

WEEK 1 PRACTICE PLAN

Repertoire:	Movement:
Ravel Sonata No. 2 in G Major	Allegretto (I): mm. 1 - 22
Sibelius Violin Concerto	Allegro moderato (I): mm. 1 - 53
Brahms / Schumann F-A-E Sonata	Allegro (III): an overview

[Click here for marked parts](#)

[Click here for this week's videos](#)

RAVEL:

- Don't worry about the fingering:** Play the opening theme of the first movement, up to rehearsal [1], not concerning yourself at all with the marked fingering – just play it in first position.
 - This will give you an idea of the clearest, simplest possible version of this section, the way you might play and phrase it if fingering weren't a factor.
 - Notice any stylistic liberties you might be taking rhythmically at this initial stage, and just go with it.
 - Use this approach anywhere in the piece you feel could benefit from a different perspective!

for more...

[Random Finger Generator \(W07\)](#)

- Play around with the bowing:** Play through the opening again, this time disregarding the marked bowings (or phrasing markings, as they functionally are). Play using longer bows than are marked, slurring especially across measure lines and beat delineations as desired.
 - Then play the same passage using the printed bowings. Your experimentation with longer slurs will have given you, once again, a different perspective on how you might phrase this section. Just because the markings

don't slur across measure lines doesn't mean you can't phrase it as if they were!

- Time for some fast notes:** Now it's time to tackle measures 17 - 22. Play through a few times to start getting your fingers around the passage, and pay special attention to where you can put fingers down in advance and/or leave them down.

👉 For example, you can leave down the first-finger A# through the entire section. You may need to let it up to facilitate the fourth-finger reach occasionally.

- In this manner, playing slowly, begin learning not only the notes in this section but the choreography of the fingers.

SIBELIUS:

- Find your core sound:** The opening of this concerto should really speak clearly, so you'll need a ringing, unpressed sound.
 - The first ingredient in this sound will be the ringing of overtones wherever possible. Check the first few notes against the open string to center the pitch, and continue to use the ringing of open strings as a reference with whichever notes you can.
 - You'll want some resistance between the bow hair and the string, but be sure not to press too hard.

for more...

[Tuning the Scale Degrees](#)

- Evaluate the fingerings:** Play through and explore Nathan's fingerings in the opening. The main concerns with these fingerings are, as usual, a choice of which string to be on at any given point (voicing) and where to use slides.
 - Start evaluating the marked fingerings and consider whether there are any changes you'd like to make, and for what reasons. Would you prefer to change strings at a different point? Feel like there's a slide missing somewhere? Now's the time to start making those decisions!

- If there's a fingering whose purpose you don't understand at first, try it for a while, then try a different approach, and compare your results.
- Page 1: rhythms and dynamics:** Part of what makes this piece special is Sibelius's unconventional approach to dynamics. The markings aren't necessarily what you'd expect.
 - 🤔 Consider, for example, the crescendo through measure 8, which indicates its own kind of phrasing.
 - 😬 Also worth noticing are the expressive lines over the notes in measure 20. They're not accents, but you'll have to decide what to do with them.
 - ⚠️ There are also some surprising rhythms throughout – note the oft-overlooked triplet rhythm in measures 21 and 22, as well as the 32nd notes leading into measure 24.
- Many of these rhythmic and dynamic markings are the opposite of what you might expect, so this week, start getting used to the ones on the first page.

BRAHMS/SCHUMANN:

- A little research:** The first assignment for this piece is an easy one – just do a bit of research and read up on the history of the piece, the people involved, and the titular “frei aber einsam” motto.
- Bow task 1: the grip:** The rhythmic motive for the third movement of the piece will require you to feel the grip of the bow hair on the string for all four of the notes involved.
 - Start with the pizzicato version of the motive: on an open G string, pluck the motive as you would bow it, starting with an up-bow motion. The finger will start placed firmly against the string and then release to play the note. The key is not in the release but in the tension with which you set the finger on the string.
 - This first-finger tension will be the same as in the setting of the bow on the string. The energy for the stroke will come from just behind the elbow of the right arm, with hardly any movement of the fingers.

- Practice this stroke on the open string, not spending any more time than necessary in contact with the string. Once the bow makes contact, immediately set and release. You'll need to be further from the bridge than you might think to get this stroke to speak on the G string.
- As you speed the stroke up, the arm will make an infinity-symbol-like motion.
- Bow task 2: the release:** For the accented fourth note in the motive, the key is to set and release. This usually happens on a down-bow in this movement, but practice it on an up-bow as well.
 - The setting of the bow on the string is the same as before. If the bow crunches on release, you're either setting with too much pressure or hanging onto the pressure for too long into the release.
 - Once you've practiced this component, combine it with the previous one. As you practice the motive in its entirety, be very particular about the type of sound you're getting.

for more...

[Bow Best Practices](#) (WO26)