

WEEK 5 PRACTICE PLAN

Repertoire:	Movement:
Ravel Sonata No. 2 in G Major	Allegretto (I): reh. [11] - end
Sibelius Violin Concerto	Allegro moderato (I): mm. 278 - 438
Brahms / Schumann F-A-E Sonata	Intermezzo (II): An overview

[Click here for marked parts](#)

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

RAVEL:

- Shaping and proportion:** The last section of the first movement is a contrast to the rest – the note values are a bit slower and much more regular, and it almost seems like one continuous line. So here you'll want to take advantage of what the piano is unable to do, to wit: shape a line using the tool of crescendoing on a single note.
 - To this end, you'll simply mark the shapes you want for this last section. Find some moments of repose or transition, using longer notes as possible guideposts. Measure 181 is a good candidate for the end of a phrase.
 - Within each longer phrase, mark any micro-shapes. You may want to stress non-chord tones or crescendo during rising or repeated motives. The contour of a line is a good place to start.
 - Follow this procedure and mark your ideal phrase shapes to the end of the movement.
- The low register:** When you're playing on the G string (as you are at rehearsal [11]), a primary consideration is the level of your bow arm. You'll want it high enough that you don't accidentally graze the D string at any point.
 - This may involve an angle greater than parallel with the floor – in which case, make sure the elbow does not rise above the level of the bow.

- When you're higher up on the G string, remember that with the shorter resultant string length, you'll need less bow pressure.

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[Right Arm Setup](#)

- The high register:** The E string needs the least amount of bow pressure of any of the strings, but also has the narrowest margin for error vis-a-vis the contact point.
 - The bow will be moving fairly slowly at rehearsal [14], so the contact point should be close to the bridge.
 - Conversely, with the amount of bow needed to play the unslurred note in measure 214, the bow will need to be much further from the bridge.

for more...

[The Three Bow Variables](#)

SIBELIUS:

- Remembrance of themes past:** Most of the material in measures 278-32 is the same as the beginning of the movement. So make a mental note of the difference here, to avoid looping back around to the beginning. A few things to consider in this section:
 - You'll need less bow pressure as the string gets shorter when you're up high on the G string – see the related topic in the Ravel above, especially re: bow arm level.
 - Additionally, when you're up in those higher positions, it's important that the bow stays straight (lest you lose the contact point) and very near the bridge, with flat bow hair.
 - For the scale in measure 324, you can play the entire scale in one bow as marked, or start it on a down-bow and take two bows to get to the top.

- Brand new key (with double-stops):** With the double-stops starting in measure 373, it may be easier to hear the [previously mentioned Tartini tones](#) in this new key. Spend some time really listening for them before you start fiddling with any other aspects of this passage.

for more...

[6ths](#)

- A tale of two registers, plus octaves:** The third section this week starts at rehearsal [11] and extends to measure 438. For maximum contrast between the high and low registers in this section, allow the down-bow at measure 422 to take you to the upper-middle of the bow, where you'll play heavily, with flat bow hair and a lot of bow speed.
 - Then the up-bow at measure 424 will take you to the lower part of the bow. The hair won't actually leave the string here, but it will sound like it does when you're that low in the bow. Experiment a bit with these two contrasting strokes for two contrasting registers.
 - For the octaves at measure 430, practice by starting on the top A octave and playing one octave per bow, moving chromatically downward. If you play one you don't like, take a moment to assess what you don't like about it, and which finger is the culprit.
 - Decide which finger you'd like to lead the octaves. Then play the chromatic descent using only that finger, and get used to what that feels like. Once you're comfortable with that finger, play through with the octaves again, and with any out-of-tune octave, lift and replace the non-leading finger.
 - In a descending series of octaves, it's common for the first finger to move incrementally high relative to the fourth finger (the other way around for ascending octaves).
 - When you're comfortable with the passage using one-to-a-bow octaves, before you tackle the printed bowing, play it through slurring the octaves together. This will make playing the passage as written feel easier by comparison.

for more...

[Octaves](#)

BRAHMS/SCHUMANN:

- Look out for this Zukerman kid:** Watch [this video](#) of Pinchas Zukerman playing the Intermezzo. Pay particular attention to his use of vibrato. Does the motion primarily come from the arm or the hand at any given point?
 - Also keep an eye on the variety of positions the left thumb occupies.
 - Finally, pay attention to the contact point of the bow. With all these variables, including how they combine to produce the sound and interpretation they produce, decide whether they are something you'd like to emulate, or whether you want to go a different direction.
- Vibrancy of the vibrato:** It's become a stylistic feature of modern pop and musical theater singing to start a note without vibrato. But this week, your goal will be to begin the vibrato immediately, so the vibrancy of the note begins with the contact of the bow hair to the string.
 - Play the first note of the piece, experimenting with joining the onset of vibrato with the resistance of the bow hair catching the string.
 - For passing the vibrato between fingers, practice this concept using double-stops. Start by playing the first two notes as a vibrated double-stop. Then practice the two notes as written, making sure to place the second finger before you cross over to the lower string, and then releasing the first finger. This way, there will be a moment during which both fingers are vibrating.
 - For the slide into the third note, pair the moment of arrival with the start of the vibrato, so that the arrival constitutes the first "up"-cycle of the vibrato. Resist the urge to "help" by accenting with the bow!

for more...

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

- **I guess everything is timing:** Slides have been a focus for the last few weeks in this piece, so you're no doubt used to deciding between new- and old-finger slides and new- and old-bow slides. In the fourth measure, for example, both new-finger + new-bow and old-finger + old-bow are possible, depending on preference.
 - In both cases, the timing of the slide determines how much attention is drawn to it. Since the slide needs to arrive on the beat, an earlier slide means a slower slide, and more attention drawn.
 - The downward slide in the fifth measure is a good example of a "ski slope"-style shift – instead of a strict guide finger, the first finger gradually replaces the second on the way down.
 - Practice this by first shifting with the second finger only. Then start passing the slide from the second finger to the first during the slide. The second finger will compress into the first until it lifts off the string completely (almost riding up the first finger as if on a ski slope). It can also slide off to the side of the first finger, if you prefer.

for more...

[Introduction to Shifting: Choosing and Using Glissandi](#) (WO25)