

UPDATING THE VIOLIN STUDY REPERTOIRE  
USING EUGÈNE YSAÏE'S OP. 27 AS A MODEL

by

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Updating the Violin Study Repertoire Using Eugène Ysaÿe's Op. 27 as a Model

Thesis co-directed by Associate Professor Erika Eckert and Senior Instructor Károly Schranz

The most commonly studied etudes and caprices in the violin studio are dominated by works composed largely in the earlier half of the nineteenth century. While these works deserve their place in the repertoire, they are unable to accommodate technical, harmonic, and musical developments of the twentieth century and beyond.

Part of the difficulty in updating the study repertoire comes from how varied the styles of the twentieth century are. A single composer would be hard-pressed to sufficiently address all of them, especially if one has it in mind to produce works appropriate for various ability levels of students. Therefore, it is both practical and more effective for a composer to delve more deeply into a niche even as specific as a single past composer's oeuvre, analyze it, and create from it new study repertoire.

This work provides an example of the analytical process necessary to update the study repertoire on a grand scale starting with composer and violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. His work represents understanding of the instrument to a level still unmatched and a bridge into early twentieth century practices. The aura of difficulty that surrounds these works, while perhaps warranted, does not need to deter young students from playing his music.

It is the ultimate goal of this project to provide a template by which to write works that use the same idioms as their model composers and from which younger students will gain the technical and musical tools and confidence to venture into twentieth century and more modern works sooner in their musical lives.

## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION	
	Need for the Project .....	1
	The Utility of Ysaÿe .....	4
II.	ANALYZING YSAÿE’S OP. 27	
	Ysaÿe and the Six Sonatas for Solo Violin Op. 27 .....	7
	Melodic Traits	
	Small Units and Musical Space .....	8
	Violinistic Use of Scales and Multi-Stops.....	13
	Economic Fingering Patterns .....	24
	Harmonic Traits	
	Perfect Intervals .....	30
	Tenths .....	40
	Other Violinistic Harmonies .....	46
III.	GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CLOSING REMARKS	
	Guiding Principles .....	52
	Closing Remarks .....	56
	APPENDIX .....	59
	WORKS REFERENCED .....	66

## FIGURES

### Figures

2.1. Sonata 1, <i>Grave</i> mm. 1-2; Repeated Melodic Unit .....	9
2.2. Sonata 1, <i>Grave</i> m. 4; Second Melodic Unit .....	9
2.3. Sonata 3, <i>Ballade</i> ; Melodic Unit in Various Forms .....	9-10, 37, 48
2.4. Sonata 5, <i>L'Aurore</i> mm. 1-5 .....	10, 30
2.5. Sonata 5, <i>L'Aurore</i> mm. 45-47; Development of Musical Space .....	11
2.6. <i>Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space</i> mm. 1-3; Melodic Unit .....	12
2.7. <i>Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space</i> mm. 25-28; Melodic Development .....	12
2.8. <i>Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space</i> mm. 45-46; Melodic Development .....	12
2.9. Sonata 4; Melodic Unit in Various Contexts .....	13-14
2.10. <i>Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations</i> mm. 1-5 .....	15, 40
2.11. Sonata 1, <i>Fugato</i> mm. 1-4; Use of Scales in the Fugue Subject .....	15
2.12. Sonata 1, <i>Fugato</i> mm. 15-19; Embedded Scalar Lines .....	16
2.13. Sonata 1, <i>Fugato</i> ; Embedded Scalar Lines in the Top Voice .....	16
2.14. Sonata 1, <i>Fugato</i> ; Embedded Scalar Lines in the Inner Voices .....	17
2.15. Sonata 1, <i>Fugato</i> mm. 96-98; Embedded Scalar Lines in the Lower Voices .....	17
2.16. Sonata 1, <i>Fugato</i> ; Scalar Displays .....	17-18
2.17. Sonata 2, <i>Danse des Ombres</i> Variation 4 mm. 37-40; <i>Dies Irae</i> and Chromatic Scales .....	18
2.18. Sonata 2, <i>Danse des Ombres</i> Variation 5 mm. 46-54; Embedded Scales .....	19
2.19. <i>Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space</i> mm. 36-37; Embedded Chromatic Line .....	20
2.20. <i>Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space</i> m. 45-46; Extended Hand Frame by Whole-Tone .....	21
2.21. <i>Kreutzer 2 Variant</i> mm. 7-8; Extended Fingering as Color Preservation .....	21
2.22. Sonata 3, <i>Ballade</i> opening; Contraction in the Opening Gesture .....	22
2.23. <i>Kreutzer 2 Variant</i> mm. 10-11; Creeping Contracted Fingering .....	22
2.24. <i>Kreutzer 2 Variant</i> mm. 13-15; Creeping Extended Fingering .....	23
2.25. Sonata 6 m. 56; Chordal Planing .....	24
2.26. Sonata 6 mm. 186-191; Chordal Planing in Bariolage .....	25

(Figures continued)

2.27. Sonata 4 <i>Allemanda</i> , m. 5; Consecutive Fingerings with Pedal .....	25
2.28. Sonata 2 <i>Les Furies</i> , mm. 49-50; Dissonant Pedal .....	26
2.29. <i>Chordal Open and Closed Hand Frames</i> , mm. 16-17; Similar Dissonant Pedal ...	26
2.30. Sonata 3, <i>Ballade</i> opening; Consecutive Fingering Pattern .....	27, 37, 48
2.31. Sonata 3, <i>Ballade</i> mm. 4-7; Other Consecutive Fingering Patterns .....	27
2.32. Sonata 1, <i>Allegretto poco Scherzoso</i> mm. 1-3.....	28
2.33. Sonata 2, <i>Danses des Ombres</i> Variation 6 mm. 59-62 .....	29
2.34. Sonata 5, <i>L'Aurore</i> mm. 6-21.....	31
2.35. Sonata 5, <i>L'Aurore</i> mm. 26-36 .....	32
2.36. <i>Chordal Open and Closed Hand Frames</i> mm. 4-5.....	34
2.37. Trott <i>Melodious Double-Stops</i> , No. 2 mm. 1-7; Double-Stopping with One Open String .....	35
2.38. <i>Early Multi-Stopping</i> mm. 27-30; Double-Stopping with Preserved Fingers .....	35
2.39. Sonata 6 mm. 30-36; Melodic Perfect Intervals .....	36
2.40. Sonata 6 mm. 35-43; Interval Content Change .....	36
2.41. Sonata 3, <i>Ballade</i> mm. 2-7; Perfect Intervals and Whole-Tone .....	38
2.42. Sonata 3, <i>Ballade</i> mm. 64-67; Dominance of Consonant Intervals .....	39
2.43. Sonata 3, <i>Ballade</i> mm. 73-78; Gradual Integration of Consonant and Perfect Intervals .....	39
2.44. 10 Preludes, <i>Prelude X</i> mm. 1-3; Vertical Tenths in Continuous Cantilena .....	41
2.45. Sonata 1, <i>Grave</i> mm. 29-30 .....	42
2.46. Sonata 1, <i>Allegretto poco Scherzoso</i> mm. 66-70 .....	42
2.47. Sonata 1, <i>Fugato</i> mm. 111-12 .....	43
2.48. Sonata 1, <i>Finale con Brio</i> , mm. 50-51.....	43
2.49. Other Examples of Tenths Across Op. 27.....	44-45
2.50. <i>Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations</i> mm. 23-24; Approaching the Vertical Tenth .....	46
2.51. Sonata 2, <i>Les Furies</i> mm. 1-5; The Violinistic Fully-Diminished Seventh Chord .....	47

(Figures continued)

2.52. <i>Chordal Open and Closed Hand Frames</i> m. 31; Fully-Diminished Harmony .....	47
2.53. <i>Sonata 3, Ballade</i> m. 5; Whole-Tone in Major Sixths .....	49
2.54. <i>Kreutzer No. 2 and Kreutzer 2 Variant</i> ; Side by Side .....	50
2.55. <i>Sonata 5, Danse Rustique</i> mm. 37-38; Oscillations .....	51
2.56. <i>Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations</i> mm. 21-22 .....	51
3.1 <i>Early Multi-Stopping</i> mm. 1-2; Progression of Pattern .....	54-55

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Need for the Project

Young violinists face a multi-faceted difficulty when they study music of the twentieth century, especially for the first time. Broadly, this is because there are no systems in place that support early exposure to this kind of music. Often, musical training is rooted entirely in standard western classical harmony and technique until after one is contemplating a musical career. Having thorough training in more typically tonal music is not itself the problem, but that early training does not also include appropriate preparation for styles that came about in the twentieth century and later is. On one hand, the late introduction of these styles inhibits a musician's ability to learn and perform them when they do arise. On the other, it continues to slow the assimilation of more modern works into the mainstream repertoire because people, performers and listeners alike, do not develop the different kind of listening that is so helpful in enjoying, and ultimately, advocating for it.

Consider the study repertoire by such composers as Mazas (1782-1849), Kreutzer (1766-1831), Rode (1774-1830), Baillot (1771-1842), Gavinies (1728-1800), and Dont (1815-1888). This list, while not exhaustive by any means, includes some, if not most, of consistently used etude material, and none of it was written after 1900 — the dates of their publications range from 1794 to 1849. It is literally impossible for these works to represent the musical developments of the twentieth century because they would not exist for another fifty years. These earlier



pedagogical works remain relevant because, to a large extent, technique that was required in the nineteenth century is applicable to twentieth century works. But technique has evolved since then, and some modern musical conventions are hardly even distant relatives of that time period.

The prominent pedagogues Ševčík (1852-1934), Schradieck (1846-1918), Flesch (1873-1944), Dounis (approx. 1886-1954) and Galamian (1903-1981) represent a compositional period of more interest because they inhabited the twentieth century. Their study repertoire contributions include mechanical exercises, scale systems and a number of etudes. Their collective work on the aspects of left hand technique and Galamian's scales in whole-tone and non-standard collections are worth noting for their application to twentieth century repertoire, but generally most of these works do not provide a harmonic or musical context for developing fluency in twentieth century styles.

There is study repertoire from the twentieth century, of course. Paul Hindemith, Eugène Ysaÿe, George Rochberg and John Cage are some of the most famous contributors. However, their treatment of the term "etude" or "caprice" differs greatly. Indeed, there seems to have been a gradual shift away from the didactic purpose with which students of the earlier generation of etudes are familiar towards pieces that exhibit great virtuosity. This phenomenon did not begin in the twentieth century — recall, for example, Paganini and Liszt with their performance-oriented caprices and etudes. The genre of concert-etude came into fashion in the nineteenth century, and has lasted through the twentieth century. Instructional etudes seem to have been left in the hands of composers who did not or have not yet achieved great fame. Aaron Farrel's dissertation discusses a number of them including Earl Kim, Bruno Bartolozzi, Igor Ozim, and Dimitri Terzakis.<sup>1</sup> Of those listed above, Hindemith and Ysaÿe exhibit the most formal instructional

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<sup>1</sup>Farrell, Aaron M. "A Practical Guide to Twentieth-Century Violin Etudes with Performance and Theoretical Analysis," 2004. *LSU Doctoral Dissertations*.

qualities, but even their study works are inaccessible to young students because of their difficulty. Rochberg and Cage are almost exclusively reserved for players of the highest levels.

The fact that works with the purpose of studying modern techniques and sonorities exist but do not circulate the repertoire is only indicative of the problem — modern works, especially ones that retain instructional value, have not yet been assimilated into the mainstream. One could cite a number of reasons. In addition to his analysis of twentieth century study works, Farrell also wrote on this matter.<sup>2</sup> Among them are the rise of popular music, the simultaneous distancing of art forms from the general public by means of their own progress, and pedagogical retrospection. I would add to the list the perception that more modern works are inherently more difficult.

As far as assimilating works that have already been composed, at least part of the solution is simple. Teachers need but familiarize themselves with these works and utilize them in their teaching as much as possible. But the process is more nuanced than that. Works composed throughout the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries are as vastly different as they are many. Composers who wrote as distinctly as Stravinsky, Ysaÿe, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Bartók, Britten, Schoenberg, Messiaen, Ligeti, Reich, Penderecki, Boulez, Berio, and Carter all exist in this time frame. Determining which etude-type pieces or collections to teach as the broadest catch-all for modern technique and harmony is a difficult and selective process, to say the least. It also risks compromising the quality of study for the quantity of it, or missing particular veins altogether.

So, I would suggest an alternative path to new and useful study works: composing preparatory works tailored to a specific composer. Approaching study repertoire in this way allows the writer of new works the freedom to exercise expertise in a particular niche and

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<sup>2</sup> Farrell, 223-30.

provide the most immediately relevant technical and musical considerations. A repertoire rich in more specific works would allow a student and their teacher directed control over and efficient preparation for whatever their growth plan might be. My project here is to establish a process by which one can analyze a model and compose study works using the model's same idioms to bolster the repertoire. For this project, I will be using Eugène Ysaÿe's Sonatas for Solo Violin Op. 27 as my model.

### The Utility of Ysaÿe

Ysaÿe's Op. 27 is not at the cutting edge of modern, but there are good reasons to consider it for this project. Op. 27's reliance on more or less tonal schemes provides many opportunities to explore the ways in which Ysaÿe deviated from standard tonal practice. Understanding these deviations allows one to understand what makes Ysaÿe sound so distinctly himself, but also to grasp more broadly the compositional concepts of moderation in harmonic deviation and timing, both of which inform the placement of important musical junctures. For the violinist, his style of writing is also rich in the creative use of physicality. No facet of playing is neglected — fingerings, bowings, voice crossings, open strings, and the harmonies themselves create a strong relationship between idiom and virtuosity that remains unmatched.

These are only some of the qualities that contribute to Op. 27's continued presence in the standard repertoire. Indeed, they are used for recital performance, as encores, and are still being analyzed and recorded almost one-hundred years after their first publication. This kind of longevity does not simply happen by chance — it is on account of their compelling musical depth, virtuosic use of the instrument, and overall quality that they remain popular.

With this kind of reputation comes a downside, however. Sometimes attached to these works is an air of untouchability, especially in still-developing students. This is problematic because there are very few works that utilize the instrument in such a musical and violinistically compatible way. It should not feel like stepping into the unknown to begin work on one of Ysaÿe's sonatas. If anything, there should be a sense of comfort and groundedness. The technical demands are formidable, but they are rooted in playability and musicality.<sup>3</sup>

As I discussed earlier, part of the discomfort with these works and others of the twentieth century is owed to a study repertoire that is unable to accommodate the needs of those works. Not that studying Kreutzer or Rode is not good for technique. Quite the opposite. There is good reason they have stayed in the repertoire for two-hundred years. But their age, and that of most study repertoire, is problematic. They were not conceived to accommodate the kind of playing required for Ysaÿe, or really much of anything that is descriptive of twentieth- and twenty first-century musical development.

I reiterate my solution here: Teachers with access to both etudes from the nineteenth century and the repertoire from the last one-hundred years are well-equipped to fill in the study repertoire, especially for young students, and can therefore compose their own preparatory works. To initiate that process, the following is a discussion of some of the musical and technical traits of the violinistic language of Eugène Ysaÿe. Following that will be a discussion of incorporating those traits into preparatory works appropriate for younger students that will better prepare them to play his music and music of that time period.

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<sup>3</sup> Greitzen, Mary Lee. "Becoming Bach, Blaspheming Bach: Kinesthetic Knowledge and Embodied Music Theory in Ysaÿe's 'Obsession' for Solo Violin." *Current Musicology*. Department of Music, Columbia University, New York 2011 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1037827>.

The first step in the process is to determine what traits preparatory works appropriate for Ysaÿe should exhibit. At present, his Sonatas for Solo Violin Op. 27 remain the most standard of his music and therefore provide some of the most relevant data. But they do not have to be the only source. As an extension, the composers with whom Ysaÿe associated and their works that undoubtedly influenced him are worth some attention. Among them are Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Lekeu, and Franck. Further, consider Ysaÿe's Ten Preludes, Op. 35.<sup>4</sup> The work was not completed before his death, and what is available in public circulation is largely an editorial reconstruction of sketches. But they are still valuable here because they represent Ysaÿe's own pedagogical output with the very goal of helping violinists assimilate new harmonies and techniques. While the difficulty of these works removes them as contenders for young students, the work's intent can be adapted to the young violinist's level. One endeavoring to contribute to the study repertoire would do well to contextualize these kinds of references similarly. While one work may be enough on which to base technical and musical considerations, it is almost certainly more beneficial to consider a broader scope of a composer's context.

As I mentioned earlier, there is merit to teaching the old generations of etudes. They develop the fundamental mechanics of the violin, including tasteful shifting, clean string-crossing, managed bow distribution, and sound that is both high quality and appropriate contextually, quite well. The advantage of the newer studies I suggest creating would continue to address these skills while also introducing the newer harmonies and challenging techniques found in Ysaÿe's sonatas earlier and to players of all levels.

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<sup>4</sup> Ysaÿe, Eugène. *10 Préludes pour Violon seul, Op. 35*, ed. Charles Radoux Rogier, (Brussels: Schott Frères, 1952).

## CHAPTER II

### ANALYZING YSAÏE'S OP. 27

#### YsaÏe and the Six Sonatas for Solo Violin Op. 27

Eugène YsaÏe (1858-1931) is heralded as having combined the violin schools of virtuosity and musical substance, a movement previously championed by Sarasate and Joachim. As such, YsaÏe has been described as the first modern violinist. His career took him across the globe with longer residencies in Belgium, France, and the United States. YsaÏe performed as a soloist and concertmaster, championed new music, collaborated with contemporary composers, wrote his own music (notably having its own strong evolutionary path in large part thanks to the influence of French music), and conducted. His works are largely dominated by the Six Sonatas for solo violin which have received the majority of attention in research.

Op. 27 contains six sonatas, four multi-movement and two single-movement works. The number of sonatas and their general contrapuntal nature harken to YsaÏe's extreme fascination with the earlier works of J.S. Bach. Largely, each movement functions around a tonal center, but deviation is strong and whole-tone collections appear somewhat regularly. Rhythms range from straightforward to complex, including multiple voices moving at different times. YsaÏe's writing also demands skillful use of the bow for dynamic range, manipulation of stroke, and control of color. It should be noted that this thesis in its current form focuses primarily on the left hand.

Following is a passage-by-passage exploration of some of these prominent technical and musical challenges. I have grouped them under the headings of melodic and harmonic traits. I have made special note of the length and construction of the melodies, incorporated scales and

multi-stopping, the economic patterns of fingering designations, and how all of these are used idiomatically. The information gleaned in this process has been used to create my own preparatory works, examples of which are discussed alongside relevant passages from Ysaÿe's sonatas. They also appear in full in the Appendix.

## Melodic Traits

### Small Units and Musical Space

The six sonatas are almost surprisingly simple melodically. The complexity of the musical composite that a listener hears comes from how it is decorated. Ysaÿe's use of predominantly stepwise motion and generally shorter melodic units can be attributed to how the melodies interface with writing idiomatic for the violin. Because the writing almost always includes multiple voices, it is necessary to use intervals easily accessed within the hand frame which results in melodies that are shorter and more manageable, ultimately providing continuity through different registers. Imagining Ysaÿe's style of writing with longer or more leaping melodies becomes problematic on account of playability and sonic transparency.

The first movement of the first sonata opens with a perfect illustration. The melodic material of virtually the entire movement comprises two rhythmic cells. The first audible unit, illustrated in Figure 2.1, appears in the first two measures: sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth. Figure 2.2 shows the second rhythmic cell that appears in m. 4: eighth-sixteenth-sixteenth. However, Ysaÿe makes it apparent that the melodic units are only a single beat despite consecutive rhythmic repetitions. He achieves this by placing subsequent iterations in different registers. How voices are beamed and the direction of their stems also helps clarify the different voices.

Figure 2.1. Sonata 1, *Grave* mm. 1-2; Repeated Melodic Unit



Figure 2.2. Sonata 1, *Grave* m. 4; Second Melodic Unit



The third sonata is constructed around a similarly short melodic unit. It is first found in m. 13 in the top voices and is constructed of two descending half-steps followed by a single half-step rise. Figure 2.3 illustrates the intervallic structure of this theme, followed by the first statement and subsequent variations in m. 56, 71, and 119. The ubiquity of half-step motion makes this melody especially malleable.

Figure 2.3. Sonata 3, *Ballade*; Melodic Unit in Various Forms

Distilled

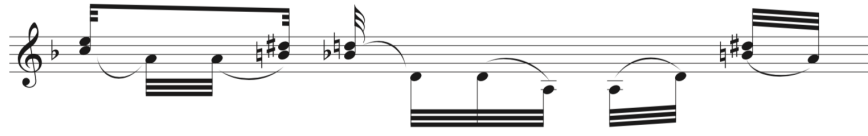


m. 13





m. 56



m. 71

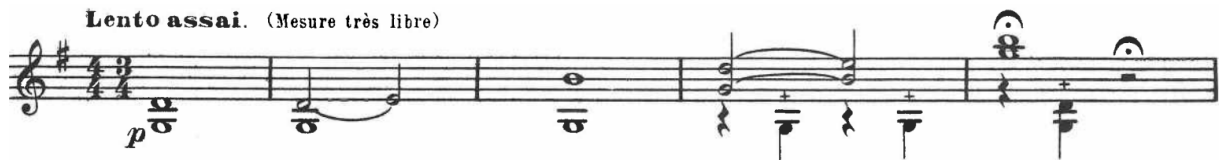


m. 119



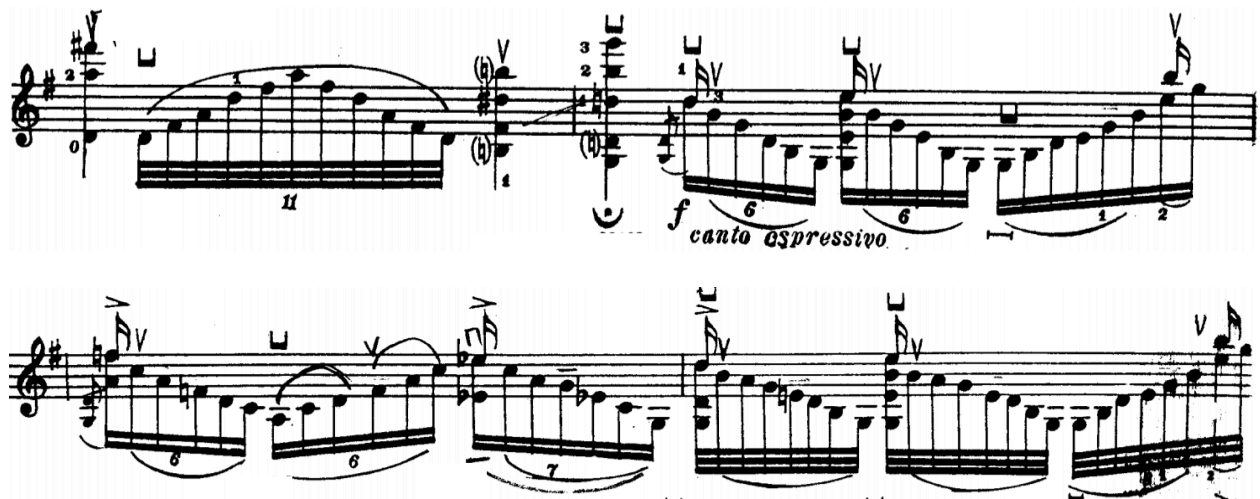
As far as melody is concerned, one could argue that the first movement of the fifth sonata is not a strong candidate for the discussion here. The melody itself is less of a tune to be sung or remembered than it is a means to explore color and musical space. The material to which I refer is found in full in mm. 1-3 and is repeated mm. 4-5. Both iterations start on the fifth scale degree, move up a whole step and then up a fifth, as illustrated in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4. Sonata 5, *L'Aurore* mm. 1-5



In a quantitative sense, the melody itself is short, lasting at most five pitches. But it appears frequently throughout the movement. Over time, more and more violinistic activity happens between the melodic content. Through this process, the melodic notes become pillars to which listeners can ground themselves amidst Ysaÿe’s virtuosic, improvisational elaboration. This compositional tool is what I refer to as the development of musical space. These two traits of melodic repetition and developing musical space are staples in Ysaÿe’s music. Figure 2.5 below illustrates one instance from the fifth sonata where this occurs. The melody described above is found in the top voice of mm. 45-47 and textural arpeggiation fills in the rhythmic space between. Other examples can be found in the first sonata *Fugato*, the second sonata *Danses des Ombres* and *Les Furies*, the third sonata in many of the passages mentioned above, and the fifth sonata *Danse Rustique*.

Figure 2.5. Sonata 5, *L’Aurore* mm. 44-47; Development of Musical Space



My own works sometimes utilize musical space in this way; the following three Figures show excerpts from one in particular that is designed to do so, titled *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space*. The main melodic material is a simple ascending major arpeggio followed by a

descending scale — intentionally short in length and glacial in harmonic progression so that later in the work, change becomes much more potent.

Figure 2.6. *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space* mm. 1-3; Melodic Unit



As the work progresses, the space between these notes becomes busier. The original material remains present, but becomes aurally masked.

Figure 2.7. *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space* mm. 25-28; Melodic Development



There comes a point when the melodic unit is almost unrecognizable. This is not so much the case with Ysaÿe's, but my work does arrive somewhere close to that.

Figure 2.8. *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space* mm. 45-46; Melodic Development



## Melodic Traits

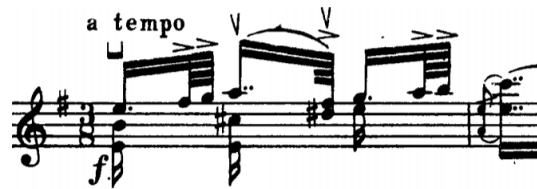
### Violinistic Use of Scales and Multi-Stops

Scales also play a large role in the construction of Ysaÿe's melodies. At times, they are embedded within non-melodic voices, they can denote larger structural features, and sometimes they serve as the melodies themselves. This portion of the discussion would be far more limited if multi-stopping were barred, and so I feel it is appropriate to emphasize once again the significance of multi-stopping in Ysaÿe's music.

The fourth sonata captures all of these components. The main melodic unit of this entire work is a microcosm of an octave scale. It spans the interval of a fourth ascending stepwise from scale degree one to four. The first iteration occurs in the first movement, *Allemanda*, at m. 8, shown below in Figure 2.9. The *Sarabande* uses this same motive in retrograde embedded in literally every bar except the last four. And the *Finale* outlines it in a number of different ways in a flurry of *détaché* and *spiccato* sixteenth notes.

Figure 2.9. Sonata 4; Melodic Unit in Various Contexts

*Allemanda*, m. 8



*Sarabande, mm. 1-2*



*Finale, mm. 51-52*



The fourth as a structural interval is convenient musically because it relates the first scale degree to the lower fifth, the dominant, and the fourth above it, the subdominant. Between these two landmarks, every diatonic pitch class within the scale is feasibly accessible. When one considers more imaginative transpositions or scalar permutations, there are virtually no compositional limits.

The span of an intervallic fourth is also particularly convenient violinistically. Most diatonic hand frames span a fourth without any need to extend fingers, shift, or cross strings. Ysaÿe does suggest shifting regularly, which is done both as a practical tool to accommodate accompanimental multi-stopping, and as a musical choice to preserve color by keeping the melodic voice on the same string. Regardless of which kind of shifting is being used, I would suggest further that the multi-stopping he incorporates is only possible on account of his melodies' inherent facility on the violin — it is both few in number of notes and often stepwise. This makes adding voices much more convenient, especially if they fall within the same hand frame. These concepts apply to my own work, *Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations*. See

Figure 2.10 below. It is not necessary to shift in order to play the melody (upper voice) or its accompaniment (lower voice), but it is useful for preserving color, especially as it concerns avoiding the open E string.

Figure 2.10. *Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations* mm. 1-5



The second movement of the first sonata, *Fugato*, is also an excellent piece to illustrate the use of scales. Refer to Figure 2.11 below. The fugal subject itself is a modified scale moving from scale degree five down to one. More broadly, the gesture beginning with the pickup to m. 2 outlines a stepwise ascent which is immediately followed by a stepwise descent. Interestingly, both span the same range of a perfect fourth. The close of the subject, seen in m. 3, is a literal chromatic descent. One could argue that this chromatic descent is subsidiary since it is not retained in all subsequent iterations, but it still adheres to the scalar model that applies to the rest of the movement.

Figure 2.11. Sonata 1, *Fugato* mm. 1-4; Use of Scales in the Fugue Subject



Further use of scalar material can be found in a number of different places throughout the movement in varying forms — not always strictly diatonic, nor always strictly chromatic.

Compositionally, this is an impressive device because all of the variations retain their relationship to the fugal subject. Consider the bass voice between mm. 15-19, below in Figure 2.12. It undergoes a chromatic stepwise ascent from B-flat to D. One might also notice how the material of mm. 15-16 can create mm. 17-18 by transposition. With transposition being employed, it is not a surprise that Ysaÿe could embed a chromatic line. What is exciting about it is that the material in between also relates to its transpositional cousin, but because it is spread out and the gestures are disjunct, it sounds like a flurry of more or less unrelated chromatic gestures.

Figure 2.12. Sonata 1, *Fugato* mm. 15-19; Embedded Scalar Lines



Numerous other chromatic lines appear throughout the movement as well. Examples can be found in the top voice of mm. 6-12, shown in Figure 2.13 below, the middle voices of m. 74 and m. 77, shown in Figure 2.14 below, and the lower voices of mm. 96-98, shown in Figure 2.15 below.

Figure 2.13. Sonata 1, *Fugato*; Embedded Scalar Lines in the Top Voice

mm. 6-12

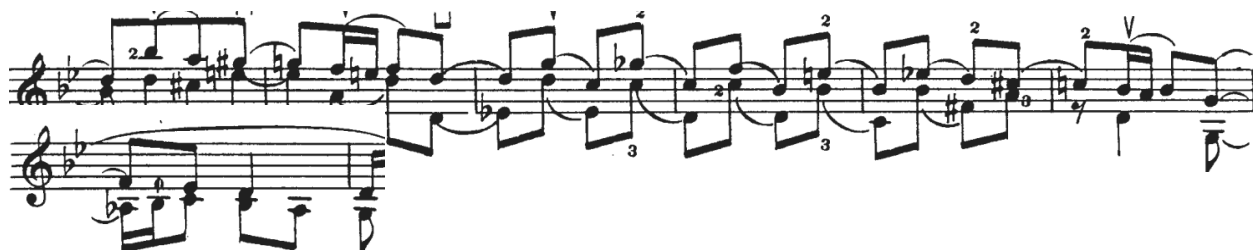


Figure 2.14. Sonata 1, *Fugato*; Embedded Scalar Lines in the Inner Voices

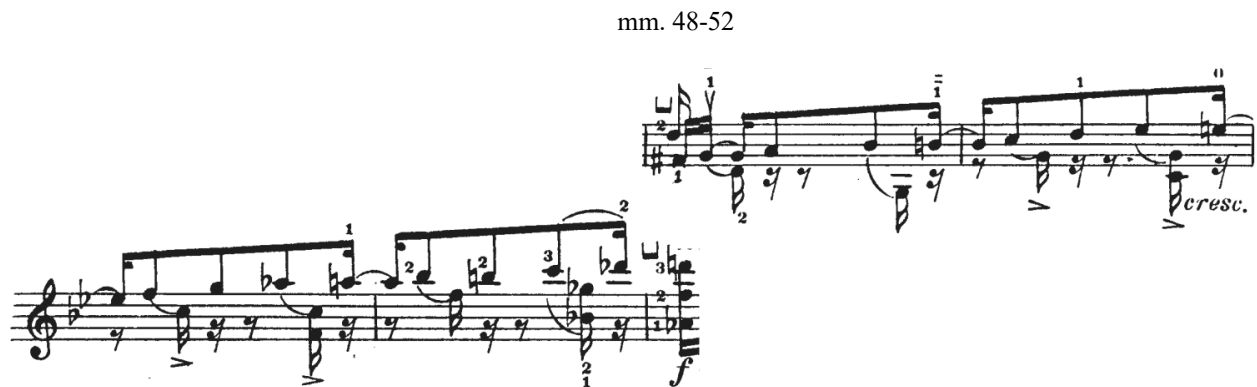


Figure 2.15. Sonata 1, *Fugato* mm. 96-98; Embedded Scalar Lines in the Lower Voices



Some of the most impressive scalar displays are found in mm. 48-52, where the syncopated voice climbs almost entirely chromatically the distance of an octave and a fifth from G to D, and in mm. 77-82 where the top voice makes an almost entirely chromatic descent across the same range in the opposite direction. Both are illustrated in Figure 2.16.

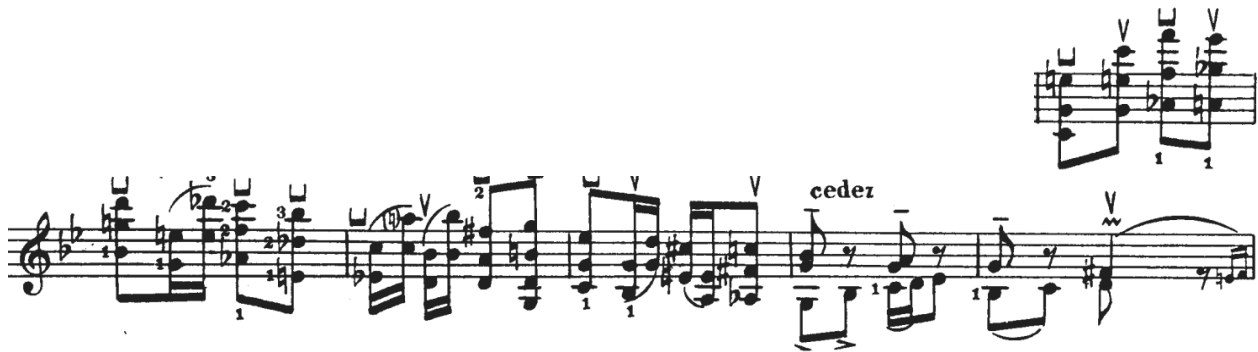
Figure 2.16. Sonata 1, *Fugato*; Scalar Displays





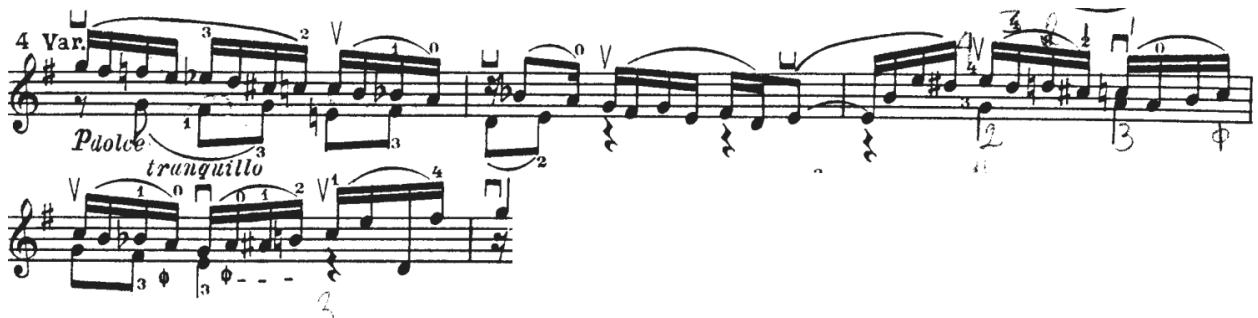
Sonata 1, *Fugato*; Scalar Displays

mm. 77-82



The use of scales occurs across the other sonatas as well. The fourth variation in the third movement of the second sonata weaves chromatic scales around the *dies irae* both above and below. Musically, Ysaÿe is creative with the chromatic figuration — gestures are not always singular in their direction, but the intent to incorporate chromatic scales structurally is worth acknowledging. One possible reason this particular example is not strictly scalar is to allow the left hand to function as easily as possible. The other factor seems to be musical because changes occur towards the end of phrase gestures. Figure 2.17 below shows the first phrase of the variation.

Figure 2.17. Sonata 2, *Danse des Ombres* Variation 4 mm. 37-41; *Dies Irae* and Chromatic Scales



The fifth variation of the same movement, seen below in Figure 2.18, also demonstrates a heavy reliance on scalar material. Each measure constitutes its own phrasal gesture, and within every single one, at least one of the three voices is moving stepwise. Especially compelling examples can be found in the top voice from the beginning of the variation (m. 46) until m. 49, the lower voice in m. 46, the bottom voice in m. 50, and all voices in m. 51. The final three bars of the variation are chordal elaboration on dominant and tonic, but even here chromatic leading tones that imply scalar motion are utilized.

Figure 2.18. Sonata 2, *Danse des Ombres* Variation 5 mm. 46-54; Embedded Scales

The image shows a musical score for Variation 5 of Sonata 2, *Danse des Ombres*, measures 46-54. The score is written for three voices (treble, alto, and bass clefs) in a key with one sharp (F#). It features complex scalar passages with many accidentals and fingerings. The first staff is marked 'p' and '(semplice non più vivo)'. The second staff has a 'loco' marking. The third staff has a 'loco' marking and a 'V' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Ysaÿe has shown that chromatic scalar figuration is especially malleable, and that is a trait I utilized in *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space*. The excerpt in Figure 2.19 below features a chromatic line in the lower voice and a slightly modified (also incomplete in this excerpt) *dies irae* in the upper voice. This passage does not include a scale in which all

chromatic pitches are present but focuses on a smaller range which provides harmonic consistency as well as a basis for fingerings.

Figure 2.19. *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space* mm. 36-37; Embedded Chromatic Line



While a subset of the theoretical chromatic scale exists in *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space*, the physical experience of playing a chromatic scale compared to that of playing my work is starkly different. This speaks for both of the examples found in Figures 2.17 and 2.18 and broadly to the nature of embedded scales as well. The heart of the difference is that in a real-music setting, fingerings and hand frames that are not typically employed to play scales are often, or at least can be, used.

Ysaÿe's use of multi-stopping, especially with multiple melodic voices (as opposed to one melodic and other accompanimental) generally places limits on the range of the left-hand fingers. While this remains true most of the time, but are instances where modifications to the hand frame, extensions and contractions, are unavoidable. One could refer here to any chord that includes fingered octaves or tenths, and many that include augmented seconds or tritones. Contractions and extensions can be used as tools for color preservation and quasi-shifting as well. As such, there is merit to their practice.

Fingered octaves and tenths may be out of the question for younger students, but there are a number of other approaches that work well to address extensions. For example, one can simply write music in a key area that utilizes pitches that fall beyond a typical hand frame. This

principle can be used for any of the various positions. If a piece is designed to explore extensions within first position, a key that provides access to pitches outside the hand frame could be B major. Pitches D-sharp and A-sharp are both candidates for the fourth finger. A tonicization of the dominant also allows access to E-sharp which is indeed playable by the fourth finger as well. The same relationship between hand frame and those pitches can be achieved using the whole-tone collection. This whole-tone manifestation makes an appearance in *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space* and can be found in Figure 2.20 below.

Figure 2.20. *Atypical Hand Frames and Musical Space* mm. 45-46; Extended Hand Frame by Whole-Tone



Extensions are pragmatic tools but can also be used as color preservers by avoiding string crossings. I think most immediately of the F accessible both from the fourth finger on the A string or from the first finger on the E string. Both fingerings have their merits in different contexts, but the former is almost certainly preferable if subsequent material does not move higher in register. I suggest this exact fingering in my *Kreutzer 2 Variant*, seen below in Figure 2.21.

Figure 2.21. *Kreutzer 2 Variant* mm. 7-8; Extended Fingering as Color Preservation



Contractions often occur when the fourth finger stops a note a tritone above an open string, as in a fully diminished arpeggio. Similar is the figuration of the whole-tone opening from the third sonata, seen below in Figure 2.22. Ysaÿe’s suggested fingering creates a contraction between the first and fourth fingers.

Figure 2.22. Sonata 3, *Ballade* opening; Contraction in the Opening Gesture



Scalar figurations of the whole-tone scale can be navigated with creeping fingerings — creeping in that the left hand moves in position but without making a true shift. Whole-tone and diminished harmonies do not necessarily generate extended hand frames, but especially in double-stopping or crossing strings in rapid ascent or descent, using extensions and contractions can be practical. Another excerpt from *Kreutzer 2 Variant*, illustrated in Figure 2.23, demonstrates the latter. The creeping contraction is suggested in m. 10 and can be repeated until the fully-diminished arpeggio at the end of m. 11. Here, one could use a number of fingerings, one of which is 4-0-2-4-1-3-1-2.

Figure 2.23. *Kreutzer 2 Variant* mm. 10-11; Creeping Contracted Fingering



Extensions can be used in a similar fashion. Figure 2.24 below shows a different excerpt from *Kreutzer 2 Variant* that demonstrates the use of a creeping extended fingering. This time, however, instead of traveling up the fingerboard, the fingering allows the player to travel down it.

Figure 2.24. *Kreutzer 2 Variant* mm. 13-15; Creeping Extended Fingering



Augmented seconds are not prominent in Ysaÿe's music, but they appear frequently in twentieth century repertoire. Equally as important is their usefulness in exploring extensions and contractions because this interval has the capability to produce both simultaneously. If the augmented second occurs between the second and third fingers, one has lowered the second and raised the third by a half-step each relative to a typical hand frame. The contractions are a result of the first and second finger being a half-step apart while simultaneously the third and fourth are as well, but it is the space between the second and third fingers that creates an extension.

The use of extended and contracted hand frames is not a new idea. Fingerings that suggest as much are found throughout all of the study repertoire back into the early 1800s. I make mention of them here because they are still necessary, especially in accessing harmonies that are used in twentieth century repertoire. Still forthcoming are more detailed discussions on whole-tone collections, fully-diminished harmony, and tenths, but all of these require modification of the typical hand frame. Ysaÿe certainly uses other situational extensions and contractions as well.

## Melodic Traits

### Economic Fingering Patterns

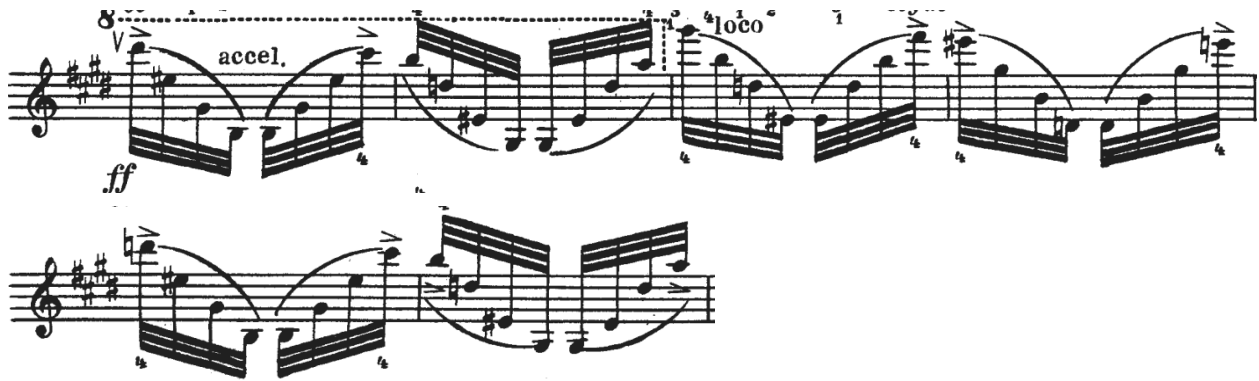
Chordal planing in scales, similar to parallel intervals like those found in Figure 2.20, appears less frequently but is worth mentioning because it allows the continuity of many voices without the need to surgically manage the relationship between fingers in the left hand. It can also be used effectually to highlight sonorities produced by parallel motion. Ysaÿe makes use of it in the sixth sonata m. 56 where three voices descend stepwise, seen below in Figure 2.25.

Figure 2.25. Sonata 6 m. 56; Chordal Planing



Another manifestation of chordal planing used is in conjunction with bariolage and can be found in mm. 186-191 — refer to Figure 2.26. This technique appears frequently throughout the sonatas and involves similar parallel motion in the left hand but pitches do not sound simultaneously. More occurrences of chordal planing in bariolage can be found in Sonata 1, *Grave*, m. 29; Sonata 2, *Obsession*, m. 39; Sonata 4, *Allemanda*, m. 5. Bariolage in non-planing capacities appears in all six of the sonatas.

Figure 2.26. Sonata 6 mm. 186-191; Chordal Planing in Bariolage



Incorporating pedal point is another effective way to make space for planing fingering patterns. Particularly if an open string is involved, the player has the opportunity to move the left hand all at once without the technical demands of shifting inaudibly. An example is found in the opening of the fourth sonata *Allemanda* in m. 5, seen in Figure 2.27 below. The open A string allows the player to make a chromatic descent and maintain the same fingering for the duration of the passage. Aside from the pedal, each voice also retains scalar motion.

Figure 2.27. Sonata 4, *Allemanda* m. 5; Consecutive Fingerings with Pedal



Pedal point is not exclusive to instances of planning. One such variation can be found in the second sonata *Les Furies* in mm. 48-54, an excerpt of which is shown in Figure 2.28. Here, Ysaÿe uses dissonant, non-melodic pitch material as the pedal to create something akin to bi- or polytonality. My own work makes use of bitonality without the leaping shifts found throughout *Les Furies* — a deliberate step easier. It also includes the distinct *dies irae* that Ysaÿe employs

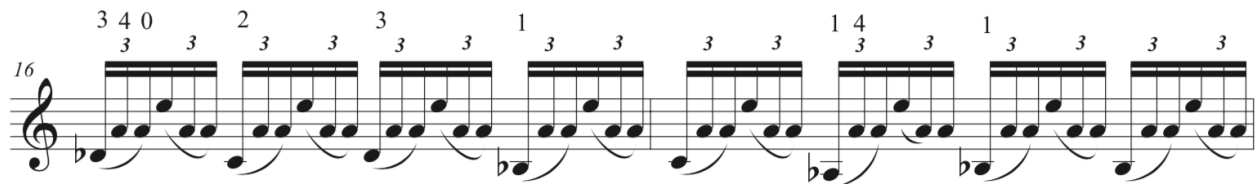


throughout his second sonata. While it may be typical for a pedal to be found in the bass voice, the pedal pitches in my work are found above the melody. An excerpt from *Chordal Open and Closed Hand Frames* can be found in Figure 2.29.

Figure 2.28. Sonata 2, *Les Furies* mm. 49-50; Dissonant Pedal



Figure 2.29. *Chordal Open and Closed Hand Frames*, mm. 16-17; Similar Dissonant Pedal



Chordal planing is not featured in my own works in the way Ysaÿe uses it. The three examples of his works in Figures 2.21, 2.22, and 2.23 are likely more difficult than is appropriate for students who have yet to approach his music. However, a composer should take note of the components that make chordal planing possible — unchanging combinations of double-stops between fingers that move in successive parallel motion. For example, a piece in which one would play parallel sixths with the same two fingers, while perhaps contrived, would nonetheless prepare a student for these kinds of passages from Ysaÿe.

Especially as the hand frame is concerned, there are a number of methods by which Ysaÿe makes economic use of consecutive patterns, chordal planing and pedal point being only two of them. As an example that is both uncontrived and musical, consider the opening of the

third sonata until the first fermata, featured in Figure 2.30. Its pitch material exists entirely within the whole-tone scale. The initial augmented triad is used to introduce the tonality and is left as its own entity, but the subsequent pattern of offset sixths can be played with the first and second fingers exclusively. Indeed, Ysaÿe recommends this for all but the last two notes of the passage. Similar patterns for other double-stop combinations are suggested in measures 4, 5-6, and 7. Refer to the Figure 2.31 below.

Figure 2.30. Sonata 3, *Ballade* opening; Consecutive Fingering Pattern

Figure 2.31. Sonata 3, *Ballade* mm. 4-7; Other Consecutive Fingering Patterns

This economy can be seen in a different light in the first sonata’s third movement. The melodic cell that germinates the entire movement is found in the very first bar in the upper voice.

The first several bars of the movement can be found in Figure 2.32. It is a songful stepwise descent with a mordent embellishment. The fingering Ysaÿe indicates is telling of his own preferences — he marks to play the first note in second position and to slide down into first when it very well could remain in either first or second. This may seem beside the point, but indeed, one could play each iteration of the melody with the same fingering if they chose.

Figure 2.32. Sonata 1, *Allegretto poco Scherzoso* mm. 1-3

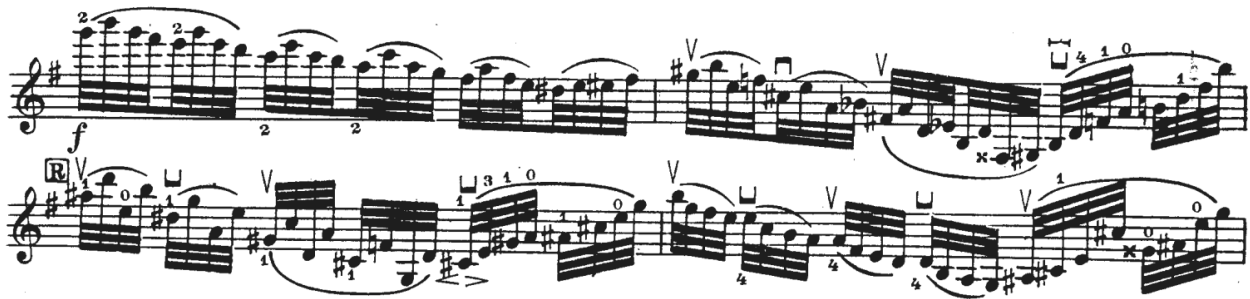


The reason why the same fingering is not suggested becomes apparent when one considers the accompanimental voices. Not only do they prevent a continuity of fingering here as in m. 2, they also necessitate a change in the melody in m. 3. If the melody were perfectly transcribed from the first two iterations, the B-flat within the first beat would instead be a G. This is not possible, or at least would be much more difficult, because the upper voice is playing the fifth above it and therefore using the same finger. It is a subtle change, but it is the only melodic iteration with this particular intervallic content. If I were to hazard a guess, Ysaÿe's fingering suggestions and melodic change have more to do with color and preserving linear continuity than any technical limitations, and therefore clearly illustrate the integral role that the physical violin held in his compositional process.

Ysaÿe makes use of fingering patterns when not double-stopping as well. Consider the sixth variation from the second sonata's *Danses des Ombres*. A large portion of this work

features music that is repeatedly transposed by fifths, as can be seen by his fingering indications. An excerpt from mm. 59-62 is shown in Figure 2.33 below. It is no coincidence that the repeated transposition allows the player to use the exact same fingering, either from a different string or a different position. It is much easier to play rapid passages such as these when fingerings are repetitive. One might also note that, while not exactly melodic in the singable sense, the melodic components of this passage are transpositions of the same four intervals — a short duration for any melody.

Figure 2.33. Sonata 2, *Dances des Ombres* Variation 6 mm. 59-62



The melodies Ysaÿe uses more often than not feature small units of repeatable and easily transposable material. This often includes stepwise motion, which itself implies the use of scales, and registrally distinct voicing. I suggest this is to accommodate the frequency of melodic multi-stopping. In these situations, voices by necessity are kept within the range of a single hand frame. In other instances, material that could be designated as melodic is of a more structural nature that creates musical space within to elaborate or allows the physical mechanism to shine. Indeed, it seems that at the heart of all of Ysaÿe’s writing is violinistic accessibility. The best music, in my opinion, achieves musical substance with the support of technique and vice versa, and Ysaÿe’s melodies allow both aspects to flourish.

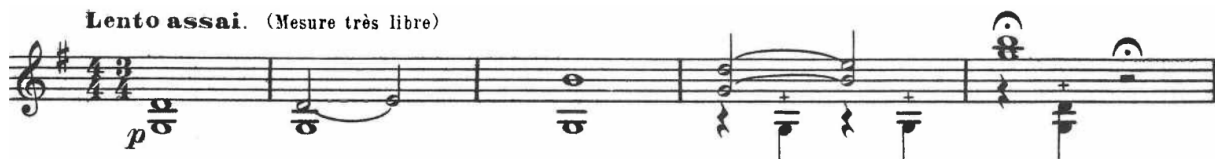
## Harmonic Traits

### Perfect Intervals

The most quintessentially Ysaÿe trait of his music other than the obvious virtuosity is the harmonic language. Of course, each of his sonatas and other works have their own personalities, but they share a number of common threads. Perfect intervals are used in abundance, and dissonance produced by tritones, sevenths, and chromatic passing tones is not approached with hesitation. This is not to say that Ysaÿe does not utilize consonant intervals either — quite the opposite. The generally thick texture and regular appearance of the aforementioned intervals results from how regularly Ysaÿe employs multi-stopping. As with his melodic material, the harmonies Ysaÿe uses are always rooted in violinistic accessibility, especially when it involves the horizontal movement of multiple-stops.

*L'Aurore* of the fifth sonata borderlines cliché in its use of openness and perfect intervals. I defend it on account of how inventively the harmonies develop, and this ability to develop is owed to the flexibility of perfect intervals. Consider again the first five bars shown in Figure 2.4 below.

Figure 2.4. Sonata 5, *L'Aurore* mm. 1-5



This G major opening is one of the most harmonically stable of the six sonatas. In the following passage, seen in Figure 2.34, it is not until m. 13 that the harmony really leaves G even

though Ysaÿe introduces non-diatonic pitches in m. 7 and 11. This is accomplished by Ysaÿe's use of non-diatonic vertical fourths and tritones. Measures 14-21 continue to feature fourths, both diatonic and chromatic.

Figure 2.34. Sonata 5, *L'Aurore* mm. 6-21

Further deviation occurs shortly after, the illustration for which is found in Figure 2.35. Here, the harmony travels to a distant A-flat by m. 28 which is quickly respelled as G-sharp and reinterpreted as the third of E major. The material returns to G by emphasizing the chromatic leading tone to G-sharp after oscillating perfect intervals between mm. 31-34. It is no coincidence that the chromatic leading tone is F-double-sharp, enharmonically equivalent to G.

Figure 2.35. Sonata 5, *L'Aurore* mm. 26-36

The musical score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a *pp* dynamic and includes fingerings (2, 2, 1) and accents. It features a *sf* dynamic followed by a *f* dynamic and a *dim.* instruction. The second staff starts with a *ppp* dynamic and includes the instruction 'culme et mesure'. The third staff includes a *pp* dynamic, a *mf* dynamic, and the instruction '(un peu pressé) loco'. The fourth staff includes a *p* dynamic and the instruction 'poco calando'. The score is rich with technical markings such as slurs, fingerings, and articulation marks.

The details of the analysis here are less important than simply noting the prominence of perfect intervals and how they allow the distant keys of E and G to relate to each other. Indeed, the flexibility of perfect intervals is a two-pronged tool in Ysaÿe's compositional process. On the theoretical side, they imply no quality of harmony — there are no major or minor fourths or fifths, for example. This allows them to function as pivots between key areas. The effect this produces is somewhat different than a secondary dominant or other typical kind of pivot because the perfect intervals lack the tug characteristic of the third of a dominant harmony. It results in a less definitive arrival at the destination harmony, and one which is easily deflected back or to another key area. This particular utility is used extensively in the passage outlined above.

On the violinistic side, both fourths and fifths lay reasonably well within the hand frame, especially if one does not need to use the fourth finger. While achieving pristine intonation with

barred fifths can be tricky, the physical action required to play a fifth is relatively simple because it only uses one finger. Unless using an open string, a fourth requires a closed hand frame — a higher finger is placed on a lower string while the adjacent lower finger is placed on a higher string. It may help to imagine the opposite that occurs when playing a sixth. In an open hand frame, the higher finger is placed on the higher string and vice versa. A closed hand frame may prove more difficult with particular fingerings such as first and second or third and fourth because they typically align less with the natural balance of the hand. This is less so with the second and third because those fingers function closer to the meridian of balance. The comparative comfort of playing fourths is certainly subjective, but at the very least, there is little room for argument about where they are in tune.

Open and closed hand frames are not addressed as frequently as other technical items in the study repertoire, or at the very least do not have as obvious indications within a score. This is something I hope to rectify with this project. Technically, they provide access to unique fingering patterns, especially as they relate to chordal playing. Their development supports strong multi-stopping and increases facility in passages that require keeping fingers on or close to the fingerboard as well as those that demand moving between open and closed hand frames. One of my works, an excerpt of which can be found in Figure 2.36, is devoted entirely to this cause. It shows a passage where the second and fourth fingers must leap across the strings and quickly navigate between open and closed hand frames. The chromaticism of the inner voices is included to allow the player to release tension that would otherwise accrue from anchoring the hand.



Figure 2.36. *Chordal Open and Closed Hand Frames* mm. 4-5



Returning to the passage from Sonata 5 *L'Aurore* in Figure 2.27 above, Ysaÿe provides fingerings and only once is the fourth finger suggested to play a vertical perfect interval. And it is a specific context that allows it to work. The second beat of m. 34 oscillates between a fourth produced by the fourth and third fingers on the pitches A and D respectively and another fourth produced by the first finger E and open A strings below. It is because of the open string and the implication that the second set of notes only requires the use of one finger that it is fluid. Other possible but slightly less desirable combinations of perfect interval oscillations including the fourth finger could be  $4/3$  to  $2/1$ ,  $4/3$  to  $1/1$ , and  $4/3$  to  $1/0$ .

When one plays consecutive fourths and fifths as in mm. 13-14 or mm. 31-34, there is a kind of smoke and mirrors effect. Two voices are playing two notes each, but only three fingers total are required to do so because of Ysaÿe's use of the first-finger barred fifth. The first finger performs the role of two and simultaneously functions as an anchor. The other two fingers used are the second and third — again, no fourth finger — and they are responsible for movement within the left hand. The result is an efficient, concise pattern that can be transposed to great virtuosic and colorific effect. Indeed, Ysaÿe makes use of these and other intervallic oscillations frequently in both movements of this sonata and the rest of Op. 27. Other frequently appearing interval combinations are fifths to fifths and fifths to sixths, each of which has contextually-dependent finger efficiency.

My own pieces access the violinistic traits of perfect intervals in a number of different ways, but the smoke and mirrors effect I just described is especially helpful when considering early multi-stopping. As in Trott’s *Melodious Double-Stops*, an open string paired with a fingered note on another string is typical for beginners, and the next best step is to use fingerings that maintain a finger from the previous double-stop. This structure manifests particularly well with perfect intervals, especially in conjunction with specific consonant ones. This is first because one cannot dispute their intonation, and second because it is relatively easy to move between double stops using open strings, one fingered note and an open string, and two fingered notes, especially if one of the fingers remains constant. Refer to excerpts from Trott in Figure 2.37 and my *Early Multi-Stopping* in Figure 2.38 below.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 2.37. Trott *Melodious Double-Stops*, No. 2 mm. 1-7; Double-Stopping with One Open String



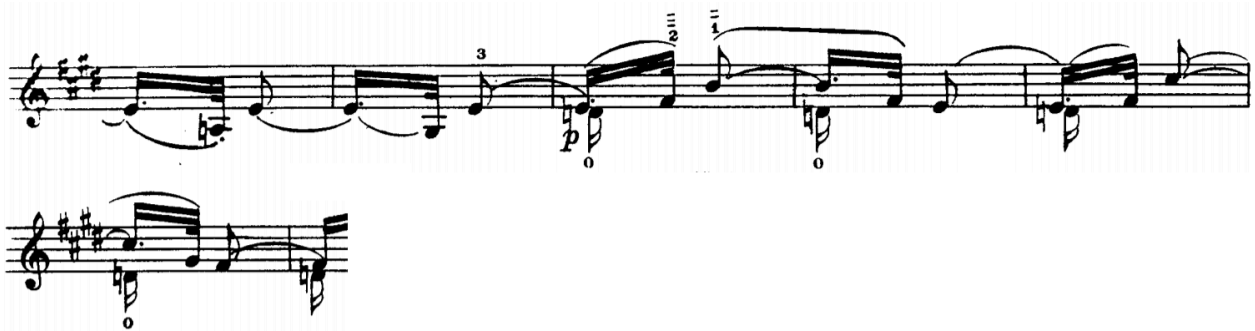
Figure 2.38. *Early Multi-Stopping* mm. 27-30; Double-Stopping with Preserved Fingers



<sup>5</sup>Trott, Josephine. *Melodious Double-Stops*, (U.S.A., G. Schirmer Inc., 1925).

The sixth sonata may not be the most melodic of the six, but is certainly more so than the first movement of the fifth. The same applies to the comparative ways perfect intervals are used. Consider mm. 30-36 found in Figure 2.39 below. The melody is outlined by a simple series of perfect intervals with connective steps. It features contour both up and down, and that coupled with its distinct dotted rhythm creates an easily traced, singable tune.

Figure 2.39. Sonata 6 mm. 30-36; Melodic Perfect Intervals



The passage immediately following it until m. 45 incorporates a variety of intervals. Structurally, the antecedent phrase from mm. 36-39 uses more regularly, but not exclusively, thirds. Its consequent from mm. 40-43 is effectively the same material but decorated in mostly perfect intervals, including parallel fifths. Both phrases are found in Figure 2.40.

Figure 2.40. Sonata 6 mm. 35-43; Interval Content Change



Perfect intervals appear in the other sonatas in different capacities as well. The third sonata, for example, contrasts with the fifth in that perfect intervals are not so fundamental to an open harmonic landscape as much as provide contrast to tertiary material. Recall the whole-tone material of the opening recitative — all major thirds derived from the whole-tone scale — and the melodic incipit of m. 13 — also major thirds. Both are found earlier in Figures 2.30 and 2.3 respectively and are provided again below.

Figure 2.30. Sonata 3, *Ballade* opening



Figure 2.3. Sonata 3, *Ballade* mm. 13



Figure 2.41 below shows m. 2 where similar whole-tone material progresses almost entirely uninterrupted until the vertical fourths that appear in m. 6. Then in m. 7, whole-tone material is punctuated by open string perfect fifth pedals. Neither perfect fourths or fifths are native to the whole-tone scale.

Figure 2.41. Sonata 3, *Ballade* mm. 2-7; Perfect Intervals and Whole-Tone

The juxtaposition of consonant and perfect intervals is particularly interesting between mm. 64-86. Intervallic content is dominated by thirds and sixths until about m. 74 barring a few interjections of perfect intervals. One such interjection can be found in m. 67 where the bottom voice oscillates in tritones. The other is the transition beginning in m. 73 into m. 75 where perfect intervals introduce a new character. This second one is worth noting especially because in mm. 76-86, both kinds of intervals coexist, but the sonic realization is obscured by large leaps between subsequent pitches. This is the longer of only two places in the movement where these intervals are used together in relative fluidity, the other being at m. 44. Excerpts representative of mm. 64-86 can be found in Figures 2.42 and 2.43 below.

Figure 2.42. Sonata 3, *Ballade* mm. 64-67; Dominance of Consonant Intervals

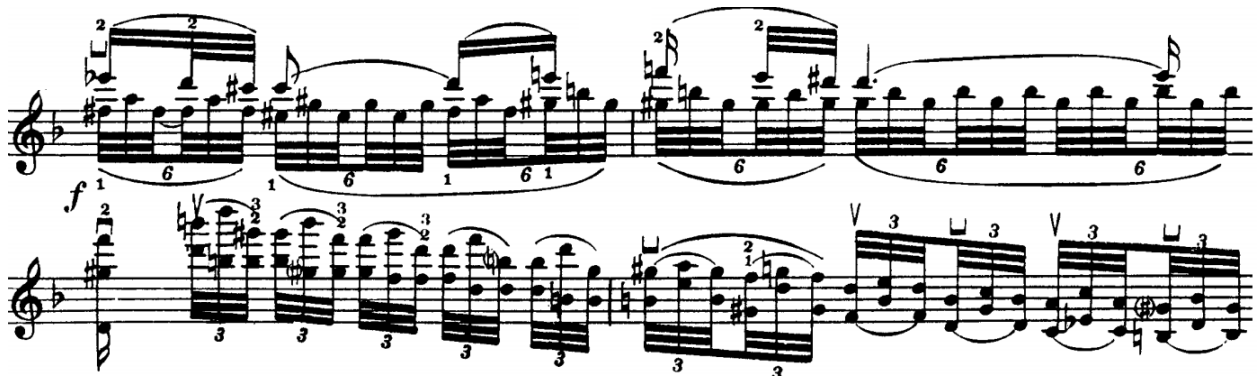
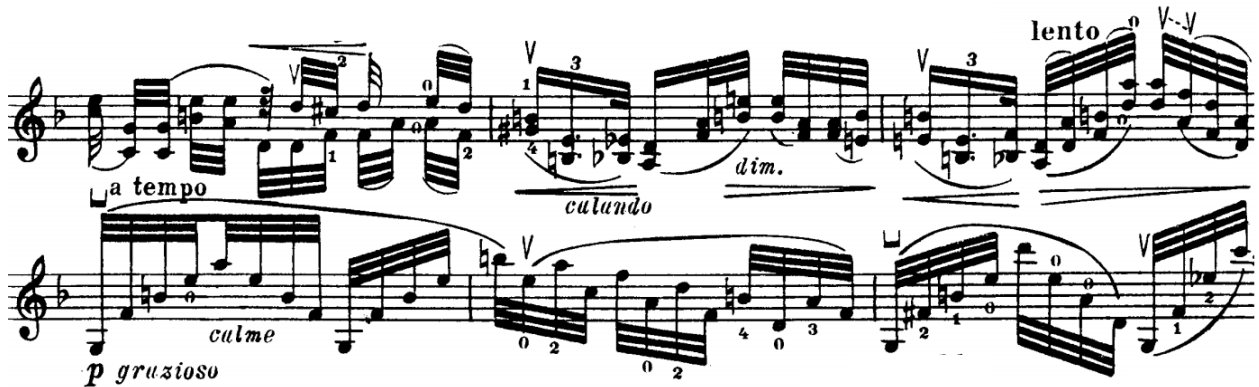


Figure 2.43. Sonata 3, *Ballade* mm. 73-78; Gradual Integration of Consonant and Perfect Intervals



My own work, *Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations*, features both consonant and perfect intervals and similar shifting patterns which evoke a similar musical landscape to the sixth sonata especially, though it does not striate them as fully as Ysaye did in the passages above. This excerpt was referenced above in Figure 2.10, and it is provided again below.

Figure 2.10. *Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations* mm. 1-5; Coexistence of Perfect and Consonant Intervals



## Harmonic Traits

### Tenths

The use of vertical tenths in violin repertoire has largely been reserved for the flashiest or most climactic moments of a work. One might also surmise that composers who write them are not violinists themselves or have large enough hands that they are not physically compromising. The typical violin hand frame spans a comfortable octave between the first and fourth fingers and tenths require a significant reach beyond, especially in lower positions. Ysaÿe is likely of the latter group. Indeed, he uses tenths somewhat regularly throughout the six sonatas, and his preface regarding them in *10 Preludes* at least partially illuminates why that might have been the case.

The tenth had the privilege of serving often as an ornament for the brilliant conclusion of various works; it possesses a certain heroism, but let us remark that, so far, tenths remain foreign to continuous cantilena. Slow tempo does not agree with them, which is why they are limited to rapid flights. The use of tenths being more widely spread nowadays, their execution is no longer feared by anybody and may be assigned a less restricted role for which this Prelude will serve as a model.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ysaÿe, Eugène. *10 Préludes pour Violon seul, Op. 35*, ed. Charles Radoux Rogier. (Brussels: Schott Frères, 1952) 35.

The opening of the tenth prelude, found in Figure 2.44 below, serves to illustrate how Ysaÿe subverts the typical role of the vertical tenth.

Figure 2.44. 10 Preludes, *Prelude X* mm. 1-3; Vertical Tenths in Continuous Cantilena



Despite the presence of tenths even in earlier study repertoire — Mazas's *Études-Spéciales* No. 11 for example — they still come with a connotation of difficulty. As such, their discussion necessitates a particularly violinistic approach.

The first sonata includes the use of tenths in all four movements, and each with a slightly different musical and technical character. The first movement's can be found in the pickup to m. 30 and after, illustrated in Figure 2.45 below. The tenth is itself worth noting, but it also appears in conjunction with another instance of embedded chromatic lines. The second finger, which is not typically used in playing tenths, is utilized in a lower voice while the first and fourth fingers create the tenth in question. All of this together makes for a delicate balance between intonation and physical playability. However, Ysaÿe composes in such a way that arriving in the extended hand frame is about as easy as it can be — in beat 2 of m. 29, the second finger plays the pitch D and the first finger immediately before and after the pitch anchors the tenth. The only mobile factor is the fourth finger stretch to the A. It is a dramatic musical moment that could be much more difficult than it is, but the violinistic schematic used in its conception actually provides some stability.

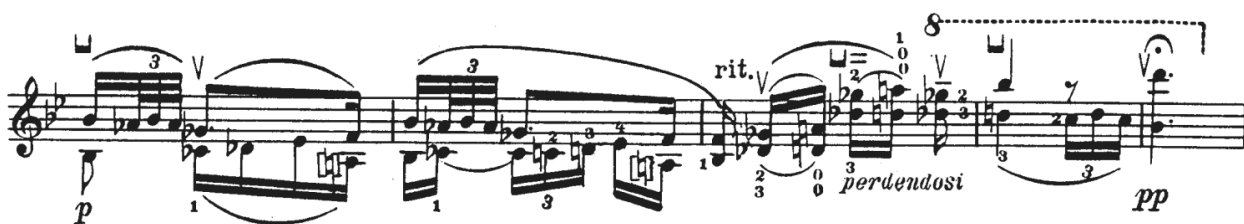


Figure 2.45. Sonata 1, *Grave* mm. 29-30



Similarly constructed is the occurrence in the last bar of the third movement, found in Figure 2.46. The bottom voice before the final note is descending stepwise to its destination, again from the second finger to the first. The fourth finger is also the mobile factor here. The differences that make this instance more challenging than the first movement's are that the first finger does not preemptively play its destination pitch and the character of the music is exceptionally tender and fragile. Adjacently, one might note again the use of perfect intervals in m. 66-68.

Figure 2.46. Sonata 1, *Allegretto poco Scherzoso* mm. 66-70



The second movement utilizes the tenth in the very last bar as well. See Figure 2.47 below. Immediately preceding it is a triple octave on the dominant — to use Ysaÿe's words, there is a certain kind of heroism attached to this iteration. As a result, this is perhaps the most technically straightforward of the occurrences in the first sonata because it is necessary to slide

both fingers into the final pitches. There is nothing about this passage that is tender or fragile — quite the opposite.

Figure 2.47. Sonata 1, *Fugato* mm. 111-12



The tenths in the fourth movement are a particularly interesting example because Ysaÿe finds a way to write them consecutively and lyrically. In m. 50, shown below in Figure 2.48, Ysaÿe sidesteps the need to be high in position on the D and A strings for the first tenth by adding the octave above the lowest voice (pitches G and B) that subsequently allows the tenth hand frame to be prepared during a tenth that utilizes an open string (A and C). The remainder of the tenths in mm. 50-51 do require a certain amount of technical determination because there is no way to play them without simply sliding the tenth hand frame to each successive note. This is especially true in higher positions because the physical space between pitches gets smaller and easier to reach. The fact that this excerpt exists brings up another point — Ysaÿe expected that lyrical tenths be played in “continuous cantilena” in a real performing context.

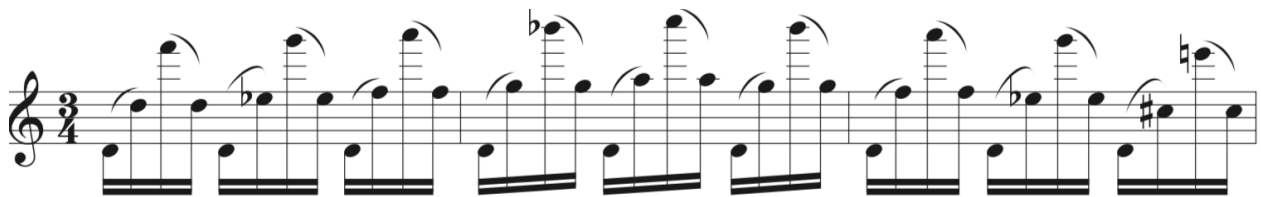
Figure 2.48. Sonata 1, *Finale con Brio*, mm. 50-51



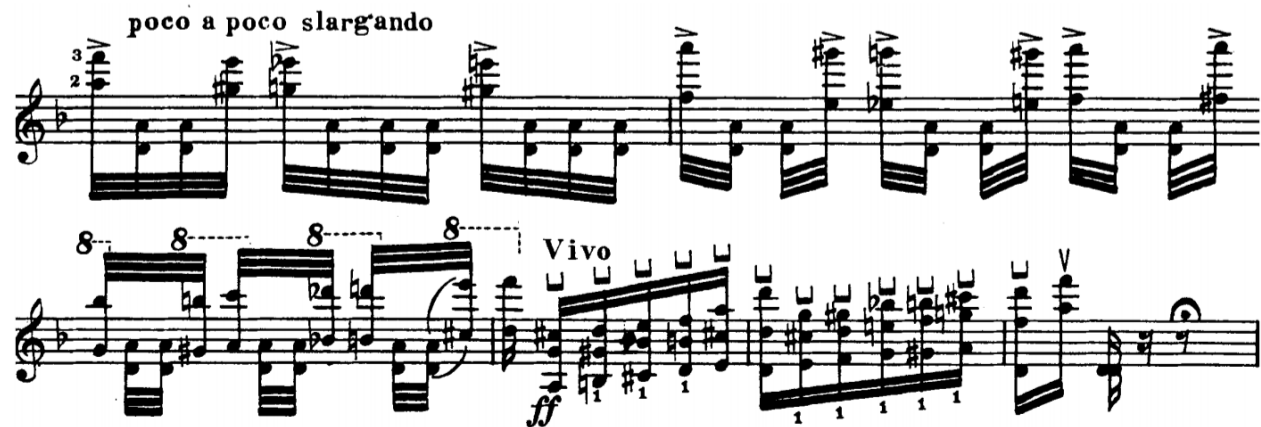
Though I have described only the first sonata, Ysaÿe’s use of tenths is not limited to that one. They are, in fact, utilized in each sonata in Op. 27. They can be found in the second sonata first movement at mm. 39-41, the fourth movement at m. 34, in the third sonata at m. 66, mm. 93-94, and mm. 123-125, in the fourth sonata first movement at m. 64, the second movement at m. 42, the third movement at m. 65, the fifth sonata first movement at mm. 58-59, the second movement at m. 20, and the sixth sonata at m. 85. Their use complies with similar musical and violinistic governance that I have just described. Some of these excerpts are included below in Figure 2.49.

Figure 2.49. Other Examples of Tenths Across Op. 27

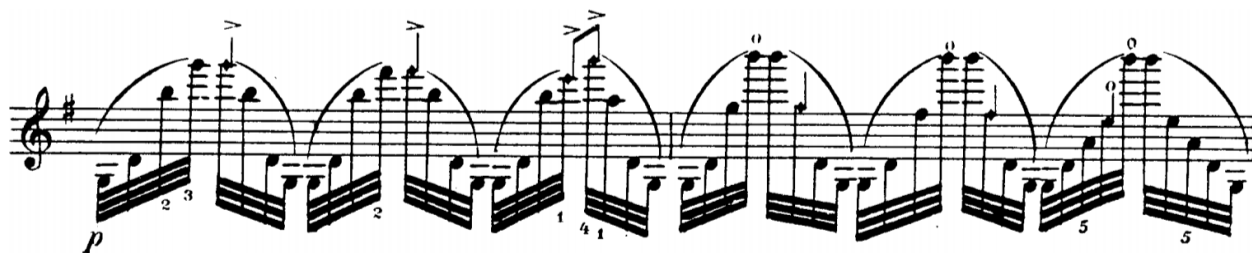
Sonata 2, *Obsession* mm. 39-41



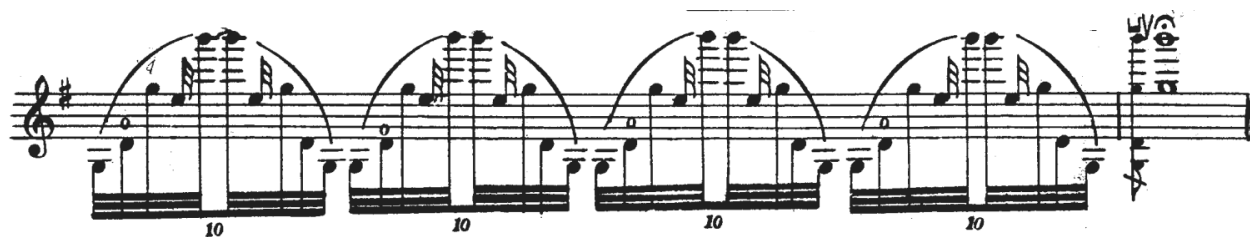
Sonata 3, *Ballade* mm. 122-127



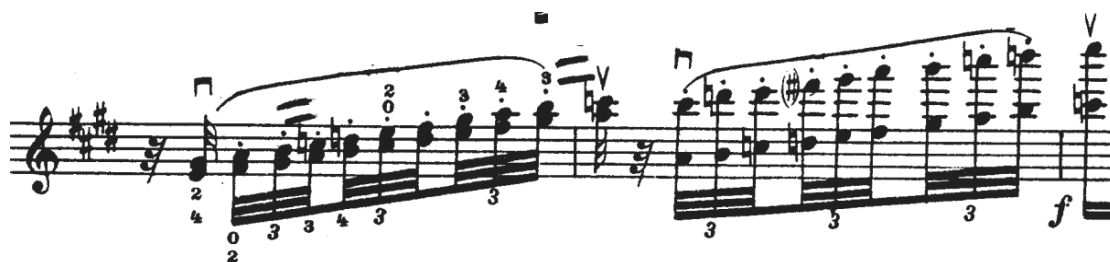
Sonata 4, *Sarabande* mm. 41-42



Sonata 5, *L'Aurore* mm. 58-59



Sonata 6 mm. 84-85



While there are better and worse ways to approach tenths compositionally, they are always relatively difficult. I have included one instance in my works thus far, and it is one that benefits from a reasonable approach. See below the excerpt from *Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations* in Figure 2.50. The musical setting of this moment is climactic, including a ritardando and a crescendo. There is no need to be tentative with sound. Further, the use of open strings in m. 23 allows a player to release tension prior to the immediate approach. The fingering

preceding the tenth also prepares the left hand by introducing an extension early, and the placement of the second finger a half-step above where the first finger will play the lower voice of the tenth removes some guesswork.

Figure 2.50. *Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations* mm. 23-24; Approaching the Vertical Tenth

The musical score is in 2/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The notation shows a series of chords and intervals. Above the staff, fingerings are indicated: 1 0 3 0 2 0 3 3 for the first line and 2 0 4 0 1 0 2 2 for the second line. A *rit.* marking is present. A diagram below the staff shows a hand frame with a '6' indicating a sixth interval between two points, and a trapezoidal shape representing the hand's reach.

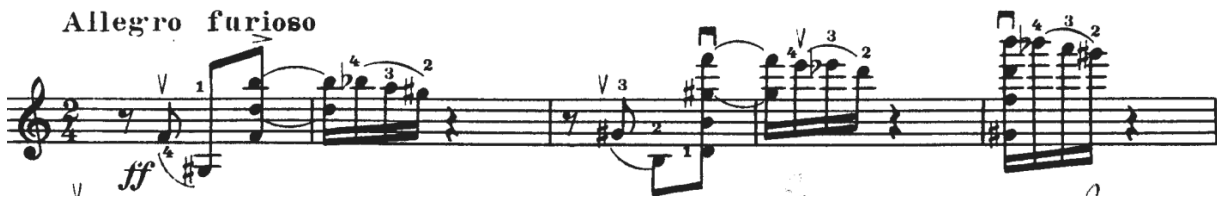
### Harmonic Traits

### Other Violinistic Harmonies

The fully-diminished seventh is a harmony that Ysaÿe uses in a similar violinistic fashion. Of course, it appears somewhat ubiquitously as a functional harmony, but the particular construction where all adjacent pitches are related by major sixth is especially violinistic. The physical layout for any inversion of the three distinct fully-diminished chords is an open hand frame where the first finger anchors on the G string, the second finger rests two half-steps higher across on the D string, the third finger sits two half-steps higher than that on the A string, and the fourth finger is placed the same distance above the third on the E string. The space between each finger is essentially uniform and the hand frame overall is accessible since it spans only a half-step beyond a normal 1-4 octave hand frame. It is worth noting that this is the most open hand frame that uses all four fingers of the left hand in common practice.

The physical parallel of this harmony to the whole-tone scale is also of interest. If one places the fingers of the left hand spatially as the fully-diminished seventh chord but on the same string, the resulting pitches are all members of the same whole-tone collection. While spreading the fingers across different strings results in a different harmony, the physical feeling of the fully diminished seventh chord compared to the whole-tone scale is nearly the same. Chords of this structure can be found in the first sonata first movement in m. 2 and m. 8, the second movement in mm. 102-103, m. 109 and m. 11, the fourth sonata first movement in m. 64, and the sixth sonata in m. 72, m. 82, m. 88, m. 92, and m. 186. Perhaps the most iconic occurrence is in the last movement of the second sonata. That excerpt can be found below in Figure 2.51.

Figure 2.51. Sonata 2, *Les Furies* mm. 1-5; The Violinistic Fully-Diminished Seventh Chord



I use this construction of the fully diminished harmony in my work, *Chordal Open and Closed Hand Frames*. It does not function thematically as in the Ysaÿe example, but it does create a similar energy-building effect before the final cadential material.

Figure 2.52. *Chordal Open and Closed Hand Frames* m. 31; Fully-Diminished Harmony



Appearing less frequently but perhaps more distinctly than the fully-diminished harmony is the whole-tone scale. It appears across the sonatas in several different capacities, most of which manifest more as colorific effects than functional harmony. Ysaÿe uses whole-tone material to elaborate on more typically tertiary material. The exception is the third sonata where a substantial portion of fundamental material is presented in the whole-tone setting at the very beginning of the piece. This material appears in Figure 2.30 earlier and is referenced again below.

Figure 2.30. Sonata 3, *Ballade*; Whole-Tone Influence



Additionally, whole-tone material retains its influence in the movement proper through Ysaÿe's use of parallel major thirds — the only quality of third present in the whole-tone scale. This material originally found in Figure 2.3 be seen again below.

Figure 2.3. Distilled Melodic Material from m. 13 and after



Despite the melodic prominence of whole-tone collections within it, occurrences of it within the third sonata are often similar to other occurrences in Op. 27 because they manifest as parallel minor sixths. As far as double-stopping is concerned, parallel diatonic sixths are not the

most difficult to play. The whole-tone variant, the aforementioned parallel minor sixths, is slightly more difficult because perfect fifths across the strings never occur, meaning that fingers on both strings of the double-stop are moving for every subsequent note. It is also worth mentioning that as with most consecutive double-stopping, more shifting is required. Here, the highest number of stepwise double-stops that can be created in one position is two. Ysaÿe's suggested fingerings acknowledge that whether the material is stepwise or leaping. Both kinds of motion appear in m. 5 featured in Figure 2.53 below.

Figure 2.53. Sonata 3, *Ballade* m. 5; Whole-Tone in Major Sixths



Whole-tone double-stopping presents a unique set of difficulties for the younger student. At least at present, the whole-tone scale and harmonies derived from it are not a primary part of the academic vernacular. Compounding the difficulty is double-stopping within unfamiliar harmonic territory. Possible solutions are multi-faceted, but perhaps the best place to begin is by addressing the two components of the challenge individually.

First is the harmony itself. It seems appropriate that one of the most ubiquitous etudes in the entire repertoire, affectionately referred to as just “Kreutzer 2” by many, would receive special attention. The original setting of the work is tonal. C major is the home key, and modulations move it comfortably through the related keys of A minor, F major, and G major. The work often includes combinations of bow strokes and patterns for didactic purposes, and it is assigned to young students and continues to be practiced by seasoned professionals as well.



These same bowing variations are just as applicable to the work I have provided. It is in this spirit of wide accessibility that I reimagined *Kreutzer No. 2* with passages of whole-tone harmony. Figure 2.54 below features the original and my own work side by side.

Figure 2.54. *Kreutzer No. 2* and *Kreutzer 2 Variant*; Side by Side

Original mm. 4-5



*Kreutzer 2 Variant* mm. 4-5



It is worth noting that neither *Kreutzer No. 2* or my variant of it include double-stops. On one hand, this allows the harmony to remain the focus. On the other, it allows a different work to address early double-stopping technique in more isolation. This work and double-stopping will be discussed further in Chapter III.

There is one more important point about Op. 27 that is worth acknowledging: the number of notes compared to the number of bows being drawn. In virtually all but a select few places in this music, there are multiple, sometimes many, notes to a single bow. This includes instances with a single melodic voice and where multi-stopping is prominent. The latter is of interest because Ysaÿe makes use of it in a particularly distinct way. I call them oscillations. An example from the fifth sonata's *L'Aurore* mm. 27-34 in Figure 2.27 on page 27 included them, but they are found in many other places as well. Other prime examples appear in Sonata 1, *Grave*

mm. 15-17, *Fugato* mm. 68-72, *Allegretto poco Scherzoso* mm. 16-19, Sonata 3, *Ballade* mm. 56-68, Sonata 5, *Danse Rustique* mm. 22-24, mm. 37-38, mm. 59-61, and Sonata 6 mm. 98-103. Figures 2.55 and 2.56 show excerpts from the *Danse Rustique* alongside my own *Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations*.

Figure 2.55. Sonata 5, *Danse Rustique* mm. 37-38; Oscillations



Figure 2.56. *Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations* mm. 21-22



Overall, Ysaÿe’s use of harmony as it relates to vertical intervallic content is guided primarily by their violinistic accessibility. The previously mentioned scalar qualities and pivotal use of perfect intervals allows for great versatility in horizontal harmonic progression. The musical composite maintains an almost nonsensical relationship of open sonority and thick texture. The sonority owes its openness to the frequent use of perfect intervals, but because there are often multiple voices, the texture remains thick. My own works focus especially on navigating perfect vertical intervals using violinistic compositional techniques to make what seems difficult more accessible.

CHAPTER III  
GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CLOSING REMARKS

Guiding Principles

The prior kind of analysis is crucial to composing pieces that utilize similar patterns, techniques, and styles — to create pieces that speak the same language, as it were. The works I have composed are intended to be concise, organized explorations of these defining characteristics of Op. 27. I would not call them etudes necessarily either. Perhaps one could call them caprices, as in Rode or Paganini, though overall, my works are not as difficult. Indeed, my goal is to create pieces that are more preparatory in nature.

It may be useful here to designate in my vocabulary the distinction between “exercise,” “etude,” and “caprice.” When referring to the former, I speak of isolated technical maneuvers — the goal is mechanism and function, not so much music-making, as in Gaylord Yost’s *Exercises for Change of Position*.<sup>7</sup> Ševčík and Schradieck contributed a number of these kinds of studies. Within the context of the study repertoire composers I have mentioned previously, “etude” refers to a piece of music constructed with considerable attention to a single specific or small palette of techniques that are often presented in repetitive patterns. It seems appropriate that one would designate a caprice as the culminating work or works that incorporate a variety of the techniques developed over prior etudes as well as a less strict use of patterns or structure. By definition, “caprice” refers to quick changes — in this setting, quick changes in immediately required

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<sup>7</sup> Yost, Gaylord. *Exercises for Change of Position*, (U.S.A., Volkwein Bros., Inc., 1928).

technique. The word in the sense of “capricious” also implies character, and one that is perhaps unpredictable or also quick to change. Either are antithetical to structure and patterns, thus the designation of my own works as “caprices” and not “etudes.”

To illustrate, I would label most works within Kreutzer’s “42 Etudes or Caprices,” as etudes even though they are not individually classified as etudes or caprices. However, one must acknowledge that Kreutzer included both words in the title. This indicates that there was a perceived and worthwhile difference between the two at the time of publication. With some closer examination, etudes 1-12 culminate in no. 13, which I would call a caprice.

One important element to consider when writing preparatory works is the degree to which they should be purely technical. One might superficially impose a spectrum from the technical to the musical to illustrate — superficially because the two are not mutually exclusive. As far as preparatory works go, Rode and Gavinies do well at balancing musicality and technicality. Kreutzer’s etudes, for example, often manifest as a series of the same consecutive pattern and therefore strike me as distinctly more technical than musical. As has been shown, Ysaÿe’s Op. 27 is full of technical challenges, but that is not the end of their interest, nor is it their most prominent feature. They are first musical, and that musicality is supported by the technical requirements. It is in that spirit of musicality that I have modeled my own works.

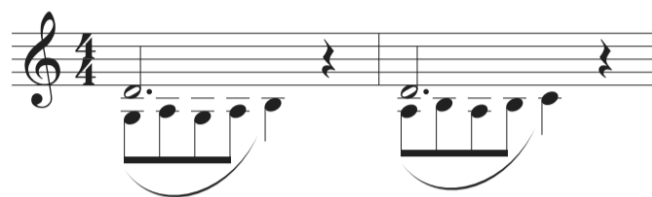
The determination that a work is musically compelling is, of course, enormously subjective. But there are some characteristics that I believe to contribute universally. Musicality, as I refer to it in relation to a piece of music, is a sum of components. Primary among them is the development of material which can manifest melodically, harmonically, texturally, and technically. Musicality also includes the general avoidance of gimmicks, clichés, and

predictability. While I refer to musicality in relation to the preparatory works I have written, technicality refers to how the violin and the anatomy required to play it interface with the music.

In addition to balancing between musicality and technicality, it is important to balance both the isolation and combination of different facets of technique. In isolation, it is generally more efficient to learn skills. However, in real music scenarios, technique in any kind of isolation is rare, perhaps given to its propensity for repetition and blandness. As a pedagogical point then, it is a worthwhile goal to create opportunities to address techniques as individual items as well as in combination with each other, especially for students who are learning a technique for the first time.

An example from my own work that functions in this way is *Early Multi-Stopping*, below in Figure 3.1. The excerpts here show the progression from double-stopping with an open string, to alternating between double-stops that use one and two fingers. Over the course of the piece, each finger motion that is used in the culminating figure is featured in isolation.

Figure 3.1. *Early Multi-Stopping* mm. 1-2; Progression of Pattern



m. 5-6



m. 24-25



m. 27-28



With a work such as *Early Multi-Stopping*, it would be fair to question the necessity of writing more beginning works like this. If one delves into the repertoire that is already available, it seems like most conceivable possibilities are already in existence. While this may be the case, I would harken back to my goal of keeping specific composers in mind. Ysaÿe writes double-stops in a particular way, and I believe that a particularly scaffolded approach can help young students address that kind of double-stopping earlier and more effectively. This repertoire is something that does not yet exist — for Ysaÿe as well as a large number of other composers.

This may not always necessitate the production of new works. Though the majority of the ones that I have composed are my own, *Kreutzer 2 Variant* is more of a reimagining. Like I have already said, there are many good reasons that nineteenth century study repertoire remains popular, but their explorations of the right arm and bow are especially worth keeping. Adapting these works to exhibit harmonies and left-hand techniques more representative of the twentieth century may be sufficient. With more melodic study repertoire — Rode, for example — adaptations may prove challenging to create. There is a cost-benefit relationship to consider. There is also a case to be made for musical pioneering and supporting new music.

Regardless, there are fundamentals that need to be considered in new study repertoire. For the left hand, these include aspects of hand frame and dexterity. They are important skills generally but are of particular significance as far as Ysaÿe is concerned. This is where the chromaticism and general harmonic landscape that defines his music is produced. The treatment of hand frame and half-step relationships between fingers within it is vastly different than solo violin repertoire that came before. Especially pertinent are vertical extensions and contractions of the hand frame and their horizontal cousin, open and closed hand frames, all of which play a role in multi-stopping. Addressing these in ability-appropriate ways will ultimately depend upon teachers and composers being creative — not unlike Ysaÿe — in their use of the violin.

### Closing Remarks

There are a multitude of items to address when it comes to composing study repertoire, and it includes broad considerations like musicality as well as technique. Works of prominently technical material, especially as they manifest in patterns, provide an excellent platform for developing facility in very specific areas at a time. Kreutzer contributed works of this style and they can be used as an excellent template for adapting more modern technique and harmony.

However, the nature of Ysaÿe's music as envisioned by the composer himself is musical first. The technique utilized in achieving the musical vision is subservient. Therefore, I suggest that a musical approach to preparatory works would be more appropriate. This in large part is why I have avoided lengthy pattern-based structures and calling my own works etudes. Specific techniques I have considered that would be useful in other similar projects, include the basic variables of sound — bow speed, arm weight, contact point, and bow hair use — as well as the

standard types of bow strokes and slurring patterns. The left hand has an especially important role. Proficient multi-stopping is an end goal for Ysaÿe's music, and achieving it includes preparation at all levels, so hand frame and finger dexterity are always of great importance. Further, hand frame extensions and contractions as well as navigating within and between open and closed hand frames are considerations for higher levels. The creative use of fingerings and physicality similar to Ysaÿe's own writing allows younger students to achieve more and older ones to make much more accessible the passages that may initially seem daunting. All of these things have been addressed in my own works. The nature of this project is never-ending, but at the very least, these provide a point from which to begin.

The template I have provided for replicating this process begins with developing fluency in the base material. This includes both the model composer and the standard study repertoire. One should contextualize the composer at hand with any other relevant works and his or her contemporaries. One should also analyze the model works similarly to what I have presented in Chapter II. Additional factors that contribute to the quality of a technically analytical project like this are the time one has spent learning, performing, and digesting the base material as well as the frequency of exposure from others that comes in the form of adjacent study, performances, or recordings. Once fluency is sufficient, one must identify clearly that which is characteristic of the base material, synthesize those features with relevant musical and technical development tools, and then write works using them. Different angles of technical or musical difficulty may be appropriate depending on the intended audience. Familiarity with study repertoire generally and perhaps similar technical analysis of it can only be helpful in determining what is most appropriate for the intended audience.



I reiterate here that this project is necessary. While the old generation of etudes deserves its place in the repertoire, it should not be the only source from which violinists draw for developing technique. The language of western classical music has evolved greatly since the mid-1800s, as has the technique required to play it. An update to the study repertoire is more than warranted. While there does exist newer study repertoire, it does not largely hold a place in the mainstream. So, the solution is multi-faceted: as teachers, advocate and utilize more modern study repertoire, or create it. As for the latter, one could compose with the vast spread of musical styles that developed over the twentieth century as a goal, but I suggest a more narrow, specialized, and I believe, effective approach. Violinists and teachers who have access to the repertoire can compose works specific to composers or singular styles within that time period thus allowing the preparatory works to be more directly applicable to more immediately relevant composers. Technical considerations should still be maintained at a fundamental level in all preparatory works, but the possibilities for students' learning trajectories become more personally tailored with a study repertoire that is as diverse as the music for which it prepares. The more robust the pool of study resources, the more robust the potential for students' success.

APPENDIX

Early Multi-Stopping

Benjamin Ehrmantraut

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of eight staves. The first four staves (measures 1-14) feature a sequence of multi-measure rests: 2, 2, 2, and 2 measures respectively. The fifth staff (measures 15-18) begins with a key signature change to one sharp (F#) and contains four measures of music. The sixth staff (measures 19-22) contains four measures of music. The seventh staff (measures 23-26) contains four measures of music. The eighth staff (measures 27-30) contains four measures of music, with a guitar fingering diagram above the first measure: 1 1 0 2 0 over 1 3 1 3 2. The final staff (measures 31-34) contains four measures of music, ending with a double bar line.

# Kreutzer 2 Variant

Benjamin Ehrmantraut

(♩ = 80)

3 4 4 4 2 3

5

7 0 4 3 4 1 3 4 1 2 1 3 1

10 4 1 4 0

12 4 1 4 3 2 1

14

16 0 1 4 1 4 1

19

# Atypical Handframes and Musical Space

Benjamin Ehrmantraut

(♩ = 80)

7

14

20

25

29

33

36

38

40 2 1 3 4 0 4 0 4 0

42

44

46

52

The image shows a musical score for guitar, consisting of five staves of music. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The first staff (measures 40-41) includes a fretboard diagram above the notes: 2 1 3 4 0 4 0 4 0. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and includes some chromatic movement. The second staff (measures 42-43) continues with similar rhythmic patterns. The third staff (measures 44-45) shows a change in the melodic line. The fourth staff (measures 46-51) contains several measures with rests, indicated by a 'z' symbol, followed by a melodic phrase. The fifth staff (measures 52-53) concludes the piece with a final melodic phrase and a double bar line.

# Shifting, Perfect Intervals, and Oscillations

Benjamin Ehrmantraut

(♩ = 80)

*mf*

9

17

21

*rit.*

25 *a tempo*

*p*

31

*mf*

38

44

*rit.*

# Chordal Open and Closed Handframes

Benjamin Ehrmantraut

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of nine staves of music. Each staff begins with a measure number: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16. The music features a variety of chordal textures and fingerings. The first staff has four measures, each marked with a '6' above the staff. The second staff has eight measures, with the first four marked with '(h)' and the last four with '2 1'. The third staff has eight measures, with the first four marked with '(h)' and the last four with '(h)'. The fourth staff has eight measures, with the first four marked with '(h)' and the last four with '(h)'. The fifth staff has eight measures, with the first four marked with '(h)' and the last four with '(h)'. The sixth staff has eight measures, with the first four marked with '(h)' and the last four with '(h)'. The seventh staff has eight measures, with the first four marked with '(h)' and the last four with '(h)'. The eighth staff has eight measures, with the first four marked with '(h)' and the last four with '(h)'. The ninth staff has eight measures, with the first four marked with '(h)' and the last four with '(h)'. The music includes various chordal textures and fingerings, with some measures marked with '6' and others with fingerings like '(h)', '2 1', '2 2', '3 2', '3 3', '3 4 0', and '2 3 1'.

18

20

22

24

26

27

29

31

rit.

33



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