. Also, the thematic material of the 'Danse' is related to the beginning of 'L'Aurore,' especially bars 6 to 13 (2). The coda takes up the thematic material of the 'Danse' again and is driving to the climax at the end. The allusions to the Baroque occur especially in the 'Danse' with its embellishments.



From the discussions of the previous Sonatas it has become apparent that in Ysaÿe's Sonatas the forms of the individual movements are very varied although phrases and themes are inclined to being largely periodic and of traditional harmonic organisation. However, especially in 'L'Aurore' but also, for instance, in the B section of 'Danse rustique,' Ysaÿe takes a more 'additive' or mosaic-like approach. By 'additive,' following Robert Morgan, is meant here the repetition and gradual variation of one or more cells.<sup>422</sup> Much of 'L'Aurore' consists of relatively distinct cells. Often, they are only two bars long but are frequently collected into larger groups of related material (see example 8.1).

**Example 8.1. – Ysaÿe, 'L'Aurore,' Op. 27/5, bb. 1-12**

**Lento assai**  
(mesure tres libre)

For instance, in bars 6 to 11 the two-bar units are unified through their motivic and textural similarity. Ysaÿe takes this 'additiveness' quite far here by relying almost exclusively on the initial three bars, though cells are often closer to their modified form of bars 6 to 7. While uncharacteristic of Ysaÿe, the use of cells as building blocks for larger forms is typical of Debussy.<sup>423</sup> However, it is important to note that Debussy was not the first or only composer to work with cells. Modest Mussorgsky and Liszt, for instance, were precursors. Also, care must be taken not to over-generalise or simplify, given Debussy's preference for individual formal solutions and his complexity of thought. For example, Debussy tends to use more than one cell as basic material, often juxtaposing them. He layers material more than Ysaÿe, too, such as in 'Sirènes' and *Jeux* (1912-1913).<sup>424</sup> Nevertheless, the starting points of Ysaÿe and Debussy are akin. The importance of an 'additive' approach in Debussy and its rarity in Ysaÿe indicates a stylistic proximity.

<sup>422</sup> See Morgan 1991: 48.

<sup>423</sup> See, for instance, DeVoto 2003: 179, and Morgan 1991: 48-49 and 126.

<sup>424</sup> See Morgan 1991: 102.

Moreover, it is only natural that 'L'Aurore' is less complex than much of Debussy's music in terms of, for instance, textures, timbres and numbers of cells used as basic material, since Ysaÿe merely had a single violin at his disposal rather than an entire orchestra or at least a piano. Because of the mosaic-like approach of 'L'Aurore,' there is, as often in Debussy, little sense of traditional development. Rather, the small variations evolve. In 'L'Aurore,' there is a general progression from soft to loud and from transparency to greater complexity, leading into a final *arpeggio* section. 'Danse rustique,' especially in the B and the beginning of the A' sections, is also somewhat more fragmentary than Ysaÿe's idiom in the other five Sonatas. It seems to stand between Ysaÿe's usual style and 'L'Aurore.' A point in case is the first half of the B section (bb. 22-44), where there is some segmentation although this is not as pronounced as in 'L'Aurore.'

Ysaÿe's harmonic idiom is again tonal but very chromatic, as well as modally inflected. Particular uses or suggestions of unconventional harmony include the whole-tone scale in 'Danse rustique' (bb. 52-53). The beginning of 'L'Aurore' (bb. 1-12, see example 8.1 above), on the other hand, suggests pentatonicism, a very rare occurrence in the set of Sonatas but present, like the whole-tone scale, in a number of Debussy's pieces, such as 'Pagodes' (*Estampes* (1903)). The two cells, bars 6 to 7 and bars 8 to 9, are each pentatonic and include all five pitches. They differ, however, in that the *f* of bar 7 is sharpened in bar 9. Modifications occur in bars 1 to 5 where a tone is missing and in bars 10 to 11 where there seems to be a conflation of the *a* and *b* into an *a#*. Tonal ambiguities also abound. For instance, at the beginning of the B section (bb. 22-24), there is some ambiguity as to whether these bars are D Dorian or G Mixolydian.

A particular similarity of Ysaÿe's Fifth Sonata with Debussy's works is the relative lack of leading notes, especially in 'L'Aurore.' Although not exceptional in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is for Ysaÿe, given their abundance in the other five Sonatas. Also atypical of Ysaÿe, but typical of Debussy, is a relatively static harmony. Debussy achieves this partly through slow harmonic movement, an avoidance of traditional modulation and the use of pedals. For instance, 'Pagodes' relies entirely on the harmonically non-directional whole-tone scale and on pentatonicism. It is also permeated with pedals. In addition, 'Sirènes,' the third of the *Nocturnes*, springs to mind by virtue of its slow harmonic movement, avoidance of traditional modulation and use of pedals. 'L'Aurore,' in particular, proceeds in a similar manner. It substantially insists on the pitch *g*, be it as root, pedal or general anchor, which gives rise to sparse harmonic movement with a concomitant static feeling. This is especially striking in the last part, the sweeping

*arpeggios* over an obvious pedal *g* (bb. 51-59). Even before (bb. 45-50), there is a strong pull towards *g*, above which more narrow *arpeggios* unfold.

While palpable throughout the Sonatas, Ysaÿe's interest in individualised colour is especially evident in this Sonata. Tone colour is important and can be striking but is typically subordinated to melodic-rhythmic-harmonic considerations rather than being an end in itself. His interest in and use of timbre is shared by many composers, especially since the nineteenth century, including Hector Berlioz, Gustav Mahler, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov and Maurice Ravel.<sup>425</sup> The importance of timbre to Debussy is well known.<sup>426</sup> However, he distinguishes himself in his use of colour. This is because in his compositions it assumes a more cardinal function. Arthur B. Wenk, for example, argues that

[a]n active interest in tone colour was, of course, a characteristic feature of nineteenth-century Romanticism in music. [...] Yet we regard Debussy, rather than any of his illustrious forerunners, as the father of twentieth-century music in part because Debussy, more than any composer who preceded him, allowed considerations of sonority to govern melody, rhythm, harmony, and even structure.<sup>427</sup>

Mark DeVoto comments on 'rapid colouristic changes,' which are facilitated by Debussy's use of short, varying motivic cells and are combined in a mosaic-like fashion.<sup>428</sup> He also argues that '[w]hen we say that Debussy's characteristic harmony is often independent of its tonal function [...] we mean that he chooses a harmony first and foremost for its value as sound and sonority.'<sup>429</sup> Robert P. Morgan adds that

[i]n Debussy [...] tonality is treated in a more stable way, defined by a series of related yet essentially stationary blocks of largely static harmony. Thus the listener tends to experience each musical moment more in terms of its own inherent properties [...]. This [...] had a decisive influence on all aspects of Debussy's style. The 'surface' of the music—its texture, color, dynamic nuances, etc.—assumes an unprecedented prominence and importance.<sup>430</sup>

In Ysaÿe's Fifth Sonata, sonority, too, takes on an exceptionally central position, evoking an entire orchestra. It assumes a similar significance as in Debussy. Particularly in

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<sup>425</sup> An insightful contemporary account is: Charles MacLean, 'On Some Causes of the Changes of Tone Colour Proceeding in the Most Modern Orchestra', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 21st Sess., (1894-1895), pp. 77-102.

<sup>426</sup> Fascination with timbre is often seen as characteristically French. This is commonly dated back to at least Berlioz.

<sup>427</sup> 1983:123-124.

<sup>428</sup> 2003: 184.

<sup>429</sup> 2003: 188.

<sup>430</sup> 1991: 46.

*L'Aurore*, colours and textures (including rhythms) change swiftly, often in relatively quick succession. Numerous unusual combinations of very different sonorities occur, such as the use of simultaneous *pizzicato* and *arco* (bb. 6-11) and the almost pointillist rapid alternation of colours (through *tremolo*, harmonics, bright, fleeting *arpeggios* and *pizzicato*) (see example 8.2). This reinforces its mosaic-like quality.

**Example 8.2. – Ysaÿe, 'L'Aurore,' Op. 27/5, bb. 35-40**

The combination of the prismatic colours through timbre, texture, figurations (for instance, shiny *arpeggios* and double-stop undulations), the striking insistence on *g*, the paucity of harmonic progression and the ‘additive’ construction, shifts the focus from the traditional emphasis on deeper harmonic-thematic processes to the present moment and the musical surface. This *modus operandi*, again, evokes Debussy and is an innovation in the use of violin technique in a solo work for the instrument.

So far, the parallels between Ysaÿe and Debussy have been stylistic, but there is a distinct resemblance between the trill-like and the short *appoggiaturas* in ‘L'Aurore’ and two central ideas of ‘Sirènes’ (see examples 8.3, and 8.4a and b).

Example 8.3. – Ysaÿe, 'L'Aurore,' Op. 27/5, bb. 13-19

13 *pp* *sans hate* E.A. A.D.  
(A-D-sur la touche-ppp)

16 *calme* *pp*

Example 8.4a. – Debussy, ‘Sirènes’ (Trois Nocturnes)

Moderement anime

3 Flutes

Oboe

Cor Anglais

Clarinets in A

Bassoons 1 and 2

Bassoon 3

Horns 1 and 2 in F

Horns 3 and 4 in F

3 Trumpets in F

Harp 1

Harp 2

8 Sopranos

8 Mezzo-sopranos

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

*p*

*ppp*

Div.

*p*

*ppp*







In addition, the short *appoggiaturas* are a characteristic of ‘Nuages.’ The first example occurs in bar 23 in the French horns (see example 8.5).

**Example 8.5. –Debussy, ‘Nuages’ (*Trois Nocturnes*), b. 23**



Standing out of their surroundings, these bars sound like an open, if transitory, homage to Debussy. Other, more equivocal, similarities could be pointed out, but this example is the clearest. Further pieces that contain similar *appoggiaturas* include Debussy’s *La Mer* and Maurice Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909-1912) and *Ma Mère l’Oye* (1911).

Another resemblance between Ysaÿe’s Fifth Sonata and Debussy’s style in a number of his works is, again, a link to the Baroque, especially the French Baroque. Reminiscences are most apparent in ‘Danse rustique’ but also exist in ‘L’Aurore.’ For instance, Ysaÿe embellishes the A section in the former intermittently with mordents. In addition, figures in the B section, such as in bars 25 to 26, are written-out mordents that recall Couperin. Moreover, Ysaÿe uses *Fortspinnung* again, which is very palpable, for instance, in the first half of the B section (bb. 22-44). Both movements are also improvisatory in character due to the cell-like structure evident particularly in ‘L’Aurore’ but, to a lesser degree, also in the ‘Danse.’

Finally, the pictorial titles connect this Sonata to both contemporary French music and to the Baroque. For instance, in most of François Couperin’s works for the harpsichord there are movements that carry pictorial titles, such as ‘La Lugubre’ and ‘La Favorite,’ both from the third *Ordre* (1713). Couperin also includes titles, such as ‘Les Abeilles’ and ‘La Pastorelle’ in his first *Ordre* (1713). The natural world was of great importance in the Baroque and the pastoral is a Baroque topos. In addition, some Baroque composers chose titles that refer to dawn or sunrise, such as Jean-Phillipe Rameau in *Zoroastre* (c1749) and *Zaïs* (c1748). Debussy and Ravel, who very much admired Rameau, also entitled a work to that effect: ‘De l’aube à midi sur la mer’ (*La Mer* (1903-1905)) and ‘Lever du jour’ (*Daphnis*

et *Chloé*, Part III (1909-1912)) respectively. Later composers that made dawn a topic include Messiaen (*Réveil des oiseaux* (1953)). ‘L’Aurore’ is, thus, part of a tradition of pieces that refer to dawn.

Like the Second and the Fourth, this Sonata is cyclic in a number of ways. First, the theme of ‘Danse rustique’ is based on the beginning of ‘L’Aurore.’ Bars 8 to 9, which, as discussed, stem from the initial three bars, provide the pitches and rhythm for the first motif of the ‘Danse.’ The remainder of the theme is based to a greater or lesser degree on the first motif, too. Perhaps one could speak of its *Fortspinnung* or variation to construct the theme. The significant insistence on the initial motif strengthens the link to ‘L’Aurore.’ An example of a modified version occurs in bar 4 and even bars like bar 11 (see example 8.6) suggest bars 8 to 9 of ‘L’Aurore’ (see example 8.1 above).

**Example 8.6. – Ysaÿe, ‘Danse rustique,’ Op. 27/5, bb. 11**



Secondly, especially bars 54 to 55 of the ‘Danse’ (see example 8.7), but also the *arpeggios* in bars 71 to 72, are akin to those in ‘L’Aurore,’ for instance, in bar 36.

**Example 8.7. – Ysaÿe, ‘Danse rustique,’ Op. 27/5, bb. 54-55**



Thirdly, the embellishments in ‘L’Aurore’ (bb. 13-15) seem to return in the ‘Danse’ in a modified form and spun out in bars 25 to 26 (see example 8.8) and 29 to 30.

**Example 8.8. – Ysaÿe, ‘Danse rustique,’ Op. 27/5, bb. 25-26**



In addition, more tentative links between the two movements exist. For instance, undulations in the ‘Danse’ could perhaps be described as slightly reminiscent of those in ‘L’Aurore.’

In terms of violin technique, it has been noted above that in this Sonata Ysaÿe seems to evoke an entire symphony orchestra with violinistic devices and their often fast alternations, such as left-hand *pizzicato* (including as accompaniment to bowed notes), harmonics, parallel double-stops (be it as undulations or *glissando*-like with the same fingers (bb. 31-33 of ‘L’Aurore’)), *arpeggios*, consecutive chords and, at the end of the ‘Danse,’ an extremely fast run. Through combining devices such as these, Ysaÿe exploits the violin’s potential for different colours and textures. In ‘L’Aurore,’ for example, the *arpeggios* shimmer, especially through the use of open strings and tonalities that sound bright on the violin, such as E major (bb. 41-43), but also because they are fast. Another shimmering effect is achieved with the *tremolo* of alternating double-stops (bb. 35, 39 and 40). Harmonies also contribute timbre and atmosphere. For instance, depending on the context, open fourths and fifths might be heard as archaic-sounding allusions to the distant past or as devices used in the music of Ysaÿe’s contemporaries or as both. The *pizzicato*, on the other hand, has a sparkling effect, for instance, in bars 7, 9 and 11 of ‘L’Aurore.’ Another point in case is the *pizzicato* in ‘Danse rustique’ (bb. 62-64), which, in addition, loosely recalls Debussy’s ‘Jardins sous la Pluie’ (*Estampes* (1903)) as well as Paganini’s twenty-fourth *Caprice* (c1805). Ysaÿe often deploys violinistic devices to create shimmering and sparkling effects in this Sonata. However, at times, he establishes a sense of weightiness, particularly through the consecutive chords in the ‘Danse’ (bb. 11-18) but also through the theme. The theme sounds direct and robust. This is partly due to its homophonic texture, rhythmically incisive first two bars, relatively simple harmonic scheme and the many open fourths and fifths.

As there are no recordings by Crickboom, it is not possible to compare his playing style to the character and techniques that might be suitable in the Sonata dedicated to

him. It is thought, however, that he did not perform this Sonata in public.<sup>431</sup> He did not make any comments that were transmitted to posterity about it either. Judging by the little description that exists of his playing, Crickboom was an exceptional violinist as discussed in Chapter 3. Crickboom's own violin sonata is conceived in a conventional idiom and is tonally quite simple. There is nothing comparable to the motivic play and orchestral texture of 'L'Aurore' or the forceful theme of the 'Danse' and its complex meters. Neither is it a virtuosic work, and it is devoid of Ysaÿe's complex figuration. It is quite song-like and diatonic throughout.

With respect to the Sonata as a whole, what springs to mind first when listening to it is the apparent modernity of its idiom compared to the other five Sonatas. It seems to be firmly rooted in the early twentieth century and has many parallels in works by composers, such as Debussy and Ravel and, amongst others, the early Florent Schmitt, Albert Roussel as well as Nadia and Lili Boulanger. The recurrent Neobaroque attributes are a further characteristic of such a style. They look both backwards to the Baroque and sideways to Ysaÿe's contemporaries. In addition, the Sonata is cyclic, a characteristic that, while prevalent in the music of the Franckists, also features in other composers' works, including in that of Debussy. Examples include his String Quartet Op. 10 (1893) and the *Trois Nocturnes*.

Although always difficult to exactly pinpoint instances of influence, this chapter has shown that Ysaÿe's Fifth Sonata shares harmonic and structural traits, often unique to this Sonata, with Debussy and seemingly invokes 'Sirènes.' However, it could be argued that the most important similarities lie in the way colour is created and functions, as well as in the emphasis on the musical moment over linear development. Why the Fifth Sonata in particular bears such strong debussyste echoes can only be surmised. Perhaps, on one level, this Sonata lends itself readily to such tendencies because of its evocative movement titles. Also, in each Sonata Ysaÿe appears to explore different styles as well as ways to relate to particular composers and to music history more generally. Therefore, given his close personal and artistic ties with Debussy, the inclusion of a sonata that engages particularly with Debussy's music would only be coherent. It would seem true to say that although Ysaÿe did not copy Debussy, the Fifth Sonata, and 'L'Aurore' in particular, appears barely conceivable without Debussy's precedent even if it is difficult to find specific debussysmes. Ysaÿe's most important contribution to the violin tradition is likely to be his

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<sup>431</sup> See A. Ysaÿe 1947: 224.

creation of Debussy's colouristic effects by creating an almost pointillist texture. The violinistic techniques, such as *tremolo* and left-hand *pizzicato*, and the harmonies are not new in themselves, rather it is their use that is new. Finally, it is impossible to judge to what extent this Sonata suited Crickboom as there are no recordings of his playing and very little description.

## Chapter 9: Eugène Ysaÿe, Sonata Op. 27/6

The Sixth Sonata, like the Third, is conceived as a single movement and the virtuoso tradition is again foregrounded. Also, the Spanish nationality of the dedicatee Quiroga served Ysaÿe as an inspiration, which led him to incorporate a habanera. In violinistic terms, the work is probably the most demanding of all six Sonatas. Virtuoso devices, such as runs in parallel thirds and tenths, abound. Harmonically, Ysaÿe employs again his usual, very chromatic and modally inflected tonal idiom with the various ambiguities, such as in harmony, melody and phrasing. Much of the Sonata is generated through *Fortspinnung*, which gives the work the by now familiar improvisatory feeling of Ysaÿe's Op. 27. First, this chapter offers a summary of the Sonata's structure as well as of important characteristics. It then deals with the work's construction, notably its Spanish elements and virtuosic nature. Form and *Fortspinnung* are also considered. A brief discussion of the Sonata's connection to its dedicatee Quiroga closes the chapter.

**Table 9.1. – Outline of Sonata Op. 27/6**

Structural position	Bars	Tonal area	Technique/musical content	Style
A	1-105	E major →tonal flux →E major; some pentatonicism	Fast, introductory passage work, then motivic material spun out, much passage work with various virtuoso devices	Nineteenth-century virtuoso tradition ( <i>Fortspinnung</i> gives Neobaroque overtones)
B	106-150	C sharp minor →tonal flux	Habanera with virtuosic display	
A'	151-218	E major →Tonal flux →E major; some pentatonicism	Motivic material spun out, much passage work with various virtuoso devices; its beginning is largely based on A section but the material is then spun on freely and differently	

The Sixth Sonata has a modified ternary form, ABA'. No distinctive theme exists in the outer parts although there is recurrent motivic material. The inner section, on the other hand, is inspired by a habanera and has a theme in that style. Especially the outer parts are free, fantasia-like and created through figuration and their *Fortspinnung*. The inner section also appears improvisatory and is spun out, but because of the theme, it has a much more solid feeling than the surrounding material. The Sonata is tied to the nineteenth century especially through its tonal but very chromatic and modally-inflected harmony and to the virtuoso tradition through its great technical difficulty. The Spanish aspect of the work stems from the influence Quiroga's nationality and artistic personality had on Ysaÿe's imagination. In addition, the Spanish quality lends the Sonata a sense of exoticism.

With the Sixth Sonata, Ysaÿe remains within the limits of an idiom that is based in the nineteenth century. Stylistically, his music is neither directly reminiscent of Debussy nor of other early twentieth-century innovative composers, while the Baroque is only evoked very indirectly through the abundant use of *Fortspinnung*. Instead, in this work, Ysaÿe combines references to two aspects of Quiroga's artistic personality: his Spanish nationality and his virtuosity. While the entire piece is very virtuosic, it is the B section that draws most explicitly on Spanish music by means of a habanera. Originally a Cuban dance, it came to be associated with Spain largely due to the habanera that Bizet wrote for Carmen's entrance music in the opera of the same name (1873-1874). Because A/A' and B sections have some motivic connection, the outer parts also become associated with this 'Spanish' quality.

The A and A' sections bear echoes of the habanera, mostly through the dotted rhythms, such as in bars 12 to 13 (see example 9.1. below) and bars 151 to 154. Some melodic-motivic material is also reminiscent of the B section, notably bars 18 (1) and 24 (1) which correspond to some degree to bars, such as bar 109 (1+ to 2) (see examples 9.1. and 9.2. below). Especially bar 28 with upbeat to bar 45 (1) are reminiscent of the middle part because of both the dotted rhythm and the melodic material. Towards the end of the Sonata (bb. 196-209), the dotted rhythms and the melodic material, too, bring back some of the atmosphere of the B section, somewhat similar to bar 27 onwards. Also, because the entire Sonata is based on *Fortspinnung*, some of the motivic-thematic material of the outer sections recalls the habanera of the middle section. Its *Fortspinnung*, therefore, not only

gives a sense to each section and the Sonata as a whole of being close-knit, but also of being related to the habanera and, therefore, to the Spanish theme of the Sonata.

In addition to the motivic connection with the middle part, the A section foreshadows the exotic, with which Spain was associated for Francophone composers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It does so by employing pentatonicism (for instance, in bb. 13-17 and bb. 20-24 (1)), a widespread means to evoke the exotic (see, for instance, Debussy's 'Pagodes' (*Estampes* (1903))). These bars are repeated literally in the A' section. The only passage that is literally repeated in the entire Sonata are bars 13 to 24 (1) in bars 159 to 170 (1), which, of course, include the easily recognisable pentatonic bars and heightens their effect by the time they return (see example 9.1).

**Example 9.1. – Ysaÿe, Op. 27/6, bb. 12-26**

The B section is relatively short; it only comprises 44 bars (as compared to the A and A' sections, which contain 105 bars and 68 bars respectively). However, it is at the centre of the Sonata because it is here that Ysaÿe writes in the style of a habanera and thereby creates the direct Spanish ambience. He generates a sense of an accompaniment with a melodic line above. In reality, however, the texture is homophonic and the different voices are implied. The habanera is largely evoked through the characteristic rhythm and duple metre. The typical triplets and local modal colouring also occur (see example 9.2.).



**Example 9.2. – Ysaÿe, Op. 27/6, bb. 106-114**

In addition, the B section is by and large simpler than the outer sections. Perhaps this has to do with the character of the habanera and its origins as a popular dance. The phrase-length also corresponds to that of the habanera: the first phrase, apart from the two introductory bars of the ‘accompaniment,’ is about eight bars long and, therefore, roughly the traditional length of the habanera phrase. In addition, the second half is livelier than the first, which is, again, characteristic of the dance.<sup>432</sup> However, thinking back over the Sonatas of Op. 27, Ysaÿe almost always suggests rather than follows a particular design or form and his habanera is no exception. While the second phrase appears to turn into another eight-bar phrase, too, it is spun on and grows more virtuosic. Here, it becomes clear that Ysaÿe treats the habanera similarly to, for instance, his directly Neobaroque Sonatas: the style or genre is a starting point not an end point.

Harmonically, the habanera is set apart as well, since Ysaÿe changes from E major to the relative minor C sharp, which he inflects chromatically, such as in bars 109 (1), 111 and 113-116 (1). The minor mode with the chromatic inflections evokes an exotic atmosphere, and, it could be argued, a more or less imaginary Spanish style. The outer sections of the Sonata are chromatic, too, and develop a strong sense of tonal flux. This is, of course, consistent with Ysaÿe’s idiom as familiar from the previous Sonatas but could also be seen as contributing to the exoticism of the work.

Ysaÿe was far from alone in drawing on the habanera. As Frances Barulich notes, habanera rhythms were used around the turn of the twentieth century by numerous

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<sup>432</sup> See Frances Barulich and Jan Fairley, ‘Habanera,’ *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, (accessed May 9, 2017), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/121116>.

French composers.<sup>433</sup> And although Ysaÿe's Sonata does not show direct stylistic reminiscences of Debussy, he does join him and other French contemporaries, such as Saint-Saëns, Ravel and a little earlier, of course, Georges Bizet, in drawing on the dance to evoke Spain and the exotic.

In addition to the 'Spanish' style and 'exotic' associations in the Sixth Sonata, the harmonic play, especially of the outer sections, deserves mention because it shows Ysaÿe's command of harmony so well. Also important to note is that although the music sounds like an improvisation, it actually relies on a highly controlled harmonic design. For instance, in the A section, Ysaÿe moves, as noted, from the initial E major to the relative minor C sharp at the beginning of the B section. He does this via a number of harmonies on which he touches. Perhaps some of the most important ones include B minor in bar 68, which is prepared by its dominant F sharp major, and E minor in bar 76. The latter is both on the large and the small scale prepared by its minor dominant B, that is, in bar 68 and bar 75 respectively. Then, the harmony moves to E major, where it remains despite various small-scale modulations and colouristic harmonic effects. Finally, it progresses to C sharp minor for the habanera. Therefore, the overall harmonic scheme is quite simple: E major, B minor, E minor, E major, C sharp minor (I-v-i-I-vi). Many more subsidiary harmonies could also be named, but this would cloud what seem to be the underlying main harmonic progressions.

On the small scale, chromaticism and modal inflections abound. Progressions often make more sense horizontally than vertically as example 9.3 shows.

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<sup>433</sup> See Frances Barulich and Jan Fairley, 'Habanera,' *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, (accessed May 9, 2017), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libeproxy.open.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/12116>.

Example 9.3. – Ysaÿe, Op. 27/6, bb. 44-60

44 *lusingando molto meno vivo*

47

49 A.D. 6

52 *(céder)* **Poco lento** arpeggiated

56 arpeggiated 6 *teneramente*

60

For instance, bar 49 begins in C major/minor, likely minor given the surrounding accidentals, which is followed by an F minor inflection on beat 1+. The F minor is slightly modally ambiguous because it contains a *d natural* that descends to *c* rather than a *d flat*. A *d natural* in F minor would, of course, traditionally only have been consistent with an ascent to *f* via *e natural* and, therefore, gives the bar Dorian overtones. The *d* becomes important in the next bar, where it serves as an anchor to a non-functional chromatic descent in the upper voices (a third apart) that develop into a descending *glissando* in parallel minor thirds. The following bars are not functional either, though a diminished triad on *d* seems to be suggested (b. 51 (2+) and b. 52), which means that *d* is still an anchor of sorts.

By changing the final *b flat* enharmonically to *a sharp*, Ysaÿe arrives momentarily on A sharp minor (b. 53), which leads via F sharp major (V of V of E major) to E major (b.

54). Through chords that descend stepwise rather than in functional terms, Ysaÿe reaches G major in bar 55. G major is understood here as the subdominant to D major, which is attained in bar 59. The latter is considered a temporary goal harmony because it introduces new melodic material, which catches the attention of listener and performer as it stands out through its syncopation, lack of double-stops and chords as well as the presence of syncopation. In addition, it is arrived at through a quite traditional cadential sequence: IV-i-V7- I (the said subdominant G major, then the minor tonic D (b. 55), the dominant seventh chord A7 (b. 57) and, finally, the temporary tonic D major (b. 59)).

However, despite this cadence from bar 55 onwards, Ysaÿe introduces a rich chromaticism as well as modal inflections. For example, bar 56 does not only contain the initial D minor chord, but also a non-functional stepwise descent, similar to that in bar 54. Equally, the next bar does not only contain the initial dominant seventh to D major, but also adds chromaticism through the inclusion of *a sharp* and *b flat*. The chromaticism continues into the following bar with a *d sharp*, *g natural* and *b flat*. The chromatic and modal inflections lend the passage a kaleidoscopic play of harmonic colours. For instance, bars 51 to 52 are relatively dark in colour, partly through the dissonances, the use of flats and its descending motion, although, here, too, different shades occur. Bar 53, on the other hand, is very bright and almost feels as if it is floating (it could, perhaps, be described as ethereal), partly due to the consonant intervals, which include two open fifth and two open fourths, the use of sharps, as well as its rising motion, mainly on the A and E strings.

Another interesting aspect of this Sonata is the extent to which Ysaÿe modulates. For instance, in bar 45, where the music slows down slightly, the key turns to E flat major with little preparation. Only the last two semiquavers of the previous bar (b. 44) seem to prepare the new key by being flattened (*b flat* and *a flat*). E flat major has a much darker colour than E major not least because the two open strings it includes on the violin are the lower and darker two strings G and D. In E major, on the other hand, the bright open A and E strings resonate, which gives the key its radiance. In addition, the open strings ring when certain stopped intervals are played, especially at an octave, thereby contributing to the brightness of the key. The key of D major is also relatively far away from E major as it is the flattened seventh of the original tonic E major. However, it is not so far from B minor, the next goal harmony (b. 68), as it is its relative major. Finally, the entire passage is an example of *Fortspinnung* and has a very improvisatory character but has nevertheless direction and a logic as discussed.

Harmonically, Ysaÿe's idiom, especially in the outer sections of this Sonata, is reminiscent of the group of composers around Franck and their music. Works, such as Chausson's *Concert*, Op. 21, for piano, violin and string quartet (1889-1891) and *Poème*, Op. 25, for violin and orchestra (1896) as well as d'Indy's first two String Quartets Op. 35 and Op. 45 (1890 and 1897 respectively), are points in case. This is because not only are these works chromatic and modally inflected, but there are also unexpected harmonic shifts that are not traditional. These directly recall Ysaÿe's Sixth Sonata and, to a greater or lesser degree, the other Sonatas of the Op. 27 cycle, too.

When comparing, for example, Chausson's *Poème* for violin and orchestra, which was written at Ysaÿe's request, and Ysaÿe's Sonatas Op. 27, one similarity that stands out is the use of harmony and melody to create kaleidoscopic colouristic effects. As in Ysaÿe's works, Chausson's harmony and melody seem to flow and meander in unexpected ways, and it is through the ever surprising melodic and harmonic twists that the colouristic play is created. Progressions are, at times, perhaps best understood in terms of voice leading rather than functional harmony. This is very similar to example 9.3 above of Ysaÿe's Sixth Sonata. A part of the cadenza of Chausson's *Poème* shall serve as an illustration. The cadenza is highly chromatic and modally inflected throughout, and Chausson creates a rich colouristic play that is difficult to analyse in terms of functional harmony. The most striking bars are, perhaps, bars 83 to 96 (see example 9.4).

Example 9.4. – Ernest Chausson, Op. 25, bb. 83-96

The image displays a musical score for Example 9.4, Op. 25, measures 83-96. It consists of four systems, each with a Violin I (VI.) part and a Piano (Klav.) part. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).  
- **System 1 (measures 83-85):** The VI. part features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and slurs. The Klav. part is silent.  
- **System 2 (measures 86-88):** The VI. part continues with a similar melodic line, marked with a *cresc.* (crescendo). The Klav. part remains silent.  
- **System 3 (measures 89-90):** The VI. part has a more complex melodic line with slurs and a *f* (forte) dynamic marking. The Klav. part provides harmonic support with chords.  
- **System 4 (measures 91-92):** The VI. part concludes with a melodic phrase ending in a trill (*tr*) and a sixteenth-note flourish (*w*). The Klav. part continues with harmonic accompaniment. A *6* (sixteenth-note flourish) is indicated below the final measure of the VI. part.

As can be seen in this example, both the melodic and harmonic progressions are highly chromatically inflected, which creates the kaleidoscopic colouristic effect noted above. Unexpected melodic and harmonic turns and nuances abound, creating an element of surprise in the music and a sense of the improvisatory, as in Ysaÿe's music. Perhaps the most surprising shift occurs from bar 89 to bar 90. Here, the harmony moves from the g sharp diminished seventh chord on the last beat of bar 89 not to the expected diminished seventh a semitone higher, which would follow the pattern set in bars 84 and 86. Rather, in bar 90, Chausson raises the *a* of the diminished seventh to *a sharp*, thus creating the celebrated 'Tristan' chord on *c* (*c, f sharp, a sharp, d sharp* (with some enharmonic respelling in the orchestra)). In addition, the final bars of the cadenza (bb. 93-96), in which the long notes in the solo violin horizontally outline an E flat minor chord are highly unusual. This is because not only do the runs embellish this chord chromatically, offering local colour, the accompaniment progresses from what appears to be the 'Tristan' chord with the lowest note *c* again (spelled as a half-diminished *c* seventh chord but essentially the same chord as in bar 90) via a C flat major chord with an added augmented sixth to an augmented G flat chord with an added ninth that arrives in bar 97 on E flat minor. This progression colours each note of the violin's E flat minor chord differently.

In this Sonata, Ysaÿe most clearly follows the nineteenth-century virtuoso tradition, perhaps even more intensively so than in the Third Sonata. The work brims with virtuoso devices including the parallel thirds and octaves mentioned above but also, for instance, the fingered octaves, ascending and descending *glissandi* in parallel thirds, chords with up to five voices and *arpeggios* in high positions. The accumulation of these highly virtuosic devices is reminiscent of Paganini, for instance, his *24 Caprices Op. 1* (c1805). However, it is likely that Ysaÿe had first and foremost the dedicatee Quiroga and his technical brilliance in mind. In addition, Quiroga was often considered Sarasate's finest

successor<sup>434</sup> and, according to Ysaÿe's son Antoine, reminded his father, too, of Sarasate.<sup>435</sup> Quiroga and Sarasate shared certain traits, such as the brilliant violin technique and their composition of many pieces that bear Hispanic titles and are very virtuosic.

It is likely that Ysaÿe was not only acquainted with Sarasate's compositional style but with that of Quiroga, too. He would probably have known some of the latter's works and, therefore, chosen a style of writing that has some similarities with that of the dedicatee, notably in terms of technical difficulty and allusions to Spain and the Hispanic sphere. Interestingly, among Quiroga's numerous pieces that refer to his country, there are two habaneras.<sup>436</sup> However, it is not certain when these were written or even if they were written before Ysaÿe wrote his Sonatas. Moreover, it is easily possible that Ysaÿe would not have been aware of them even if they had been written by 1923. Perhaps most interesting in this context is not whether or not Ysaÿe knew Quiroga's habaneras, but that he follows a tradition in which habaneras were frequently used, as suggested above, to evoke Spain.

To sum up, the Sixth Sonata, like the Third, is formed of a single movement, focusses on the virtuoso tradition and the dedicatee's cultural heritage. The work remains within the boundaries of a nineteenth-century idiom. Its tonal yet highly chromatic as well as modally inflected style and the various ambiguities in, for example, harmony, melody and phrasing are familiar from the previous Sonatas. Like the other Sonatas of Op. 27, this one is close-knit in that the two outer sections seem to refer to the middle part through some of their material.

The violinistic difficulties of this work are in keeping with Quiroga's reputation as a brilliant virtuoso and perhaps Sarasate's most excellent successor. Whether deliberate or not, the virtuosic demands also serve as a reminder of Ysaÿe's own prolific violin technique. In addition to its great virtuosity, the Sonata evokes Spanish music through various means. The most obvious reference is the habanera in the B section, but the A and A' sections also refer to Spain and the exotic, notably in their use of pentatonicism, but also in some of the dotted rhythms and the melodic material.

In this Sonata, Ysaÿe presents his 'Romantic' heritage, with which he so identified, most openly. Harmonically, the piece follows in the footsteps of the composers around Franck, such as Chausson and d'Indy. In addition, Ysaÿe does not seem to have directly

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<sup>434</sup> See Luque Fernández 2002: 1.

<sup>435</sup> See A. Ysaÿe 1967: 12.

<sup>436</sup> For a full list of Quiroga's compositions see Ana Luque Fernández, 'The Works of Manuel Quiroga: A Catalogue,' (DMA Thesis, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, 2002).



incorporated Debussy or other contemporary stylistic traits, and the Baroque is only faintly suggested through the use of *Fortspinnung*. Although Debussy and other early twentieth-century composers, such as Ravel and Bartók, use pentatonicism, Ysaÿe's use of it seems more in keeping with its utilisation in the nineteenth century. This is because the pentatonic passages are neither layered nor constructed of cells, *et cetera* (see, for example, Chapter 8 for Debussy's compositional means and Ysaÿe's incorporation thereof). What is more, the surrounding material clearly stands in E major and consists of devices typical of the nineteenth-century violin virtuoso tradition, such as the aforementioned runs in parallel double-stops and the *arpeggios*. Its virtuosity and perhaps also a certain light-heartedness, which contrasts with the other five Sonatas, give rise to an almost encore-like character that brings the cycle to a flamboyant close.

Finally, Ysaÿe ends Op. 27 with a Sonata in E major, which is the same key in which Bach ends his set of Sonatas and Partitas BWV 1001-1006. Therefore, both Ysaÿe's sonata cycle and that of Bach begin and end in the same key (beginning in G minor and ending in E major). In light of the many allusions to and even some quotations of Bach, E major would seem to be a direct allusion to the latter's Sonatas and Partitas and a way for Ysaÿe to round off his own cycle of six Sonatas with a reference to the composer he so admired.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has identified a number of characteristics to be central to Ysaÿe's Sonatas Op. 27. The cycle is very much a work for violin in which Ysaÿe explores and develops a wide range of violin techniques, from counterpoint to innovative colouristic effects. While his compositional idiom is deeply rooted in the nineteenth century, he also draws on earlier and later music, in particular on Bach and the Baroque and on a debussyste idiom. In addition, references to the Sonatas' dedicatees may be detected in most cases. The manner in which the music proceeds is imaginative and explorative. The different musical styles and traditions wax and wane within an improvisatory musical fabric. They often merge and are elaborated. Each Sonata balances and integrates different stylistic components, although in the First, Second and Fourth, the Baroque is of major importance. In the Third and Sixth Sonatas, the dedicatees' nationality and their virtuosic capabilities served as the major inspiration to Ysaÿe, while the Fifth is the most debussyste of all. Ysaÿe, thus, demonstrates his command of a range of different idioms. The styles and traditions on which he draws are those with which he personally identified most.

The Sonatas' stylistic fluidity, multifaceted and often innovative nature, mirror Ysaÿe's belief in the continuity of history, the value and inseparability of past, present and future. They testify to his commitment to balancing the continuation of musical tradition with making a unique and personal contribution to its development. In addition, this study has signalled a close link with the fantasia tradition, notably in the interpretation that began to emerge since the late eighteenth century. This includes the music's carefully crafted improvisatory appearance, a concern with originality and the fundamental importance of expressiveness and beauty. It has also been noted that instrumental virtuosity and musical content are intimately interlinked and seem to elicit each other.

Musical expressiveness was fundamental to Ysaÿe's aesthetics. His search for it is especially palpable in his resourceful and innovative use of violin technique, the intensely chromatic and modally-inflected harmony, and the music's improvisatory nature. The different ambiguities and divergences from convention intensify the sense of freedom and spontaneity. Again, exploration is a primary issue. In his verbal discourse, Ysaÿe had identified the development of expressiveness without neglect of the various aspects of musical tradition as the true purpose of musical progress. As previously discussed, he speaks, for example, of his 'desire to link music and virtuosity—the true virtuosity which

had been neglected since the instrumentalists, departing from the example set them by the early masters, had ceased composing themselves and had left this art to those who ignore the resources of the violin.<sup>437</sup> He also states that the musical art seemed to him like a 'single and perpetually unfinished monument to which each generation, each school come and contribute their stone [...]'.<sup>438</sup> In Op. 27, Ysaÿe continuously pursues the objectives of linking music, that is, expressiveness, and virtuosity, as well as past, present and future. Thus, a comparison of his verbal discourse about his musical identity and aesthetic aspirations as a Romantic<sup>439</sup> who composes 'for and through the violin',<sup>440</sup> with the compositional idiom of the Sonatas reveals a great consistency between the two.

By the time the nineteenth century drew to a close, Ysaÿe had become an important and life-long member of the group of musicians and composers that broke new aesthetic ground in post-1870 France (which included, as noted, the Franckists, Debussy and Fauré). In the new century, however, their music gradually lost its revolutionary force and was superseded by a new generation of composers, which included Stravinsky and Les Six, from whose music Ysaÿe felt, to his great dismay, increasingly estranged. As was discussed in chapter 2, Ysaÿe expressed his dismay on a number of occasions, worrying, for example that 'I don't see anything but chaos in the current productions.'<sup>441</sup> Nevertheless, even in the 1920s did he continue to share a number of typical artistic concerns with this new, heterogeneous group of composers, notably a belief in the necessity of innovation to serve contemporary aesthetic and technical needs combined with an intensive interest in music from before the nineteenth century. Of course, the concern with both the past and innovation was not new in the 1920s as it had developed in the nineteenth century, especially in its later part. However, the fundamental difference to these pioneering composers lies in Ysaÿe's avowed loyalty to the Romantic tradition and his refusal to break with its aesthetics and values. Rather, he always sought to carefully refine and extend the possibilities of expressing the ideals of Romanticism as he understood them without moving away from them. He also viewed the more distant past as participating in the same Romantic aesthetics. This clearly stands in contrast to the somewhat younger, innovatory composers of the 1920s as they intended a rupture with Romanticism by rejecting it, as, for

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<sup>437</sup> In A. Ysaÿe 1947: 218.

<sup>438</sup> '[...] un monument unique et perpétuellement inachevé, auquel chaque génération, chaque école viennent apporter leur pierre [...]' (in Christen 1947: 180).

<sup>439</sup> E. Ysaÿe 1968: 8.

<sup>440</sup> 'pour et par le violon' (in Christen 1947: 35).

<sup>441</sup> 'je ne vois rien qu'un chaos dans les productions actuelles' (in Christen 1947: 181).

example, Neoclassicism did. A use of music from before or outside this tradition served, therefore, as a means to create distance from the nineteenth century rather than continuity of its values.

Although by the 1920s, Ysaÿe's loyalty to and belief in Romanticism very much excluded him from being considered as participating in the newest musical developments, it seems important to acknowledge his innovative and imaginative side and keenness to explore, as this is as fundamental a part of his identity as his loyalty to Romantic ideals and, in fact, inseparable from them. Through his association with the Franckists, such as d'Indy, Chausson and not least Franck himself (to whom frequent reference has been made throughout this thesis), Ysaÿe had found his lifelong artistic identity within which he explored his individuality and personal vision of progress. He remained loyal to these composers despite their growing reputation as outdated, conservative and dogmatic. Through their circle, he was able to be both proudly traditional, yet always to seek to explore and innovate.

Ultimately, Ysaÿe's identity is perhaps best described as multifaceted. He was both proudly traditional, yet always sought to explore and innovate; he openly emulated music from a variety of periods and traditions, yet was very personal in his choices on whom to draw and how to do so. He constantly sought ways to increase musical expressiveness and beauty, yet was very focused on the technical possibilities of his instrument (not unlike Debussy for the piano). His music is carefully planned and constructed, yet gives a free and improvisatory impression. On first sight, this may appear somewhat contradictory. For Ysaÿe, however, these aspects were complementary and formed his artistic personality and identity.

Moreover, the Sonatas reflect his passion to communicate and transmit his aesthetic convictions – which he considered immutable throughout history – in a world he feared had abandoned them in favour of chaos and ugliness.<sup>442</sup> He intended Op. 27 to offer new violinistic resources and to illustrate ways in which to respect and creatively follow traditional aesthetic values in the early twentieth century, while always remaining committed to musical progress. Thus, although deeply rooted in the past, he was profoundly concerned with the future and focused perhaps as much on this as he did on the past. This suggests that, to Ysaÿe, his identity as a 'Romantic' included an openness to and inclusiveness of compositional approaches from different periods and traditions, both

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<sup>442</sup> See Christen 1947: 179-181.

past and present, while maintaining a strong vision of musical progress. Therefore, when evaluating Ysaÿe's identity and music, it may be advisable to put aside labels, such as Romantic, modern, reactionary or progressive, and to follow his own advice: 'Do not judge an artist [...] according to what you want him to be, but according to what he gives you.'<sup>443</sup> This offers an excellent way to consider Ysaÿe in his individuality and multifaceted nature, with as few preconceptions as possible of what he should or should not have been.

The purpose of this thesis has been to contribute to a better understanding of Ysaÿe's artistic personality and as a stepping stone for research into his contribution to larger developments in music history. However, the scope of this study is necessarily constrained in a number of ways. For instance, it seeks to understand Ysaÿe's aesthetic identity specifically through the Six Sonatas Op. 27, a work he wrote late in life. Consequently, consideration of his gradual aesthetic and artistic development and evolving views could not be explored in depth. Moreover, it is difficult to measure the importance his changing, that is, diminishing, position and his struggle to get to grips with a rapidly changing musical world had on his aesthetics and/or their expression. For instance, some aspects may have become more important to him, such as the link to the more distant past and to Bach. A turn to the past may have been a part of a trend in which composers increasingly turned to the past for inspiration, not least because the relatively new field of musicology was growing in importance. It brought to light older music and made it available to musicians. Composers found inspiration in these newly available sources. On the other hand, Ysaÿe might have become more interested in older music because he had become separated from newer aesthetic developments. Christen suggests that this was painful to Ysaÿe.<sup>444</sup> The two explanations are not mutually exclusive, however, and for Ysaÿe both aspects might have played a role. Questions, such as these, would need to be addressed by future research.

Then, although Ysaÿe's context, historical, biographical, social and aesthetic, has guided this study as much as possible within the constraints of this PhD thesis, it is, of course, impossible to truly replicate Ysaÿe's vantage point. Therefore, the thesis is necessarily based on today's perspective and thinking, including the author's personal interest in and partiality to Op. 27. While the distance from the object of study may in

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<sup>443</sup> 'Ne jugez pas un artiste [...] d'après ce que vous voulez qu'il soit, mais d'après ce qu'il vous donne' (in Christen 1947: 151).

<sup>444</sup> See Christen 1947: 180.

some ways constitute a weakness, it can also serve, and hopefully has served, as a strength by offering relevant perspectives, insights and ideas into Ysaÿe's artistic identity not available to his contemporaries.

Despite these limitations, in offering a more detailed understanding than in previous studies, especially of Ysaÿe's relationship and engagement with music history, the author of this thesis hopes to encourage and facilitate the further exploration of his interaction with his environment, particularly with composers and violinists to whom he was close. One relatively large topic area is the closer examination (or re-examination) of Ysaÿe's aesthetic role and contribution within the Franck circle. Of interest may, for instance, be a closer study of the role Ysaÿe played in his friend d'Indy's artistic and aesthetic development in light of the latter's impact on French musical life as well as on music history more broadly speaking. Finally, as culmination of Ysaÿe's artistic creativity in which he encapsulates his aesthetic concerns as they had evolved during the course of his life, the study of Op. 27 offers a starting point from which to retrace his aesthetic development.

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Original issue number: Columbia D 15175

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3001-1, 02-2, 03-2
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Original issue number: BD3 Opal

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Original issue number: Polydor 516549/52

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issue number: Columbia LX 127 and Columbia J 7825

-----, with Andor Foldes (piano), Charles Ives Sonata for Violin and Piano, No. 4,  
rec. 1942, D2 BD9-11 BIDDULPH, Matrix number: ARS 2457-58, Original issue  
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174-178 (175, 176, 177)

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Sergei Prokofiev Violin Concerto in D major (1916-17), rec. 1935, Matrix number:  
CAX 7583-7587 & LX 433-35, Original issue number: Columbia LX 433-35/Columbia  
(France) LFX 402-404/Columbia Masterworks M 244

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Matrix/Runout (Side A): XLP 6627-38, Matrix/Runout (Side B): XLP 6620-3A,  
Original issue number: Columbia ML 4679, Columbia

Thibaud, Jacques, with Alfred Cortot (piano), César Franck Violin Sonata, rec. 1929, Matrix  
number: CS 3724-31, Original issue number: HMV DB 1347-1350

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47, rec. 1929, Original issue number: HMV (Gramophone) DB 1328-31, Matrix

number: CS 3716-23 (CS 3716-III, 3717-II, 3718-III, 3719-I, 3720-II, 3721-I, 3722-II, 3723-III)

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1941, Original issue number: HMV DB 5142-4

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Ernest Chausson *Poème*, rec. 1941, Original issue number: Appian APR-5644

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Op. 19 No. 1 (2 mins. excerpt), rec. 1900, Original issue number: SEQ23A  
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-----, Richard Wagner 'Prize Song,' rec. 1912,  
Matrix number: 36526, BD13 SYMPOSIUM (1912)

Ysaÿe, Eugène, with Camille Decreus (piano), Henri Vieuxtemps 'Rondino,' rec. 1912,  
Original issue number: 1 DELTA

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3, rec. 1912, Original issue number: 4 DELTA

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Matrix number: 36522, BD9 SYMPOSIUM