

**The Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin by Eugène Ysaÿe:  
a study in dedication and interpretation**

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## **Abstract**

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931) was one of the most prominent violin virtuosos from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century. As a composer, his Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin, Op. 27, composed in 1924, are amongst his most creative and significant contributions to the solo violin repertoire. Each sonata was dedicated to a different virtuoso violinist and is composed to represent the different performing style of each violinist.

Among the research related to Ysaÿe's solo sonatas, there is no detailed performance analysis of the works. Although instructions in Ysaÿe's solo sonatas are marked carefully in terms of tempo, bowings, bow strokes, fingerings, string choices, dynamics, and characters, the existing recordings show a variety of approaches regarding these elements. Therefore, this exegesis investigates the sonatas through the comparative analysis of six selected recordings of the composer's students or their own students, and performers with no direct pedagogical lineage to the composer. The study explores whether performances recorded by the violinists who have a pedagogical connection to the composer provide useful sources that are not found in the music, and also examines how and why different musical decisions were made and offers my point of view as a performer as well.

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## Introduction

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931), one of the most prominent violin virtuosos from late nineteenth and early twentieth century, is considered by many to have been the father of modern violin playing.<sup>1</sup> He exhibited a combination of exceptional technique and profound musicianship in his playing, and his performances had a great impact on his contemporaries and the younger generation of violin virtuosos. As a composer, his Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin, Op. 27, composed in 1923-1924, which explored and expanded the possibilities of modern violin playing, are among his most creative and significant contributions to the solo violin repertoire. Each sonata was dedicated to a different virtuoso violinist, each being a close friend of Ysaÿe - No.1 to Joseph Szigeti (1892-1973), No.2 to Jacques Thibaud (1880-1953), No.3 to George Enescu (1881-1955), No.4 to Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), No.5 to Mathieu Crickboom (1871-1947), and the last one to Manuel Quiroga (1892-1961). Each sonata features a unique character and is composed to represent the different performing style of each violinist. As summarized by Michel Stockhem in the preface of the Urtext edition of the sonatas they “range from suave rigor (Szigeti and Crickboom) to stringent elegance (Kreisler), and from rhapsodic wit and *esprit* (Enesco) to Spanish ardor (Quiroga) and tender lyricism (Thibaud)”.<sup>2</sup> According to Antoine Ysaÿe (the son of Eugène), only the first four sonatas were performed by the dedicatees in public.<sup>3</sup> However, neither the dedicatees nor Ysaÿe himself recorded any of the sonatas.

Possibly because Ysaÿe never performed the sonatas in public, and because of the avant-garde musical language they contained, the sonatas were underestimated and not frequently performed on stage for a long time. The inherited performance practice and popularity of the sonatas came primarily from Ysaÿe’s students, who performed

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Roth, *Violin Virtuosos: from Paganini to the 21st Century* (Los Angeles: California Classics Books, 1997), pp.20-32. Boris Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin: From Corelli and Vivaldi to Stern, Zukerman, and Perlman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 279-294.

<sup>2</sup> Eugène Ysaÿe, *Sechs Sonaten für Violine Solo*, Op.27 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Antoine Ysaÿe and Bertram Ratcliffe, *Ysaÿe, His Life, Work, And Influence* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1947), p.224.



and taught the sonatas to their own students, and from the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Belgium, in which a different sonata is required at each competition. Bearing this in mind, this exegesis will address the research question “Can the performances of Ysaÿe’s violin sonatas by the composer’s students or their own students be considered the most authentic interpretations, as there are no known recordings made by the dedicatees and Ysaÿe himself?” The question will be explored through the comparative analysis of six selected recordings of the composer’s students or their own students, and performers with no direct pedagogical lineage to the composer. The discussion will address to what extent the violinists follow the indications in the score; what can be absorbed from the performer; how the students or their own students interpreted the work; and whether there are any alterations based on the advice of Ysaÿe that are not shown in the music.

Among the research related to Ysaÿe’s solo sonatas, there is no detailed performance analysis of the works. As access to recordings is made more convenient today, these recordings contribute essential elements to the study and comprehension of these compositions. Performances recorded by the violinists who have a connection to the composer might provide useful sources that are not found in the music, and thus they are crucial to the study. Although instructions in Ysaÿe’s solo sonatas are marked carefully in terms of tempo, bowings, bow strokes, fingerings, string choices, dynamics, and characters, the existing recordings show a variety of approaches regarding these elements. The exegesis examines how and why different musical decisions were made and also offers my point of view as a performer.

The main body of the exegesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One includes brief biographical information and the performing style of Ysaÿe, and the origin of his violin sonatas. The study focuses in detail on Sonatas No. 2, 3 and 4, as these three sonatas are the most often performed. My performances of these in my solo recitals form part of the enclosed DVDs. Each of these sonatas is discussed in a separate chapter, followed by a brief biography on the dedicatee, the outline of the sonata, and

an in-depth comparative analysis of selected recordings. Sonatas Nos.1, 5 and 6 are discussed in more general terms in Chapter Five. The conclusion focuses on how the research question has been answered and demonstrates the function and significance of the performances by the selected violinists.

## **Literature Review**

Alberto Bachmann's *An Encyclopedia of the Violin* could be considered a comprehensive guide to the violin up to the 1950s. It covers the origin and construction of the violin and the renowned violin and bow makers, through to the art of violin playing and evolution of violin technique. Both Boris Schwarz's *Great Masters of the Violin: From Corelli and Vivaldi to Stern, Zukerman, and Perlman* and Henry Roth's *Violin Virtuosos: from Paganini to the 21st Century* include most of the influential violinists in the history of the violin. The biographical information, the performing style and the important contribution of each violinist are included. They provide a historical background of the French and Belgian violin schools as well. Ivan Galamian's *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* offers the definitions and instructions of fundamental violin techniques and serves as a guide when the selected recordings are examined.

Bertram Ratcliffe and Antoine Ysaÿe collaborated on the book *Ysaÿe, His Life, Work, and Influence*. It describes the life and musical career of Ysaÿe, and his friendship and collaboration with his closest friends and musicians. Antoine Ysaÿe's *Historical Account of the Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin Op. 27 of Eugène Ysaÿe* offers his own account of the set of sonatas and explores their origin and general features. The biographical information and style of performance of the first four dedicatees, Szigeti, Thibaud, Enescu, and Kreisler can be drawn from the biography or autobiography of each violinist as well as conversations and memoirs by other musicians. The books include *Szigeti on the Violin* and *With Strings Attached: Reminiscences and Reflections* by Szigeti, *Fritz Kreisler* by Louis P. Lochner, *George*

*Enescu: His Life and Music* by Noel Malcolm, and *Memoirs* by Carl Flesch. On the other hand, Crickboom and Quiroga remained less well-known and are not well documented. No biography of either violinist has been found thus far and their names are usually left out of violin literature. Crickboom was mentioned in *Ysaÿe, His Life, Work, And Influence* and Ana L. Fernández's dissertation *The Works of Manuel Quiroga: A Catalogue* is among the few studies of Quiroga in English.

The following dissertations on Ysaÿe and his solo sonatas were beneficial in writing this exegesis. Ray Iwazumi's *The Six Sonates pour violon seul, op. 27 of Eugène Ysaÿe: critical commentary and interpretive analysis of the sketches, manuscripts, and published editions* focuses on the compositional development of the six sonatas and comparison was made between the sketches and manuscripts he found and two current editions printed by G. Schirmer and Schott Frères in 2004. With the permissions of the Juilliard Library, the Royal Library of Belgium, and the Liège Royal Conservatory Library, he was able to gain access to the primary source, which includes the sketches and manuscripts of Ysaÿe. Therefore, his studies provide reliable resources and present an in-depth investigation of Ysaÿe's works. Andrey Curty's *A Pedagogical Approach to Eugène Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27* can be considered a practical guide for violinists who are interested in learning and playing the sonatas. The most challenging passages of each sonata are investigated and detailed suggestions of how to approach these passages are offered. Christian Vachon's *Ysaÿe's Six Sonatas for Solo Violin: Influences and Inspirations* explores Ysaÿe's sonatas as a synthesis of past and present, and discussion was made based on the music from the standpoint of violin technique and the structure of the sonatas.

The following resources provide background information about the changes in violin performance practice through the nineteenth and twentieth century, and were beneficial to the analysis of the selected recordings. These resources examine the changes of execution of rhythm, bowing style, vibrato and portamento in violin performance practice – *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin*

*Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* by David Milsom, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* by Robert Philip, and the article *Bowing Styles, Vibrato and Portamento in Nineteenth-Century Violin Playing* by Clive Brown. The changes can be considered a result of the sound recordings as discussed in the dissertations *The Phonograph Effect: The Influence of Recording on Listener, Performer, Composer 1900-1940* by Mark Katz and *The Legacy of Chausson's 'Poème'* by Laura Haupt.

Ysaÿe's solo sonatas were not well recognized at the time they were composed. In fact, the first complete recordings were not issued until the 1960s, and for a long time there were only a handful of recordings available.<sup>4</sup> These included the recordings by Ruggiero Ricci (recorded in 1974), Gidon Kremer (recorded in 1976), Charles Castleman (recorded in 1981), and Oscar Shumsky (recorded in 1982). However, over the last two decades, the popularity of the works has flourished, and the issue and reissue (by Ricci and Kremer) of the recordings of the complete sonatas has grown rapidly. The importance and value of the work has taken time to be realised and evaluated, like many of the important works in the violin literature.

### **The Selection of Violinists**

The selection of violinists in this study includes the third generation of Ysaÿe's students and performers with no direct pedagogical lineage to the composer – none of his own students recorded the sonatas except Josef Gingold who recorded a live performance of the No.3 sonata played in unison with several of his students in 1979 in the album *The Artistry of Josef Gingold*. However, due to the unusual nature of the recording, it is not included in the analysis. The selection of recordings varies from early complete sets to the more recently released ones, which demonstrate the different approaches to the sonatas. (Chart 1) Ruggiero Ricci (1918-2012) was an American violinist known for his performances and recordings of the works of

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<sup>4</sup> Eugène Ysaÿe, *Sechs Sonaten für Violine Solo*, Op.27 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006), preface VII.

Paganini. When he was young, he studied with Louis Persinger, whose teacher was Ysaÿe. Charles Castleman (1941-), an American violinist, pedagogue, and chamber musician, was a student of Emmanuel Ondricek, and received coaching from Joseph Gingold and David Oistrakh. He has a particular interest in Ysaÿe's music, and his recording and performance of all Ysaÿe's six solo sonatas at Alice Tully Hall in the United States, both in 1981, were mentioned by the Eugene Ysaÿe Foundation. Leonidas Kavakos (1967-), described as a "Modern Virtuoso", is a Greek violinist who studied with Stelios Kafantaris and attended master classes conducted by Joseph Gingold at Indiana University. All these three violinists have some connection to Ysaÿe as they studied with Ysaÿe's students respectively.

The next three violinists have no direct lineage to Ysaÿe. American-born violinist, Oscar Shumsky (1917-2000), was probably less recognized than the other violinists of his time due to his reserved personality and dislike of concert touring. He was a student of Leopold Auer and Efrem Zimbalist. Gidon Kremer (1947-), a USSR-born violinist, is a strong advocate of contemporary music. He was a student of Voldemar Sturestep and David Oistrakh. Ilya Kaler (1963-) was the first violinist to obtain gold medals at the Tchaikovsky, the Sibelius, and the Paganini violin competitions. His teachers include Yury Yankelevich, Leonid Kogan and Viktor Tretyakov.

Analysis of the recordings will be made according to the key points of each movement; the preferences in the places and alterations made by the violinists; and phrases that demonstrate diversity of interpretation, or places that show the distinguished interpretation of any violinist. Comparison will focus on aspects of performance practice, including tempo, *rubato*, rhythm, dynamics, vibrato, *portamento*, fingerings, string choice, and bow stroke. Bearing in mind that Ysaÿe employed some descriptive symbols and abbreviations in the set of solo sonatas, places indicated with those signs will be also selected and examined.

The Schirmer edition (1924) and the Henle edition (2006) will be used to assist the

analyses. While the Schirmer edition presents the unaltered musical text of 1924, the Henle edition includes the alterations by Ysaÿe made to the printed text in his personal copy.

<b>Violinist</b>	<b>Name of Album</b>	<b>Label of Recording</b>	<b>Year of record / Year of release (or reissue)</b>
Ruggiero Ricci (1918-2012)	“The Art of Ruggiero Ricci” (Disc 4)	Vox ASIN: B0001NPTX4	1974/ reissued in 2005
Oscar Shumsky (1917-2000)	“Eugène Ysaÿe: 6 Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27”	Nimbus Records ASIN: B00005YBUO	1982/1982
Charles Castleman (1941-)	“Eugène Ysaÿe: 6 Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27”	Music and Arts Programs of America ASIN: B00BFPLGFC	1981 (originally released on Nonesuch LP H-71408) / 2011
Gidon Kremer (1947-)	“Eugène Ysaÿe: Six Sonatas for Solo Violin op. 27”	Olympia ASIN: B004FLP6C2	1976/1976 (reissued in 2005)
Ilya Kaler (1963-)	“Eugène Ysaÿe: Solo Violin Sonatas, Op. 27”	Naxos ASIN: B0000ZKRTY	2001/2004
Leonidas Kavakos (1967-)	“Eugène Ysaÿe: Six Sonatas for Solo Violin op. 27”	Bis ASIN: B000046S1P	1999/1999

Chart 1

## Chapter One - Ysaÿe and His Six Violin Solo Sonatas

Ysaÿe was born in Liège, Belgium in 1858, and studied the violin from the age of four with his father, who was a violinist and a conductor. At seven he started to play in the orchestra in Liège, which was conducted by his father. From 1865 to 1874, with some years of interruptions, he studied at the Liège Conservatoire primarily with Rodolphe Massart (1840-1914), nephew of Lambert Massart (1811-1892). Ysaÿe was born with a natural musical talent. When he won the ‘Premier Prix’ in 1873, the director of the conservatoire remarked, ‘As a bird sings, so he plays the violin’.<sup>5</sup> From 1876, Ysaÿe went on for further study in Brussels with Wieniawski and later in Paris with Vieuxtemps, whom Ysaÿe respected the most. He inherited and absorbed the tradition of both the French and the Belgian violin schools from the two masters and carried them into the twentieth century. During the years in Paris, Ysaÿe became acquainted with César Franck (1822-1890), Franz Liszt (1811-1886), and Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894), who later invited Ysaÿe to concertise with him. Ysaÿe’s reputation as a soloist started to grow and he served briefly as the concertmaster of the newly-founded Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>6</sup>

Ysaÿe’s international reputation was established in his thirties, after his London and Vienna debuts in 1889 and 1890. He was engaged for solo and chamber performances throughout Western Europe and the United States. He had an extensive repertoire ranging from J.S. Bach to contemporary pieces. His musicianship, virtuosity, and personality were embraced by the public and admired by his contemporaries. Descriptions on the style of his playing can be found in the numerous written accounts of musicians who either worked or played intensively with him. Flesch attended many of Ysaÿe’s performances from 1890 to 1914 and he claimed that Ysaÿe was “the most outstanding and individual violinist” he had ever heard.<sup>7</sup> The distinction of Ysaÿe was described as below:

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<sup>5</sup> Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, p.19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp.32-34.

<sup>7</sup> Carl Flesch, *Memoirs*. Trans. Hans Keller (New York: Da Capo, 1979), p.78.

Ysaÿe's tone was big and noble... His vibrato was the spontaneous expression of his feeling... his portamentos were novel and entrancing, his left-hand agility and intonation of Sarasate-like perfection... There was no kind of bowing that did not show tonal perfection as well as musical feeling. His style of interpretation betrayed the impulsive romantic... He was a master of the imaginative rubato...<sup>8</sup>

The notes remarked by Pablo Casals (1876-1973) illustrated the uniqueness of Ysaÿe's playing and interpretation:

Once Ysaÿe came into the picture, he outdated all the schools and trends of violin playing of his time... The advent of Ysaÿe was a revelation not only because of his technical mastery but especially because of the qualities of colour, accent, warmth, freedom, expressiveness, which he brought to the interpretation of music...<sup>9</sup>

Henry Wood (1869-1944), an English conductor who was best known for conducting the Promenade Concerts, asserted that Ysaÿe impressed him the most among the violinists he had worked with and he described that "the quality of his tone was so ravishingly beautiful... [and] he seemed to get more colour out of a violin than any of his contemporaries and he was certainly unique as a concerto-player..."<sup>10</sup> Kreisler shared his opinion of Ysaÿe's playing in an interview, 'Ysaÿe bears a message, a great message, and you must follow closely to receive it. He does not deliver it every time he plays, but when he does, it is wonderful!'<sup>11</sup>

According to Henry Ross, who studied with Ysaÿe's student Alfred Megerlin, Ysaÿe's fingerings, bowings and interpretations were comparatively spontaneous and varied from one performance to another.<sup>12</sup> However, some characteristics of his favourite fingerings and bowings can still be observed and some also can be found in

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<sup>8</sup> Flesch, p.79.

<sup>9</sup> Pablo Casals and Albert E. Kahn, *Joys and Sorrows: Reflections* (London: Macdonald & Co, 1970), p.128

<sup>10</sup> Henry J. Wood, *My Life of Music* (London: Gollancz, 1938), p.173.

<sup>11</sup> Louis P. Lochner, *Fritz Kreisler* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), pp.61-62.

<sup>12</sup> Roth, pp. 22-25.



his compositions (the fingerings and bowings in Ysaÿe's compositions will be discussed later in this chapter). In fast passages, Ysaÿe was fond of playing as many notes as possible on the E-string in order to present the brilliance of the wire E-string, which at the time was a recent replacement of the old gut E-string. Like many players of his day, Ysaÿe had a particular interest of using open strings, though for the sake of sonority rather than technical convenience. As a trend, *portamento* was employed abundantly and freely in the nineteenth century, as did Ysaÿe, who used it as an expressive effect in his playing. Ysaÿe's vibrato, as described by Roth:

... was a direct extension of his personality...[and] was wondrously sensitive and diversified in speed and color. He often played lyric phrases with no vibrato at all, producing his so-called *white* tone, but this practice was artfully blended with an entire range of vibrato speeds which he applied for expressive purpose.<sup>13</sup>

Two distinctive bowing devices are often found in Ysaÿe's playing, firstly the whipped up-bows (a slapping stroke of the up-bow in the upper part of the bow which produces a crisp effect) and secondly the replenishing down-bows (a full down-bow on the first note followed by retaking the bow quickly to the middle without barely leaving the string and then continuing the next note(s) on the down-bow). Ysaÿe also frequently used *flautato* bowing (the bow is drawn near or over the fingerboard, which results an ethereal tone<sup>14</sup>) especially in the interpretations of the French music. Another characteristic of Ysaÿe's bowing techniques was found in passages of long runs, where he instructed to use as little bow as possible at the beginning and save the bow for a broad sweep on the last note.<sup>15</sup>

Like many great Romantic musicians, Ysaÿe's playing showed a considerable liberty with rhythm, notes, and tempo in his interpretation of music. The use of a

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<sup>13</sup> Roth, p.25.

<sup>14</sup> "Flautato", The Oxford Dictionary of Music, 2nd ed. rev. Ed. Michael Kennedy, *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41703>> (2 Nov. 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Roth, p.25.

considerable amount of *rubato* was one of Ysaÿe's hallmarks. Emile Jacques-Dalcroze described in detail Ysaÿe's interpretation of *rubato* at a rehearsal of the Beethoven "Kreutzer" Sonata with him:

In *rubato* melodic passages, he instructed me not to follow him meticulously in the accelerandos and ritenutos, if my part consisted of no more than a simple accompaniment. 'It is I alone', he would say, 'who can let myself follow the emotion suggested by the melody; you accompany me in strict time, because an accompaniment should always be in time. You represent order and your duty is to counter-balance my fantasy. Do not worry, we shall always find each other, because when I accelerate for a few notes, I afterwards re-establish the equilibrium by slowing down the following notes, or by pausing for a moment on one of them.'<sup>16</sup>

The originality of Ysaÿe's style was found in his interpretations of many works, including the ones dedicated to him, by "changing an occasional note or rhythmic pattern to suit his fantasy".<sup>17</sup> The interpretation was usually musically convincing, though sometimes his performance of Mozart and Beethoven was criticized. After Ysaÿe's first performance of Brahms' violin concerto, Joseph Joachim went backstage and told him:

You have shown me a perfectly new concerto. Perhaps it is more the concerto of Ysaÿe than that of Brahms, but don't worry, it is as beautiful as ever and you should have no doubts in offering your own interpretation.<sup>18</sup>

According to Antoine Ysaÿe, after Ysaÿe's first performance of Franck's Violin Sonata (a dedication to Ysaÿe), Armand Parent said to Franck: "It is very fine, but the playing does not quite conform to your direction. Franck replied: "Perhaps, but from

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<sup>16</sup> Emile Jacques-Dalcroze, *Souvenirs: Notes et Critiques* (Attinger, 1942), p.43. Translated by Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 43-44.

<sup>17</sup> Roth, p.25.

<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey Howard, "Composition by Collaboration", *The Strad* 105 (1994), p.1088.

now on it will be impossible to interpret it in any other way. Don't worry, it is he, Ysaÿe, who is right."<sup>19</sup> Ysaÿe also made some editorial changes regarding notes and rhythms to Ernest Chausson's *Poème* (a dedication to Ysaÿe). The revisions were found in Joseph Gingold's personal library and mostly found in a version of the work published by Editions Ysaÿe in 1969.<sup>20</sup>

The recordings of Ysaÿe, made from 1912 to 1914, consisted of mainly short virtuoso pieces. According to Szigeti, Ysaÿe's craftsmanship was not displayed on a full scale in the recordings because he had passed his prime.<sup>21</sup> However, the musicianship and individuality can still be traced. The marvellous control of the bow and the left hand enables him to produce the subtlest tonal nuances. Ysaÿe's playing sounds spontaneous and expressive by his ingenious use of *rubato*, *portamento* and vibrato and various bowing techniques. Ysaÿe's virtuosity shines through in the recording of the third movement of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with the clarity of the rhythm and the driving force in the interpretation. In Vieuxtemps' *Rondino*, Ysaÿe demonstrates his mastery of various bow strokes such as flying staccato, *ricochet*. In contrast, Ysaÿe's interpretations of Schubert's *Ave Maria* and Fauré's *Berceuse* shows his musicianship with the employment of various degrees of *rubato* and a considerable amount of *portamento*. Ysaÿe also used vibrato as an expressive device.

Apart from being a soloist, Ysaÿe was at the same time a chamber musician, an educator, a conductor, and a composer. He was the founder and first violinist of the Ysaÿe Quartet and he served as the violin professor at Brussels Conservatoire from 1886-1896. He was the appointed conductor of the Cincinnati Orchestra from 1918-1922. Although Ysaÿe did not study composition systematically, he composed over thirty works for violin and other string instruments, of which more than half were published.<sup>22</sup> His compositions showed the imprint of post-Romanticism and the

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<sup>19</sup> Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, p.167.

<sup>20</sup> Howard, p.1088.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Szigeti, *With Strings Attached: Reminiscences and Reflections* (London: Cassell, 1949), p.118.

<sup>22</sup> Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, pp.244-245.

influence of French Impressionism. His early works, following the footsteps of Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps, were very much virtuoso pieces. *Poème Élégiacque* Op.12 was considered a turning point for Ysaÿe and he wrote that the piece “marks a definite step in my work as a composer for it contains clear evidence of my desire to link music and virtuosity”.<sup>23</sup> It shows Ysaÿe’s ambition and attempt to a more mature and integrated larger work for violin. The piece is about fourteen minutes in length and features some of Ysaÿe’s favourite compositional devices and violin techniques – whole-tone scales, octaves and fingered octaves, sinuous double-stop passages and moreover the scordatura, in which the G-string needs to be lowered to F-natural throughout the piece.

Ysaÿe’s most important output was his “*Six Sonatas for Violin Solo*”, Op.27, published in 1924. Ysaÿe was inspired to compose the work after attending a concert in Brussels by Joseph Szigeti, who played one of J.S. Bach’s solo sonatas.<sup>24</sup> Ysaÿe discussed Bach’s music and the performance of Szigeti on the way home,

The genius of Bach frightens one who would like to compose in the medium of his sonatas and partitas. These works represent a summit and there is never a question of rising above it... When one hears a master of the bow like Joseph Szigeti, who can adapt his talent equally well to the classical style, to the romantic inflections, and to the modern harshness, one feels encouraged to attempt an experiment, and I think of a piece for solo instrument essentially conceived ‘through and for the violin’, endeavoring to occasionally follow the specific playing of one or another great violinist of our time.<sup>25</sup>

According to Antoine Ysaÿe, the intention of Ysaÿe to write the sonatas seemed spontaneous and it only took one day or so for him to complete the work.<sup>26</sup> However, Ray Iwazumi argues that the composing of the sonatas might have been a longer

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<sup>23</sup> Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, p.218.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.222.

<sup>25</sup> Antoine Ysaÿe, *Historical Account of the Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin Op. 27 of Eugène Ysaÿe*, trans. Nadine Leblanc (Brussels: Editions Ysaÿe, 1968), p.4.

<sup>26</sup> Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, p.223.

process according to a comparison of the drafts, manuscripts, current editions, and Ysaÿe's handwritten corrections.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of how long it actually took for the sonatas to be conceived and finished, the work reveals "a searching mind in terms of harmonic originality and novel violin technique".<sup>28</sup> David Oistrakh stated that, "like Paganini, Ysaÿe introduced a new era of the violinistic art, enriching the instrument's technical and polyphonic possibilities".<sup>29</sup>

As mentioned above, Ysaÿe's style of playing was reflected in his compositions. In the solo sonatas, for instance, some fingerings indicated by Ysaÿe imply *portamento*. Besides using the same finger to slide either up or down, the other typical fingerings are finger 1 followed by finger 2 down a second. Open string notes are seen frequently in all the sonatas, especially in fast string-crossing passages, and sometimes in slow passages where the open string notes function as a sustained voice. It should be noticed that both movements in the fifth sonata start with double-stop open strings G and D as the beginning of the motive. *Sans vibrer* (no vibrato) is marked in particular phrases in Sonata No. 2 and No.5, where he thought it was appropriate for the *white* tone that he was looking for. It is interesting to observe that *rubato* is marked once in the second movement of Sonata No.5 (bar 5) and twice in Sonata No.6 (bars 89 and 93). Since Ysaÿe employed *rubato* frequently, one could suppose he might have intended more passages in the set of sonatas to be interpreted with *rubato*. However, probably these are the places that might be easily overlooked, therefore *rubato* is indicated.

Ysaÿe's favourite bowing devices -- the whipped up-bows and the replenishing down-bows are considered interpretive preferences. Although they are not labeled in the music, the implication of employing these bowings techniques can be found in various passages. For example, the whipped up-bows seem to be appropriate for the

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<sup>27</sup> Ray Iwazumi, 'The Six Sonates pour violon seul, op. 27 of Eugène Ysaÿe: critical commentary and interpretive analysis of the sketches, manuscripts, and published editions', DMA diss., Juilliard School (2004), p.11.

<sup>28</sup> Schwarz, p.292.

<sup>29</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.3.

first notes of the beginning motif of *Les Furies*, and the replenishing down-bows can possibly be an option of interpreting the successive down bows in *Danse Rustique*. The indications of tonal effects are marked in the music -- *sul ponticello* (a term refers to an instruction of string instruments to play the bow “as near as possible to the bridge to produce a rather metallic but mysterious sound effect”<sup>30</sup>) and *sur la touché* (the French equivalent of *sul tasto* or *flautato*).

Underneath the page of the description of signs and abbreviations in the Schirmer edition, Ysaÿe’s note to the performers is noteworthy:

Without disputing that the technical process comes within the individual province, one can say, with certainty, that the artist who will look closely at the fingerings and bow strokes, nuances and indications of the author, will always approach the goal more quickly.<sup>31</sup>

Examining to what extent the violinists selected in this study followed the indications in the music served as one of the guidelines of this thesis. Ysaÿe gave very detailed instruction for fingerings, bowings, bow distributions, bow strokes, and even string choices in his music. Since Ysaÿe himself was a violinist, most of these musical nuances lie well in the hands and they are worthy of study and consideration.

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<sup>30</sup> “*Sul Ponticello*”, The Oxford Dictionary of Music, 2nd ed. rev. Ed. Michael Kennedy, *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e9946>> (24 Feb. 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Page of Signs and Abbreviations, Eugène Ysaÿe, *Six Sonates pour Violon Seul*, Op.27 (New York: G. Schirmer, 1924).

## Chapter Two - Sonata No. 2 in A minor (à Jacques Thibaud)

### Brief Biography of Jacques Thibaud and Outline of the Sonata

The second sonata was dedicated to Jacques Thibaud, a prominent French violinist and chamber musician in the early twentieth century. Thibaud claimed that the French and Belgian violin school had merged for him, as he inherited the French traditions from Jean-Delphin Alard (1815-1888) through his father, and he was also a student of Martin Pierre Marsick (1847-1924), who also taught George Enescu and Carl Flesch.<sup>32</sup> Thibaud was regarded as one of the most promising French violinists after Rode, Kreutzer and Baillot. There is an interesting anecdote told by Mischa Elman (1891-1967) that manifests the leading role of Thibaud in the modern French school of violin playing. When Elman came to Paris and asked who was the greatest French violinist, the answer was Thibaud. Twenty years later when he came back and asked again, the answer was still Thibaud.<sup>33</sup> Boris Schwarz states that the reason why Thibaud remained the most favourite violinist for such a long time ‘represented French taste and style in such an inimitable way that no need was felt to replace him as an idol’.<sup>34</sup> According to Flesch, the sweet and seductive colour of tone Thibaud produced was fascinating and unheard before his time and he also ‘introduced into modern violin playing a flat initial intonation of the more sustained and expressive notes, which he then leveled up. For him, at any rate, the device seemed to be an organic necessity, a means of expression which was essential to his utterly individual style’.<sup>35</sup> However, Flesch also criticized Thibaud, saying he had a rather limited range of repertoire and lacked technique stability.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Frederick H. Martens, *Violin Mastery: Talks with Master Violinists and Teachers* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company Publishers, 1919), <[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15535/15535-h/15535-h.htm#Page\\_259](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15535/15535-h/15535-h.htm#Page_259)> (7 December 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Schwarz, p.356.

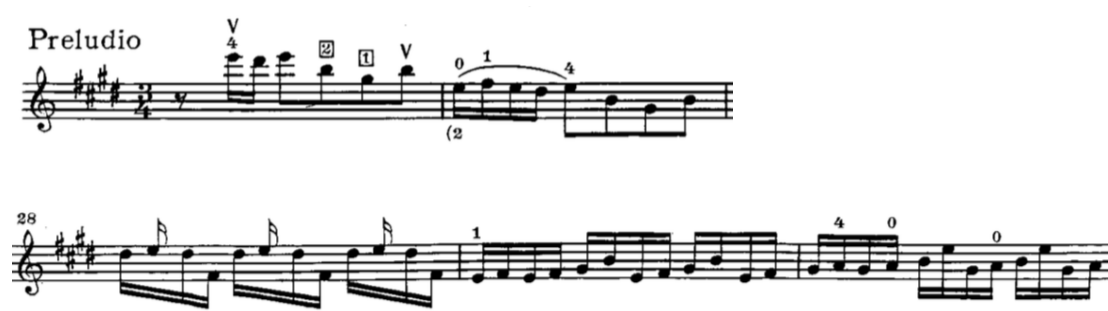
<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.356.

<sup>35</sup> Flesch, pp.196-197.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp.198-199.

Thibaud admired Sarasate and Ysaÿe and considered both of them his ideal violinists. Thibaud scorned any soulless and mechanical system and he asserted ‘technic does not exist for me in the sense of a certain quantity of mechanical work which I must do. I find it out of the question to do absolutely mechanical technical work for any length of time’.<sup>37</sup> He stressed that ‘a violinist’s natural manner of playing is the one he should cultivate’.<sup>38</sup> Thibaud enjoyed playing chamber music and he established a renowned trio with Alfred Cortot and Pablo Casals and left some remarkable recordings. He died tragically in an air crash in 1953 on the way to a concert tour in East Asia.

Thibaud was a close friend of Ysaÿe and he was said to have learnt a great deal from him. The sonata opens with a quotation of the beginning of the Preludio of J.S. Bach’s Partita No.3 in E major. (Ex.2.1 & 2.2) Different segments of the Preludio, as indicated in brackets, are presented in the movement either in their original statement or slightly altered or transposed. They appear at key points throughout the movements, some of them function as a short interlude, and some are woven into the fabric of the music. It was believed that one of the reason Ysaÿe chose to incorporate the segments of the Preludio into this movement, was that Thibaud used the piece as a daily warm up.<sup>39</sup>



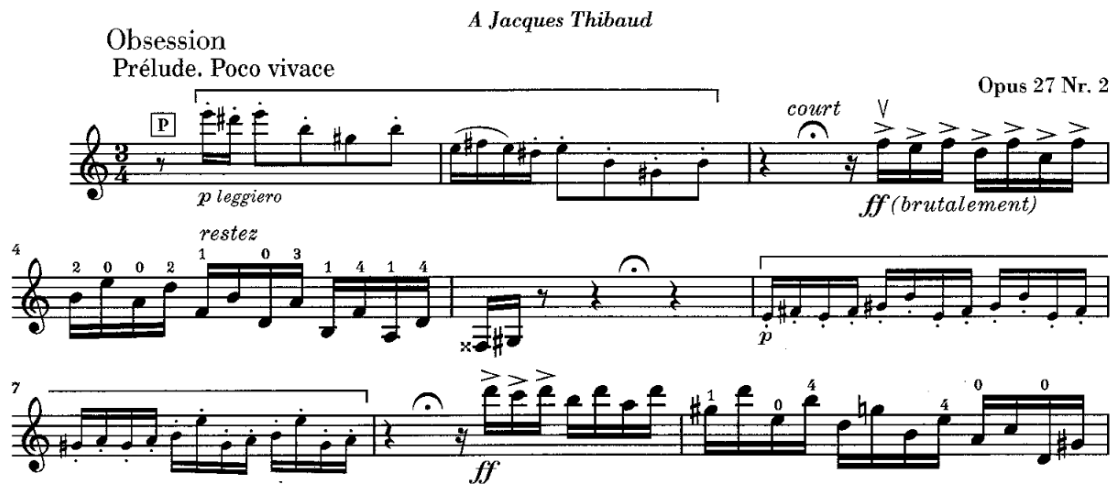
Ex. 2.1 J.S. Bach Solo Partita No.3, *Preludio*, bars 1-2 & 28-30 (New York: International Music Company, 1971)

<sup>37</sup> Martens, <[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15535/15535-h/15535-h.htm#Page\\_259](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15535/15535-h/15535-h.htm#Page_259)> (7 December 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Hector Valdivia, “Eugène Ysaÿe’s Six Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op.27: Bach, Virtuosity, and Musical Portraiture”. *The Violexchange* 6, 2&3 (1991): pp.83-95.





Ex. 2.2 Ysaÿe Sonata No.2 I. *Obsession*, bars 1-9 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006)

The first movement of the sonata is entitled ‘Obsession’. The most obvious obsession for Ysaÿe during his composing of the solo sonatas was Bach. It was mentioned in Antoine Ysaÿe’s book of his father Eugene Ysaÿe, that Ysaÿe performed Bach’s G minor solo sonata and the Chaconne regularly. He respected Bach and must have studied his music extensively. Compared to the ease of writing the first sonata, the process of the second sonata seemed more difficult for ‘Bach was so strong in influence with Ysaÿe that he felt that great man dominating him and was on the point of giving up’.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the theme *Dies Irae* was employed as a motivic scheme throughout the entire sonata which implied that Ysaÿe’s concern was not simply because of Bach, but also in exploring the subject of death. It is revealed through the descriptive titles of the other movements as well: second movement ‘*Malinconia*’ (Melancholy), third movement ‘*Danse des ombres*’ (Dance of the Shadows), and the finale ‘*Les furies*’ (in Greek mythology Furies represent justice and vengeance, especially known for punishing the bad person by driving them mad).<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, p.223.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Furies’ <<http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Fi-Go/Furies.html>> (12 December 2014).

## Analysis of Selected Recordings

### I. Prélude, Poco vivace, “*Obsession*”

#### Tempo and *Rubato*

Unlike the first sonata, Ysaÿe did not specify exact tempos for any movements of this sonata. The first movement was indicated *poco vivace*. According to Grove Music, *vivace* indicates a tempo roughly equivalent to *Allegro* and in the nineteenth century the term was referred to as a mood rather than as a tempo.<sup>42</sup> (Chart 2) In general, Ricci’s tempo is the fastest among the six and shows his attempt to be virtuosic, however, the phrases are sloppy at times. Castleman’s tempo is the slowest and his bow strokes lack variety, thus the whole movement lacks some excitement. Although both Shumsky and Castleman employ a considerable amount of *tenuto* and *rubato* throughout the movement, their approaches are different. When Shumsky employs *rubato* or applies *tenuto* on certain notes for emphasis, he then makes up the time by accelerating some other notes in the phrase, which is a similar approach to Ysaÿe’s. Castleman usually starts a phrase with a *tenuto* and ends it with a little *ritard*, which becomes somewhat predictable. As a result Shumsky’s pacing sounds more spontaneous. A subtle *rubato* is observed in the interpretations of Kaler and Kavakos and there is almost no *tenuto* and *rubato* found in Kremer’s version.

#### Bars 1-5

It is indicated that the first two bars, which are direct quotes from the *Preludio* of Bach’s Partita No.3, should be played at the tip of the bow in a light bow stroke. Although the notes except for the slurred semi-quavers are marked with *staccato* signs, it possibly implies a separation between the notes rather than a *spiccato* stroke because of the indication of the part of the bow to be used. Castleman and Shumsky play the phrase on the string (*martelé*), however it is not possible to identify whether they use the tip of the bow. In contrast, Ricci employs an off-the-string bow stroke

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<sup>42</sup> David Fallows, “Vivace” *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29542>> (16 December 2014).

(*spiccato*) and it can be assumed that he uses the middle of the bow. The interpretations of Kavakos, Kaler and Kremer are somewhat in between, using a brush stroke (*sautillé*). The choice of whether to use *martelé*, *spiccato*, or *sautillé*, determines the length of the stroke.

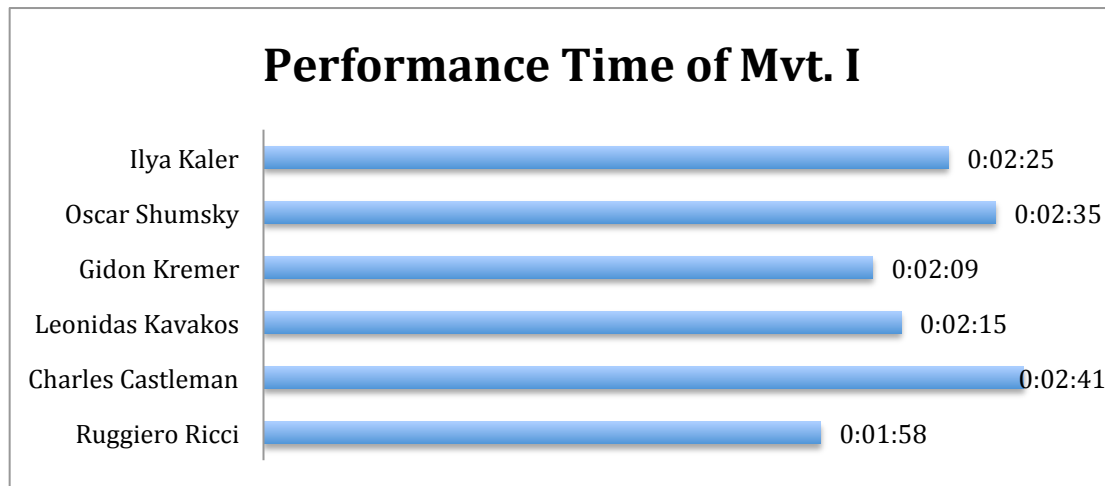


Chart 2

The bow strokes of Castleman and Shumsky are slightly too long and heavy, whereas Ricci's is too short and pointed. I think the *sautillé* is an advisable stroke for its lightness and the degree of separation, although it might not be played at the tip as Ysaÿe intended.

Bars three to five, marked *brutalemt* (brutally) and *fortissimo*, can be considered an interruption and contrast of the beginning quote. Antoine Ysaÿe suggests that:

... a strong (almost brutal) transition should be made between the quiet nuances indicated for J.S. Bach's original motives (which are diabolically harassing the author), and the violent, angry passages which seem to want to escape from them.<sup>43</sup>

Kavakos and Kaler make a significant contrast between the two phrases -- the first phrase is interpreted as an echo or a question that is answered by the exclamatory

<sup>43</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.8.

second phrase. The different characters of the two phrases are clearly identified. In contrast, Ricci and Castleman start the first phrase louder than the indication, which results in less contrast of the second phrase.

Although not marked by Ysaÿe, it is noticeable that, except for Ricci, the interpretations of the other five violinists show some degrees of crescendo and accelerando throughout the phrase and the last two notes are emphasised and slightly elongated. Exceptionally, Ricci starts the phrase in a considerably fast tempo and finishes in a restless manner with no change in tempo or dynamics, which results in some uncoordinated string crossing and the notes towards the end of the phrase are not clearly pronounced.

### **Bars 74-80**

The *meno mosso* section consists of arpeggiated chords in groups of six or eight notes and the *Dies Irae* theme is woven into the chords between the low and the top voice alternately. When playing this passage, as Andrey Curty suggests, it is not necessary to articulate each note clearly, but more importantly, ‘the violinist should make one smooth arm motion, which takes the bow across all of the strings’.<sup>44</sup> Kavakos, Shumsky and Kaler demonstrate a smooth string crossing with a rich tone on the bass line and the *Dies Irae* theme is clearly emphasized with a *tenuto*. A clean string crossing and a clear voicing are observed in the versions of Castleman and Kremer. Ricci’s string crossing is a little bumpy and the tone is somewhat thin. Although the *Dies Irae* theme is clearly heard, the rapidity sacrifices the other notes overly.

### **Bars 83-85**

Ysaÿe wrote the last A of the piece as a quaver with a dash on top of it. However, it sounds somewhat abrupt if one plays the last note exactly according to the time value. It provides a more satisfying and convincing ending if the last note is played slightly

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<sup>44</sup> Andrey Curty, ‘A Pedagogical Approach to Eugène Ysaÿe’s Six Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27’, DMA diss., University of Georgia (2003), pp. 29-30.

longer than as written. The following chart compares the length of the last note each violinist decides to take. (Chart 3)

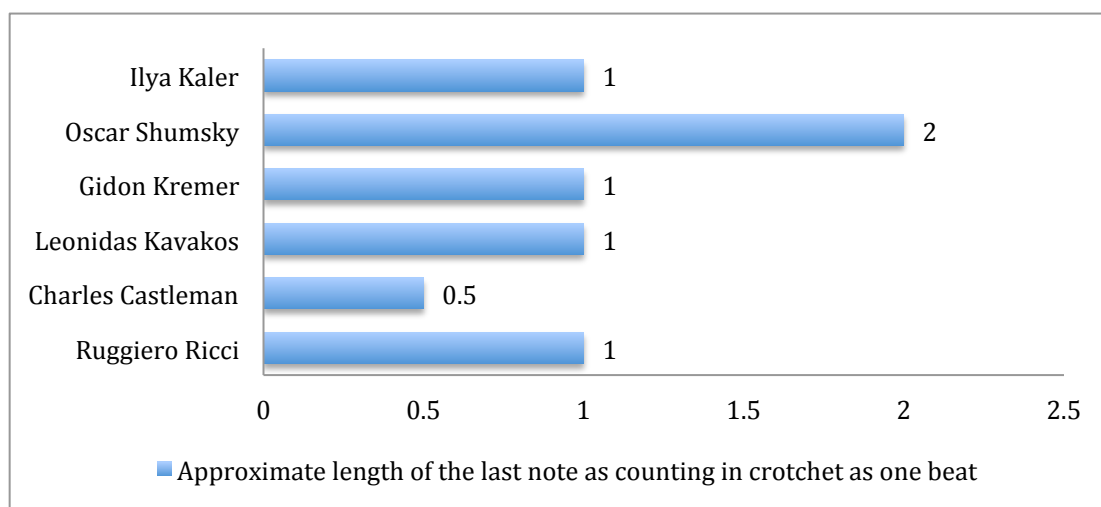


Chart 3

## II. Poco Lento, “*Malinconia*” (*con sordino*)

### Tempo and phrasing

Among the six, the tempo and phrasing of Shumsky and Kavakos in this movement can be considered the most appropriate. The tempo is neither too slow nor too fast with a certain degree of flow. *Rubato* is employed appropriately within the phrases. Kaler’s tempo is a little too slow and the pacing is too steady where as Ricci’s pacing is a little rushed. Kremer’s phrasing is distinct as most of the semiquavers are stretched deliberately, which presents a recitative-like second movement.

### Rhythm

In the versions of Ricci, Kremer and Shumsky, the motives in bars 2, 7, 8 and 13, where the dotted semiquaver followed by a demisemiquaver, are played as two semiquavers. (Ex. 2.3) The interpretations seem to be a rhythmic inaccuracy for there is no evidence to support the alteration of rhythm.

as written

versions of Ricci, Kremer and Shumsky



Ex. 2.3 Sonata No.2 II. *Malinconia*, bar 2

### ***Vibrato***

In the recordings, generally, little vibrato is employed in the first six bars. As the theme develops, the vibrato becomes more present and richer. Overall, Kavakos and Ricci do not employ much vibrato whereas Shumsky and Castleman use more. Curty suggests that “the speed of the vibrato throughout this movement should remain calm and unagitated, although generally consistent and connected”.<sup>45</sup> Kaler’s vibrato resembles Curty’s suggestion, although it lacks some variety. Kremer’s vibrato is not consistent, possibly due to his phrasing and Castleman’s vibrato is too intense.

### ***Portamento***

Shumsky and Castleman employ *portamento* in various degrees in this movement. The subtle use of *portamento* highlights Shumsky’s interpretation and the intensity and frequency of his *portamento* is appropriate. The employment of a great amount of *portamento* in this movement shows Castleman’s particular interest in this nineteenth-century trend. The *portamento* he uses is heavy and audible. On the contrary, almost no *portamento* is heard in the interpretations of the other four violinists.

### **Drawing of bow**

In this movement, the biggest challenge of the right hand is to accomplish a smooth string crossing from single notes to double-stops (and vice versa), which requires a precise judgment of the angle of the right arm. Overall, Kavakos, Kaler, Castleman and Shumsky demonstrate a smooth bow change. Kremer also makes a clean string

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<sup>45</sup> Curty, p.31.

crossing, but the sound is not very consistent, again partly due to his interpretation.

### **III. Sarabande (Lento), “*Dance des ombres*”**

#### **Bars 1-9**

In the beginning section, the violinists demonstrate various approaches to pizzicato chords. Ricci, Castleman, Kremer and Shumsky pluck the chords simultaneously except for bar 8, where Ysaÿe indicated an arpeggiated chord sign. The interpretations of Kavakos and Kaler are similar – most of the chords are spread out as a guitar might sound. In comparison, the approaches of Kavakos and Kaler are advisable because of the way their pizzicato echoes the theme that reoccurs at the end of the movement. Considering the degree of *rubato*, Castleman’s version is the most literal whereas Kremer takes considerable amount of time in this section.

#### **Var. 1 (bars 10-18)**

Ysaÿe marked *sans vibrer* (without vibrato) at the beginning of the variation, indicating that a pure and distant sound (or white tone as called by Ysaÿe) is required. Kavakos follows the indication and applies almost no vibrato throughout the variation. Kremer does not use vibrato until bar 14, where *expressivo* is indicated. However, vibrato is employed more or less from the beginning in the interpretations of Shumsky, Ricci, Castleman and Kaler. I think it makes a bigger contrast to use no vibrato at the beginning and I like Kremer’s concept of using the vibrato from bar 14, where the bass line is added to the theme.

#### **Var. 2 (bars 19-27)**

There are two interpretations of the sustained low G. Kremer, Shumsky and Ricci play the G as one sustained long note throughout the variation. On the other hand, Kavakos, Kaler and Castleman underline the G at the beginning of each bar, including bars 22, 23, 25 and 26 while the high voice is tied over from the previous bar. Their versions are more appropriate since there is no tie between the Gs.

### **Var. 3 (bars 28-36)**

Castleman employs *portamento* in almost every bar in this variation, particularly when shifting with the same fingers on double stops. Shumsky uses *portamento* most noticeably in bar 30 on the second and third beat. Similar to the observation of the use of *portamento* in the second movement, Ricci, Kremer, Kaler and Kavakos employ practically no *portamento*.

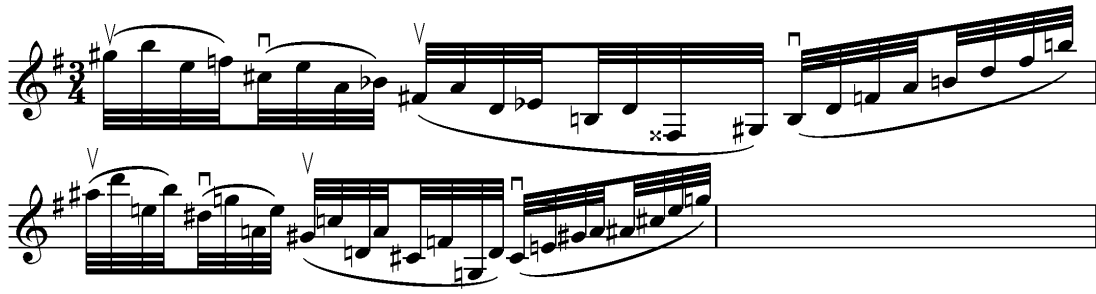
### **Var. 4 (bars 37-45)**

Both variation 3 and 4 were written in a polyphonic style. Variation 4 consists of a moving line, the restless quasi-chromatic semiquavers and a restrained line, the *Dies Irae* segments in quavers and crotchets. The biggest challenge for this variation is to keep the fluency of both lines and also maintain a smooth string crossing. Kavakos, Kaler, Shumsky and Castleman conscientiously balance the voicing of both lines and the string crossing is smooth. In contrast, the string crossings of Ricci and Kremer are a little bumpy and the notes of the *Dies Irae* segments are not connected effectively.

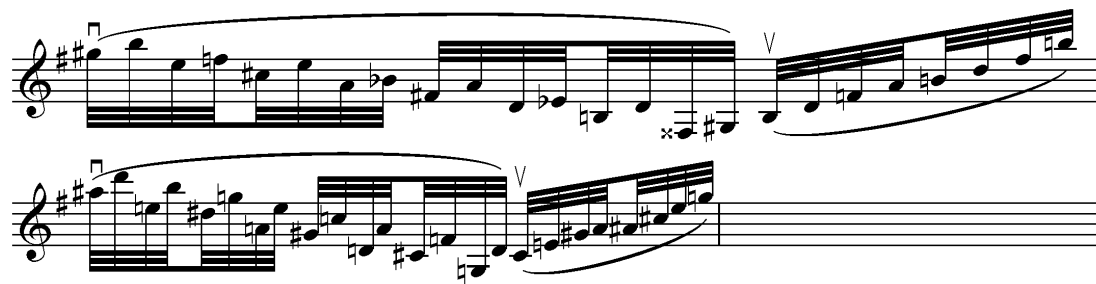
### **Var. 5 & 6 (bars 46-64)**

According to Ysaÿe's marking *semplice non più vivo* at the beginning of variation 5, most violinists keep the tempo the same (in Ricci's case even slower) compared with variation 4 except Kremer who takes the tempo a little faster. In variation 6, coincidentally, all the violinists push the tempo faster except Ricci, who in fact slows down a little. The violinists are not totally satisfied with the bowings as they change them more or less and there is one place (bars 60-61) that Kaler, Ricci, Castleman and Shumsky use the same altered bowing. (Ex. 2.4 & 2.5) The advantage of this bowing is that it makes it possible for the downbeat to be played on the down bow and enables the rapid descending notes to be played in one bow, avoiding the frequent changing of bowing. The disadvantage of it is that it might lose some volume of sound.





Ex. 2.4 Sonata No.2 III. *Danse des ombres*, bars 60-61



Ex. 2.5 Sonata No.2 III. *Danse des ombres*, bars 60-61, bowings by Kaler, Ricci, Castleman and Shumsky

### Comparison of tempos of 6 variations

Although there are no metronome markings or indications of change of tempo in each variation, each violinist demonstrates their own understanding and flexibility of tempos in different variations. Chart 4 records the approximate tempo of each variation played by the six violinists.

## IV. Allegro furioso, “*Les Furies*”

### Tempo and Rhythm

Ysaÿe did not indicate any tempo changes in this movement except bars 94 and 95 towards the end, where it is marked *allargando poco* and *lento* respectively. Castleman and Kavakos maintain almost the same tempo throughout the movement. Ricci accelerates the tempo suddenly in the closing statement (bars 92 to the end). Shumsky and Kaler speed up every time the *Dies Irae* theme appears with *marcato* markings (bars 27-31 and bars 92 to the end). Kremer’s interpretation falls into the

‘more wild’ category for his tempo changes frequently within and between the phrases and the middle *ponticello* section (bars 41-75) is considerably fast. He also employs a considerable amount of *rubato*. The rhythms of Castleman and Kavakos are probably the closest to what is written while the other four violinists interpret the rhythm with relatively more liberty.

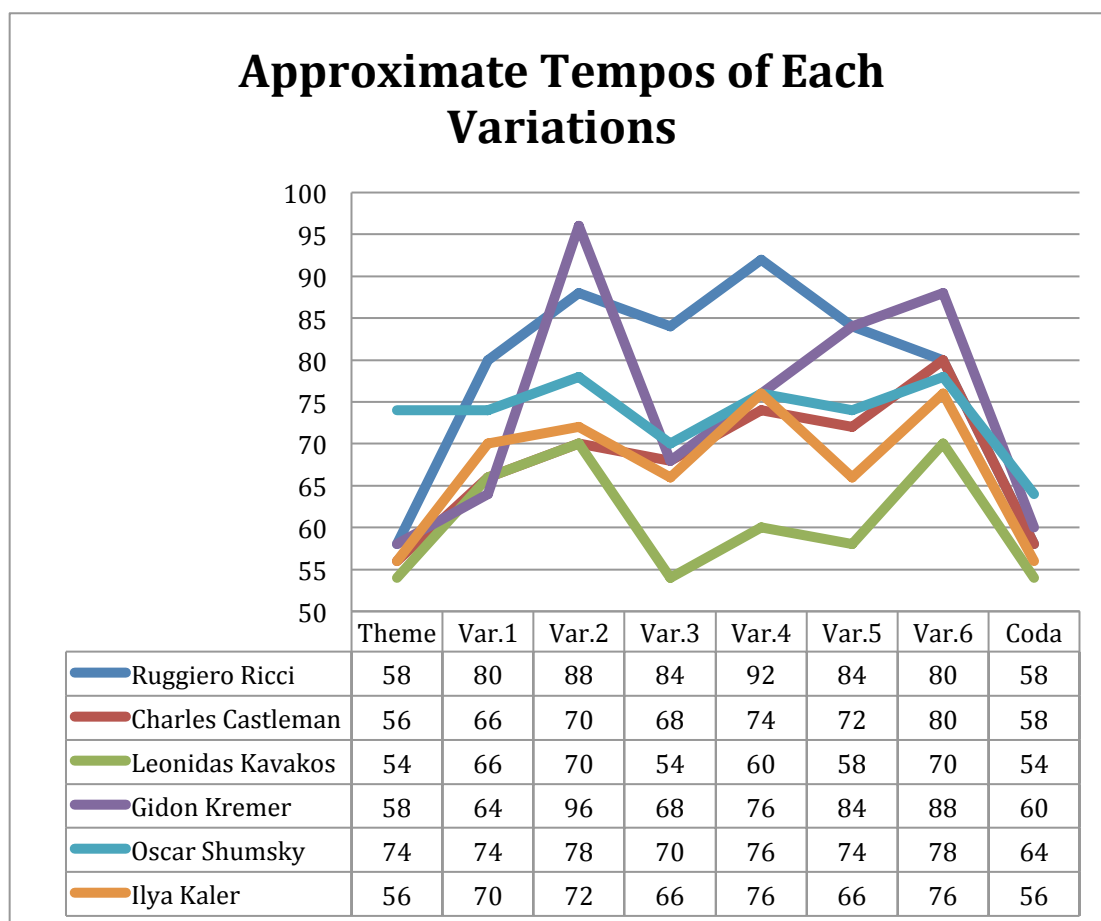


Chart 4

### Bars 1-9

In bar 1 on the B-diminished triad, Shumsky added a G-sharp, which is a re-articulation of the previous note, and thus forms a G-sharp diminished seventh chord. (Ex. 2.6 & 2.7) The G-sharp is not found in either the Henle or Schirmer edition, nor mentioned in Iwazumi’s dissertation regarding the comparison between sketches, manuscripts, and published editions. Therefore it is probably Shumsky’s

intention to rearticulate the note in order to give more tonal fullness. It can be observed that in the sequence of the following two bars (bars 3 and 4), Ysaÿe actually employed a diminished seventh chord instead of a triad and a similar sequence can be found in bars 32, 33, and 76. According to the later sequences, Shumsky's alteration seems thoughtful although Ysaÿe might have left the G-sharp out deliberately.



Ex. 2.6 Sonata No.2 IV. *Les Furies*, bars 1-4 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006)



Ex. 2.7 Sonata No.2 IV. *Les Furies*, bars 1-2, adding note by Shumsky

## Bars 10-15

The section is marked *marcato* and the semiquaver double-stops are accented. In the versions of Castleman and Kremer, the semiquaver double-stops are short and crisp, therefore the sound is more aggressive. Kavakos interprets the double-stops with slightly longer length, using a quasi-brush stroke, which enables more resonance. In comparison, Shumsky's bow stroke is the longest, almost on the string, yet with a driving force. In Ricci's case, the double-stops are not articulated clearly because the speed is so fast that not enough time is allowed for the bow to rearticulate the remaining notes. In my opinion, Shumsky's interpretation is the closest to the character of this movement although the bow strokes could be slightly shorter.

## Bars 19 and 20

Ricci plays an E-sharp and C-sharp double-stop instead of D and B in bar 20. (Ex. 2.8 & 2.9) In the context of the music, either version seems to be feasible. In the printed

edition, the phrase (bars 19 and 20) remains unresolved with the restating of the E-sharp diminished seventh chords in different inversions. Whereas in Ricci's alteration, the E-sharp and C-sharp makes the last chord a C-sharp dominant seventh, which could be considered the resolution of the G-sharp diminished seventh.



Ex. 2.8 Sonata No.2 IV. *Les Furies*, bars 19-20



Ex. 2.9 Sonata No.2 IV. *Les Furies*, bars 19-20, altered notes by Ricci

### Bars 27-31

The tempos of Shumsky, Kaler, and Castleman clearly accelerate from the beginning of the phrase and a continuous accelerando throughout these five bars is observed in Shumsky's interpretation. In Kremer's version, the semiquavers are played much slower, almost like quavers when the *Dies Irae* theme appears in the low voice in bars 27, 28, 30 and 31 whereas in bar 29 the tempo is almost twice as fast when the *Dies Irae* theme is presented in the high voice. I think a significant accelerando is not necessary but it is appropriate to interpret it with an agitated feeling.

### Bars 34-36

In bar 35, there are only one and a half beats, which is metrically a contradiction to the 2/4 and 3/4 meters of the movement. Iwazumi states that Ysaÿe actually found the problem himself and marked an X underneath the bar in his sketch, but probably forgot to correct it.<sup>46</sup> He suggests two solutions to fix the rhythm – either changing

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<sup>46</sup> Iwazumi, pp.60-61.

the quaver rest to a crotchet rest, which forms a 2/4 bar or removing the quaver rest and combining bar 35 with the previous bar, which forms a 3/4 bar. However, further discussed by Iwazumi, either solution has its disadvantage from the performance angle for the crotchet rest might make the rest too long and the removing of the quaver rest might post an issue of missing the “dramatic weight of the moment”.<sup>47</sup> In the recordings, all the violinists interpret the phrase without the quaver rest and I think this enables the music to become more intense towards the end of this section.

### **Bars 41-75**

*Sul ponticello*, a special sound effect, is indicated in this section. Ysaÿe was credited for “expanding violin technique by experimenting with new techniques, exploring every aspect of the violin including register, texture, timbre, and other sound effects”.<sup>48</sup> He showed a particular interest of employing *sul ponticello* in his compositions, and it can be also found in the first movement of Sonata No.1. Throughout the section, there are two constant alternations - one between *sul ponticello* and *ordinario* (ordinary), and the other one between *ff* and *pp*. The alternation between *sul ponticello* and *ordinario* creates two entirely different timbres, and it demands a high level of bow control to change the sounding point frequently. The alternation between *ff* and *pp* also requires an appropriate adjustment of bow pressure and bow speed. All the violinists demonstrate significant differences between the two bowings except for Castleman. The most dramatic dynamic contrast is found in Shumsky’s interpretation whereas the least is found in Castleman’s.

### **Bars 92-99**

In this closing statement, the *Dies Irae* theme is intensified by the restating of the motif and the ascending registers. Diversity of interpretations can be noticed. Although *marcato* is marked in bar 92, Kremer interprets the bar with a quasi *sul ponticello* effect. *Allargando poco* is indicated in bar 94 and *lento* in bar 95, which are the only places requiring a considerable slowing down in the entire movement.

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<sup>47</sup> Iwazumi, p.61.

<sup>48</sup> Curty, p.1.

However, in the versions of Shumsky and Ricci, the tempo remains fast from bar 92 and *allargando* and *lento* is overlooked. Although bar 96 is marked *a tempo*, Castleman interprets the bar and the following bar faster than the original tempo along with some degrees of *accelerando* and a heavy *portamento* is used in both shifting up to the harmonics and down to the open strings.

### Chapter Three - Sonata No. 3 in D minor “Ballade” (à George Enescu)

#### Brief Biography of George Enescu and Outline of the Sonata

Enescu was acclaimed to be one of the most versatile musicians of his time. According to Flesch, “it is impossible to say which of his gifts deserves to be regarded as the greatest, since his qualities as composer, conductor, violinist, pianist were about equally outstanding”.<sup>49</sup> Enescu studied violin from the age of four and showed great talent. Soon after he was introduced to piano and started to write short pieces at the age of five. Composing became a powerful passion and he devoted himself to composition throughout his life although his perfectionism as a composer limited the number of outputs. Enescu once remarked “if I could put down on paper everything that I have in my head, it would take hundreds of years”, which showed his dedication and enthusiasm to composition.<sup>50</sup> Enescu was said to have a remarkable ability to memorise music. According to Yehudi Menuhin, Enescu knew by heart most volumes of the Urtext editions of J. S. Bach’s complete music and he could also play some of Wagner’s operas at the piano without score.<sup>51</sup>

One characteristic of Enescu’s violin playing was the gypsy and improvisational style, which came naturally under the influence of the musical surroundings of his home in Moldavia – Romania folk music, church music, and gypsy music. His first violin teacher was Nicolae Filip, a gypsy fiddler who did not read music and the students learned from him by imitating what they heard.<sup>52</sup> Menuhin stated that Enescu “had the most expressively varied vibrato and the most wonderful trills of any violinist” he had ever known.<sup>53</sup> Flesch recalled Enescu’s performance of Ravel’s *Tzigane* in 1935:

What gave his playing a pronounced personal quality was his habit of starting

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<sup>49</sup> Flesch, p.178.

<sup>50</sup> Noel Malcolm, *George Enescu: His Life and Music* (London: Toccata Press, 1990), p.262.

<sup>51</sup> Yehudi Menuhin, *Unfinished Journey: Twenty Years Later* (New York: Fromm International, 1997), p.71.

<sup>52</sup> Malcolm, p.30.

<sup>53</sup> Menuhin, p.73.

expressive, sustained notes a few vibrations below their proper pitch and then to raise them to their correct level by way of his vibrato... His feeling was genuine, deep and alive, his technical basis solid, his mixture of thought and emotion well balanced, and I came to the conclusion that he was one of the most attractive artistic characters of our time.<sup>54</sup>

Being an extraordinary violinist of his time, Enescu made his living as a violinist, but it was composing and conducting that fulfilled his soul. The orchestras he conducted include the New York Philharmonic, Orchestra and the Concertgebouw Orchestra (Netherlands). Enescu was also remembered as the teacher of Menuhin, whose account of the lessons with Enescu showed his distinctiveness as a teacher.

A lesson was an inspiration, not a stage reached in a course of instruction. It was the making of music, much as if I were his orchestra, playing under his direction, or his apprentice-soloist and he both conductor and orchestra, for while he accompanied me at the piano he also sang the different voices of the score... What I received from him – by compelling example, not by word – was the note transformed into vital message, the phrase given shape and meaning, the structure of music made vivid.<sup>55</sup>

The sonata is a single movement and is entitled '*Ballade*'. *Ballade* was one of the forms that flourished in both poetry and music in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the Romantic era, Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) endowed the form with a narrative characteristic, "based on thematic metamorphosis governed not so much by formal musical procedures as by a programmatic or literary intention".<sup>56</sup> Apparently, Ysaÿe's approach to this *Ballade* was influenced by Chopin and the sonata presents a sense of freedom and improvisation.<sup>57</sup> According to Antoine Ysaÿe, Ysaÿe recalled when he composed this sonata that, "I let myself be drifted with my fantasy. The

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<sup>54</sup> Flesch, p.180.

<sup>55</sup> Menuhin, p.72.

<sup>56</sup> Maurice J.E. Brown, 'Ballade (II)' *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press*. Web. 5 May. 2015. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01885>>.

<sup>57</sup> Iwazumi, pp.68-71.



remembrance of my friendship and admiration for George Enesco and of the performances we gave together in the music room of that delightful queen, Carmen Sylva, guided my pen!”<sup>58</sup>

The *Ballade* is described as the most rhapsodic and the most typically Ysaÿean among the six sonatas and remains arguably the most popular. Noel Malcolm claims that “It seems likely that Ysaÿe considered Enescu to be the one young violinist who came closest to his own ideals of violin-playing”.<sup>59</sup> The sonata features a great deal of sinuous double-stop phrases, which was said to be Ysaÿe’s favourite device, and these are also found in the other sonatas and in Ernest Chausson’s *Poème* with the collaboration of Ysaÿe. In his *A Violinist’s Notebook*, Szigeti discussed that “Ysaÿe’s use of sixths in whole tone scale... is one of the rare instances of this device, and gives us a good idea of the smooth expressive double-stopping across the positions and across the strings that was characteristic of him.”<sup>60</sup> According to Antoine and Schwarz’s account of a masterclass conducted by Ysaÿe in Paris in the summer of 1926, Enescu performed the *Ballade* as a homage at the course and it was one of the first performances of the piece.<sup>61</sup> Although the *Ballade* was dedicated to Enescu, it was Josef Gingold (1909-1995) who premiered the sonata in Brussels in 1928.<sup>62</sup>

## Analysis of Selected Recordings

### Bar 1

The first bar functions as a cadenza-like narrative introduction to the piece. Although there is a 4/4 time signature at the beginning, the bar is unmeasured and contains 82 beats. This seems somewhat a contradiction. Iwazumi states that the time signature does exist in the manuscript and no traces of barlines are found. He further suggests,

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<sup>58</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.11.

<sup>59</sup> Malcolm, p.87.

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Szigeti, *A Violinist’s Notebook – 200 Music Examples With Notes for Practice and Performance*, (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd., 1964), p.96.

<sup>61</sup> Schwarz, p.284 and A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.10.

<sup>62</sup> Liner notes from Josef Gingold, *Artistry of Josef Gingold*, Enharmonic Records (2011), B0050BPJGE.

as an experiment, if considering the dotted minim A as an upbeat and drawing barlines throughout the bar, “the barlines clarify downbeats and syncopations within the metric structure of a common time signature”.<sup>63</sup> The suggestion provides some useful insights to the interpretation of the first bar.

### Beats 1-5 (Bar 1)

Two questions are raised when playing the first three notes of the bar according to the notation. (Ex. 3.1) The first is whether to play the C-sharp for one beat or two beats and the second is whether to play the F-natural with the C-sharp or separately. Unlike later beats in this bar, Ysaÿe did not mark any rests over the A and the C-sharp, which results in an ambiguity of the notation. Given that the rests are missing and the different directions of the stems are taken into account, it possibly implies that the notes are in two different voices, which means the F should be played on the second beat of the C-sharp. (Ex. 3.2) Or, if Ysaÿe did not intend to write the rests, the F should be played after the C-sharp. (Ex. 3.3) Regarding how to interpret the F, Iwazumi suggests that it should be played separately as Ysaÿe did indicate the rests when similar double stops occur later.<sup>64</sup> However, observing the selected recordings, most violinists choose to play the F-natural together with the C-sharp. The following chart shows the preferred choices of the two discussed questions. (Chart 5) Since Ysaÿe marked different directions of the stems of the first three notes, I would play the F on the second beat together with the C-sharp.



Ex. 3.1 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 1 (beats 1-5)



Ex. 3.2 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 1 (beats 1-5)

<sup>63</sup> Iwazumi, p.72.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



Ex. 3.3 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 1 (beats 1-5)

C-sharp two beats	C-sharp one beat	F-natural separately	F-natural with the C-sharp
	Ruggiero Ricci		Ruggiero Ricci
Charles Castleman			Charles Castleman
Leonidas Kavakos		Leonidas Kavakos	
	Gidon Kremer		Gidon Kremer
Oscar Shumsky			Oscar Shumsky
Ilya Kaler			Ilya Kaler

Chart 5

### Beats 19-21 (Bar 1)

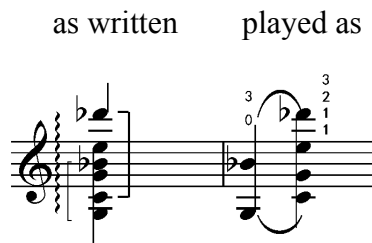
Ysaÿe indicated finger 1 over the G and finger 2 over the F-sharp, which requires a shifting from the third to the first position and implies a *portamento* effect between the two notes, although they could be easily achieved within the same position. However, surprisingly, no *portamento* is observed from the selected recordings except for Castleman’s. In order to interpret the *portamento* but shorten the distance of the slide, I suggest using second finger for the G on the second position and sliding down to the first position on the F-sharp. (Ex. 3.4)



Ex. 3.4 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 1 (beats 19-21)

### Beats 47 (Bar 1)

This is the so-called innovative ‘Ysaÿe super chord’. In the history of violin playing prior to Ysaÿe, due to the nature of the instrument, four notes are the maximum number of a chord that the violin can produce at the same time. Ysaÿe was credited for expanding the chord into six notes. In this case, based on a C dominant ninth chord with an added G, the chord is expanded and the volume is increased. According to Ysaÿe’s explanation of the interpretation of this type of chord, it should be played as a rapid arpeggio as below: (Ex. 3.5)



Ex. 3.5 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 1 (beat 48)

Castleman, Shumsky and Kavakos’s follow Ysaÿe’s instruction to interpret the chord. However, Ricci, Kaler and Kremer show their own approaches to the chord. Ricci and Kaler play the chord note by note from the bottom to the top as an arpeggiated chord. (Ex. 3.6) Kremer separated the chord into three parts – G as a grace note, then C G B-flat and E D-flat. (Ex. 3.7) The way Ricci and Kaler interpret the chord lacks power and Kremer’s version results in unnecessary shifting and string crossing. It is advisable in my view to play the chord as instructed by Ysaÿe because it can be achieved in the same position without awkward string crossing.



Ex. 3.6 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 1 (beat 48), interpretations of Ricci and Kaler

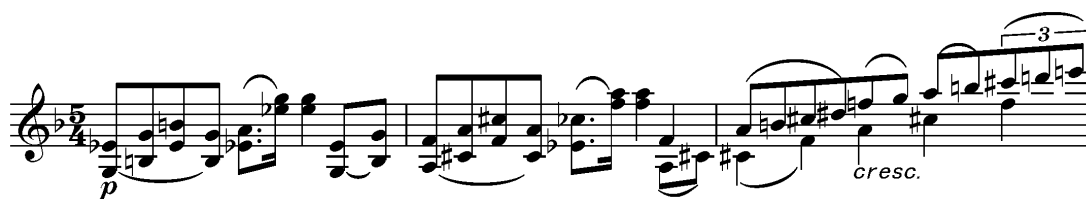


Ex. 3.7 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 1 (beat 48), interpretation of Kremer

### Bars 2-4

Comparing the tempo marking, *Lento molto sostenuto*, at the beginning, the tempo is expected to move slightly faster from bar two, where it is marked *Molto Moderato quasi Lento*. (Ex. 3.8) However, instead of taking the tempo faster from bar 2, Ricci, Kremer, Shumsky, Kaler and Kavakos interpret these three bars with a gradual *accelerando*, although there is no marking of tempo changes. The *accelerando* seems to be a thoughtful plan since the three phrases are getting longer and more intensive each time. No noticeable tempo change is observed in Castleman’s recording in bars 2 and 3 and it is not until bar 4 that the tempo is accelerated.

In terms of dynamic, although Ysaÿe did not indicate any dynamic changes until bar 4, a progressive crescendo is observed from all the selected recordings as the music develops. As suggested by Curty, the progressive crescendo ‘will not only make the repetition more interesting, but it will also move the overall musical phrase forward’.<sup>65</sup>



Ex. 3.8 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bars 2-4

### Bars 8-11

The first notes of the first three groups of quintuplets are marked with Ysaÿe’s descriptive symbols, “|--|”. (Ex. 3.9) The symbols can be also found in all the other sonatas except No. 2, which implies that it might be one of Ysaÿe’s favourite bowing

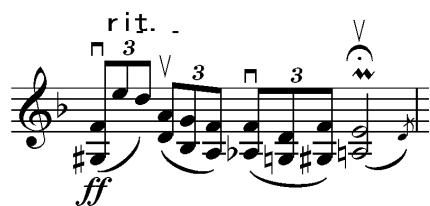
<sup>65</sup> Curty, p.54.

techniques. According to Ysaÿe’s instruction, the symbol means to use the entire bow. However, a better understanding of the symbol might be to play the group of notes with the whole bow and stretch the first note with a faster bow speed. Among the selected recordings, Shumsky is the only one who clearly interprets the symbols, in which the first note is slightly elongated and emphasized. It is advisable to play the way Ysaÿe instructed, because it does bring out a different effect.

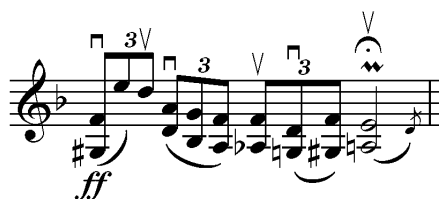


Ex. 3.9 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 8 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006)

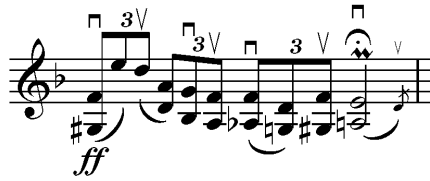
In bar 11, the bowings are altered by Kaler and Shumsky respectively. The main purpose of the alteration is to break the original slurs in order to achieve a bigger volume in this *ff* cadence. Although Shumsky’s bowing slightly differs from Kaler’s, they both separate the slur of the first triplet into two bows, which enables the bow to produce a fuller sound and it also allows a little more stretch of time for the big leap from the double stop G-sharp and F-natural to the E on D string. (Ex. 3.10, 3.11 & 3.12)



Ex. 3.10 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 11



Ex. 3.11 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 11, Shumsky’s bowing



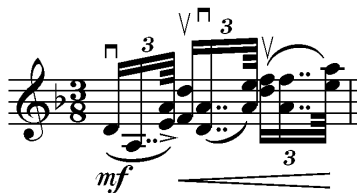
Ex. 3.12 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 11, Kaler’s bowing

### Bars 12-14

In contrast with the broad introduction, the main theme is stressed with rhythmic pulse. Accents also play an important role as they are marked, in most cases, on the weakest beats of the bar. On the first group of the triplets of these three bars, the accents are located on the last demisemiquaver notes. (Ex. 3.13) Because the accents are to be played by the weakest part of the bow, in order to emphasize the notes, Curty suggests stopping the bow to prepare for the accent while practising.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Ricci and Kremer interpret the accents with a slight separation beforehand, which stresses the accents. Kavakos and Kaler play the theme in a more legato manner, therefore the accents are not noticeable. Shumsky and Ricci deliberately delay the entrance of the demisemiquaver notes, which makes it sound like a double-dotted rhythm, accordingly the rhythmic pulse is more energetic and exciting. (Ex. 3.14)



Ex. 3.13 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bars 12-14

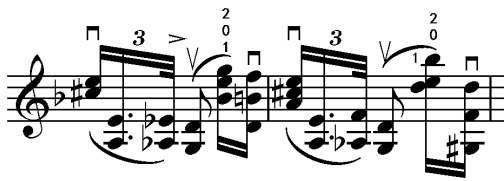


Ex. 3.14 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bars 12, interpretations of Shumsky and Ricci

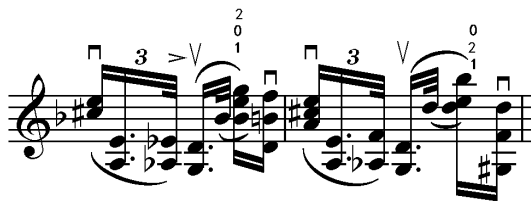
<sup>66</sup> Curty, p.43.

### Bars 17-18

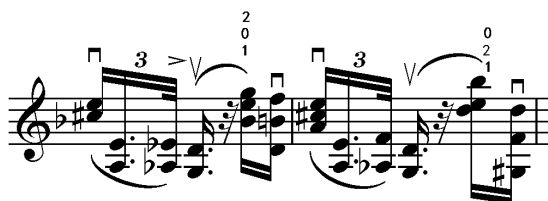
There is a big shift from beat 2 to beat 3 in both of the bars, which poses a great challenge to the performers. (Ex. 3.15) In order to secure the intonation, the violinists choose different approaches to interpret the shift. Shumsky and Ricci slide up from the open strings to the landing chord by using the lowest note of the chord as an intermediate note and play it slightly before the beat, then play the whole chord. (Ex. 3.16) Kremer places a quick rest at the end of the second beat to prepare the shift to the next chord. (Ex. 3.17) In comparison, the interpretations of Kavakos and Kaler are the most ideal as they take no rest before the shift and the notes of the chord are played altogether in time on beat three. Taking the slur over the second and the third beat into account, Kremer's version is very clean but the rest stops the fluency of the music, so Shumsky and Ricci's interpretations are favoured, although an intermediate note is added.



Ex. 3.15 Sonata No.3 "Ballade", bars 17-18



Ex. 3.16 Sonata No.3 "Ballade", bars 17-18, interpretations of Shumsky and Ricci



Ex. 3.17 Sonata No.3 "Ballade", bars 17-18, Kremer's interpretation



### Bar 37

Coincidentally, both Ricci and Castleman play B-flat and F on the third double stops of the first group of demisemiquavers instead of the printed B-flat and E and an open string E is added to the last note of the beat. (Ex. 3.18) Since Ricci was the student of Louis Persinger and Castleman was the student of Josef Gingold, this raises the question and leaves some thoughts, do they play the wrong notes accidentally or do they actually play the notes that Ysaÿe intended? In comparison with the second group, the notes altered by Ricci and Castleman seem to be logical for it makes the two groups of demisemiquavers into similar sequences.



Ex. 3.18 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 37

### Bars 42-43

Ricci, Kaler and Kremer separate the first two slurs of bar 42 and it allows more bows for the second and the fourth sixteenth notes. (Ex. 3.19) However, the phrasing is different without the slurs. To achieve a better result of the accents, Shumsky and Kaler employ all down bows on the accented chords. (Ex. 3.20) This bowing enables each chord to be played in an equal volume, and meanwhile keeps the weight and the energy of the chords. The only concern of imitating Shumsky’s bowing is that the retake of each down-bow might shorten the length of the chords.



Ex. 3.19 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 42, bowings of Ricci, Kaler and Kremer



Ex. 3.20 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bars 42-43, bowings of Shumsky and Kaler

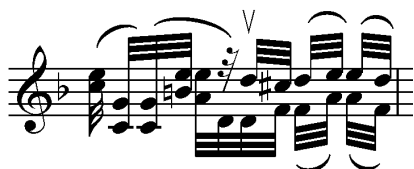
### Bars 44-55

The whole passage consists of sinuous sextuplet demisemiquavers that create an effect of murmuring and a feeling of improvising. This seems to be one of Ysaÿe’s favourite compositional devices, for similar passages can be found in other sonatas as well. Generally, there are two approaches to the passage observed in the recordings, one stresses the articulation and the notes are played clearly, and the other one emphasizes the tone colour, therefore the notes are blurrier. Overall, Castleman and Kavakos articulate the notes clearly, and the passage is played in a relatively steady pacing. On the other hand, Ricci, Kremer, Kaler and Shumsky interpret the passage in a relatively fast tempo, and the notes are blurrier. Each of the two approaches has its advantages and it remains a personal choice for the performers. Kremer’s version is fairly straightforward while Shumsky and Kaler employ more *rubato* and *tenuto*. In terms of dynamics, a significant contrast of dynamics is observed in the versions of Shumsky, Kavakos, and Kaler, while no noticeable dynamic changes are observed in the versions of Ricci, Castleman, and Kremer.

### Bars 73-75

In bar 73, an open E is added to the third beat in the versions of Ricci, Kremer and Shumsky (Ex. 3.21) Whether this is a note left out accidentally or deliberately by Ysaÿe remains a question. No fingerings are marked on beats two and three in bar 74, therefore, it leaves the choice to the performer either to play the B-natural and E-natural in first position (Shumsky, Ricci, Castleman, and Kaler) or to play them in third position, (Kavakos and Kremer). (Ex. 3.22) To play the B-natural and E-natural in first position enables a brighter colour, especially with the open E string, consequently making a bigger contrast with the following bar, which is indicated to

remain on the A and D strings on beat two and three. To play the notes in third position enables the phrase to change to a darker colour from bar 74, where the *calando* starts.



Ex. 3.21 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 73, versions of Ricci, Kremer and Shumsky



Ex. 3.22 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bars 74-75, Shumsky, Ricci, Castleman, and Kaler use the fingerings above the notes while Kavakos and Kremer use the fingerings below in bar 74

### Bars 107-127 (the end)

The coda is filled with elements of virtuosity and excitement. The tempo markings indicated in the music serve as a guide to the pacing in the section. Bar 107, 113 and 125 are marked *Tempo poco più vivo e ben marcato*, *Più mosso*, and *Vivo* respectively, with *allargando* and *poco a poco slargando* indicated in bars 111 and 122 respectively. Literally, it seems to imply a progression of increasing speed. However, Iwazumi argues that it is more appropriate that *vivo* to be considered as an indication of character rather than of speed.<sup>67</sup> (*Vivo* is defined as a tempo designation and an indication of an alive and vigorous mood.<sup>68</sup>) Therefore, even if not played deliberately faster and faster, the music definitely gets more agitated and exciting as it progresses.

<sup>67</sup> Iwazumi, p.77.




<sup>68</sup> David Fallows, “Vivo” *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29553>> (22 July 2015).

### Bars 107-113

In all the selected recordings, a *poco a poco stringendo* is observed from bars 107 to 111 and the *allargando*, marked in bar 111, is postponed to the second and the third beat of the next bar. The *stringendo* and the delay of *allargando* seems to be an advisable decision for it is more natural to start the phrase slower and accelerate as the chromatics ascend, and it makes more sense for the music to slow down in bar 112 than in bar 111.

### Bars 113-118

The greatest challenge of this passage is the clarity of string crossing and the accuracy and preparation of the left hand. Curty suggests practising “each group of four thirty-second notes as two pairs of double stops”.<sup>69</sup> (Ex. 3.23) I would suggest practising the left hand in groups, by putting down all the fingers for each group of thirty-seconds at the same time. (Ex. 3.23) By doing this, the left hand is able to prepare each group in the shortest amount of time. Kavakos, Shumsky, Kaler and Kremer interpret the passage with great clarity.

as written	Curty's suggestion	my suggestion
		

Ex. 3.23 Sonata No.3 “Ballade”, bar 113

### Bars 119-127

In bars 119 to 124, Ysaÿe did not indicate whether to play on or off the string. Kremer, and Kaler employ *sautillé* while Ricci, Kavakos, Shumsky and Castleman remain on the string. To play off the string makes the passage sound more brisk, but it loses the weight of the music. Also if taking the accents marked in the music into account, it is easier to emphasize the accents when playing on the string. Although it is not

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<sup>69</sup> Curty, p.57.

indicated in the music, a tendency of *accelerando* is observed in bars 119 to 122 to varying degrees as the music ascends. Again, the *poco a poco slargando* marked in bar 122 is postponed to the following bar or the bar after the next. All the violinists from the selected recordings approach the last three bars, where *Vivo* is marked, in a more compact manner except for Shumsky who takes the tempo deliberately slower.

## **Chapter Four - Sonata No. 4 in E minor (à Fritz Kreisler)**

### **Brief Biography of Fritz Kreisler and Outline of the Sonata**

Though a violin prodigy, it took time for Fritz Kreisler's talent to be recognised. It was his debut with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1899 that launched his successful career, which spanned decades. Ysaÿe attended Kreisler's performance and stated later in a conversation with Walter Damrosch:

I have arrived to the top and from now on there will be a steady decrease of my prowess... But Kreisler is on the ascendant, and in a short time he will be the greater artist.<sup>70</sup>

It is very rare that as a concert soloist, Kreisler, who played up to 260 concerts in one year, did little practice after the establishment of technique in his youth. His method of practising and the way he learned music emphasises a psychological rather than physiological approach. As explained by himself:

The secret of my method, if I may say so, consists of my having to concentrate and exert myself, when on the platform, much more than if I had previously practiced the music for many hours. The extra alertness required to master any uncertainties that may exist enables me to play all the better. The fingers are merely the executive organs.<sup>71</sup>

Kreisler had an extraordinary memory of music and he described that once the music was memorised, it was "engraved" in his mind. He was also a remarkable pianist, and was able to accompany other violinists in some of the major violin repertoire without the music.

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<sup>70</sup> Lochner, p.60.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.90.

The characteristics of Kreisler's playing include his emphasis on emotion and expression, the sweetness and elegance of his tone, his deliberate use of shorter bow strokes, and his employment of continuous vibrato. Flesch remarked that:

... this extension of expressive resources through a continuous vibrato may be regarded as his most important technique attribute, it is ultimately but the inevitable result of his highly individual need for an increased intensity of expression.<sup>72</sup>

Similar to Ysaÿe, Kreisler was admired by his colleagues and his followers. As one of the most influential figures after Ysaÿe's decline, Flesch admitted that:

... he [Kreisler] has fundamentally influenced the development of our art as no other violinist of his time has done. In the history of violin playing he will live not only as an artist whose genius stimulated and expanded the art, but also as a most valuable symbol of a whole epoch. As a man, finally, despite his unheard-of success, he has always remained simple and kind-hearted.<sup>73</sup>

The legacy that Kreisler left comprises his numerous compositions (including *Recitative and Scherzo*, Op. 6 which was dedicated to Ysaÿe), transcriptions, arrangements and cadenzas for violin, and the large number of his sound recordings. Unlike Ysaÿe who recorded relatively few short violin pieces, Kreisler's recordings range from solos and concertos to chamber music. According to Schwarz, he recorded over 200 titles for RCA Victor and its European affiliates, between 1910 and 1950.<sup>74</sup>

Like other dedicatees of the six sonatas, Kreisler remained a close friend of Ysaÿe and they often played chamber music together with other musicians at Ysaÿe's or Thibaud's house. They respected and supported each other in their lives and careers. In one of the last benefit concerts for Ysaÿe whose health was weakened by incurable diabetes, Kreisler played Beethoven's "Violin Concerto" and Chausson's *Poème*. As a

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<sup>72</sup> Flesch, p.120.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>74</sup> Schwarz, p.299.

tribute, Ysaÿe sent Kreisler a letter that expressed his sincere appreciation and enclosed the hand-written manuscript of Chausson's *Poème*.<sup>75</sup>

Antoine Ysaÿe stated that the Sonata No.4 is the most “classical” among the six and that Ysaÿe “was guided by the remembrance of the great Viennese virtuoso's robust playing” when composing this work.<sup>76</sup> It consists of three movements – I. *Allemanda*, II. *Sarabande*, and III. *Finale*. The titles imply the incorporation of Baroque dance elements in the movements and Curty suggests that the reason why Ysaÿe employed Baroque titles for the movements in this sonata may be associated with the publication of Kreisler's numerous arrangements of older Baroque pieces.<sup>77</sup> Kreisler's particular affection for Viennese music from the late 19th century was said to be Ysaÿe's impetus for the inclusion of the folk-like material in the last movement.<sup>78</sup> After examining the origin and evolution of the two genres -- *allemande* and *sarabande*, Iwazumi proposes that Ysaÿe's *Allemanda* incorporates elements of various allemande types and his *Sarabande* is combined with a *Passacaglia*.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the Finale from bars 16 to 23, resembles a section of Kreisler's *Praeludium and Allegro (in the style of Pugnani)*, which was believed to be an inspiration. (Ex. 4.1) Coincidentally, in Edward Elgar's Violin Concerto, which was dedicated to Kreisler, similar sequences are found in rehearsal 44 in the first movement compared with Ysaÿe's sonata and Kreisler's *Praeludium and Allegro*. (Ex. 4.2)

According to Antoine Ysaÿe's account of Kreisler's performance of the sonata in Brussels in 1930, Kreisler told him that he felt embarrassed to play the work in front of Ysaÿe for he had to alter a passage, which he thought he was unable to play. After the concert, Ysaÿe offered to show Kreisler a “trick” to overcome the difficulty of the passage.<sup>80</sup> However, Antoine Ysaÿe did not specify where the passage was or what the “trick” was. Iwazumi offers his hypothesis of two possible places – bar 48 and bar

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<sup>75</sup> Lochner, pp.62-63.

<sup>76</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.12.

<sup>77</sup> Curty, p.47.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Iwazumi, pp.83-84.

<sup>80</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, pp.13-14.



60, one of which may be considered the passage that concerned Kreisler, when he compares the current edition with Ysaÿe's revision in his personal copy.<sup>81</sup> The sonata was set as one of the repertoire pieces in the Eugène Ysaÿe International Competition of 1937 and was also the last piece Ysaÿe heard before his death.<sup>82</sup>



Ex. 4.1 Fritz Kreisler's *Praeludium and Allegro*, bars 12 to 24 in the *Allegro* section (London: Schott & Co., 1910)

Ex. 4.2 Edward Elgar's *Violin Concerto in B minor*, Op. 61, rehearsal 44, (London: Novello & Co., 1910)

<sup>81</sup> Iwazumi, pp.84-87.

<sup>82</sup> Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, p.224 and pp.152-153.

## Analysis of Selected Recordings

### I. *Allemanda, Lento maestoso*

#### Bars 1-7

The beginning seven bars serve as an introduction to the movement. Iwazumi argues that the metronome marking at the beginning, a semiquaver equals 72, seems like a miscalculation or misplacement for it is difficult to sustain the bow in such a slow tempo.<sup>83</sup> He further suggests that the tempo might be intended to be a quaver equals 72 after consulting the thought process of Ysaÿe from different resources. In fact, it is rare that any violinist strictly follows the tempo marking, possibly due to the improvisatory feeling of the beginning. In the first four bars, the hemidemisemiquavers are articulated more evenly in the versions of Kavakos, Kremer, Castleman and Kaler. In contrast, Shumsky and Ricci's interpretations show more liberty in rhythm, with the hemidemisemiquavers being interpreted similarly to a group of arpeggiated grace notes leading towards the next beat.

As discussed in Chapter Three, again the symbol “|--|” is indicated underneath the notes that Ysaÿe intended to emphasize. (Ex. 4.3) However, possibly due to the concern of the bow distribution, the effect of the symbol is not observed in the first two bars. In bars 6 and 7, although the notes with the symbol are brought out with more attention in the versions of Shumsky, Ricci and Castleman, not as much bow as Ysaÿe required is employed.

#### Bars 8-19

This section resembles the second variation of the Ciaccona of Bach and the theme is presented in different voicing. In bar 11, it is interesting to observe the various executions of the chords. Kremer, Kaler, Shumsky and Kavakos play the A minor chord on the second beat from low to high notes. (Ex. 4.4) In contrast, Castleman

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<sup>83</sup> Iwazumi, pp.91-94.

reverses the order of the execution of the chord in order to emphasize the melody in the low voice as one might do in Bach's Fuga. (Ex. 4.5) Ricci plays the chord from low to high then returns to the lowest note, similar to the approach to the chord in the Ciaccona. I think the approach of Castleman is advisable because it enables the continuity of the theme.

Ex. 4.3 Ysaÿ Sonata No.4 I. *Allemanda*, bars 1-7 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006)

Ex. 4.4 Sonata No.4 I. *Allemanda*, bar 8, versions of Kremer, Kaler, Shumsky and Kavakos



Ex. 4.5 Sonata No.4 I. *Allemanda*, bar 8, Castleman's version

Regarding the rhythm in this section, Ricci's rhythm is not very accurate, with the hemidemisemiquavers usually played too early. The differences between the dotted and the double-dotted semiquavers are clearly distinguished in the versions of the other five violinists. The approaches to the short notes over the slurs from bars 8 to 12 are different. A lift is placed between the slurs in order to stress the accents or the dashes in the versions of Kremer, Castleman and Kaler whereas Kavakos plays the slurs in a more legato style. The interpretation of Ricci and Shumsky may be considered the closest to Ysaÿe's intention, for they distinguished the articulations by placing a lift between the slurs with accents and the ones with dashes are treated more smoothly.

In bars 14 to 16, *toujours f et très rythmé* (always *f* and very rhythmic) is indicated and accents are added to the dotted semiquavers in the Henle edition whereas *mf* is marked in the Schirmer edition. However, coincidentally, the phrase is played in a more *tranquillo* manner rather than the indicated dynamics in all the selected recordings. This seems advisable, especially after the previous cadence and it also makes more contrast with the crescendo later in bar 17.

Although no shifting is indicated over the slur on the third beat of bar 17 in the Schirmer edition, a fingering 1 is added to the C-sharp in the Henle edition, according to the autograph engraver's copy (Ex. 4.6). All the violinists of the selected recordings choose to shift to fifth position on the C-sharp and it is a wise decision for it avoids the awkwardness of shifting on the fourth finger and secures the intonation as well.



Ex. 4.6 Sonata No.4 I. *Allemanda*, bar 17 (fingering as printed in the Henle edition)

## Bars 20-32

Shumsky and Kaler take more liberty in pacing whereas the other four violinists play the section more steadily. Shumsky employ a considerable amount of *rubato* throughout the section and Kaler places a gradual *accelerando* from bars 28 to 32. In comparison, the versions of Shumsky and Kaler sound more expressive and convincing although they include some personal ideas of interpretations.

The fingerings of the last beat in bars 21 and 26 are different in the two editions, thus providing a possible *portamento* in the Schirmer edition and an intended *portamento* in the Henle edition (Ex. 4.7 & 4.8). Shumsky and Castleman employ the fingerings indicated in the Henle edition and the *portamento* is quite effective between the last two notes of the ascending scale where Ysaÿe marked *sensible* and *cedéz* in parentheses respectively. Kaler's *portamento*, by using the fingerings in the Schirmer edition, is subtle and less audible. No *portamento* is observed in the recordings of the other three violinists.



Ex. 4.7 Sonata No.4 I. *Allemanda*, bars 21 & 26 (fingerings as printed in the Henle edition)



Ex. 4.8 Sonata No.4 I. *Allemanda*, bars 21 & 26 (fingerings as printed in the Schirmer edition)

### Bars 50-51

In Shumsky's version, the second tied-over G in the high voice is altered to an F-sharp, which enables the line to become a consistent descending chromatic scale (Ex. 4.9). While it seems to be a logical thought, it may not have been Ysaÿe's intention.



Ex. 4.9 Sonata No.4 I. *Allemanda*, bars 50-51 Shumsky's version

### Bar 55

Although not indicated, the use of *portamento* between the shift from D-sharp and B to the high G seems appropriate and adds some flavour to the phrase. Castleman and Shumsky's *portamento* are heavier and more audible while the ones Kaler and Kremer employ are subtler. No *portamento* is observed in the versions of Ricci and Kavakos.

### Bars 61-63

There are three approaches to the triads. Castleman and Kremer play the notes simultaneously whereas Shumsky, Kaler and Ricci play the notes in a manner of two plus two. Kavakos' approach is distinct for he plays the lower two notes together and rolls and sustains in the high notes, which are the theme, in bars 61 and 62. From the second half of bar 62, where the theme is switched to the low voice, he reverses the approach and stresses the low voice then rolls to the upper two notes.

### Bars 67-69

Only Kremer plays the rhythm and the bowing as written in bar 68. In the versions of the other five violinists, the last beat of the bar is extended to two beats, which forms a metric hemiola from beat two of the previous bar. (Ex. 4.10) The pulse in fact feels

correct with the added beat. In order to sustain in the *ff* and allow some extra time to prepare for the big stretch for the third and fourth fingers from a third to an octave, Shumsky, Kavakos and Kaler separate the slur before the last bar.



Ex. 4.10 Sonata No.4 I. *Allemanda*, bars 67-69, with an added beat in bar 69

## II. *Sarabande, Quasi Lento*

Although titled *Sarabande*, the movement is in fact a combination of two genres – *sarabande* and *passacaglia* (originated from the Baroque era and revived in 19th- and 20th-century music in which the term is referred to as a set of ground-bass or ostinato variations).<sup>84</sup> Two notable examples are J. S. Bach's *Passacaglia* in C minor for organ (BWV 582) and *Passacaglia* from Handel's Suite no.7 in G minor. Ysaÿe must have known Bach's *Passacaglia* and *Sarabandes* very well and he successfully synthesized the two genres in one movement for the solo violin. The entire movement is penetrated with a plainsong motive, G-F#-E-A, which serves as an *ostinato* (A term used to refer to the repetition of a musical pattern many times in succession while other musical elements are generally changing).<sup>85</sup> Vachon suggests that the movement is possibly inspired by the beginning of Vincent d'Indy's String Quartet No.1 (Op. 35), premiered by Ysaÿe in 1891, which the viola starts with a quasi-ostinato motive accompanied by *pizzicato* on the other three instruments.

### Bars 1-11

The beginning of the movement is noteworthy. According to the Preface in the Henle

<sup>84</sup> Alexander Silbiger. "Passacaglia" *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/21024>> (24 Dec. 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Laure Schnapper. "Ostinato" *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20547>> (24 Dec. 2015).

edition, in a note to Kreisler, Ysaÿe proposed an alternative opening by adding two extra bars of the plainsong motive as an introduction. “I would be pleased if you could begin the second section [the second movement] as follows:



As for the rest, you may alter it as you see fit.”<sup>86</sup> Two further sources support this, one of which is found in the booklet of Shumsky’s recording of the sonatas, where it states “Oscar Shumsky – acting on the advice of Josef Gingold who studied with Ysaÿe – has included a short extra phrase in the Sarabande”.<sup>87</sup> Other evidence is found in Vachon’s dissertation where he proves that it is the way that his teacher Martin Beaver learned from Gingold.<sup>88</sup> Apparently, Gingold, who was a student of Ysaÿe, received the instruction from Ysaÿe and passed it on to his students and colleagues. The advantage of adding the two bars, as described by Curty, “establishes the material upon which the entire movement is based, and for the listener, it is helpful to hear the motive alone in order to recognize Ysaÿe’s compositional use of it throughout the movement.”<sup>89</sup> However, the two additional bars are not printed in the movement in either edition.

In the selected recordings, Ricci interprets the beginning as Shumsky does and Castleman adds only one bar before the printed music. (Chart 6) Out of curiosity of the approaches to the beginning of this movement by other violinists, I listened to as many recordings as I could obtain and found that the choice of whether to play or not to play the additional two bars is evenly divided. Among the violinists who decide to play the two extra bars, in most cases the second bar is played softer as an echo.

<sup>86</sup> Norbert Gertsch, Preface of *Eugène Ysaÿe: Sechs Sonaten für Violine Solo, Op.27* (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006).

<sup>87</sup> Margaret Campbell, liner notes from *Eugène Ysaÿe: Six Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27*, Oscar Shumsky, violin (England: Nimbus Records, 1982).

<sup>88</sup> Vachon, p.39.

<sup>89</sup> Curty, p.50.



Additional two bars	Additional one bar	No adding bars
Oscar Shumsky	Charles Castleman	Leonidas Kavakos
Ruggiero Ricci		Gidon Kremer
		Ilya Kaler

Chart 6

The tempo Castleman takes is unusually fast, almost a crotchet equals 72, which is contradictory to the tempo marking, Quasi Lento. The other five violinists take a moderately slower tempo. Because the ostinato appears in the middle or low voice in most of the section, it poses a challenge to the performer to bring it out. Therefore, I think a slower tempo helps the ostinato to be identified easier.

While the other five violinists pluck the notes of the chords simultaneously, Kavakos employs two different approaches, some of which are played simultaneously and some which are played as arpeggiated chords. The use of either type of pizzicato seems a thoughtful plan and the employment of the arpeggiated pizzicato produces an effect similar to a lute, which enriches the colour of the section.

### Bars 45-46

The last note in the two editions is different -- it is a D in the Schirmer edition and it is an A in the Henle edition (Ex. 4.11 & 4.12). According to the Henle edition, the alteration was taken from Ysaÿe's personal copy.<sup>90</sup> With the A as the ending note, the ostinato is presented completely in the tenor voice over the last two bars. It is surprising that Shumsky, Ricci, and Castleman actually play an A as the ending note as their recordings were all released earlier than the publication of the Henle edition. Since Ricci and Castleman both had direct lineage to Ysaÿe, and Shumsky had received advice from Gingold, it can be assumed that they received the instructions from Ysaÿe.

<sup>90</sup> Norbert Gertsch, Comments of *Eugène Ysaÿe: Sechs Sonaten für Violine Solo, Op.27* (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006), p.54.



Ex. 4.11 Sonata No.4 II. *Sarabande*, bars 45-46 in the Schirmer edition



Ex. 4.12 Sonata No.4 II. *Sarabande*, bars 45-46 in the Henle edition

The way that Kremer and Kaler play the pizzicato of the last bar differs from the other four violinists. The E is plucked again immediately after the E minor chord as an emphasis of the middle voice.

### III. *Finale, Presto ma non troppo*

The tempo marking of this movement is *Presto ma non troppo*, which indicates a fairly fast tempo. According to Antoine Ysaÿe, Ysaÿe recommended not to use *spiccato* in this movement and the notes “must naturally be attacked, but by holding the bow to the string”.<sup>91</sup> However, the instruction does not appear in both editions. On the music, the semiquaver notes are in fact marked with dashes and dots alternately. Ysaÿe did specify the bow stroke according to the markings in the description of signs and abbreviations – the dashes imply a *détaché* bowing and the dots imply a *sautillé* stroke. The question is why Ysaÿe rejected the use of *spiccato* and preferred the *sautillé* bowing. According to Galamian’s “Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching”, *spiccato* involves the movement of dropping the bow from the air and lifting up again after each note and there are various types of execution of *spiccato*. In short, the length and the tone quality of the *spiccato* are affected by the height of the dropping and the choice of the part of the bow.<sup>92</sup> Another similar

<sup>91</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.12.

<sup>92</sup> Ivan Galamian, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp.75-77.

bowing is *sautillé*, yet being “distinguished from the *spiccato* by the fact that there is no individual lifting and dropping of the bow for each note”.<sup>93</sup> The motion comes principally from the elasticity of the bow stick. Ysaÿe might have been concerned that the musical content might be overshadowed by the virtuosity of the *spiccato* bowing, therefore, he rejected the idea of using *spiccato*. Another benefit of using *sautillé*, particularly in this movement, is that it makes a smooth transition from *détaché* since these two bowings alternate frequently. The *sautillé* is derived from a fast and short *détaché* and these two bowings appear to be exchangeable:

The short *détaché* can often very successfully replace the *sautillé*, especially when the tempo is rather fast. Although the bow does not leave the strings under these circumstances, it can be made to resemble closely the sound of a fast *sautillé*.<sup>94</sup>

Castleman plays the whole movement on the string except for bar 23, and there is no distinction between *détaché* and *sautillé*. The interpretation, therefore, is a little dull and lacks excitement. Kremer, in contrast, employs a quasi *spiccato* bow stroke throughout the movement except for the *Giocosamente* section. It indeed sounds more or less like a “moto perpetuo”, however, it lacks dynamic contrast and variety of expression. The other four violinists follow the articulations attentively. In the versions of Ricci and Shumsky, the *sautillé* bow stroke is longer and closer to the strings whereas Kaler’s and Kavakos’ are shorter and more distinguishable from the *détaché*. Ysaÿe had a clear idea of the articulations of the piece and the detailed indications could only have been written by a violinist who knew and understood the mechanism of the instrument thoroughly. The various articulations also enable the piece a greater range of expression than simply a virtuoso piece.

*Rubato* and *tenuto* are found in the versions of Shumsky and Castleman. Shumsky uses *rubato* and *tenuto* discreetly whereas Castleman uses the two abundantly, which

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<sup>93</sup> Galamian, p.77.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p.78.

hinders the continuity of the music. The interpretations of Kaler, Kavakos and Kremer show more consistency in rhythm while Ricci's rhythm is slightly unsteady.

### Bar 20-22

Except for Kaler, the violinists alter the bowings of these bars to some degree. Ricci and Kremer separate the slurs in bar 22 except for the last beat (Ex. 4.13). According to the pattern of the bowings at the beginning of the passage, Shumsky and Kavakos add two slurs to beats 1 and 4 in bar 21 (Ex. 4.14). In addition, Shumsky adds slurs to beat 5 in bar 21 and beat 4 in bar 22 (Ex. 4.15). Castleman adds 2 slurs to beat 4 in bar 22 (Ex. 4.16).



Ex. 4.13 Sonata No.4 III. *Finale*, bars 20-22, bowings of Ricci and Kremer



Ex. 4.14 Sonata No.4 III. *Finale*, bars 21-22, bowings of Kavakos



Ex. 4.15 Sonata No.4 III. *Finale*, bars 21-22, bowings of Shumsky



Ex. 4.16 Sonata No.4 III. *Finale*, bars 21-22, bowings of Castleman

### Bars 24-37

The section is reminiscent of the thematic material and rhythmic figures in the *Allemanda*, but with a less serious character -- *Giocosamente* (playful). According to

Iwazumi, at an early stage when working on this movement, Ysaÿe indicated similar bowings and articulations as those found in the first movement.<sup>95</sup> He later revised it possibly because the slurs without accents are more appropriate for the characteristic of the passage here. The five violinists play the bowings as written in the current editions expect for Shumsky who separates the two hemidemisemiquavers after the dotted semiquavers, which resembles the earlier bowing version of this section (Ex. 4.17). In fact, Shumsky's version feels slightly heavy and it proves that Ysaÿe's revision was a thoughtful decision.



Ex. 4.17 Sonata No.4 III. *Finale*, bars 24-25, Shumsky's bowings in the *Giocosamente* section

### Bars 60-66

The ending gradually slows down. The *allargando* starts from the middle of bar 59 to 62, *Piu lento* is marked in bar 63, and finally the rhythms are enlarged from semiquavers to quavers from bar 64 to the end. It is advisable to make the *allargando* in bar 59, since bar 60 is quite technically demanding. Shumsky does not slow down until bar 62 whereas Castleman, Kavakos and Kaler follow the indications of tempo closely. The ways Ricci and Kremer interpret the ending feel rushed and are not convincing. Ricci does not slow down in this section and Kremer plays the last three bars too fast with beat three shortened in bars 64 and 65. Castleman and Shumsky employ a considerable amount of *portamento* on the big shifts in the last four bars while no obvious *portamento* is observed in the versions of the other four violinists.

<sup>95</sup> Iwazumi, pp.101-102.

## **Chapter Five - Sonatas No. 1, No. 5, and No. 6**

This chapter is a general summary of the remaining sonatas. Instead of an in-depth analysis of selected recordings, an overview of the interpretation of each sonata will be addressed after the brief biography of the dedicatee and the outline of the sonata.

### **Brief Biography of Joseph Szigeti and Outline of Sonata No.1 in G minor (à Joseph Szigeti)**

Joseph Szigeti received early violin lessons from his father and uncle, both professional musicians, and was very talented. He later spent several years studying with Jenő Hubay (1858-1937) at the Budapest Academy, however, he was disappointed that Hubay's class aimed at achieving technical brilliance and the works he learned were somewhat shallow. Feeling uncomfortable about being pushed by his father to embark on a child prodigy career, Szigeti took his time to mature as a violinist and his acquaintance with musicians such as Ysaÿe, Kreisler, Elman and Busoni helped his growth.

As mentioned in the introduction, Szigeti was the inspiration for Ysaÿe's set of solo violin sonatas and therefore, the first sonata was inevitably dedicated to him. Besides this sonata, Szigeti was the dedicatee of several important violin works, including Béla Bartók's Rhapsody No.1 (1928), Ernest Bloch's Violin Concerto (1938), and concertos by Alfredo Casella (1883-1947), Hamilton Harty (1879-1941) and Frank Martin (1890-1974) respectively. Szigeti not only frequently performed the works dedicated to him, but also championed music by other contemporary composers such as Sergei Prokofiev, Igor Stravinsky, and Alban Berg.

Szigeti's musicianship and personality was and is widely admired and respected by other musicians. His intellectual approach to music, his deep exploration of interpretation, and his understanding of form and structure mark the distinctive traits

of his musical character. Ysaÿe remarked:

I found in Szigeti this quality, rare in our time, of being simultaneously a virtuoso and a musician. One senses in him the artist, conscious of his mission as an interpreter and one appreciates him as a violinist who, aware of the problems, puts technique in the service of expression...<sup>96</sup>

In spite of some critical comments on Szigeti's being overly intellectual, Menuhin recalled in his memoirs that:

Apart from Enesco, he [Szigeti] was the most cultivated violinist I have known but whereas Enesco was a force of nature, Szigeti, slender, small, anxious, was a beautifully fashioned piece of porcelain, a priceless Sèvres vase.<sup>97</sup>

According to Flesch, Szigeti's fundamental training was too old-fashioned, which he considered might have been at times an obstruction to his practice and performances, although he had achieved a very high artistic level of violin playing. Flesch further claims that Szigeti's most important contribution to the modern violin playing was his concept of programming:

As an interpreter, he feels strongly and sincerely, and is alive to his artistic individuality. In general, one gets the impression that antiquated technical resources have prevented the complete development of his outstanding personality. Thus, Szigeti's real significance for contemporary musical life does not lie in the purely violinistic field, but in that of original and progressive programme-building.<sup>98</sup>

While the conventional recital programme was dominated by virtuoso and encore pieces in the early twentieth century, Szigeti advocated the inclusion of chamber

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<sup>96</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.4.

<sup>97</sup> Menuhin, p.356.

<sup>98</sup> Flesch, p.331.

music, serious solo repertoire, contemporary works and collaboration with the composers in his recitals. A similar principle also applies to his recordings.

Like Kreisler, Szigeti recorded extensively and he was well aware of the importance of the recordings he made. In an interview conducted by Bálint András Varga, Szigeti said:

You ask me about my achievement and naturally, I must think of my records... I am convinced of the significance of preserving continuity, so that we can assess our own achievement as well as those who come after us. All that is an unbroken line – a development which is not devoid of detours and returns to past concepts, past style. Continuity is of increasing importance because I find that the young generation tends to steer clear of the thorny path of trial and error, and prefers the shortest and easiest way.<sup>99</sup>

Szigeti was a dedicated writer and the books he wrote include: *“With Strings Attached: Reminiscences and Reflections”*, *“Szigeti on the Violin”*, and *“A Violinist’s Note Book”*. *“With Strings Attached”* is an autobiography written during his years in the United States and was first published in 1947. After settling down in Switzerland in 1960 and gradually withdrawing from concert tours, he devoted more time to writing and music editing. *“Szigeti on the Violin”* is a treatise published in 1969 and is divided into two parts. In part one, Szigeti shares his thoughts about the current challenges and issues raised for violinists and modern violin playing; and in part two, Szigeti offers his insight into violin technique based on the examination of some particular passages of violin repertoire. *“A Violinist’s Note Book”*, published in 1964, comprises a selection of 200 excerpts of music that Szigeti found technically, stylistically, or musically challenging and he offers his suggestions on bowings, fingerings, and interpretation. Both *“Szigeti on the Violin”* and *“A Violinist’s Note*

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<sup>99</sup> Bálint András Varga, “Joseph Szigeti: 1892–1973”, *From Boulanger to Stockhausen: Interviews and a Memoir* (Boydell & Brewer, and University of Rochester Press, 2013), pp.262–264.  
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt31nh79.37>>



*Book*” include examples of composers such as Bartók and Prokofiev with whom Szigeti had worked personally.

Both Antoine Ysaÿe and Szigeti recalled the story in their books respectively of the first time Ysaÿe showed Szigeti the music that was dedicated to him. Szigeti was travelling through Belgium and paid a visit to the Ysaÿe home, where they played chamber music together. One day after lunch, Ysaÿe showed Szigeti a green leather-bound manuscript book in which Szigeti found his name inscribed above the first penciled sketches of the G Minor Sonata. Szigeti was thrilled and was anxious to play through the music in front of the composer and Ysaÿe was overjoyed when he heard the sonata played by the dedicatee the first time. Szigeti reminisced that Ysaÿe talked to him about the first sonata and the remaining ones that he was planning to write, and expressed how much they would mean to him when completed.

Szigeti provided his insights into the set of solo sonatas in his book, *“With Strings Attached”*, and he remarked that the significance of the work is that “they are a repository of the ingredients of the playing style of this incomparable interpreter” and it “would permit later generations to reconstruct a style of playing of which the inadequate Ysaÿe recordings give us barely a hint”.<sup>100</sup> He further stated:

I felt that these sonatas were more to Ysaÿe than yet another work would be to a composer whose prime function was creating. They were, perhaps, a subconscious attempt on his part to perpetuate his own elusive playing style.<sup>101</sup>

Although Szigeti might not have considered the sonata dedicated to him the highest rank of music, with the great respect and enthusiasm for Ysaÿe and this sonata, Szigeti performed the work in some major cities, including London, Berlin and New York.

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<sup>100</sup> Szigeti, *With Strings Attached*, pp.117-118.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.118-119.

According to Antoine Ysaÿe, the first sonata was completed effortlessly and is in four movements – I. Grave, II. Fugato, III. Allegretto poco scherzoso, and IV. Finale con brio. Both Ysaÿe and Szigeti had a great affection of Bach’s music and they each performed Bach’s solo works frequently.<sup>102</sup> Iwazumi states that “The musical influence of J.S. Bach is powerful throughout Ysaÿe’s six sonatas, but especially so in Sonata No.1 which bears a clear homage in compositional architecture and emotional gravity to the church sonatas of Bach’s solo sonatas.”<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the sonata is unavoidably examined in comparison to Bach’s G minor sonata although they differ in many ways. They are both in G minor with four movements. The overall structure is parallel – a prelude-like first movement followed by a fugue as second movement, the third movement is lighter in weight and the fourth movement is brilliant. The key relationships are similar -- first two movements in G minor in contrast with the third movement in a major key, with the fourth movement returning back to G minor at the end. The metric plan also shares some similarities – second movement in duple time and the last movement in 3/8.

As Szigeti admitted, the sonata is very challenging, both in the technical and the musical sense. The sonata features almost all of Ysaÿe’s technical innovations and his favourite violin technique that appears in other sonatas – sinuous double-stop passages, chords with more than four notes, “across-the-strings sweep” bowings (as Szigeti called it), and *ponticello*.

## Overview of Selected Recordings

### Tempo

Unlike the other sonatas, a specific tempo is marked in each movement. The violinists follow the indication of tempo closely in the first three movements except for Castleman who takes the tempo faster in the second movement, which feels a little

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<sup>102</sup> Schwarz, pp. 287&387.

<sup>103</sup> Iwazumi, pp.29-30.

rushed. Castleman also adds a considerable *accelerando*, which is not indicated on the music, from bars 15 to 29. In the last movement, although the tempo of Kavakos and Castleman are the closest to Ysaÿe's tempo marking (crotchet = 132), it loses the spirit of the piece somehow. Coincidentally, Kaler, Shumsky, Ricci and Kremer play the movement at a faster tempo (crotchet = 160), which I think is an advisable tempo because it enables the 3/8 to sound in a pulse of one rather than three and thus the music is driven forward.

### ***Rubato***

In general, Kremer and Shumsky employ *rubato* more frequently than the other violinists, especially in the passages of the cross-the-strings sweep bowings and in the double-stop runs. In the fourth movement, Shumsky's employment of *rubato* in the first and the reoccurring theme enhances the excitement and spontaneity of the music. In contrast, Kaler and Kavakos are reserved in using *rubato* within a phrase. There is some *rubato* observed in the interpretations of Ricci and Castleman, however, it is sometimes accompanied with some unsteady rhythm.

### **Vibrato**

Generally, Kavakos deliberately employs little, sometimes no vibrato in the soft passages, possibly to present a sound with more purity and simplicity. Kaler's vibrato reveals the sweetness in his tone and Shumsky's vibrato is wider and warm in colour. Both Castleman and Kremer's vibrato is narrower and more intense. Ricci's vibrato is a little trembling and not continuous at times.

### **Bow Stroke**

The different length of the bow stroke of the chords in the first statement of the last movement is noteworthy. Kavakos' bow stroke is long and the chords are played in almost full value. However, the approach lacks vigour, which is indicated in the title. The length of bow stroke of Kaler and Shumsky seems the most appropriate - there is a slight separation between the quavers and the chords are played with more energy.

Kremer's bow stroke is the shortest, resembling the *collé* stroke, however, it sounds a little dry.

### **Brief Biography of Mathieu Crickboom and Outline of Sonata No.5 in G major (à Mathieu Crickboom)**

The Belgian-born violinist Mathieu Crickboom, a student of Ysaÿe, was a violin pedagogue and a chamber musician. Antoine Ysaÿe retold that although Ysaÿe did not like being asked the question "who is your best student" because it "necessarily inferred comparisons", however on one occasion "he answered outright: 'Crickboom,' and then added, 'yes, it must be Crickboom, because now and again he does exactly the contrary of what I tell him.'"<sup>104</sup> It sounds awkward but reveals Ysaÿe's respect and admiration of his student's individuality and original musicality. Antoine Ysaÿe further states:

He [Crickboom] followed the aesthetic and interpretive ideas of Joachim, and applied them to the principles of technique taught him by Ysaÿe. He had much of Ysaÿe's sure bowing, rhythmical power, and full rich tone. With a high conception of an artist's mission Crickboom refused to be drawn into social activities and affirmed that the artist belonged before all to his art. In his teaching he carried on Ysaÿe's own ideas and throughout life the two were united in affection and mutual esteem.<sup>105</sup>

Crickboom served for several years as the second violin of the Ysaÿe Quartet, which was established in 1886, and he recalled the first formation of the Quartet:

The Quartet came into existence as though by chance... From time to time Ysaÿe was in the habit of inviting some of his friends and pupils to his home and would ask them to make up a quartet for the chamber music. It happened on one occasion that he asked

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<sup>104</sup> A. Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, p.231.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

me to sit beside him whilst Léon van Hout took the viola and Joseph Jacob the cello.

This was the first beginning of the Quartet.<sup>106</sup>

According to Crickboom, the Ysaÿe Quartet worked extensively in reading manuscripts sent to them by French and Russian composers and gave premieres of some of their works, including Debussy's String Quartet.<sup>107</sup> Crickboom later founded his own string quartet with José Rocabruna (second violin), Rafael Gálvez (viola), and Pablo Casals (cello) and settled in Barcelona as a director of a music school and a symphonic society in 1896. Eight years later he returned to Brussels, where he spent most of his later life, and served as the professor of Liège Royal Conservatory and Brussels Royal Conservatory.

Crickboom's most significant contributions to the violin literature were his numerous violin methods, either edited or written by him, which included violin technique, *études*, duos, and popular melodies. They were arranged into progressive volumes respectively. Iwazumi suggests that one of the distinctive characteristics of Sonata No.5 is the incorporation of passages from Ysaÿe's or Crickboom's exercises and "in fact, from a general perspective, a great deal of the musical material in Sonata No.5 can be viewed as an elaboration of scale and interval exercises."<sup>108</sup> (Ex. 5.1 & 5.2) The sonata also features a considerable amount of left-hand pizzicato, which was a favourite technique of Niccolò Paganini.

Antoine Ysaÿe describes the sonata as showing "a more thoughtful, more elegiac character than the others".<sup>109</sup> It is in two movements -- I. L'Aurore (The Dawn); II. Danse Rustique (Rustic Dance). Iwazumi states that the sonata shows influences of French impressionism and symbolism. Although the sonata was not related to any subject or programme, the music presents a pastoral scene of Belgium as described by

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<sup>106</sup> A. Ysaÿe and Ratcliffe, p.231.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Iwazumi, p.107.

<sup>109</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.15.

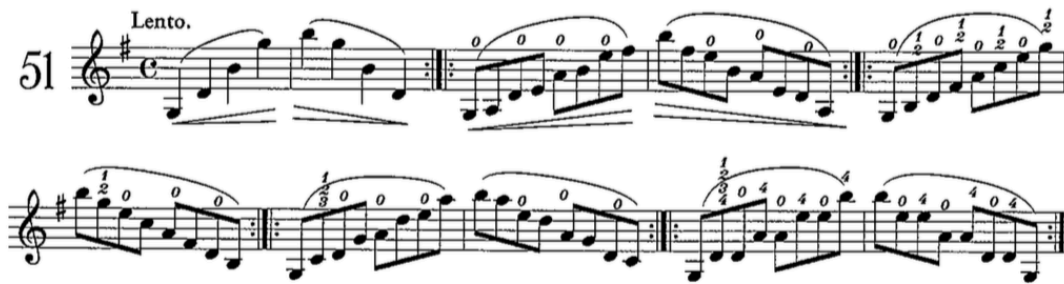
Antoine Ysaÿe:

The first part [movement] especially may be compared with the painting of a rural landscape, treated in the manner of Corot who stated: “I do not paint nature, but nature’s vibration”. The author yields, in the second part [movement], to his extraordinary fantasy, making light, in this peasants’ dance, of the technical difficulties put in the service of his musical thought.<sup>110</sup>

The music also reflects the poetic musicality and remarkable technique of Crickboom. According to Antoine Ysaÿe, however, the sonata was never performed by Crickboom in public.



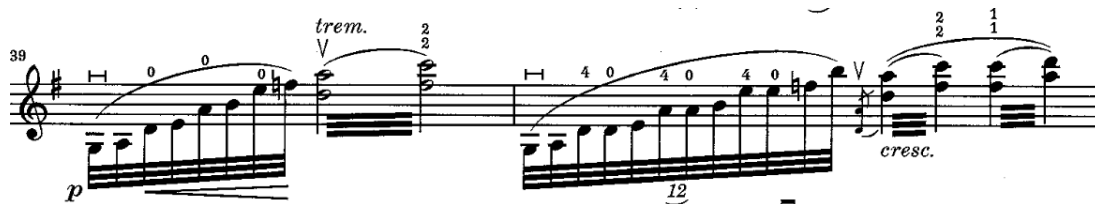
Example 5.1 Ysaÿe – *Exercices et Gammes*, exercise no. 2  
(Brussels: Schott Frères, 1967)



Example 5.2 Crickboom – *La Technique du Violon*, Vol. I, exercise no. 51  
(Brussels: Schott Frères, 1922; 1950)

Ex. 5.1 Excerpts of exercises of Ysaÿe and Crickboom provided by Ray Iwazumi’s dissertation “The Six Sonates pour violon seul, op. 27 of Eugène Ysaÿe: critical commentary and interpretive analysis of the sketches, manuscripts, and published editions” (p.107)

<sup>110</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.15.



Ex. 5.2 Sonata No.5 I. L'Aurore, bars 39-40 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2006)

## Overview of Selected Recordings

### Tempo

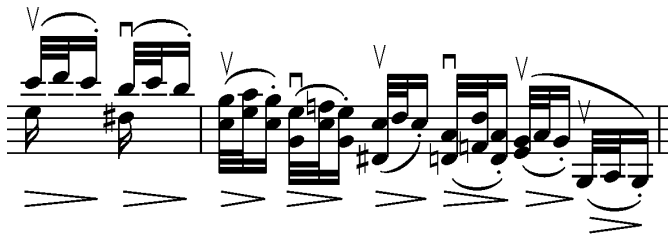
In the opening and the recurring theme of the second movement, the tempo Kremer takes is faster than the indication (crotchet = 72), which is slightly rushed and lacks the relaxation of rustic life.

### Rhythm

In the second movement from bars 25 to 30, the rhythm of the passage imitates the singing of the birds. (Ex. 5.3) A decrescendo is placed at the end of each slur and the semiquavers are played shorter than their actual value in the versions of Shumsky, Kavakos, Kremer and Kaler. (Ex. 5.4) Although their interpretations are slightly different from the printed music, I think they convey what Ysaÿe had intended. In contrast, there is no clear separation between the slurs in the interpretations of Ricci and Castleman, thus the music is less convincing.



Ex. 5.3 Sonata No.5 II. Danse Rustique, bars 25-26



Ex. 5.4 Sonata No.5 II. Danse Rustique, bars 25-26, interpretations of Shumsky, Kavakos, Kremer and Kaler

### ***Portamento***

In the first movement, generally, Castleman tends to employ the *portamento* more frequently than other violinists and his *portamento* is heavier and more noticeable. A considerable amount of *portamento* is observed from bars 16 to 28 in the versions of Kremer, Kaler, Shumsky, and Kavakos. In fact, the indicated fingerings in these passages imply the *portamento* effect. Ricci uses little *portamento* in this movement.

### **Bow Stroke**

In the first three bars of Danse Rustique, the accents are marked on the semiquavers, the shortest notes of the opening theme. (Ex. 5.5) Shumsky observes the accents the most attentively and the slightly exaggerated accents enable a special effect of the rhythmic pulse. The bow stroke of Ricci is too heavy for the dance theme at the beginning of the movement.



Ex. 5.5 Sonata No.5 II. Danse Rustique, bars 1-3

## **Brief Biography of Manuel Quiroga and Outline of Sonata No.6 in E major (à Manuel Quiroga)**

Manuel Quiroga (1892-1961) was one of the greatest Spanish violinists and was



claimed to be the successor of Pablo Sarasate. He performed extensively in Europe, and North and South America, and collaborated with musicians such as Enrique Granados, pianist José Iturbi, and composer Joaquín Nin. He revived several baroque violin sonatas by Spanish composers as well as advocated contemporary Spanish music in his recitals. As well as being a painter, he was a composer with over forty works, and these two talents were well recognized in his home country. Besides Ysaÿe's solo sonata No.6, music dedicated to him includes Edouard Nadaud's *Six Etudes de Concert* (No.5) and Marcel Samuel's *Les Promis*. His playing was defined as "a real hope for Galician artistic awareness" and as "a musical evocation of Galician landscape".<sup>111</sup> However, at the peak of his career in 1937, he was hit by a vehicle in New York during an American tour. Though he mostly recovered, he gradually lost the feeling and mobility of his arm and consequently his career as a violinist was cut short. He remained committed to painting and composing.

According to Antoine Ysaÿe, "it is in remembering the Spanish violinist's playing style, which reminded him [Ysaÿe] of Sarasate, that the master conceived his last sonata for unaccompanied violin".<sup>112</sup> The work shows more than other sonatas that:

The master [Ysaÿe] endeavours to adapt the violinistic writing to the playing of the artist to whom the work is dedicated. It is conceived, like the third sonata, in one part, but it shows a lighter and more fanciful character than the "Enesco".<sup>113</sup>

Coincidentally or not, Ysaÿe chose to use E major, the same key as Bach's Partita No.3, for the last sonata of the set. However, the work is the most exotic and virtuosic among the six and is the least related to Bach's music. According to Antoine Ysaÿe, the work could be subtitled "Spanish Capriccio".<sup>114</sup> The most noticeable Spanish element, the habanera, is found in the middle section (*Allegretto poco scherzando*) of

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<sup>111</sup> Ana L. Fernández, "The Works of Manuel Quiroga: A Catalogue", D.M.A. diss., Louisiana State University (2002).

<sup>112</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.16.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

the sonata. Iwazumi states that the sonata features “varied and often rapidly changing rhythm, fluctuations of tempo, and dynamic inflections” and is “constructed of relatively small sections that link into each other”.<sup>115</sup> The structural coherence is created “through the organization of rhythms”, therefore rhythm takes an active role in the work.<sup>116</sup> However, the sonata was never performed by Quiroga in public due to his injury from the accident.

## Overview of Selected Recordings

### Tempo

Regarding the indicated tempo in this sonata, Antoine Ysaÿe states that Ysaÿe gave some special reminders, “One must play in time...without being metronomic” and “Never exaggerate the tempi nor confuse virtuosity with speed!”<sup>117</sup> Ricci finishes the piece in four and a half minutes, which is an overly fast tempo for this sonata, and it leaves not enough time for the music to breathe in the exposition and the recapitulation. Kremer’s tempo is fairly fast, but still acceptable. In contrast, the tempos the other four violinists employ are more appropriate especially according to Ysaÿe’s reminder.

### Rhythm

The two main rhythmic elements in this sonata, as suggested by Iwazumi, “are the habanera rhythm and the passages that have displaced *sforzando* emphases of an agogic nature”.<sup>118</sup> Because of the fast tempo, Ricci’s interpretation of rhythm is less articulated and thus less convincing, and the *sforzando* are overlooked. Each violinist shows his distinguished interpretation of the habanera section. It is interesting to observe that Ricci employs pizzicato for the first two bars of the habanera.

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<sup>115</sup> Iwazumi, pp.126-128.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp.126-127.

<sup>117</sup> A. Ysaÿe, *Historical Account*, p.16; Iwazumi, pp.127-128. (I use Iwazumi’s translation for the first sentence, which I think is closer to its French meaning – “Jouer en Mesure...SANS Mesure”.)

<sup>118</sup> Iwazumi, pp.126-127.

### ***Portamento***

*Portamento* is employed more frequently by the violinists in this particular sonata as a stylistic device in comparison with the other five. Castleman's heavier and more audible *portamento* fits well to the style for it enriches the piece with exotic flavour.

### ***Rubato***

Plenty of liberty for *rubato* is left up to the performer in this sonata due to its phrasing and structure. Kavakos' pacing is too steady, resulting in an interpretation that lacks passion and excitement.

## Conclusion

Overall, the approaches to Ysaÿe's six sonatas are quite different in the selected recordings. From the aspect of violin performance practice, the characteristics of interpretation of the six violinists more or less reflect the change of aesthetics in the twentieth century. Violinists from the first half of the twentieth century show more freedom, spontaneity, and individuality in their interpretation, and sometimes are more adventurous in their performance. The tempo of a work can be quite different according to the violinist, and it can also vary distinctively in each section. *Rubato* and *portamento* are employed in a moderate manner and notes and rhythms are altered at times. In contrast, the later generations of the twentieth century "are more concerned about performing pieces as the composer 'intended' them to be played, and are less likely to change notes, rhythms, or instrumentation than earlier violinists".<sup>119</sup> They tend to make "safer" choices when making a performance decision. The tempo becomes more consistent, and the uses of *rubato* and *portamento* are more reserved. The changes are believed to be partly related to the recording industry, as hearing themselves recorded made some technical features seem exaggerated.

In general, the interpretations of Ricci, Shumsky, Castleman and Kremer show more individuality and are easier to identify. The tempos they take are quite different -- Ricci and Kremer tend to take quicker tempos, especially in the fast movements, and Castleman has a tendency to play slower in some of the movements. *Rubato* and *tenuto* are often used in double-stop and string crossing passages, and also in places with either a more driving or relaxed character. *Portamento* was found more frequently in the interpretations of Castleman and Shumsky, though Castleman's is heavier and more audible, which is a preservation of the nineteenth-century trend. Rhythms and notes are altered occasionally -- some of the alterations are based on advice received from Ysaÿe or his students, and some of them can be considered a personal choice, and the remaining ones might be showing the freedom of

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<sup>119</sup> Haupt, pp.78-79.

interpretation. The bowings and fingerings are changed at times as a personal choice. Some of the indications are overlooked in the interpretations of Ricci, Castleman and Kremer. It should be noticed that Shumsky draws close attention to the signs and symbols indicated by Ysaÿe and thus his approach to those particular passages is more distinctive than the others.

On the other hand, the interpretations of Kavakos and Kaler are distinguishable in a more subtle way. They follow the instructions on the music attentively and show a great loyalty to the score -- the tempos they take are quite similar and are usually close to the tempo markings and they do not tend to alter the notes or the rhythms. *Portamento* is employed occasionally and *rubato* is used to a less degree. Kaler generally uses a sweet vibrato and Kavakos deliberately uses little or no vibrato in many soft passages.

However, it is difficult to define whether the performances of Ysaÿe's violin sonatas by the composer's students or their own students are considered the most authentic interpretations. The performances by Ricci and Castleman provide some beneficial suggestions, which might have been imparted from Ysaÿe, yet some musical nuances are overlooked. Kavakos and Kaler follow the score and Ysaÿe's indications attentively, yet their performances lack some spontaneity. Although he studied with Gingold for some time, there is no obvious connection from Ysaÿe found in Kavakos' interpretation. Kremer shows a strong individuality and virtuosity in his performance, yet at times it perhaps overshadows the composer's intentions. In my opinion, Shumsky's interpretation is the most musically convincing and is still close to the score. His performance has achieved a great balance between showing off his individuality and bringing out the composer's intention.

All the selected recordings and the ones that are not included in this study are worth spending time to listen to and study. It is helpful to observe different interpretations by individual artists and also examine the change of approaches to the sonatas through

the twentieth century.

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