

WEEK 9 PRACTICE PLAN

Repertoire:	Movement:
Ysaÿe Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, "Ballade"	Complete
Bruch Scottish Fantasy	Finale (IV): Beginning - reh. [C]
Kreisler Recitative and Scherzo-Caprice, Op. 6	Complete

[Click here for marked parts](#)

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

YSAÿE:

- ☐ **Level 1: what's going to break?:** This week, in the interest of putting things together and speeding things up with a sense of ease, you'll be using the same three-step process outlined in the [Kreisler video](#), so it may be worth it to take a look at that as well (and/or read below).
 - ☐ The first step is to play sections of the piece up to tempo to assess where things might break down. What constitutes a "breakdown" is up to you to determine – it may be something like having to stop or finding the left hand in the wrong position. But **you're looking for major disruptions**, not small nitpicks.
 -  Mark in your part where these breakdowns occur. This will be useful information to have, and to put things in perspective.
 -  Especially in a piece like this, **you won't want to go through it in its entirety**. In order to avoid overwhelm, keep it to maybe a page or two at a time. Five such things to work on in one practice session is definitely enough.
- ☐ **Level 2: the x-ray:** Once you've marked your problem spots – say, the chromatic run at the end of line 7 – you'll **identify what technical aspect is causing the problem**.
 - ☐ For this purpose, play the section through a few more times at tempo. In the example above, it may be that you've forgotten where in the run to shift. It

may also be tension accumulated from the preceding chordal passage. In both cases, simply practicing with awareness of these hurdles may be enough to overcome them.

- ☐ Accumulated tension may also be a problem at the end of line 15, so practicing leading into this measure from the previous one may help to address it.
- ☐ **Level 3: anticipating instability:** The last step in this process involves **paying attention to any anxiety or tension that creeps in as you play**, with an eye toward staving off problems before they occur.
 - ☐ If you'd previously flagged the end of line 7 as a breakdown point, even if you've since solved the problem out of context, pay attention to whether you still accumulate anxiety or tension leading into that spot – and if so, where it occurs.
 - ☐ In this instance, if you find yourself focusing on the quarter tones at the end of line 6, and maybe resulting in a little too much physical effort, it might not be much of a problem in practice – but small problems in practice tend to get magnified in performance. So it's better to address it beforehand.
 - ☐ If the fingers don't move correctly for the quarter tones without that extra effort, it might be a good idea to practice that section slowly. Make sure to retain the character during slow practice as well.
- ☐ 👁️ In this way, be on the lookout for other potential moments of instability so you can avoid them in performance.

BRUCH:

- ☐ **Get that first line down:** The material on the first line or so occurs throughout this last movement, so if you get comfortable with it early on, you'll find your left hand conforming to these shapes in this key much more easily.
- ☐ Despite appearing somewhat ambiguous, the dotted rhythm will need some clear separation with the bow.

- ☐ As ever, with chords like these in the beginning, your **focus should be on the perfect intervals**, tuning everything else around them. Most of these chords have some sort of perfect interval in them, so get those in tune first. In general, E-flat should be fairly close to the open D string, meaning that the B-flat will be on the lower side to match.
- ☐ For the first chord in the second measure, it's probably best to place the fingers in reverse order, from highest to lowest.
- ☐ Even though the grace notes in the fourth measure are before the chord, it's more convenient to play the bottom two notes of the chord first.

for more...

[3- and 4-Note Chords](#) (2025Q3 Welcome Call); [Tuning the Scale Degrees](#) (RTR)

- ☐ **Arpeggio time:** For the arpeggio figures starting in measure 19, you don't want to get caught with too little bow left at the top of the arpeggio. Even as you practice slowly, be sure to use the appropriate bow distribution, which means saving fully half the bow for the last few notes.
 - ☐ You can practice this by placing the bow at the halfway point and playing the last four notes from there.
 - ☐ For the same-finger shifts in these arpeggios, really sense the shift before the moment of arrival, keeping the finger into the string. Luckily, though the notes of these arpeggios vary, the same-finger shifts remain the same.
 - ☐ With unaccented triplet figures such as in measure 29, resist the urge to accent with the bow as you practice. Instead, keep the bows connected, with concentration in the bow from the beginning to the end of the stroke. This will allow the left-hand articulation to come out at tempo.

for more...

[Arpeggios](#); [Introduction to Shifting](#)

- ☐ **Some quick double-stops:** When you practice the double-stops at measure 23 slowly, focus on getting the fingers and the bow moving in the direction of the next note.

- ☐ Wherever possible, move fingers in advance.
- ☐ In measure 34, practice with the same concentration of the bow for the octaves as you did above for the triplets. This means you won't have to bother with accenting at tempo.

for more...

[Singing Double-Stops](#) (WO16)

KREISLER:

- ☐ **Level 1: what's going to break?:** The first tier in this week's three-tiered approach to getting things faster and easier in this piece is simply playing parts of it up to tempo to assess where things break down.
 - ☐ As much as Nathan stresses minimizing the amount of practice time spent making mistakes, it is sometimes necessary. So pick a section of the Scherzo and play it fast. The idea is not to nitpick small details, but to see what breaks (the definition of "breaking" is up to you – it may mean having to stop, getting derailed after a shift, or losing a degree of control).
 - ☐ When you find a spot where things break down, simply make a note of it in your part.
- ☐  **Above all, don't take on too much in this step and demoralize yourself.** You'll want this process to be useful, after all. Identifying two such spots in the space of a page, or 4-5 total, is probably plenty.
- ☐ **Level 2: the x-ray:** Now, for each of the breakdown spots you've identified, it's time to identify what sort of technical concern is causing the breakdown.
 - ☐ For example, maybe the off-the-string section at measure 18 is breaking down. Play it fast another couple of times to see what's going wrong. The cause could be related to the right arm level, or maybe if the stroke is too heavy it's a matter of contact point or bow pressure.
 - ☐ Start by **identifying what sound you'd like first**, maybe on an open string. Then continue practicing at tempo, but **using small manageable sections**.

♪ Hopefully, when you pin down and fix the problem, you'll register this success for tackling similar passages in the future.

- ☐ Keep in mind that once you fix a section in this way, **the fix may disappear when you put it back in context**. You may need to make a marking in your part to remind you what the fix is – i.e., using the above example, a reminder to lighten the bow or change the contact point coming off of the preceding chordal passage. Then practice eliding between the sections.
- ☐ Using this process, solve the problems of the other breakdown points you've marked and start fitting them into context.
- ☐ **Level 3: anticipating instability:** This last step is all about **preventative maintenance**. The idea is to keep an eye out for little feelings of insecurity as you're playing through the piece, preparing for an eventual performance situation where the pressure will be higher.
 - ☐ For example, you may find yourself feeling slightly unstable around the long note in the second measure, even though you feel comfortable with the off-the-string passage that follows.
 - ☐ In this case, the problem might be that you find yourself too high in the bow compared to where you've practiced the succeeding spiccato. So you'll need some sort of physical or mental cue that will place you in the right area of the bow. Then practicing this transition may relieve the anxiety you were feeling.
 - ☐ Stay aware of any similar physical or mental tension you may encounter so you can head it off at the pass in this way.