

WEEK 6 PRACTICE PLAN

Repertoire:	Movement:
Ravel Sonata No. 2 in G Major	Blues (II): An overview
Sibelius Violin Concerto	Allegro moderato (I): mm. 439 - end, Adagio di molto (II): An overview
Brahms / Schumann F-A-E Sonata	Intermezzo (II): Complete

[Click here for marked parts](#)

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

RAVEL:

- Pizzicato two ways:** Try playing the opening pizzicato of the movement as if the violin were a guitar, using the thumb to play the pizz. Try to get all three notes as even as possible.

👍 If you're hearing too much of the G string, turn the thumb so you're strumming with more of the flesh, and use a strumming angle more parallel to the fingerboard. If you're getting the E string, back off the angle of the strum a bit. You can also use a finger to dampen the E string just in case.

👏 For playing the pizzicato normally, try using the middle finger to strum, using the same parameters you did with the thumb previously. You can avoid the E string by changing the angle or strumming closer to the bridge. Above all, don't pluck with a curved finger on the G string – that will make hitting the other strings more difficult, and less even.

- Stylistic slides:** The glissando-like figures such as the one in measure 12 are meant to emulate the vocal style of jazz singers of the time – think Ella Fitzgerald or Billie Holiday. So in the measure 12 example, the F shouldn't be emphasized; the goal is a sliding effect into the G.
 - The amount of slide will vary with the individual, of course, but experiment with a slight nudge with the finger to subtly distinguish the individual notes.

The bow will remain smooth, and the goal note will arrive early, as if with a slight swing.

- The slide in measure 15 is a little different, with a bigger break in the line. So the first note, the A, is worth emphasizing in this case.
- How would you sing it?:** Speaking of stylistic slides, as is usual with these matters, it can help to try to sing the figure yourself to decide how you'll want to play it. So do some experimenting with any of these phrases, singing them first and then attempting to emulate what you sang.
 - Ravel has marked many similar places for slides, but there's plenty of room in this movement to introduce your own, not to mention Nathan's markings.

for more...

[Choosing and Using Glissandi](#) (WO25)

SIBELIUS:

- Across the stringiverse:** The technique in measure 441 may be familiar to you from the Mendelssohn concerto. A prerequisite for this passage is to be able to bow evenly across all four strings using a regular slur; this will also determine where in the bow you want to be.
 - The right arm will be quite active in this stroke, going all the way from the G-string level to the E-string level and back. This is a hard thing to do under tempo, so go ahead and just practice it at tempo if you can, with or without the fingers of the left hand.
 - When you're ready to make the stroke bounce, start by putting a little extra energy into the bow change at the down-bow, directed downward into the G string. Don't worry about the up-bow yet – just see if you can get five clean bouncing notes starting with the down-bow (four down and one up).
 - Then see if you can manage the same starting on an up-bow from the E string. The energy here will basically be directed sideways into the E string.
 - Finally, combine the two motions for the full effect.

- Separately from the bow stroke, practice the actual notes involved using slurs and under tempo.



for more...

[4-String Ricochet](#)

- Octaves, octaves, and more octaves:** The octaves starting in measure 458 can be played either fingered or not, with upsides and downsides to both approaches.
 - Nathan's marked fingerings include fingered octaves. This makes the quicker movement of (for example) measure 466 easier to navigate, with fewer shifts.
 - Fingered octaves can definitely be helpful for the last scale in measure 495 - 496. The marked fingerings are chosen to avoid half-steps between the 1-3 octaves and the 2-4 octaves.
 - Feel free to experiment with both methods. If you've never done fingered octaves before, practice the passage using first-and-fourth-finger octaves to start, and start working on fingered octaves with some scales first to avoid muddying the waters.

for more...

[Octaves, Building Tenths from the Ground Up \(WO11\)](#)

- Embrace the G string:** For the opening of the second movement, ranging up and down the G string, you'll want to find your ideal sound in that register – sink into the string with the bow as a plow would sink into the earth.
 -  Be sure to angle the bow away from the D string.
 -  It should be easy to tell if you're using too much bow pressure or drifting too close to the bridge here. Also remember that the higher up the string you go, the shorter the string gets, the more important the contact point becomes, and the less pressure you'll need.

for more...

[The Three Bow Variables](#)

BRAHMS/SCHUMANN:

- A vibrato for every finger:** Each finger of the left hand tends to have an ideal placement and shape for vibrato. To discover these factors for each finger, start in a middle position – 3rd, 4th, or 5th – and place the first finger. The factors you're looking for are:
 - ① The placement of the left arm (how far to the left or right it is),
 - ② The placement of the finger on the string (does the finger contact the string more or less in the center, or more to the right or left side?),
 - ③ The proximity of the fingernail to the string, and
 - ④ The angle of the last finger joint to the fingerboard.
- For the first finger, it should contact the string toward the left side. This contact will move further right for each subsequent finger. The angle relative to the fingerboard should be about 45 degrees.
- If you look in a mirror (which you should, for this purpose), keep an eye out for any abnormal breaks in the angle of the wrist. Aim for a neutral wrist and then find the appropriate placement for the arm that allows the finger to be relatively straight on the string.
- With your finger and arm placement established, play the note, getting some vibrato going without much effort. Then experiment with where you want to place your thumb. This is mostly down to personal preference and the physics of your instrument, but avoid any really exaggerated stretches or angles. The placement won't necessarily change with which finger you're using, but the distribution of weight you're putting on it might.
- Find an equivalently comfortable setting for the other three fingers, using the same parameters. Feel free to release the other fingers to give the one you're using a little ballast. Then move the whole experiment downward position by position, or just jump to trying it all in first position.

for more...

[Vibrato](#)

- Odd finger out?:** With your preferred settings for each finger's vibrato thus established, now test them by passing off the vibrato from one finger to the next.
 - Pay attention to whether any of the fingers' settings results in an alteration of the whole shape of the hand or arm setup. If one doesn't fit with the rest, you'll have to find a way to adapt that finger to a more harmonious position within the whole.

for more...

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

- One of my turns:** To practice the ornaments starting in measure 13, start by playing them all as straight triplets. This will put the energy and emphasis into the first note of the ornament, as opposed to the ornamented note itself.
 - This will ultimately make these turns clearer and more expressive when you play them at tempo.
 - For a bonus, you may find it fun to apply this procedure to that old Suzuki standard, Fiocco's *Allegro*.