WEEK 2 PRACTICE PLAN

Repertoire:	Movement:
Bach Sonata No. 1 in g minor	**Adagio (I)**: complete
Vieuxtemps Violin Concerto No. 5	**Allegro non troppo (I):** 62 - 86
Beach *Romance* and *Three Pieces*	***La Captive*:** complete

Click here for marked parts
Click here for this week's videos

BACH:

- ☐ **Finding the left arm position:** Navigating all the chords in a movement of Bach like this can be tricky. One thing that can help is finding the right position with the left arm.
  - ☐ **Try the super-old-school method:** In first position, place the fourth finger on the bottom string, the third finger on the next string up, and so forth, creating a series of double-stop fourths.

    🧐Note the position of your left arm. This should give you a starting place from where you'll be able to use any finger on any string without impinging on any neighboring strings.

    The last knuckle of each finger should make roughly a 45-degree angle with the string.
  - ☐ If your default arm position is too far to the left, try reaching out with the left arm, allowing the shoulder socket to move freely, in Gatsby's "come hither" gesture toward the green light. This will give you a sense of the full range of motion in your shoulder.

for more...

Finger Angle, Simon Fisher Warming Up, part 1 (WO9)

- ☐ **Focus on the perfect intervals:** Now that you've got the ideal position of your left arm and fingers, it's time to move on to fingering the chords. In each, focus on any perfect intervals. For example, there's a perfect fourth between the top two notes of the second chord.
    - ☐ If any of these intervals is out of tune, **leave your fingers where they are and try to determine how it's out of tune** – is either or both of the notes a little too high? Too low? Play each note individually in alternation if you need to.
    - ☐ Once you've found the offending note and which direction it's out of tune, ***lift and replace*** the finger in the correct direction. With the perfect interval in place, play the chord a few times. Then go back a few notes and put the chord in context.

      ⛔Under no circumstances should you slide the fingers around, adjusting arbitrarily as you play the chord – that won't give you any useful information.
    - ☐ To determine which note is out of tune, and in which direction, comparing them with open strings is often the best guide. Alternatively, a finger may have been set up in advance (e.g., the third-finger D in measure 3). In this case, the other notes may need to adjust to that one.
    - ☐ Go through the chords of at least the first half of the movement (the whole movement, if you have time!) in this manner.
- ☐ **Baking in the bow distribution:** Think back to the map you made last week of the harmonic pillars and their relative dynamics. Now is the time to start contextualizing them.
    - ☐ Let's look at the chords in the first two measures as a case study:
        - ☐ If you identified the second chord as more important than the first, you'll want to crescendo into it.

          → The way to accomplish this is more with bow distribution than pressure. Start with less bow in the run leading into this chord. Then increase the speed as you approach the chord.

- ☐ If you hear the fourth chord as a relaxation of tension, you'll want to reverse the process:

  → start the run with more bow, decreasing the speed as you approach the frog.

- ☐ **Apply this technique throughout the movement** to start putting your harmonic plan into action – it will serve you well to start baking this in early, so it eventually becomes second nature.

for more...

The Three Bow Variables

VIEUXTEMPS:

- ☐ **Moment of arrival:** It's a Nathan Cole maxim that **every shift can be reduced to a same-finger slide**, whether it's a slide on the old finger or a new one. Take the first shift in measure 62 as an example, a slide on the second finger from B-flat to D.

  - ☐ The slide connects the two notes, but the arrival note (D, in this case) doesn't sound until you reach it, meaning that the slide itself "steals" from the B-flat.

  - ☐ Practice this shift without vibrato. During the slide, the finger pressure will be less, but still enough that it produces a discernable pitch for the duration of the slide.

    🦩As you practice this shift, try to sense the moment of arrival just before it happens, fully joining the fingerboard as you reach the D.

  - ☐ Practice some more of the slides on the first half of the first page in this fashion – if you're familiar with these shifting concepts already, feel free to tackle all of the shifts through measure 70.

    🧐 For shifts that occur between bows, decide whether they will happen on the old bow (less audible) or the new bow (more audible).

for more...

Never miss a violin shift again (YouTube)
The "Mother Shift" (WO3)

- ☐ **Adding vibrato:** Slowly play the opening of the movement, with vibrato, through the downbeat of measure 68. There should never be a gap in the vibrato – the only time you won't be vibrating is during a slide. Change bows as needed.
    - ☐ For this task, play slowly enough that you never miss vibrating a note.

for more...

Vibrato

- ☐ **Maximize the bow:** Now play through the same passage, maximizing your bow usage. Don't use so much bow that any single note stands out, but see how much bow you can realistically get away with using.
    - ☐ If there are runs that you are currently having trouble with, leave them for now and skip to a section like measure 77 to continue your bow maximization exercise.
    - ☐ The idea is to build freedom in your bow use from the very beginning of your work on this concerto. This way, if you feel you need to scale it back later, you'll be able to do so as a conscious decision.

for more...

Kreutzer 1 (from WO22)

BEACH:

- ☐ **Getting to grips with the G string:** Since a large portion of *La Captive* takes place on the G string, start by setting some dynamics (a singing piano, a singing mezzoforte, and singing "full" dynamic) in three different zones of the string.
    - ☐ Begin with the open G string, playing around with different contact points to achieve your desired dynamics. Mark your estimates for all three bow variables used to produce these dynamics.
    - ☐ Do the same in the approximate "middle" zone of the string, around an E-flat in fourth position.
    - ☐ Finally, do the same for the upper region of the string – somewhere around a C above that previous E-flat, depending on whether or not you have a wolf tone there.

for more...

Simon Fischer Tone (WO12)

- ☐ **The angle of the fingers:** With all the playing you'll be doing on the G string, you'll want the fingers of the left hand to meet the string at an angle that allows for cushioning and a nice wide vibrato.
  - ☐ As you play through at least the first half of the piece, make sure your left arm and hand are always in a position that allows for that ideal finger angle.

    🧐 If you notice a finger dropping at a different angle, see if you can figure out how that happened and correct it.
- ☐ **Vibrato with a metronome:** Nathan doesn't practice with a metronome often, but one of the approved uses is to measure and practice vibrato. Choose a tempo and play three "up"-cycles of the vibrato per click.
  - ☐ Using this method and experimenting with different tempos, try to find out what your default vibrato speed is.
  - ☐ Once you've determined that, play around with both faster and slower tempos, seeing how comfortably you can adapt your vibrato to them.

for more...

How to develop a flexible, effortless violin vibrato (YouTube)