

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF STYLE  
AND TECHNIQUE IN UNACCOMPANIED  
VIOLIN WORKS SPANNING THE  
SEVENTEENTH THROUGH TWENTIETH  
CENTURIES

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Violin playing on a universal level encompasses a vast history of stylistic and technical traditions. By studying the evolution of the styles and techniques of violin playing—while not always obvious or expected—one can further understand and have a greater appreciation for the genre as a whole. The specific realm of unaccompanied polyphonic violin repertory is a unique one, for the violin itself was never physically ideal for chordal playing, and yet, composers have expanded their idiomatic writing through this very genre in truly ideal ways from the early-Baroque Era until now. My approach with this performance dissertation has been to highlight solo polyphonic works of both standard and non-standard reputation, to show a wide scope of the styles and techniques that have been used over centuries to shape how we experience violin playing today. What we discover is that despite the leaps and bounds taken by composers of this genre to reach the current trends, the simplest and most widely applied violinistic traditions over time are the ones that composers continue to rely on the most.

TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF STYLE AND TECHNIQUE IN  
UNACCOMPANIED VIOLIN WORKS SPANNING THE SEVENTEENTH  
THROUGH TWENTIETH CENTURIES

by

Audrey Wright

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Advisory Committee:  
Professor David Salness, Chair  
Professor Irina Muresanu  
Dr. Edward Maclary  
Dr. James Fry  
Dr. Kenneth Slowik  
Professor Dan Moller

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To my parents and Geoff

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## Introduction

The unaccompanied violin genre is a vast exhibition of virtuosity, idiomatic expression, and compositional innovation. From the earliest traces of instrumental music featuring the violin, there is a continual development of techniques and expansion of musical possibilities. Due to its size, timbre, and tuning, the violin is highly versatile and has historically been featured in melodic, accompanying, and even rhythmic roles. These roles have been intensified and transformed over time; as violinists seek out more challenges and opportunities to impress, composers increasingly meet those demands and nudge them further, and instrument makers discover new ways of facilitating these progressions from the mechanical standpoint. The evolution of violin playing therefore involves a truly symbiotic relationship between violinists, composers, and violin makers, all of whom take part in molding the history of the instrument and the development of its repertory.

In the more specific realm of unaccompanied violin polyphony, this evolution becomes especially apparent. Despite the versatility of the violin, it is still limited in its chordal capabilities when compared to the keyboard or fretted string instruments, so composers are challenged to be creative and resourceful in their attempts to write music that idiomatically incorporates polyphonic elements. Therefore, many aspects of style and technique in polyphonic solo violin playing recur over time to become the connective tissue between the multifarious works in this genre.

The music in this genre represents, in many ways, the pinnacle of violin playing. In essence, this dissertation provides a survey of that repertory. It is my intent that it be used as a guide to familiarize oneself with this music, meant for

aspiring violinists and others who are drawn to the repertory. For this reason, I feel compelled to include some discussion about the role of process as related to the violin and the individual works themselves, as well as from my own personal experience with performing these works. This discussion can be broken down into two main areas: (1) process as it relates to the evolution of the instrument itself and its effect on violin playing over time (pp. 3–9, “The Violin: Historical Context” and “The Violin and Violin Bow: A Brief History”), and (2) process as it relates to the performer’s relationship with this music, including my own notes on working on this project and thoughts on preparing pieces for the first time as opposed to revisiting them over time (p. 47, “Personal Process” and throughout the various sections on individual works). By reflecting on personal process within the context of the evolution of style and technique in unaccompanied violin repertory, I have realized the profound impact this topic has made on my own individual career and identity as a violinist. In addition to highlighting the fascinating elements of this particular genre of music, it is my hope that this dissertation provides a framework for examining the evolution of other music from a holistic perspective.

## The Violin: Historical Context

To fully grasp this music as an evolutionary process in the world of the violin, it is beneficial to understand a brief history of the instrument from a physical and performance standpoint. To the best of our knowledge, the violin emerged as a hybrid of the *rebec*, Renaissance fiddle, and *lira da braccio* in the northern regions of Italy during the sixteenth century. French composer Philibert Jambe de Fer wrote his treatise *Epitome musicale* in 1556, in which he provided the earliest recorded description of the violin as a fretless, four-stringed instrument tuned in fifths. He maintains that the physical nature of the violin allows for agile, highly articulated playing, and therefore was often used in courtly or peasant dance music.<sup>1</sup> Melodic lyricism is the other main characteristic of the violin, and comes from its singing quality, expanded pitch range, and the use of a bow for sustained tone.

By the end of the sixteenth century, the violin would also have been found in ensemble settings to highlight its melodic nature, taking on simple lines in instrumental sonatas or *canzonas*, or filling in for the soprano part in church vocal music. The early seventeenth century saw a rise in demand for the violin in court and church settings. In response, violinists started taking on various forms of musical directorship, which provided artistic and financial support to compose, perform, and teach their own music freely. Their compositions were filled with technically adventurous, highly idiomatic writing that paved the way for virtuosic violin playing for centuries to come.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David D. Boyden. 1965. *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761, and Its Relationship to the Violin and Violin Music*. Pl. 40. Oxford University Press: London. 6–12.

<sup>2</sup> David D. Boyden. 1965. *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761, and Its Relationship to the Violin and Violin Music*. Pl. 40. Oxford University Press: London. 49–64.

Italy was the original epicenter of virtuosic violin playing, but the trend spread quickly throughout Europe and especially to Germany. Some of this was due to Italian violinist-composers who found employment in German courts, such as Biagio Marini (1594–1663) in Neuburg and Düsseldorf<sup>3</sup> and Carlo Farina (c.1604–1639) in Dresden.<sup>4</sup> Italian virtuosity also spread to Germany through the publication of repertory collections in cities such as Vienna, as was the case with Marco Uccellini (1610–1680) and his *Opp.* 4–8. The presence of these musicians and their compositions made a huge impact upon German violin virtuosity. The cities of Dresden and Salzburg maintained a particularly impressive roster of virtuosic violinists during the seventeenth century. In Dresden, prominent performers included J.W. Furchheim, J.J. Walter, J. P. von Westhoff, N.A. Strungk, and J.G. Pisendel, and Salzburg was home to Heinrich von Biber and his pupil Johann Joseph Vilsmaÿr.<sup>5</sup> This wave of German virtuosity that sprang out of the early-seventeenth century was characterized by highly individualized and expressive playing. To compliment this, compositions highlighted sections of vividly contrasting character, utilized a ‘mixed-style’ approach, and turned to polyphonic writing as a means to exploit the full range of the violin.<sup>6</sup> It is from this tradition that most of the repertory in this dissertation originates.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> David Ledbetter. 2009. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 24.

## **The Violin and Violin Bow: A Brief History**

A brief explanation of the basic physical traits in violins and violin bows from the Baroque Era until now will be beneficial in fully understanding why certain techniques and compositional styles evolved as they have for the instrument. This can be examined from three aspects: the violin itself, essential violin components, and the violin bow.

### The Violin

Violins made in the baroque period varied widely from maker to maker, but there are a few universal traits that are important to note. The neck and fingerboard were shorter and protruded straight out along the same plane of the body of the instrument. This contrasts with the longer, sloping setup of a modern violin.<sup>7</sup> The greatest impact of this would have been on playability. With a shorter fingerboard, the pitch range did not extend as high as that of modern violins. Playing in the sixth, seventh, or even eighth position would have been considered highly virtuosic. The bass-bar was also shorter and the soundpost thinner, both of which attributed to a softer, yet clearer and more nasal sound. These two features gained in size at inconsistent rates throughout the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when players were performing in bigger spaces and the repertory was becoming more

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<sup>7</sup> David D. Boyden, Peter Walls, Peter Holman, Karel Moens, Robin Stowell, Anthony Barnett, Matt Glaser, et al. 2001. "Violin." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 20. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000041161>.

technically demanding. The instruments in this time range have been classified as either ‘classical’ or ‘transitional’.

Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century violins made by Cremonese makers—most notably, Antonio Stradivari (*b*1644–9; *d*1737) and Giuseppe Guarneri ‘del Gesù’ (1698–1744)—have largely become the gold standard for their tone and shape. Aside from the obvious superb craftsmanship of these instruments, their relatively flat belly makes for a powerful, yet warm tone, perfect for large concert halls as well as small spaces. In the seventeenth century, however, some players may have preferred more intimate tone of rounder-bellied violins made by Andrea Amati, his sons Antonio and Girolamo, and Jacob Stainer.<sup>8</sup>

### Essential Violin Components

The two most obvious and essential violin components are the violin strings and the bridge that holds them up. Strings in the Baroque Era were made of sheep gut. By the 1660s, many players used a G-string wound with silver that improved durability and stability.<sup>9</sup> The warm, immediate sound of gut strings projects far less than the steel or synthetic strings that most players use today, but for the intimate settings and highly resonant palace halls in which violinists played, they didn’t need to. To this day, many players still enjoy playing on gut or synthetically-modified gut strings because of their tonal capability.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Bridges were typically lower, less arched, and wider than they are on modern violins, resulting in lower string tension and ease of playing arpeggiated chords across the strings.

The chinrest was not in use until around 1820 when it was invented by concert violinist Louis Spohr. The shoulder rest was an even later invention (not until the early twentieth century). Therefore, the violin was either balanced between the left collarbone and hand or placed just under the collarbone (and in some cases as low as the left ribs) and demanded an incredibly open and physically free approach to playing.<sup>10</sup> This setup largely prevented extensive shifting, continuous vibrato, and many of the extended techniques used in contemporary music of today, but was well-suited to the compositions of the period. In cases when the set-up prohibited violinists from easily executing a desired effect, they devised techniques that defied the violin's boundaries in order to serve the intended expression.

### The Violin Bow

The bow has always been as important to the playability of the violin as the violin itself. It is inherently linked to how repertory is composed for the instrument, especially in the specific subset of polyphonic unaccompanied works. Bows of the Baroque and early Classical Periods were quite literally “bowed” in shape and had much lighter sticks and less bow hair than those of modern day. They were tapered at the tip, which placed the heaviest weight of the bow toward the frog. Bows throughout much of the seventeenth century into the first half of the eighteenth century would have fallen under the category of short bows, ranging in length from

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

roughly 58 to 64 cm. To satisfy the curiosity and virtuosity of Italian violinist Giuseppe Tartini in around 1720, some bow makers extended the length of these bows to between 69 and 72 cm in length, while still maintaining a convex curve.<sup>11</sup> The shapes of these bows were perfect for lighter dance styles and certain types of expressive traits common in the Baroque Era. As Judy Tarling describes in *Baroque String Playing 'for ingenious learners'*, one of the most prevalent traits was the “rule of the down-bow”. Here, gravity’s natural pull aided down-bows that produced strong down beats, while up-bows naturally produced weak-beats.<sup>12</sup> While short bows were preferred throughout much of the Baroque Era, long bows were not seen until the end of the eighteenth century and overlapped with the transitional or Classical bows models of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. These bows typically had raised heads in the ‘hatchet’ shape rather than the tapered ones of Baroque bows. They also were light, sometimes even shorter than the long Baroque bow, and were perfect for the kind of springy articulation so prevalent in the Classical repertory of Haydn and Mozart.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1780s French bow maker François Tourte (1747–1835) revolutionized violin bow making with his model that was longer (around 74 to 75 cm), concave, more balanced from frog to tip, and had a squared hatchet tip as well as more hair

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<sup>11</sup> Werner Bachmann, Robert E. Seletsky, David D. Boyden, Jaak Liivoja-Lorius, Peter Walls, and Peter Cooke. 2001. “Bow.” *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000003753>.

<sup>12</sup> Judy Tarling. 2013. *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*. St. Albans, Hertfordshire: Corda Music. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Werner Bachmann, Robert E. Seletsky, David D. Boyden, Jaak Liivoja-Lorius, Peter Walls, and Peter Cooke. 2001. “Bow.” *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000003753>.



than any previous bow.<sup>14</sup> Tourte's bow became the standard model for the modern bows of today for its versatility, flexibility, strength, and *sostenuto* capabilities. Spohr, in his 1833 treatise *Violin-Schule*, remarked on the bow's "trifling weight", "sufficient elasticity of stick", and "the beautiful and uniform bending". These qualities remained ideal for generations of violinists to come in their pursuit to project and execute a wide spectrum of bowing techniques.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> David D Boyden. 1965. *The History of Violin Playing from Its Origins to 1761, and Its Relationship to the Violin and Violin Music*. Pl. 40. Oxford University Press: London. 328.

<sup>15</sup> Werner Bachmann, Robert E. Seletsky, David D. Boyden, Jaak Liivoja-Lorius, Peter Walls, and Peter Cooke. 2001. "Bow." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000003753>.

## **To Be a Violinist**

At the core of every great piece of music lies a rich history of techniques and trends, as well as an approach to the advantages and limitations of the instrumentation itself. In performing music especially as an unaccompanied violinist, the performer automatically becomes immersed in those traditions that have evolved for the violin from its beginnings. For example, the approach to playing fully expressive, arpeggiated chords is a bowing technique that originated in the early-Baroque period yet has been employed throughout subsequent centuries by violinists and composers in similar yet completely unique contexts, albeit with modernized versions of equipment, musical form, and harmony. To be a violinist is to acknowledge the idiomatic styles of violin playing established by the pioneering Baroque masters while continually seeking to enhance and expand the boundaries of the instrument by way of technique and expression. The following pages will examine specific works by those composers who have made significant contributions to the unaccompanied violin genre in an attempt to highlight the connective tissue that holds this repertory all together.

The compositions highlighted in this paper span from 1676 to 1976 and are representative of a great body of both standard and lesser-known works that all feature highly unique and virtuosic solo instrumental writing. While other pieces written before and after these dates would have made appropriate additions to this dissertation, these specific works were chosen with the idea of creating optimal balance and cohesion across the three accompanying recital programs.

## Chapter 1: Repertory of the Baroque Era

### *Passacaglia*

#### Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (c.1644–1704)

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber was an Austrian violinist and composer of the Baroque Era who left us with a tradition of violin virtuosity that is truly exceptional. His solo compositions are daring, unique, and technically demanding for the time. They explore fancy bowing techniques, high registers, the inventive tuning technique known as *scordatura*, and various extremes in character that make performing them as wild an experience as hearing them performed.

Only one purely unaccompanied violin solo by Biber exists, and that is the *Passacaglia* in G minor. It is the sixteenth and final work in his collection of *Mystery* or *Rosary Sonatas*, written sometime around 1676 in Salzburg. It wasn't until 1905 that the manuscript of these sonatas was discovered and published for widespread consumption.<sup>16</sup> Each piece in the original manuscript collection is marked by an engraved image depicting a different scene of the Catholic Rosary as related to events in the lives of Mary and Jesus.

As more of a “bonus track” to these ‘Rosary’ sonatas, the *Passacaglia* instead bears an image relating to the Feast of the Guardian Angels: an angel who appears to be guiding a child to the inferred light of God. The programmatic element in connection to these biblical images is present, yet subtle. For example, the descending

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<sup>16</sup> Charles E Brewer. 2016. “The Instrumental Music of Schmelzter, Biber, Muffat and Their Contemporaries,” May, 239–97. doi:10.4324/9781315238951.

four-note ground bass figure that permeates the entire piece suggests a feeling of searching, possibly in this case for God. The ground bass upon which the passacaglia and other variation forms are built is a harmonic structure that had been used in music for centuries before Biber composed this piece. Therefore, this was not as much an exploration of new concepts for the composer as it was an exercise in innovation and a platform to show off idiomatic techniques, polyphonic feats, and expressive nuances that were so characteristic of his own performance style.

The *Passacaglia* unfolds throughout five sections, each partitioned by the lone four-note theme from the opening. The variations in the first section are simple, as if to highlight the beauty of the simple ground. Gradually, the second variation intensifies with more arpeggiation, dotted rhythms, expressive chromaticism, higher registers, and double-stops. The third section reaches a climax of virtuosity as well as expressive depth. A series of fast runs gives way to a dream-like *adagio*, in a recitative style or *stylus phantasticus* that was prevalent in the early-Baroque period.<sup>17</sup> The music quickly returns to a contrasting *allegro* in a series of articulated, rising octaves that lead upwards. On top of a bass line that has now jumped up one octave, the ornamental figures consist of fast thirty-second notes in sixth position. The music seems to reach momentarily a higher spiritual place bordering on ecstasy here, yet the passacaglia cycle continues and the bass line makes its way back to the original octave below via stepwise motion. The resulting section is built upon chordal variations that demonstrate Biber's mastery of polyphonic texture. The ebb and flow between fantasy and fire continues until the last four ground bass iterations, and the

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<sup>17</sup> David Ledbetter. 2009. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

final cadence ends in a glowing G major chord. Perhaps the guardian angel has shown us the way, after all.

*Suite No. 5 for Solo Violin in D minor*

**Johann Paul von Westhoff (1656–1705)**

Johann Paul von Westhoff was a highly regarded virtuoso violinist and composer of the Dresden court from 1674 to 1697. Having experienced a fair amount of international travel through music—to Florence, to Paris to play for Louis XIV, and eventually to Weimar—Westhoff was multilingual and spent time as a language professor at Wittenberg University. During his time as a chamber secretary, chamber musician, and language professor in Weimar (from 1699 until his death in 1705), he may have had contact with J.S. Bach, who was employed as a junior attendant in the court band in 1703. It is not clear if Bach became acquainted with any of Westhoff's compositions, but one could imagine his great curiosity to learn from the older, well-established violinist.<sup>18</sup>

Westhoff's *Suite No. 5 for Solo Violin in D minor* is part of the *Six Suites Pour Violin Seul sans Basse* (Dresden 1696). It is the only published collection of its kind in existence before Bach's six violin solos, although other works for violin alone had existed in manuscript form or were compiled into larger collections by composers such as Schmelzer, Farina, Eberlin, and Baltzar.<sup>19</sup> These pieces demonstrate an abundance of full, four-note chordal writing, and to most effectively notate this Westhoff and his engraver decided upon a method of notation that involved not the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 26–27.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 21–22

usual five, but eight lines of music. They combine French violin clef on the top four staves with mezzo-soprano clef on the bottom ones, and the visual effect is that of beautifully spaced and clearly voiced chordal writing.

Ex. 1: Johann Paul Westhoff: *Solo Suite No. 5, I. Allemande*<sup>20</sup>

The pieces all contain four movements in the most common sequence of French Baroque dance suites: *Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, and *Gigue*.<sup>21</sup> Each movement of the suite follows the typical binary form and French dance character from which it is derived. Westhoff varies the polyphonic textures throughout each suite, making them feel inspired yet well balanced. Full, three-part writing is

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<sup>20</sup> Johann Paul Westhoff. 1975. *Six Suites Pour Violin Seul sans Basse*. Vol. Suite No. 5. Winterthur: Amadeus.

<sup>21</sup> Judy Tarling. 2013. *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*. St. Albans, Hertfordshire: Corda Music. 99.

contrasted with chordal accentuation of single-line melodies.<sup>22</sup> In *Suite No. 5*, the *Allemande* is mainly a two-part texture with interjections of three- and four-note chords that help build momentum to the tops of phrases and define the movement's structure. In the *Courante*, the melody is clearly heard above the chords that accompany it throughout. The *Sarabande* is a beautiful example of counterpoint and the interplay between low and high melody, as can be seen in the notated copy of the facsimile here:

Ex. 2: Johann Paul Westhoff: *Solo Suite No. 5, III. Sarabande*<sup>23</sup>



In the first four bars alone, this counterpoint is unmistakable. It begins as a simple unison 'a', to which a new voice is added to the texture in each consecutive bar. The line expands in contrary, stepwise motion to the dominant A major chord in bar four. Westhoff's genius lies in his ability to create so much expression out of so simple a

<sup>22</sup> David Ledbetter. 2009. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Johann Paul Westhoff. 1975. *Six Suites Pour Violin Seul sans Basse*. Vol. Suite No. 5. Winterthur: Amadeus. Annotated by Audrey Wright.

line. The suite ends with the energetic *Gigue*, which combines polyphonic textures from the previous movements that make it colorful and truly suitable for dancing.

The compositional legacy of Westhoff's suites combines straightforward, yet highly idiomatic polyphonic violin writing with the mixed-style approach of French dance forms being treated in a German fashion. While the virtuosity of Biber is seen in short, successive sections that highlight extreme contrasts in character, dynamics, *tessitura* (texture as related to pitch range), and bowing, the virtuosity of Westhoff's suites develops over longer, more homogenized sections through the use of varied chordal textures.<sup>24</sup> These pieces have much to offer for performers who wish to indulge in chordal playing of the Baroque Era without submitting themselves to the greater demands of Bach's solo partitas.

***Partita No. 5 in G minor from "Artificiosus Concentus pro Camera"***

**Johann Joseph Vilsmaÿr (1663–1722)**

In his book *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works*, David Ledbetter suggests that Johann Joseph Vilsmaÿr's *Artificiosus Concentus pro Camera* of 1715 are the "Austrian counterpart to the suites of Westhoff."<sup>25</sup> Very little biographical information is known about the Vilsmaÿr, other than that he was a student of Biber, whom he took over for in the Salzburg court after Biber's death in 1704.<sup>26</sup> Vilsmaÿr's music combines compositional aspects of his teacher—polyphonic

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 26–27.

<sup>25</sup> David Ledbetter. 2009. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 28

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 28.



writing, the use of *scordatura*, and unique coloring of harmony—with French dance forms and Italian musical elements.

Four of the six partitas in *Artificiosus Conventus pro Camera* use *scordatura*, a tuning strategy used by often by Biber. *Scordatura* calls for the non-traditional tuning of the violin's strings, and many composers of the Baroque Era used it to help facilitate difficult chordal playing and to allow the instrument to resonate best in a given key.<sup>27</sup> For *Partita No. 5*, Vilsmaÿr uses the tuning of g, d', a', d'', where the top string (d'') is tuned one whole step down from the traditional tuning (e''). With this tuning, the open strings of the violin ring beautifully in the key of G minor, enabling the performer to achieve a round and glowing tone.

*Partita No. 5* consists of eight movements, most of which are Baroque-era dances. In the typical style of the seventeenth-century dance suite, the opening movement is a flourishing *Prelude*, followed by a unique set of other dance forms. The *Prelude* consists entirely of an arresting string of arpeggiated chords, similar to what one would hear in instrumental music of Corelli, Geminiani, and Bach.<sup>28</sup>

The next movement, a *Gavotte*, is comprised of a continuous string of sixteenth notes in slurred pairs. The gentle rise and fall of the notes seem to be searching, but in contrast the harmonic progression and clear four-bar phrase structure create a sense of inevitability. The way in which the single-note melody outlines the harmony is a special approach to implied polyphony. In this case it falls on the violinist to adequately bring out notes of harmonic importance through bow emphasis and sensitivity in timing. The next movement, a *Sarabande*, has the marking of

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<sup>27</sup> Judy Tarling. 2013. *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*. St. Albans, Hertfordshire: Corda Music. 198.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 152–153.

*adagio* at the beginning. It is the only slow movement of the entire piece, made especially poignant through reaching melodic dissonances.

Next comes the *Rigodon*, a French folk dance that generally bears similarity in rhythm and character to the *gavotte* and *boure*.<sup>29</sup> The following *Guige* (more often spelled *gigue* or *giga*) is a light and lively three-part dance. In many French instrumental Baroque suites this dance would be placed at the end in a finale-like fashion, but here Vilsmaÿr nestles the dance in the middle of the *Partita*, perhaps to draw even more attention to its practically humorous brevity.

The *Menuette* provides an exquisite character contrast to the previous *Rigodon* and *Guige*. Where the *Rigodon* and *Guige* are folk-like and rustic, the *Menuette* provides the perfect vignette of eighteenth-century aristocracy. The poise achieved in this movement comes from its refined rhythms and interplay of stepwise notes between low and high registers on the violin.

Next comes the *Boure*, another easy-going dance in duple meter similar to the *Gavotte* and *Rigodon*. The finale movement is a *Retirada*. Characterized simply as a closing movement, the *Retirada* is less of a dance movement than it is a counterpart to the opening *Prelude*. The virtuosic aspect of performing this movement comes from bringing out unexpected dynamic changes within the off-balance phrasing. The final statement of arpeggiated chords ends the *partita* with a dramatic flourish in the same way that it began.

These pieces are as delightful to play as they are for audiences to hear, due to the short and varied movements, use of *scordatura* tuning, and different approaches to achieving polyphony.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 117.

## *Sonate a Violino senza Basso*

### **Johann Georg Pisendel (1687–1755)**

As one of the most highly regarded violin virtuosos in Germany during the Baroque Era, it is believed that Johann Georg Pisendel would have had considerable influence on his contemporaries, including Antonio Vivaldi, Georg Philipp Telemann, and J.S. Bach.<sup>30</sup> It has even been theorized that Bach may have written his pivotal set of violin solos in 1720 for Pisendel to perform.<sup>31</sup> Pisendel was a great connoisseur and collector of musical scores of many styles, especially those of the Italian tradition.<sup>32</sup> Because of this, his own compositional style is wonderfully inventive and seems not to belong to only one time or place.

As a boy Pisendel studied singing with castrato Francesco Antonio Pistocchi and violin with Giuseppe Torelli in Ansbach, Germany. By the age of sixteen, he was already known as a violinist with considerable virtuosity and was employed by the Ansbach court orchestra at age 16. Pisendel first met Bach in 1709 in Weimar while en route to study law in Leipzig. Pisendel soon decided to pursue music exclusively and became director of the opera orchestra and Collegium Musicum in Leipzig in

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<sup>30</sup> Pippa Drummond. 2001. "Pisendel, Johann Georg." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000021843>. Accessed November 14, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Johann Sebastian Bach. 1958. *Drie Sonaten Und Drei Partiten für Violine Solo, BWV 1001–1004*. Edited by Hauswald Günter and Peter Wollny. Bärenreiter. Preface.

<sup>32</sup> David Ledbetter. 2009. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 29

1710. He moved on to Dresden two years later, where he remained as *Konzertmeister* until his death in 1755.<sup>33</sup>

*Sonate a Violino senza Basso* was written around 1716. It is in the key of A minor and composed in four movements. The first movement bears no title but cries out for a tempo which allows for the space and freedom to play the improvisatory, highly ornamented music without feeling the construct of time. In essence, it is an *Adagio*. Melodic dissonance and the repetition of striking, dotted chords help to create dramatic effect. Here, one can see just how intricate Pisendel's writing is.

Ex. 3: Johann Georg Pisendel: *Sonata à Violino Solo Senza Basso*<sup>34</sup>



Movements one and two form a pair, similar to the way in which Bach often pairs preludes and fugues together at the opening of a solo sonata. The second movement is titled *Allegro*, taking the form of an Italian-style homophonic *Allegro* in

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<sup>33</sup> Pippa Drummond. 2001. "Pisendel, Johann Georg." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000021843>. Accessed November 14, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Johann Georg Pisendel. 2005. *Sonata à Violino Solo Senza Basso*. Offenburg: Edition Offenburg.

binary (AABB) form. It highlights the Lombard style of dotted notes where a stressed short note is followed by a longer one (like in the interjection, *ta-da!*). This movement is all about breaking free of regular phrasing and expected trajectory, yet Pisendel skillfully incorporates the motivic material used within the opening throughout the rest of the movement, varying it with dynamics, articulation, and tessitura. In the contrasting B section, there is an especially intriguing passage of short, spikey, falling scales that sounds similar to the obsessive quality in much of Vivaldi's writing.

The final two movements are a *Giga* and *Variatione*, also in binary form. Both are dance movements, in 6/8 time. The *Giga* is relatively straightforward in its rhythm, but extremely virtuosic in its bowing and left-hand technique. In the first four bars, the listener hears an exquisite contrapuntal line that starts with a unison chord that expands upwards in the melody and falls with contrary motion in the bass line. This contrapuntal motif is repeated later in the B section, in a sequence that expands to the wide interval of a tenth. This would have been quite a feat for the left-hand technique typical of the Baroque time period, especially given the balance of the violin without aid of chinrest or shoulder rest. Quick successions of two- and three-note chords are found throughout the movement, contrasted with dotted figures and difficult string crossings.

The final movement requires rhythmic flexibility and variation of color from the performer. In this *Variatione*, Pisendel uses bow articulation as the main element of variation on the original *Giga* theme. Instead of lively separate bows, he now fills out the chordal harmonies with slurred scales and arpeggios. The effect is improvisatory, recalling the style of the opening movement. Within the sequences of

these slurred notes, Pisendel interjects a wide range of other articulations and impressive techniques such as short, repeated double-stops and triple-stops, dotted figures, trills, and string crossings. I chose to combine the *Giga* and *Variatione* in performance, where the repeat of each section of the *Giga* was replaced by the corresponding *Variatione* section. To experience the correlating and contrasting rhythms makes for a fascinating listening experience.

If *Sonate a Violino senza Basso* tells us anything about Pisendel as a violinist, it is that he was a master of contrast, both in style and in technique. There is much to be taken from his approach for the modern violinist in his/her interpretation of Baroque repertory.

***Partita No. 1 for Solo Violin in B minor, BWV 1002 and “Ciaccona” from Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004***

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)**

Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin (BWV 1001–1006)* maintain a status of insurmountable importance within all instrumental music. In the preface to the 2001 Bärenreiter-Verlag edition of the collection, Peter Wollny remarks “By reducing his compositional resources to the barest minimum, Bach set himself an extraordinary task: to display the full harmonic and contrapuntal riches of his musical idiom, with no noticeable loss, on a melody instrument with a limited capacity for rendering chordal and contrapuntal textures.”<sup>35</sup> In short, these works represent a major pinnacle of solo instrumental playing that composers and

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<sup>35</sup> Johann Sebastian Bach. 1958. *Drie Sonaten Und Drei Partiten für Violine Solo, BWV 1001–1004*. Edited by Hausswald Günter and Peter Wollny. Bärenreiter.

instrumentalists accept as maintaining the highest standard of compositional and expressive achievements to this day. They were completed by 1720 and first published in 1802.<sup>36</sup> It has been suggested that the pieces were written for Dresden violin virtuoso Johann Georg Pisendel, whom Bach met in 1710, however there is no known dedication in existence to be able to tell for sure. It is highly possible that Bach intended this music for the purpose of learning and artistic development at the highest level. Many of his compositional collections were dedicated to various pupils and amateurs in the spirit of a therapeutic or spiritual pursuit of music, so it is likely that his intention with these solos was in a similarly noble vein. While it is widely known that Bach was an organ virtuoso, and that a vast majority of his compositions either feature or are exclusively written for keyboard instruments, a lesser known fact is that he also played the violin (well enough, at least, to be employed as a junior lackey at the Weimar court in 1703).<sup>37</sup> It is clear then that Bach's working knowledge of the violin was a key factor in his ability to write such compositionally revolutionary, yet profoundly idiomatic music for the instrument in its most exposed setting.

*The B minor Partita* is the first of three partitas in the set, all of which take the form of modified dance suites. As was the case in the solo suites by Westhoff and Vilsmaÿr, the movements follow a typical instrumental suite form. 'Doubles' occur after each dance movement, which were a standard variation form of the eighteenth century. Bach could be thought of as creatively obsessive in his compositional endeavors, and this piece demonstrates a beautifully in-depth exploration into many new aspects of the mixed style of which he was already a master.

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<sup>36</sup> David Ledbetter. 2009. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 12.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 12–18.

The opening *Allemanda* and *Double* form a pair representative of the French dance style and the Italian sonata style, respectively. The dotted rhythm at the beginning of the *Allemanda* is stylistically shocking, and immediately recalls that of a French-style overture (for example, the opening of Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B minor, BWV 1067*). Melodic triplets, as well as those that serve simply to outline chords, are found throughout the movement. Triplets had not typically been used in the strictly duple meter allemande dance form and are stylistically as unexpected as the dotted rhythm.<sup>38</sup> These rhythmic peculiarities are just one example of Bach playing in his sandbox of styles, and coupled with the *moto perpetuo* feel of the *Double*, can feel both elusive and refreshing to performer and listener alike.

Next comes the *Corrente* and *Double*, both written in 3/4 time. The first noticeable aspect of the *Corrente* score is that Bach has written only partial bar lines on every other measure, perhaps with the purpose of encouraging longer lines and reducing the number of audible downbeats. In essence, this music should be lifted rather than grounded. The *Corrente* is written entirely in arpeggiated eighth notes, while the *Double* literally doubles the speed of the note values to sixteenth notes and achieves the same harmonies by moving in stepwise scales. The virtuosity of this music is astounding. *Presto* is indicated at the top of the *Double*. The tempo of both movements, therefore, is best felt with a feeling of one beat per bar, rather than three. In this way, the music can convey a sense of vitality without feeling rushed.

The *Sarabande* and its *Double* are the next pairing. The *Sarabande* feels chorale-like with an abundance of three- and four-note chords, yet the texture remains light because of the simple quarter and eighth note rhythms. While the *Sarabande* is

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 109–113.



in 3/4 time, the *Double* is written in 9/8 with constant, lilting eighth notes. The tempo of the *Sarabande* should not be taken too slowly, as its *Double* should be able to flow freely in search of its cadences.

The final *Tempo di Borea* and *Double* sound simultaneously rustic and elegant. The polyphonic texture at the beginning of the *Tempo di Borea* feels orchestral. The chordal emphasis on strong beats feel percussive, and the swift changes between high and low registers seem as if they are being played by alternating sections within an orchestra. The term “tempo di” implies that rather than being a true dance form, this is a sonata movement in the style of a *borea*. This implication is furthered by Bach’s use of extended phrase endings, which would not have occurred in straight dance music.<sup>39</sup> One might expect this complete work to feel too long, given that the added variations result in eight movements. However, the sense of poise and essentialism with which Bach treats these dances and variations makes for a listening experience that feels not one note too long or too short. Where he could have filled out the harmonic structure by composing full chords, instead Bach showed immense restraint by implying harmony. The notes he omits make the essential ones he uses all the more meaningful.

The *Ciaccona* from Bach’s *Partita No. 2 in D minor* is one of the great masterpieces of the violin repertory, if not all instrumental music. It has captured the fascination of performers, audiences, and historians alike with its power and divine beauty. As the final movement of the piece, it carries more weight in both duration and style than all preceding movements combined. Large-scale, almost symphonic explorations of the instrumental repertory are to be expected from Bach—take for

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 117.

example the three fugue movements found within the unaccompanied violin sonatas (BWV 1001, BWV 1003, and BWV 1005)—but the *Ciaccona* is especially unique for its spiritual and emotional depth.

Like Biber's *Passacaglia*, the work is built upon a simple harmonic progression that allows for any number of innovative variations to come alive. The three main sections—D minor, D major, and finally D minor again—take the listener on an epic cyclical journey. Oddly, Bach does not compose solidly in the *chaconne* form and instead weaves in elements of a *passacaglia*. While both of these are dance forms used as frameworks for variation, the former is built upon a repeated harmonic progression while the latter is built upon a repeated, often descending, stepwise bass line. This combination of forms makes for a widely expanded virtuosic palette of which Bach takes full advantage. The listener will encounter such elements as fast runs, arpeggiated chords, endless double-stopping, and full chords. Perhaps more impressive, however, is how power and drama is juxtaposed with poise and poignancy—while some sections soar ecstatically past the point one believes a solo violin can manage, others evoke lilting dance music or the scene of a wandering minstrel playing the lute.

Bach's solo works have been a great inspiration to performers and composers alike. Within this dissertation alone, composers Max Reger, Paul Hindemith, Eugène Ysaÿe, and Luciano Berio were all directly influenced by the solo *Partitas and Sonatas*. Structurally, these works expanded the realm of possibility in violin repertory in many ways, including length of composition, use of the 'double' as a variation technique, and the intermixing of many vivid styles within one movement. Technically, these are pieces that profoundly impact the violinist's developmental

process over the span of an entire career. Even for eminent first violinist of the Guarneri String Quartet, Arnold Steinhardt, the *Ciaccona* presented a lifetime of reinvention. Steinhardt remarks “In my childhood I found Bach baffling; in my adolescence his work seemed turgid. Now, as an adult, the Chaconne's power and mystery presented me with an intriguing challenge.”<sup>40</sup> These pieces have even captured the fascination of other instrumentalists through dozens of arrangements and transcriptions (50 of these are listed on [imslp.org](http://imslp.org)). In many ways, this music transcends time and place, and can be experienced as a universal connective tissue among repertory of any period and genre.

***Fantasia No. 10 for Violin without Bass in D major, BWV 40:23***

**Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767)**

Georg Philipp Telemann was one of the most distinguished German composers of his day, holding the highest level of respect alongside his contemporaries J.S. Bach and George Frideric Handel. He was great friends with Bach, and was even named godfather of one of Bach’s sons, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.<sup>41</sup> Like Bach, Telemann modeled his solo instrumental works on the German mixed style. He drew his main inspiration for the Italian style from the works of Arcangelo Corelli, and from Jean-Baptiste Lully and André Campra for the French style.<sup>42</sup> A master of the late-Baroque Era, Telemann also incorporated elements of the

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<sup>40</sup> Arnold Steinhardt. 2008. *Violin Dreams*. New York, NY: Mariner Books. 188–189.

<sup>41</sup> Steven Zohn. 2001. “Telemann, Georg Philipp.” *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 20. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027635>. Accessed November 14, 2018.

<sup>42</sup> David Ledbetter. 2009. *Unaccompanied Bach: Performing the Solo Works*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 63.

*galant* style—the most fashionable music trend from 1720 to 1770 that turned away from the complexity of dense, contrapuntal writing towards a more pure, simplistic aesthetic—into his music.<sup>43</sup> This style would usher in the Classical Period, with Haydn and Mozart as its leaders. In this sense, Telemann would have been considered a modernist of his time.

Telemann completed his *12 Fantasias for Violin without Bass* in 1735, while living in Hamburg. It was also around this time that he wrote a similar set for unaccompanied flute (1733) and unaccompanied viola da gamba (1734). In writing the violin *Fantasias*, Telemann's aim was a pedagogical one. He experiments with varying form and emphasizing the natural beauty of the instrument through soloistic elements that could be played by professionals and amateurs alike. *Fantasia No. 10* is written in three movements in the *galant* style. The polyphony is implied through a soprano-bass texture and joyful, arpeggiated chord figures. Simplicity is achieved by light texture, short phrase lengths, and the use of rests in between phrases (perhaps the concept incorporating the breath was on Telemann's mind from his recent *Fantasias for flute*). The music is refined, elegant, and charming.

The first movement is a *Presto* in common time. The idiomatic violin writing, especially obvious in the brisk string crossings, is reminiscent of sonatas by Corelli or Vivaldi. It is important to note that Telemann had played as principal violinist and *Kapellmeister* in the Eisenach court, where he also worked alongside the master musician and violin virtuoso Pantaleon Hebenstreit. Additionally, he maintained a close friendship with Pisendel, whom he dedicated his Violin Concerto in B-flat

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<sup>43</sup> Steven Zohn. 2001. "Telemann, Georg Philipp." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 20. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027635>. Accessed November 14, 2018.

major (1719) to.<sup>44</sup> These factors would have provided Telemann with the right context with which to write such idiomatically pleasing works for unaccompanied violin.

The second movement, titled *Largo*, takes on a darker tone in the relative minor key of B minor. It is interesting to note Telemann's use of trills and triplets to ornament the otherwise simple harmonic structure. The final movement returns to a cheerful *gigue* in D major, which again employs the use of violinistic techniques such as flashy string crossings, arpeggiated triads, and double-stops. Compared with the more virtuosic and complex writing of Bach's unaccompanied violin sonatas written fifteen years prior to Telemann's *Fantasias*, these works offer a unique and refreshing view of a different kind of violin playing during the Baroque Era that appealed to a wide audience.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 2: Repertory from 1900

### *Sonata in D minor for Violin Solo, Op. 42, No. 1*

#### Max Reger (1873–1916)

Max Reger grew up near Wieden, Germany, and began his musical studies with his father and pianist Adalbert Lindner. Hugo Riemann, a leading musicologist and organist of the time, became Reger's primary teacher from 1890 to 1895. During his lifetime and following his premature death, he saw a great amount of success as both an organist and composer. Through his studies, Reger became immersed in the compositions of Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner, which instilled in him a great affinity for contrapuntal writing.<sup>45</sup> The music of J. S. Bach was of paramount importance to Reger's teacher Riemann, who was at the forefront of a movement that sought to revive music of the Baroque and Renaissance and absorb it into the contemporary music of the time. Reger developed a deep, even extreme, reverence for J. S. Bach while working with Riemann that, despite eventually breaking publicly with his teacher after claiming to possess more progressive views, he maintained as an inspiration in his own compositions for the rest of his life. Reger arranged, edited, and revised over one hundred of Bach's works, in part for the purpose of his own performances of virtuosic concert pieces and house concerts, as well as for instructional use.<sup>46</sup> It goes without saying, therefore, that Reger's own compositions

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<sup>45</sup> John Williamson. 2001. "Reger, (Johann Baptist Joseph) Max(Imilian)." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023064>. Accessed November 14, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Walter Frisch. 2001. "Reger's Bach and Historicist Modernism." *19th-Century Music* 25 (2-3): 296–312. doi:10.1525/ncm.2001.25.2-3.296. Accessed April 16, 2018. 300–301.

feature many Bach-ian traits and direct quotes. But his music goes far beyond that of a Bach-obsessed copycat. While also drawing heavy influence from composers such as Johannes Brahms, Franz Liszt, and Richard Strauss, Reger ultimately strived to establish himself as a composer who was most faithful to his own aesthetic over that of any other—a self-proclaimed *Selberaner* or “Myself-ian”.<sup>47</sup> The unique harmonic twists, textures, and assertive musical ideas found throughout his set of *Four Sonatas Op. 42 for violin solo* are a true testament to Reger’s own inimitable style.

*Sonata in D minor* is the first of the *Four Sonatas Op. 42 for violin solo* that Reger completed in 1900 and dedicated to violinist Willy Burmester (also the dedicatee of Sibelius’s *Violin Concerto*).<sup>48</sup> These pieces represent the first significant set of unaccompanied violin sonatas composed after J. S. Bach’s eminent *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*. They are as technically demanding musically more elusive than Bach’s compositions. As Reger was an organist, there are many elements in the music that are not idiomatic to the violin and therefore require the performer to make technical decisions that best serve a most intuitive and informed interpretation of the music.

The opening *Allegro energico* movement is in sonata-allegro form and opens with powerful, sweeping chords. Reger’s use of full four-note chords and double-stops throughout the movement give the music a symphonic richness reminiscent of Brahms. Arpeggiated chords and expansive leaps between the high and low registers

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<sup>47</sup> Antonius Bittmann. 2004. “Brahms, Strauss, Sheep, and Apes: Regers ‘Heroic’ Struggle with Tradition.” *The Musical Quarterly* 87 (4): 708–31. doi:10.1093/musqtl/gdh022. Accessed April 16, 2018. 708.

<sup>48</sup> Ulf Wallin. Liner notes to *Max Reger Violin Sonatas, Op. 42*. Ulf Wallin. 777762-2. 2016. 8.

of the instrument seem to foreshadow the unaccompanied violin sonatas of 1923 written by Eugène Ysaÿe.

The second movement possesses all of the expressive drama one could imagine from a movement title of *Adagio con gran espressione*. What begins as a soulful melody on the G-string quickly turns into an outburst of operatic, yet polyphonic playing. The music continues to evolve throughout an ABA form in a series of extremes in character. The effect is sometimes that of a recitative, where the rhythm and singing lines become improvisatory in nature. The movement ends with a somber coda taken from the material of the opening.

The third movement, *Prestissimo assai*, is a virtuosic display of double stops and fast changes in register. It takes the form of a typical *scherzo*, with the B-flat major trio providing a respite from the bombastic opening material with its smooth, rocking chords. Here, the music quotes a two-bar melody found in the development of the first movement (also written in B-flat major). This thematic development is reminiscent of Liszt, yet distinctly the music of Reger in its organ-like chordal texture.

While we also hear traces of Bach throughout the first three movements, the final *Allegro energico* embodies the older master most outwardly. The movement is a fugue that opens with a reference of the fugue in Bach's *Sonata No. 1 in G minor for Solo Violin (BWV 1001)*. It is in this movement that one can imagine Reger being inspired by writing his arrangements of Bach's music while sitting down at the organ, as the music evokes a sense of magnitude that isn't so often found in unaccompanied works for the violin.



For a violinist's approach to the unaccompanied music of Reger, expression and contrast are of utmost importance. Drastic dynamics should be exaggerated, and new phrases should be made very clear using timing, dynamics, or color. Amidst the vast amounts of chordal playing, the violinist should attempt to play with a vibrato that is as warm as possible, maintaining good bow contact. Perhaps the biggest difficulty is with bow distribution and making decisions about how and when to break up long slurs in order to best serve a phrase. Being a keyboard player, Reger's perception of articulation comes from that context, and therefore must be reinterpreted by the violinist to best serve the violin. Nevertheless, Reger's writing made a great impact on the more idiomatic violin music of Paul Hindemith, which will be discussed next.

*Sonata for Violin Solo, Op. 11, No. 6*

**Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)**

Paul Hindemith's *Sonata Op. 11, No. 6* was published as a complete work in 2002, eighty-four years past its original date of composition. Prior to 2002, only a few fragments of the piece were known to exist and had been published. These included a few final bars of the second movement and the complete final movement, all of which derived from an autograph score dated July 1917. Sometime during the late-twentieth century, a complete three-movement version surfaced.<sup>49</sup> Edited by Hermann Danuser for Schott, Mainz, this is the version we now know to be Hindemith's first unaccompanied composition for violin, completed between 1917–18.

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<sup>49</sup> Herwig Zack. Liner notes to *Made in Germany - Works for Solo Violin*. Herwig Zack. AV2289, CD, 2013. 6–7.

While this is a relatively early work for Hindemith, the music is well developed and clearly written by a composer with a deep understanding of the violin from a performer's perspective. It is well known that Hindemith was an accomplished violist, but he began his musical studies on the violin and maintained a busy performing career as a violinist through the early-1920s.<sup>50</sup> The violinistic writing of this piece was therefore a product of an accomplished performer's knowledge of the instrument. It is also important to note here that Hindemith looked to Max Reger as a great source of compositional and creative inspiration. He remarked, "Max Reger was the last giant in music. My own work is inconceivable without him."<sup>51</sup> Given Reger's unexpected death in 1916, it is entirely likely that Hindemith would have had the late composer on his mind (and specifically even the *Four Sonatas Op. 42 for violin solo*) while composing his first solo violin work. Could *Op. 11, No. 6* have been some kind of homage to the "last giant in music?"

The opening, sonata-form movement is titled *Mässig schnell* (moderately fast) and begins with a sturdy rhythmic melody in duple time. The second theme is more lilting and playful, incorporating slurred groupings of threes and fives that give the music a more asymmetrical feel than the opening theme. The development is full of short musical episodes that oscillate between highly rhythmic melodies and fantasy-like outbursts. After a standard recapitulation, the coda is marked by an extended G minor cadence with a series of open G-string downbeats that sound like bells. This music is reminiscent of the end of J. S. Bach's *Fugue in G minor* for solo violin

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<sup>50</sup> Giselher Schubert. 2001. "Hindemith, Paul." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000013053>. Accessed November 14, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> R. Brinkmann. 2004. "A 'Last Giant in Music': Thoughts on Max Reger in the Twentieth Century." *The Musical Quarterly* 87 (4): 631–59. doi:10.1093/musqtl/gdh023. 635.

(BWV 1001), where repeated G tones act as a bass line pedal for sixteenth notes that swirl above them. This pedal concept (always with open G) recurs throughout the rest of Hindemith's sonata. It harkens back to Baroque-era composers who employed prolonged pedal points at the ends of movements to assist in building tension before the final cadential release.<sup>52</sup> We see this technique especially in the music of Bach and Biber. It seems that while Hindemith is searching for new harmonies, often filled with rich dissonance, he always remains solidly rooted in traditional tonality.

The second movement opens with a melancholy, dotted melody in 6/8 time that descends in chromatic thirds. Hindemith's affinity for slow, dotted rhythms of this nature may draw inspiration from the opening *Adagio* of *Bach's Sonata No. 3 in C major for solo violin (BWV 1005)*, which returns in an especially obvious manner in the second movement of his *Sonata for Solo Violin Op. 31, No. 2 (1924)*. While there is no pedal here *per se*, the open G on each downbeat chord encourages the listener to infer one. Being polyphonic music written for a non-keyboard instrument, employing the use of open strings in this way is an ingenious strategy of implying a bass line on a bowed string instrument. This movement contains the most dissonance and chromaticism out of the whole sonata. At points, the effect is that of a smear heightened by legato slurs. It is during this movement that one hears traces of a composer still at the beginning of his career. The entire opening section is repeated almost entirely without variation, and the lack of thematic development makes it very easy for the music to sound aimless and monotonous. What's more, no dynamics are indicated at any point during the movement. It is therefore up to the performer to hold the attention of the audience through variation of phrasing, dynamics, and color.

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<sup>52</sup> Judy Tarling. 2013. *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners*. St. Albans, Hertfordshire: Corda Music. 127.

The final movement, titled *Lebhaft* (lively), is highly virtuosic and rhythmically charged. It employs various idiomatic violin techniques such as firey *spiccato*, arpeggiated chords, fast double-stop passages, and a fascinating section with a descending broken chromatic scale played between two adjacent strings (a kind of articulated variation of the slurred *bariolage* bowing technique). The movement follows an ABA structure. The inner B section marked *ruhiger* (peacefully) provides a fantasy-like contrast from the outer A sections. Strangely, the movement has many similarities with the *Finale* of Eugène Ysaÿe's *Violin Sonata in E minor, Op. 27, No. 4*, in terms of the structure and idiomatic style of writing. However, it is highly unlikely that Ysaÿe would have ever come into contact with *Op. 11, No. 6* before composing his sonatas in 1924. It is far more likely that these compositional similarities are mutually derived from the earlier unaccompanied sonatas of Reger. In this light, it is fascinating to see how masters of contrapuntal keyboard music (ie. Bach and Reger) have had a profound effect on the technique and style of unaccompanied violin playing throughout history, and how an important lineage of unaccompanied violin sonatas can be traced from Bach and Telemann, to Reger, Hindemith, Ysaÿe, and beyond.

***Sonata in E minor, Op. 27, No. 4, ("Fritz Kreisler")***

**Eugène Ysaÿe (1858–1931)**

"I felt 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 subconscious attempt on his part to perpetuate his own elusive *playing* style," wrote Joseph Szigeti about the set of six unaccompanied violin sonatas composed by the

Belgian violinist, composer, and conductor Eugène Ysaÿe in 1923–24.<sup>53</sup> Known as one of the most compelling and individual violinists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it comes as no surprise that Ysaÿe’s own violinistic personality plays a central role in these remarkable compositions for solo violin. The complete set had been conceived by Ysaÿe to achieve two main goals: reinterpret J.S. Bach’s unaccompanied music for violin in the context of how violin playing had evolved up to the twentieth century, and depict the personalities of the six younger violin virtuosos to whom the sonatas are dedicated.<sup>54</sup>

*Sonata No. 4* is dedicated to virtuoso violinist Fritz Kreisler and demonstrates Ysaÿe’s most inventive reinterpretation of baroque dance forms used in Bach’s solo instrumental suites. The piece is comprised of three movements: *Allemanda. Lento maestoso*, *Sarabande. Quasi Lento*, and *Finale. Presto ma non troppo*. The first two movements are representative of Baroque-Era dances.

The *Allemanda* opens with a gripping introduction in the style of a recitative. The opening of Kreisler’s *Recitative and Scherzo-Caprice* for solo violin comes to mind here, coupled with Ysaÿe’s signature sweeping arpeggiated runs across all four strings on the violin. The dance element enters after the introduction in a synthesis between the weighty tempo typical of an *allemanda* from the eighteenth century and the dotted rhythm of the French Overture that Bach used in so many of his

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<sup>53</sup> Ray Iwazumi and Jacques Ysaÿe. 2004. “The Six Sonates Pour Violon Seul, Op. 27 of Eugène Ysaÿe: Critical Commentary and Interpretive Analysis of the Sketches, Manuscripts, and Published Editions.” Dissertation. Juilliard School. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Eugène Ysaÿe. 2016. *Sechs Sonaten Fur Violine Solo, Opus 27*. G. Henle Verlag. vii.

instrumental suites.<sup>55</sup> There is a stringent and powerful quality to this music that can also be traced to the style of Kreisler.

The second movement, *Sarabande*, takes the form of a four-note descending passacaglia that Ysaÿe embellishes in three variations of harmonized melody. The opening section is played entirely with *pizzicato* (plucked strings), an appropriate marking given that *sarabandes* originated as dance repertory of Spain and Latin America and were performed on guitar.<sup>56</sup> The second section of the *Sarabande* is played with the bow. It is a lyrical, soulful variation on the opening music, complete with sinuous chromaticism and the only dynamic climax to *forte* within the movement. What proceeds is a final section of arpeggiated chords marked with one of the most peculiar instructions in the entire sonata—*canto poco marcato*. While the *canto* aspect comes from Ysaÿe’s signature sweeping arpeggios, the *marcato* element comes from a *passacaglia* figure that is hidden in different positions within each arpeggiated chord. The effect is that of notated *rubato* (as opposed to typical *rubato*, where the performer interprets her/his own tempo fluctuation for expressive means), and it highlights the poignancy and searching quality of the music. The movement ends with arpeggiated *pizzicato* chords that hang in the air like a lonely question mark.

This question mark is answered by the robust opening of the *Finale*, launching music of unbridled virtuosity and folksy flare. The character contrast between the

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<sup>55</sup> Ray Iwazumi and Jacques Ysaÿe. 2004. “The Six Sonates Pour Violon Seul, Op. 27 of Eugène Ysaÿe: Critical Commentary and Interpretive Analysis of the Sketches, Manuscripts, and Published Editions.” Dissertation. Juilliard School. 84–86.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Hudson and Meredith Ellis Little. 2001. “Sarabande.” *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000024574>. Accessed November 15, 2018.

second and third movements is quintessential Ysaÿe. Now the music is full of varying articulations, rustic trills, flying scales, and odd phrase structures that show Ysaÿe's preoccupation with pure musical exhibition rather than formality. The movement follows a three-part ABA structure, where the opening and ending sections are similar and the contrasting B section recalls the main material from the *Allemanda*. The listener might pick up on more traces of the piece's dedicatee throughout this movement, especially where Ysaÿe has inserted pseudo-quotations from Kreisler's *Praeludium and Allegro in the Style of Pugnani*. Ysaÿe's personality comes out at the very end of the finale in a series of brilliant double-stops that span both lowest and highest registers of the violin. For any aspiring violinist, this work along with the five other solo sonatas by Ysaÿe are essential for developing expressive command of the bow. That his music connects to musical traditions of the past while exploring a fresh and individualistic approach solidifies this great violin-composer as significant pillar within the evolution of this genre and violin playing at large.

### ***Sonata No. 2 for Solo Violin (1958)***

#### **Grażyna Bacewicz (1909–1969)**

Grażyna Bacewicz was born in Poland on February 5, 1909 to a family of musicians and creatives. She began her musical studies with her father and would often play chamber music with her elder brothers. Bacewicz's youngest sister, Wanda, grew up to be a poet and the family historian. After an early start to her performing career that began with a violin recital at age seven, Bacewicz went on to study violin, piano, and eventually composition at the Warsaw Conservatory. After graduating in 1932, Bacewicz joined the young Polish composers who had been

encouraged by Karol Szymanowski to travel to Paris and study with the great Nadia Boulanger. In addition to her composition studies with Boulanger, Bacewicz also took violin lessons with André Touret and Carl Flesch and maintained a very active career in both realms. She became the first female Polish composer to achieve such international standing.<sup>57</sup> In the 1956 political ‘thaw’ that occurred after the Stalinist era, artists felt freer to explore new, avant-garde elements and draw inspiration from foreign nations. By the end of the decade, Bacewicz turned her focus fully to composition and began expanding past her earlier, neoclassical style with experiments in tone color, 12-tone writing, and other techniques of the avant-garde.<sup>58</sup>

In 1957 Bacewicz served as Chairwoman of the jury for the 3rd International Wieniawski Violin Competition alongside such distinguished performers as David Oistrach and Louis Persinger, and in 1958 was on the jury of the 1st Tchaikovsky Violin Competition in Moscow. It was in 1958, perhaps inspired by hearing so many exceptional young violinists in these competitions, that Bacewicz composed *Sonata No. 2* for unaccompanied violin.<sup>59</sup> The genius of this piece lies in its idiomatic, yet wildly unique polyphonic writing for violin, something that only a true master of the instrument would have the imagination to compose.

The work is written in three movements. The opening *Adagio* begins with a unison D double-stop that sounds evokes solo violin entrance in Johannes Brahms’s *Violin Concerto in D major*. In bar two, Bacewicz quickly veers away from tradition

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<sup>57</sup> Sharon Guertin Shafer. 1992. *The Contribution of Grażyna Bacewicz (1909-1969) to Polish Music*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press. 1–4.

<sup>58</sup> Adrian Thomas. 2001. “Bacewicz, Grażyna.” *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press. January 1. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000001669>. Accessed November 14, 2018.

<sup>59</sup> “Grażyna Bacewicz.” 2018. *Polish Music Center*. USC Thornton School of Music. July 13. <https://polishmusic.usc.edu/research/composers/grazyna-bacewicz/>.



in a series of close, sustained, dissonant chords that occur between the G and open D strings. These sustained dissonances are interjected with fast runs across all four strings that sound like gusts of wind. This is an example of Bacewicz experimenting with tone color. The runs highlight the sonorities of each string on the violin, from deep and rich on the bottom strings to bright and singing on the top ones. The section ends in a single-line melody that rises and falls with dissonant intervals. It sounds like the rhetorical phrasing that is so characteristic of Baroque and Classical Era repertory.

In this opening, Bacewicz has set up the essential theme of the entire piece: opposition. In the opening, opposition is felt in the tension and release of the sustained dissonances, as well as in the textural contrast between those sustained chords and the fleeting runs. Throughout the rest of the movement, this opposition manifests itself in contrasting bowing articulations, tempo changes, special effects, dynamic contrast, and sudden changes in character. The climax of the first movement occurs in an extended passage of across-the-string virtuoso runs, taking advantage of the full range of the violin in gasping sweeps. One cannot help but think that Bacewicz was attempting to capture the essence of Ysaÿe with this music.

The second movement, also marked *Adagio*, builds upon the sustained dissonance motif from the first movement. Bacewicz writes an incredibly soulful melody on the dark G-string, but the presence of the open D-string makes the passage almost completely dissonant. The end of the movement fades out in a perfect fifth between A-flat and E-flat. If the fifth had been written only one half-step higher to incorporate the open A and E strings, the sound would be open and resonant. Instead, the effect is closed and oppressed.

The final movement is titled *Presto*. The music takes the form of a fast *moto perpetuo* and is built upon *glissando* and *spiccato* techniques. The movement is eerie and relentless. Bacewicz knows that these are techniques that work together exclusively on string instruments, and especially suit the violin because of its wide tone color range.

While Bacewicz's *Sonata No. 2* is distinctive of her own compositional style and lies clearly within the realm of twentieth-century music, it also pays homage to the techniques and styles of idiomatic violin playing that had evolved from the early seventeenth century. It is a solo masterpiece that deserves to have a great presence in the modern violinist's repertory.

### *Violin Phase*

#### **Steve Reich (1936–)**

While ground bass lines and *chaconne* figures provide a canvas for composers to write intricate variations, phasing—a compositional technique developed by Steve Reich in the 1960's—uses the canvas itself as the only musical content from which a piece is created. The concept is simple: take a short melodic theme, add another player or voice in unison, and have one of those parts gradually increase speed until it “phases” to a new beat within the theme. It can be done with multiple parts and with live performers, electronics, or a combination of the two. The result is like experiencing a musical kaleidoscope.

Reich composed *Violin Phase* in 1967 “for violin and pre-recorded tape or four violins”. While the quartet version is captivating, the version for violin and pre-recorded tape is even more fascinating when put into the context of “solo” repertory.

By utilizing the technologies available to him at the time of composing the piece, Reich creates a way for the performer to phase against three other versions of her/himself in a live setting. Therefore, this music falls into the category of solo polyphony. As modern as this may have been in the 1960's, the composition actually harkens back to musical trends of the Baroque, Renaissance, and Medieval Eras. At its core, phasing is about rhythmic polyphony, and is therefore reminiscent of the musical canon, round, fugue, and the like. In *Violin Phase*, the four-part violin writing brings to mind the rhythmic and melodic elements of the thirteenth-century organum masterpiece, *Viderunt omnes* by Perotin. If provided with the technology, it is hard to believe that innovative Baroque composers such as those discussed in this dissertation would turn down the opportunity to make music in this way. If *scordatura* can be used to alter the physical capabilities of a solo violinist, so too can modern technology and electronics.

For the accompanying recital performance of this piece I chose to take the concept of solo phasing even further. Instead of following Reich's instructions for using a pre-recorded track to phase against (which requires an assistant on stage to start and stop the tracks at the appropriate time),<sup>60</sup> I chose to phase against myself in real time using a looping station. This eliminated the need for an assistant and placed entire control within my hands as a performer. In this way, the music became an expanded version of unaccompanied polyphony; with the aid of modern innovation and technology, four distinct lines of music were created in live performance out of one violin.

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<sup>60</sup> Steve Reich. 1979. *Violin Phase - for Violin and Pre-Recorded Tape or Four Violins* (1967). London: Universal Edition.

The equipment used in this performance included a BOSS RC-30 dual-track Loop Station, L.R. Baggs Para Acoustic D.I. Preamp, Orange Crush MINI amp, and the DPA 4061 Microphone (clipped behind the bridge of the violin with a rubber DPA MHS6005 mic clip).<sup>61</sup> To prepare for live looping during the dress rehearsal of the performance, I recorded a “TAPE TRACK 1” loop with the Loop Station. I recorded this on multiple tracks, saving the best one for live performance. During the performance, I used this as my primary track to phase against, overdubbing live violin with the Loop Station at rehearsal numbers 6 and 16 to result in “TAPE TRACK 2” and “TAPE TRACK 1/VIOLIN 4” at rehearsal numbers 7 and 17, respectively.

The difficulty of looping live in this way lies with coordinating with the Loop Station while maintaining a steady pulse and consistent articulation. On top of this, the real difficulty of this piece lies in the actual act of phasing. To practice phasing, I recorded myself at home to play back and phase against. What I found helpful was to practice each phase pattern separately and with the goal of solidly feeling the beat on the new displaced starting note (ie. Where the first two eighth notes of the original pattern at rehearsal 2 are C#–F#, the next phase pattern at rehearsal 3 begins on F# and the first C# now resides in the last eighth note of the bar, acting as a pickup). Phasing is a process that simply takes time to get used to, and patience. In addition to intellectually understanding it, one must learn how to *feel* it in real time, without anticipation or retrospection. It is an aspect of Steve Reich’s music that has been likened to trance music, and with the right amount of preparation, performing this piece can have that satisfying feeling for performer and audience alike.

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<sup>61</sup> I had planned to use a set of stage amps with a monitor as my amplification, however, due to a technical difficulty at the recital hall, instead used the Orange Crush MINI. While this created an intimate sound and feel for the audience, it would still be most ideal to have a set of two amps on stage with a monitor to hear myself clearly.

## *Sequenza VIII*

**Luciano Berio (1925–2003)**

“To compose *Sequenza VIII* has been like paying a personal debt to the violin, which to me is one of the most subtle and complex of instruments... While almost all the other *Sequenzas* develop to an extreme degree a very limited choice of instrumental possibilities, *Sequenza VIII* deals with a larger and more global view of the violin and can be listened to as a development of instrumental gestures”.<sup>62</sup> The words Luciano Berio wrote about his solo violin *Sequenza* perfectly encapsulate the essence of this incredible piece. *The Sequenzas* are a collection of eighteen works for different solo instruments that Berio composed between 1958 and 2002. The eighth one, for solo violin, was composed in 1976 and revised as *Corale* in 1981 to incorporate small ensemble. In the way that Biber’s *Passacaglia* and J. S. Bach’s *Ciaccona* are built upon the simplest of harmonic structures to serve expanded variation forms, Berio follows suit in building his music upon just two notes: A and B. With the *Ciaccona* as his direct influence, Berio’s “sequence” of variations simultaneously incorporates idiomatic violin techniques that had been established by violinists for centuries before him and shatters tradition with twentieth-century compositional elements, extended techniques, and shocking expression.

The piece begins with a series of heavily accented notes that are relentless in character and unsettling in their intensity. It is in this opening that we experience the A/B dyad, at times as a double-stop, and at other times separately from each other or

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<sup>62</sup> Luciano Berio. 2018. “*Sequenza VIII*.” *Centro Studi Luciano Berio*. Accessed November 14. <http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1477?177677955=1>.

surrounded by neighboring pitches. The vividness of this opening rhythmic pulse with its dissonant chords is a magnetic force. It lays the foundation for an elaborate narrative of polyphony, divergence, and the inevitable pull back to its origins. By partitioning the piece into sections, it also functions as a beacon for the listener to rely on.

The virtuosic elements highlighted in each variation all are rooted in techniques established by the likes of Biber and other Baroque violinists. Flashy runs, lilting dance figures played in double-stops, impressive three- and four-note chords, and melodies in high registers are all very familiar kinds of violin playing, but in the *Sequenza* these techniques are implemented in extreme ways, placing the ultimate demand on performer and listener alike. Some variations call for violent dynamic contrasts within the span of a single thirty-second note, while others call for the fastest and quietest possible notes to be played consecutively at every register on the instrument. There is an extended section of intense passage work that calls for a quasi-improvised approach, marked by violent chordal outbursts.

What perhaps is even more impressive than all of these techniques, however, is the virtuosity of expression. The performer must be able to capture the audience through every nuance, manic explosion, and melodic phrase that finds its way into the mayhem of the music, which is as impressive a feat as the physical elements. The *Sequenza* concludes with the same music of the opening, but with a sentiment that has been transformed. With the use of a heavy practice mute in the final section, the music is far away and space-like. The repeated figures that began the piece are now quieter and carry an air of remembrance and acceptance. In one final sigh, the sound dissipates and the sequence is complete.

## **Chapter 3: Personal Process**

Process plays a major role in the preparation of any musical performance. In the realm of unaccompanied instrumental music, the audience's perception of a performance is shaped ultimately by the solo performer's own process. This can impact future performances and performers significantly, since the transmittance of styles and techniques evolve largely by way of aural tradition.

As a violinist having spent most of my professional life immersed in ensemble playing, the process of getting to know the pieces in this dissertation initially felt foreign and vulnerable. To perform three entirely unaccompanied programs for any musician is no small feat, and to do so as a performer who thrives within the context of collaborating with others meant redefining how to make meaningful music with only myself. The works included in this dissertation demonstrate thrilling virtuosity and great musical depth. Even for the most accomplished violinist, the challenge of technique and musical phrasing can be overwhelming. In my preparation of this music, I found certain approaches (detailed below) to be very helpful in shaping my own interpretation. These approaches made technical challenges more accessible and helped to internalize musical phrasing from within the unaccompanied texture, ultimately resulting in a meaningful and fulfilling artistic process.

### **Following the Bass Line**

Phrase structure in solo polyphonic violin music can be highly elusive, given its limited polyphonic capabilities. Musically speaking, the big picture can get lost as

the violinist attempts to execute various polyphonic textures (full chords, arpeggiated chords, solo-bass texture, and alternating registers) and any number of other technical challenges (varied bow articulation, fast passage work, dynamic contrast, shifting, etc.). My approach to figuring out a clear phrase structure within this was to focus on basic harmonic structure; in essence, always being led by the bass line. The melodic nature of the violin makes it possible for violinists to convincingly perform a concerto or sonata with piano without truly understanding the underlying harmonic structure (although the greatest ones always do), because they do not solely drive the tempo or have the responsibility of appropriately voicing every chord. In this solo realm, musical phrases are generated by the harmony and the violinist must *do* the generating.

Two collections worthy of incorporating this concept into one's process can be found in the solo violin *Sonatas and Partitas* of J.S. Bach and the *12 Fantasies for Violin without Bass* by G. P. Telemann. In fact, this music is often where violinists first learn to internalize a sense of the bass line (as was the case in my early violin studies). Music of the Baroque Era—and especially with the dance forms that Bach and Telemann so often use—is so clearly generated by the bass line that the length and shape of phrases can be determined very naturally, even without a deep theoretical knowledge of chord progressions or cadential figures.<sup>63</sup> However, Baroque harmonic progressions often provide the foundation for instrumental writing that is anything *but* simple. Especially large-scale works like Bach's *Ciaconna* present the issue of

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<sup>63</sup> On a pedagogical side note, this makes a case for including more of the unaccompanied Baroque repertory from this dissertation in the aspiring violinist's standard repertory. Working on this music helps to instill an innate sense of many important aspects of musicality, including harmony, phrase structure, and rhythm. Just as the music of Bach—and to a lesser degree, Telemann—is a standard feature of a violinist's education, so should that of Biber, Vilmayr, Westhoff, Pisendel, and their contemporaries.



sounding too heavy and bogged down by complicated chordal textures. One way I learned to approach this issue was to aim for important cadences in my timing, rather let my timing be determined by the execution of cumbersome chords. This had the effect of more satisfying momentum, longer musical lines, and a more interesting musical narrative overall.

As we progress to later music of the Romantic Era and beyond, harmonic language becomes far more complicated and unique to every composer. The works in this dissertation written in 1900 and later all presented the challenge of cohesive phrasing due to heavy double-stopping, dense chordal textures, and extreme contrasts in articulation, character, tempo, and dynamics.

Focusing on bass line and important harmonic shifts became important in my process of finding an interpretation of these pieces that felt natural to me. A good example of this is in the *Siziliano* movement of Hindemith's *Op. 11, No. 6*, with its cyclic, lilting themes and lack of indicated dynamics. Without acute attention to the bass line, this movement can drift along aimlessly, lacking clarity of structure, moments of climax, and variation of color and texture. By focusing on the bass line and practicing the essential harmonic pitches, phrase lengths suddenly became clear to me. My own outline of the opening is included in the following example, where I was able to make one long phrase (mm. 1–14) out of two quasi sentences.

Ex. 4: Paul Hindemith: *Sonata Op. 11, No. 6, II. Siziliano*<sup>64</sup>

A simple phrase shape allows for many melodic possibilities to take place around it. Throughout my dissertation, the process of discovering the music from within its own layers in this way repeatedly brought me joy and deep satisfaction. It made the preparation of these pieces feel less foreign and more familiar.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Hindemith. 2002. *Sonate for Violin Solo, Op. 11/6*. Edited by Hermann Danuser. Schott. Annotated by Audrey Wright.

## Using Baroque Equipment

A large part of my process in this dissertation was the decision to learn and perform repertory of the Baroque Era with a Historically Informed Practice approach; that is, using a Baroque violin and bow and studying the musical style in which performers of that time may have played. My interest in this practice began during my undergraduate studies at the New England Conservatory, where I participated in the NEC Bach Ensemble led by keyboardist John Gibbons. It grew during my time as a Doctoral student at the University of Maryland, where I took Dr. Kenneth Slowik's Baroque Seminar and experienced playing on a Baroque violin for the first time. It was during this time that I came across the unaccompanied violin works by Biber, Vilsmaÿr, Westhoff, and Pisendel; these are fascinating pieces written before or around the time of Bach's solo violin collection that made me realize just how rich this repertory was.

These early works were the genesis of what would become my entire dissertation, so I felt only natural studying them from a Historically Informed perspective. While I have never formally taken lessons on the Baroque violin, I have had guidance from Dr. Slowik (who plays the keyboard, cello, and viola da gamba) and Baroque violinist Marc Destrubé. I frequently reference Judy Tarling's *Baroque String Playing for ingenious learners*, Stanley Ritchie's *Before the Chinrest: A Violinist's Guide to the Mysteries of Pre-Chinrest Technique and Style*, and Francesco Geminiani's *The Art of Playing on the Violin, Op.9*, and study audio and video recordings of modern-day Baroque violinists such as Rachel Podger, Amandine Beyer, Andrew Manze, Lucy van Dael, and Dmitry Sinkovsky.

In performing my first recital, which included Baroque works by Westhoff, Vilsmaÿr, and Pisendel, I used two different Baroque violins: one in standard tuning for the Westhoff and Pisendel, and a second violin to accommodate the *scordatura* tuning in Vilsmaÿr's *Partita*. I did this to minimize the risk of destabilizing the gut strings by tuning them differently throughout the recital. In performing Biber's *Passacaglia* and Bach's *Ciaconna* in my third recital, I used a Baroque bow and modern violin, although I had studied the pieces on Baroque violin as well. This decision was made to create a cohesive sound world across the entire program, which also included Reich's *Violin Phase* and Berio's *Sequenza VIII*.

The biggest impact that playing on Baroque equipment has, for me, is the sensation of using a Baroque bow to draw out the warm tone of the gut strings. Playing on gut strings has made me more attuned to the many nuances of tone and resonance they possess. For modern players, it can be difficult at first to find the right balance of bow contact and pressure when using gut strings and a Baroque bow. What I have learned to embrace is a bow contact close enough to the bridge that brings out overtones in the string, and an approach to bow pressure that has enough release to allow for maximum resonance. I learned to trust the guidance of my ear and be led primarily by the resonance of the instrument in working on these Baroque works. This attention to sound was also invaluable in working on my other dissertation repertory. Especially in the realm of chordal playing, which can often sound crushed or tense with the wrong kind of bow stroke, a focus on resonance helped me to incorporate more release and natural follow-through into my bow strokes, aiding in a richer, rounder sound overall.

## Technical Approaches

Many of my approaches to technique in this repertory were no different than they would be for the same techniques found in any other genre of music. What I find worthy of briefly discussing are the approaches to technique that were most prevalent regarding this particular repertory.

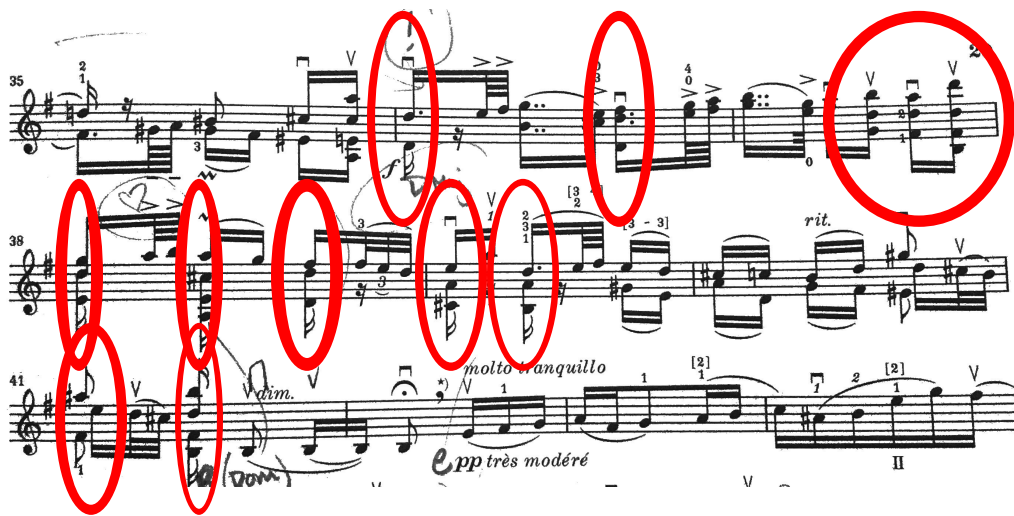
### Voicing

The voicing of chords and arpeggiated chords requires a good deal of attention in this music. As violinists, we too often focus on bringing out the melodic melody alone, but as already stated, unaccompanied polyphonic music requires detailed planning of bow distribution and phrasing to bring the music to life most vividly. Figuring out my right arm “choreography” was crucial in this process. To bring out bass-line notes in the lower strings, for example, the elbow must be high enough to accommodate for the level of those strings, yet not too high so as to lose the sensation of weight and gravity. This concept of right arm balance can be applied at any point on the bow and on any string.

In working with a Baroque bow for so much of this dissertation, I found that the “rule of the down-bow” helped my overall approach to bringing out important notes within chords, arpeggiated or scale passages, and even melodic lines. While the “rule of the down-bow” implies that gravity gives weight to strong beats, this concept can apply to many instances of note emphasis, whether on a down- or up-bow, or with a Baroque or modern bow. In essence, I found myself applying the feeling of

playing on a Baroque bow with natural weight to all of the repertory in my dissertation, which gave me the ability to naturally bring out specific notes without a crunchy sound or unnecessary accents. A good example of this approach is in Ysaÿe's solo sonata, with the chords in question circled below:

Ex. 5: Eugène Ysaÿe: *Solo Sonata for Violin No. 4, I. Allemande. Lento maestoso*<sup>65</sup>



### Chords and Double-stops

I find the two most beneficial approaches to practicing passages involving many chords and double-stops to be the following: (1) practicing with open strings, and (2) practicing with *pizzicato*. In passages incorporating any number of consecutive chords or double-stops, the most forgotten technical element in achieving

<sup>65</sup> Eugène Ysaÿe. 2016. *Sechs Sonaten Fur Violine Solo, Opus 27*. G. Henle Verlag. Annotated by Audrey Wright.

clarity and agility is that of bow coordination. One way to enhance the coordination of the bow with the left hand is to practice the given passage using open strings while imagining the correlating left-hand finger patterns. I do this at a slow and steady tempo to start, adding speed to the passage only when the right hand feels absolutely certain of its placement.

The second approach is one taught to me by my high school violin teacher, Magdalena Richter, which has helped me in countless chordal passages over the years. For this practice method, *pizzicato* is used instead of the bow. The tempo must be slow and steady enough that the left hand can finger each new chord or double-stop securely before the right hand plucks the string. In the example below, arrows represent when the left hand places the notes, while *pizzicato* occurs where the notes are notated.

Ex. 6: Max Reger: *Sonata for Violin Solo, Op. 42, No. 1, IV. Allegro energico*<sup>66</sup>

The image shows a musical score for a violin solo. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. Red arrows point to specific notes in both staves, indicating where the left hand places the notes. The word 'pizzicato' is written below the second staff. The tempo marking 'Allegro energico' is also present.

In this way, the left hand can solidify its coordination without the added complication of the bow.

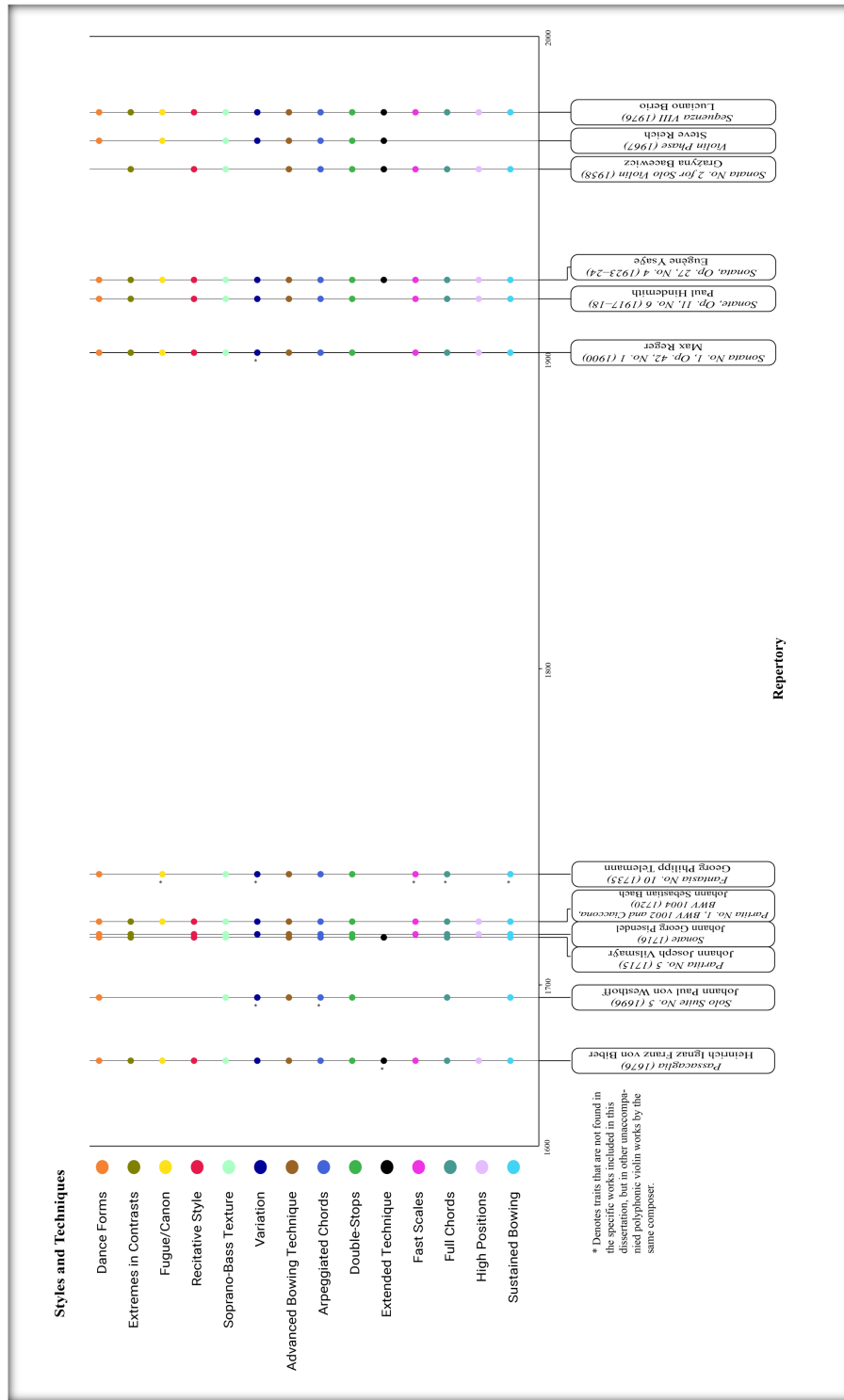
<sup>66</sup> Max Reger. 1905. *Four Sonatas for Violin Solo, Op. 42*. Vol. Sonata No. 1 in D minor. Vienna: Universal Edition. Annotated by Audrey Wright.

## Conclusion

The genre of unaccompanied polyphonic violin repertory has come quite a long way since its origins in the seventeenth century, yet in many ways it is still rooted in long-standing traditions of violin playing that will persist for years to come. The works highlighted in this dissertation are written either by violinist-composers or non-violinists who deeply understood the idiomatic language of the violin, and therefore represent a culmination of the styles and techniques that have evolved as essential violinistic qualities. One benefit of exploring the large scope of this genre is to become acquainted with lesser-known works in the context of those that are well known, for both audiences and performers alike. Another is to learn how many of the pinnacles of solo violin playing came to exist at all, from the development of specific violinists, composers, and the equipment for which they composed for over time. The connective tissue of styles and techniques found throughout these pieces is a testament to the richness of the violin from both historical and current aspects, and my hope is that this dissertation provides a starting point for violinists to draw more connections between the varied repertory they learn and perform.



# Appendix



This infographic provides a visual representation of the most prevalent styles and techniques found in each piece of this dissertation. Regardless of composition date and unique approach of each composer, this shows just how strongly this repertory is connected by the fundamental building blocks of style and technique.

One particularly interesting observation about my project becomes especially obvious in looking at this graph: there is a total absence of repertory between 1735 and 1900. Had I been able to program one additional recital for this dissertation, I would have included selections from two substantial works within the genre: Béla Bartók's *Sonata for Solo Violin* (1944) and Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst's *Six Polyphonic Studies for Violin* (published in 1864). Still, this would have left a composition gap of more than one hundred years. The simplest reason for this is that almost no unaccompanied polyphonic works exist for the violin during this time period. Virtuoso playing became a thing for big concert halls, and with Niccolò Paganini as the nineteenth-century violinist everyone aspired to be, repertory was heavily revolved around concerti, virtuosic showpieces, and technical studies (*caprices, études, etc.*). The end of the nineteenth century saw a renewed interest in the unaccompanied works of J.S. Bach that ultimately brought this genre somewhat back into fashion.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Boris Schwarz. 1983. *Great masters of the violin*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc. 110–12, 289–90.

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