Ysaye Sonata No.4 - A Sonata of Past and Future

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YSAŸE SONATA NO.4
A SONATA OF PAST AND FUTURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by
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May 2022
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Abstract

A golden age of violin playing arose during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Different violin schools were established, with their own beliefs concerning technique and interpretation. Some violinists displayed high virtuosity in their playing; whereas, others pursued establishing a noble and simple interpretation following the composer’s musical instruction. Different playing styles were developing, and people had their own preference on one or another. Eugène Ysaïe was able to present qualities from different schools altogether in his playing, and developed a style of playing that was admired by the later generation. Many violinists in the late 19th century were attracted to composing virtuosic pieces, (Paganini, Sarasate, Wieniawski). Ysaïe also composed, and he was able to incorporate different musical elements altogether in his works while still presenting virtuosity. His compositions brought the violin repertoires to an achievement of higher artistic value. This project will explore Ysaïe’s contribution to the contemporary style of violin playing and composition through historical research and analysis of his composition. By comparing his playing with the other playing styles at that time and discovering the unique features in his composition, we will reveal the birth of modern violin playing and composition.
Introduction

Eugène Ysaÿe (July 16th, 1858- May 12, 1931) was one of the giants in the classical music industry in the 19th to 20th century. He was a violin virtuoso, composer, conductor, as well as a pedagogue. This monograph will explore the innovations and contributions of Ysaÿe to violin performance, as well as to the repertoire for solo violin. As a violinist, he has achieved a balance between displaying virtuosity and presenting musical meaning. As a composer, he expanded the limit of expression and imagination in his composition and combined the elements of Baroque, Classical, Romantic and the 20th century; achieving synchronization of musical depth and modern violin virtuosity.

In the late 19th century, violin virtuosity and musical depth were unbalanced. Some violinists were overly showing virtuosity, and others tended to keep a simple and noble playing. In Ysaÿe’s playing, he was able to balance musical content and virtuosity. He absorbed the virtuosity of the Franco-Belgian school but used it as a tool to express musical meaning; he had a unique rubato and great imagination in his playing, which made the music come alive. His playing established a new trend of interpretation for violinists in the 20th and 21st centuries. In his compositions, his poems expanded the possibilities of expression and imagination. The level of creativity was beyond the expectations of audience at that time. His sonatas combined elements from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic periods, and the 20th century, which brought the genre of solo violin sonata to another height. His philosophy of playing and composition for violin was definitely ahead of time. The later generation believed in his philosophy, and established the contemporary style of violin playing and composition that still exists nowadays.
**Background**

Ysaïe was born into a musical family in Liège, Belgium. Most members of his family played instruments. He started learning the violin with his father at age of five, and he was accepted to the Conservatoire at Liège at seven studying with Désiré Heynberg. However, soon after he got in, he was asked to leave the Conservatoire, because he was not making good progress with his studies. This was because Ysaïe was playing in two full-time local orchestras in order to support his family. After he left school, he studied the violin by himself for several years, expanding his repertories and techniques. At the age of twelve, he met the most important person and mentor in his life, Henri Vieuxtemps. Vieuxtemps heard Ysaïe practicing in a cellar while he was passing by on the street. He got attracted by Ysaïe’s sound, and re-admitted Ysaïe to the Conservatoire. However, Ysaïe did not study with Vieuxtemps immediately after he was re-admitted, he was assigned to Vieuxtemps’s student, another legend in the history, Henryk Wieniawski. By then, he had met the two people who had the most influence on his playing and career.

After he graduated from the Conservatoire at Liège, he was playing as the principle violin of the Benjamin Bilse beer-hall orchestra. At the age of twenty seven, Ysaïe was recommended as a violin soloist for one of the Concerts Colonne in Paris, (concert series with a French symphony orchestra founded by Édouard Colonne). From then, his successful solo career began. One year after, he was appointed as the violin professor at the Brussels Conservatoire in Belgium, and that was when his teaching career started. He remained as tenure professor at the Conservatoire, while going on tours as solo violinist around the world, including Europe, and the United States. Among all of those things happening in his life, he was also able to fulfill his love in composition. He composed multiple works including poems, chamber music, sonatas and even an opera.
Ysaÿe was a personal friend of legendary musicians during that time, including Franck, Debussy, Liszt, Clara Schumann, Chausson, and etc. He was also a close friend with Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, who actually studied violin with him. His second wife Jeanette Dincin took over the teaching of the queen after Ysaÿe died. The Queen appreciated Ysaÿe’s teaching, and started a competition under his name, the Ysaÿe competition, and this later became the Queen Elisabeth competition, which was one of the top international competitions even nowadays.
Playing Style

Ysaÿe’s playing style was important in the development of violin playing, he was able to demonstrate virtuosity and musical meaning at the same time, and his interpretation and playing style was a turnover of the violin playing. Ysaÿe had several nicknames regarding his playing, he was called “‘the king of violinists,’ ‘the artist of the bow,’ ‘the king of the violin,’”¹ His first influence came from Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps, they were his teacher while he was in the conservatoire of Liège, and he certainly passed on the features from the two legends, especially the style of the Franco-Belgian violin school. However, he was not limited by the Franco-Belgian school or the playing style of his teacher. He established his own understanding and method of playing which was aesthetically convincing to the contemporary society.

In order to understand Ysaÿe’s dedication to the violin playing style, it was necessary to have a broad understanding of the general violin playing style during that time. There were three different schools of violin playing at that time: Franco-Belgian, German, and Russian school. Violinists in the late 19th and early 20th century all fell into one of these schools, and each school had its own uniqueness. Ysaÿe absorbed qualities from multiple schools to establish an aesthetically complete playing style.

Franco-Belgian School

The Franco-Belgian violin school took over the popularity of violin playing styles in the late 19th and early 20th century. Compare to the other two violin schools, German and Russian, Franco-Belgian school certainly dominated European violin playing at the turn over into 20th century. The French school and Belgian school are considered together as the Franco-Belgian

school because most of the greatest teachers in the French conservatories came from Liège, Belgium. For example, Lambert Massart, great violin pedagogue in Paris was from Liège. His students included Henri Wieniawski, Camilla Urso and Fritz Kreisler. Other professors at Conservatoire National de Paris were Leonard, Vieuxtemps, Marsick and Rémy, all were Belgian violinists. The Franco-Belgian school allowed players to display high virtuosit in the playing style, and this had to do with the history of the school and the bow grip.

The history of the Franco-Belgian school began with an important figure in the violin history, and that was Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755-1824), an Italian violinist and composer in the late Classical and early Romantic period. After the new Tourte bow was created (the new bow was invented between 1785 and 1790), which had a concave shape compared to the Baroque bow, Viotti was the first person who established various modern bowing techniques, especially off-string playing. He also produced an expressive, deep sound with the ability of the new bow, which was greatly appreciated by the French violinists. Viotti’s techniques quickly passed onto some of the most well-known violinists and pedagogues in Paris, including Rodolphe Kreutzer (1766-1831), Pierre Baillot (1771-1842), and Viotti’s student Pierre Rode (1774-1830). All three people later became violin professors at the Paris Conservatoire, and they developed Viotti’s techniques into a suitable practice method for all the students. This was the beginning of the French violin school.

The characteristics of French school playing can be discovered fully in Viotti’s own violin concertos, (he composed 29 violin concertos in total). All these works required brilliant

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2 Ginsburg, 252
3 Gyuhyun Han. *The Franco-Belgian Violin School: Pedagogy, Principles, and Comparison with the German and Russian Violin Schools, from the Eighteenth through Twentieth Centuries*. University of Cincinnati, 2019, 8
4 Gyuhyun Han. 9
technique and expressiveness in the bow with emotional tone. The training of Viotti’s new techniques were programmed frequently as the *exercises des élèves*, “students’ exercises,” in the Paris Conservatoire. All students were required to do these exercises by 1797, even those from other teacher’s studio.\(^5\) Kreutzer’s students include Lambert Massart, who later passed down his teachings to Wieniawski, Kreisler, and Marsick. Marsick’s students included Carl Flesch, Jacques Thibaud, and George Enescu.\(^6\)

The name Franco-Belgian school was coined by the Belgian violinist Charles Auguste de Bériot (1802-1870). Bériot was a student of Pierre Baillot, who was directly influenced by Viotti. Bériot himself had also received advice from Viotti.\(^7\) He combined the virtuosic and singing elements of Viotti and Paganini to establish the Franco-Belgian violin school.\(^8\) Bériot was the teacher of Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski, both inherited the Franco-Belgian school style, and eventually passed onto Ysaïe.

The popularity of Franco-Belgian school in America was spread by the famous violinist and pedagogue Ivan Galamian (1903-1981), who was a fourth generation student of Pierre Baillot. (See table 1 below)

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\(^6\) Gyuhyun Han, 10
\(^8\) Gyuhyun Han, 10
Table 1. Complete family tree graph of the Franco-Belgian school (table from Gyuhyun Han’s monograph)

German School

Besides the Franco-Belgian school, there were two other schools of violin playing created after the invention of the modern Tourte bow, the German and Russian schools. The German school was found by German violinist/composer Louis Spohr (1784-1859), a follower of Viotti. Spohr was one of the last successors of the Mannheim School of orchestra playing. The Mannheim School preferred clean and accurately calculated bow technique with a pure and noble sound. Spohr combined the elements of the Mannheim school with Viotti’s modern bow techniques, and therefore created the new German school. Although the German school of playing was overshadowed by the popularity of the Franco-Belgian school in Europe, there were still a lot of violinists who believed in the German school, and the most well-known figure was Joseph

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9 Gyuhyun Han, 12
10 Gyuhyun Han, 13
Joachim (1831-1907). “Joachim and his followers preferred a clean, ‘noble’ sound made with calculated controlled bow technique; considered learning the historical background of a piece very important to its performance; and adopted a serious, sober emotional attitude for playing.”

**Russian School**

The Russian school was created by Leopold Auer (1845-1930), who was one of the most important violin pedagogues in Russia in the twentieth century. The Russian school was closely related to the Franco-Belgian school, because it was Wieniawski who brought the techniques of Franco-Belgian school to the St. Petersburg conservatoire; when Leopold Auer invented a new type of bow technique based on that of Franco-Belgians, he created the Russian school. Its influence was soon spread from Russia to America, by Auer’s students, including Nathan Milstein, and Jascha Heifetz. Auer also left Russia and came to America due to the 1917 revolution, and he introduced the Russian method to two of the most important conservatories in the United States, the Curtis Institute (Philadelphia), and the Julliard School (New York). (In 1926, he joined the Institute of Musical Art, which later become the Julliard School. In 1928, he joined Curtis Institute of Music.)

**Comparing different Schools**

With the development of each school, different playing style were developed. The Franco-Belgian and Russian school focused on the execution of technical virtuosity. The German school tended to adapt a serious and noble playing of the composition. From a practical aspect, the different bow grip of each school played significant role in the resulting style.

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11 Gyuhyun Han, 13
12 Gyuhyun Han, 15
Each school had their own method of holding the bow. By changing the hand form and finger contact of the bow, it would easily change the possibility of accomplishing difficult techniques. Franco-Belgian school requested players to hold the bow with bended fingers across the bow. (figure 1.)

![Figure 1. Franco-Belgian School bow grip](image)

Figure 1. Franco-Belgian School bow grip

The most important thing about Franco-Belgian bow hold was to draw the bow with the whole forearm, while keeping the wrist and upper arm quiet.\(^\text{14}\) “The wrist position will change depending on the placement of the bow: when playing at the tip of the bow, the wrist must be at the same level as the elbow, not higher; when playing on the frog side, the wrist is bent to bring it in line with the mouth.”\(^\text{15}\) The bow was controlled mostly by smaller muscles from the finger instead of larger muscles. This bow grip allowed the player to hold the bow with the most natural way, the player was able to play with relaxed fingers, wrist and forearm which allowed them to make the most singing and legato sound. Also, due to their way of relaxing fingers and wrist, Franco-Belgian players were able to accomplish multiple virtuosic techniques easily with the bow, such as ricochet, spiccato, staccato, etc.


\(^{15}\) Gyuhyun Han, 24
The German school had a different bow grip. They tend to hold the bow with the finger tips. Spohr explained that the bow was held with the first joint of the index and middle finger, the ring finger and pinky rest loosely on the bow. All four fingers on top of the bow should be placed together, without space in between. (See figure.2) The wrist should be raised to a higher position, but the elbow needs to be lower than the wrist, and kept close to the body.

Figure 2. German school bow grip

German bow grip caused stiffer fingers, since only the tip of the finger was touching the bow, there were less flexibility and relaxation in the fingers. “The German school calls for controlling and feeling sensitively with the end of fingers to emphasize every note for a clear sound.” The low position of the arm also restrained the bow to accomplish virtuosic techniques. Therefore the German school aimed for clean and sensitive sound, but lost its virtuosity.

The Russian school held the bow deeper with the fingers than both German and Franco-Belgian school. The mechanics of the Russian bow technique relied on drawing the bow with the entire arm. The bow was controlled more by arm motion instead of finger motion, with the arm, wrist,

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17 Spohr and Holmes, 14.
18 Flesch.
19 Gyuhyun Han 25
and fingers moving as one piece, the movement began with larger muscles and then to smaller muscles.  

Figure 3. Russian school Bow grip

Russian bow grip was similar with the Franco-Belgian bow grip, with the ability to achieve relaxed fingers and wrist, however, since it was controlled by larger muscles in the upper arm, the right arm would be stiffer than Franco-Belgian school. This allowed the Russian school to have a deeper and broader sound compare to the other two schools, but loses some of the elegance. The Russian school was capable of doing virtuosic bow techniques as well, since the finger and wrist were remained relaxing as well.

Most violinists were obsessed with their own school of playing. Franco-Belgian/Russian school players were obsessed with how much technical virtuosity they were able to demonstrate with their bow grip, and thus losing some degree of the original message from the composer. German players believed in presenting music with noble sound and respecting the historical background of the music, but at the risk of potential loss of technical virtuosity. Ysaýe found a unique balance between virtuosity and musical depth in his playing. He took people out from the

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21 Flesch,
obsessions of the extreme quality of each school, and established a new playing style which was followed by the 20th/21st century violinists.
Ysaÿe’s Philosophy of Playing

Ysaÿe was considered one of the most complete violinists up to his time: he had brilliant technique (from the Franco-Belgian school) which allowed him to master virtuosic pieces, and meanwhile his interpretation of music was convincing and aesthetically pleasurable to the audience. “After Eugène’s appearance at one of Vieuxtemps’ parties in 1877, a Paris newspaper wrote: ‘M. Ysaÿe possesses precious qualities: a beautiful tone, a broad bow, a fine style and warmth; his technique certainly meets the requirements of modern virtuosity.’” 22 He had incredibly rich gifts of musical creativity, and delivered poetry, lyricism and improvisatory nature in his interpretation.

Ysaÿe sought to comprehend the composer’s original ideas in his playing. His interpretation of musical pieces sought integrity and meaning, and his technique was used to reveal the artistic message of the work. He fully respected the composer, and tried to reproduce every original idea that the composer wanted to deliver. “The artist’s first task is to forget himself,” Ysaÿe once said.”23 This outlook was rare for violinists in the late 19th century and even early 20th century, especially for Franco-Belgian players, because virtuosity was such an important element that most violinists admired. Due to their extreme technical ability, musicians of the Franco-Belgian school preferred to showcase their skills, and cared very little about the essence of the musical work. Since most performers cared only to display their technique and showmanship, they often distorted the originality of the musical works even beyond recognition.24 Ysaÿe did not fall into this trend, his playing was truthful and sincere. “He used to say that art was the result of perfect

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22 Ginsburg, 35
23 Ginsburg, 260
24 Ginsburg, 260
harmony between thought and feeling.”

He respected the logic of phrasing and harmony, and was able to focus on the most natural interpretation of the music.

Beyond being faithful to the music and the composer, Ysaïe also understood that creativity and imagination of the performer were necessary in any form of interpretative art, and great composers and music would often offer the space for the interpreter to apply their own creativity. Russian thinkers and composers, such as Belinsky, Serov, and Tchaikovsky especially believed in this. The creativity of the performer should give life to the piece. Ysaïe once said: “Without the interpreter the composition is a voice crying in the wilderness…The interpretative artist is the life-blood of music.”

Russian musician Alexander Serov once said: “An adequate performance does not mean merely a correct reading of the signs which convey sounds: one must develop in oneself a correct understanding of the musical speech, one must grasp the mystery of musical poetry, accustom oneself to ‘reading between the lines’ the message which, though unseen, is clear to one’s poetic sense.” Therefore, Ysaïe applied his own personality and imagination to the music, while showing respect to what the composer has written, he believed the performer and the composer had to live together in order to give life to a musical work.

One of the weapons he had for finding balance between personality and the original musical content was his “highly original and poetic rubato.” Ysaïe had a truly unique rubato, and it came entirely from his natural talent; no one was able to duplicate it. It permitted him to retain rhythmic precision while preventing purely metronomic pulse, which made his music alive. The amount and duration of the rubato was based on his sense of the style, and understanding of the

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25 Ginsburg, 260
26 Ginsburg, 267
27 Ginsburg, 267
29 Ginsburg, 270
spirit of the work. However, as the rubato cannot be measured accurately every time, therefore, during performances, the result of the rubato also depended on his musical intuition and inspiration of that moment, and they were simple and natural which did not break the nature of musical phrases. This showed again his gift at sensing the music in the most natural way. Ysaÿe once said: “you must phrase as you breathe,”30 quoted by Emile Jaques Dalcroze, a Swiss composer who dedicated one of his violin concertos to Ysaÿe, and he also played accompaniment for Ysaÿe during some concert tours.

It was certainly not easy to play accompaniments for Ysaÿe, due to his frequent use of rubato. “‘Ysaÿe placed great demands on his accompanist,’ Jaques-Dalcroze wrote.”31 According to his own experience of accompanying Ysaÿe, he said:

There must be an interpenetration of two temperaments, mutual sacrifices, carefully distributed rubato, efforts to achieve uniform sonority and the utmost respect for the phrasing and dynamic indicated by the composer. He hated all kinds of exaggeration and over-sensuous interpretation and paid particular attention to nuances and regular accents.32 The pianist had to agree upon the decisions Ysaÿe made for rubato, and since Ysaÿe did not like exaggeration, he still wanted to follow what was indicated by the composer. His rubato would usually be compensated in the following bars, which means the general pulse of the music remains steady, and he was only moving within the rhythmic frame. This gave the accompanist the opportunity to maintain a steady rhythm, to balance the freedom Ysaÿe had meanwhile keeping both violin and piano parts together. Sir Henry Wood, the famous English conductor once said: “if he borrowed he faithfully paid back within four bars. It was an absolute inspiration

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31 Ginsburg, 271
32 Ginsburg, 271
Ysaïe’s interpretation was a combination of subjectivity and objectivity. He could always convey the essence of the work and respect what the composer has wrote, but without doing it passionlessly, and meanwhile applying his own artistic understanding and creativity. He wrote in his notebook that the interpreter: “must be at once subjective and objective, he must be able to penetrate even deeper than the author himself into the aesthetics of the work. It is for him to bring into relief all those evanescent details which the author does not underline or even write, details which do not become apparent when the work is merely read.”

From his own writing, we can discover that Ysaïe’s freedom and creativity were based on deep understanding of every single detail of the music and the composer’s intention. Decipher every meaning of the phrase, harmony and articulation, and present it with his own understanding, and that was the reason why his creativity and virtuosity did not take over the originality of the music.

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34 Ginsburg, 275
Ysaÿe’s Interpretation on Certain Violin Repertoires

Ysaÿe as a solo violinist had an extraordinary rich repertoire list, which he performed pieces from multiple nations and periods.

Ysaÿe never missed an opportunity to play in public, and in the early 1880’s he gave some successful concerts in Leipzig and Paris. His repertoire at that time included Adagio and Fugue from Bach’s First Sonata for Solo violin, the Beethoven Romances, pieces by Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps, Rondo Capriccioso by Saint-Saëns, his own Variations on Caprice No. 4 of Paganini, and some other works.35

Looking in his career, he had performed music from France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Russia. French and Belgian composers whose music he performed included Vieuxtemps, Saint-Saëns, Lalo, Franck, Fauré, Chausson and Lekeu. Others included Wieniawski, Vivaldi, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Bruch, Tchaikovsky, Glazunov, Rimsky-Korsakov. He had received great feedback and build reputation on his interpretation of the Beethoven Violin Concerto op. 61. The concerto was brought to public by Joseph Joachim, and Joachim presented the piece in such perfect way that Ysaÿe treated his performance as an unsurpassed model. However, Ysaÿe did not want to imitate Joachim’s rendition; in fact he was trying to avoid any influence form Joachim’s interpretation. The concerto was written with such intelligence that it could be approached by different ways. Ysaÿe presented the concerto with great simplicity and serenity, and he was able to “discard both the fashionable showy virtuosity and the pseudo-academic style of playing.”36 He expressed the essence of this concerto with humanistic content. After he performed the concerto to the public, (he did not dare present it until the age of 32, in 1890)37 he received great feedback.

35 Ginsburg, 41
36 Ginsburg, 285
37 Ginsburg, 283
Ysaÿe had also received criticism from others. For example, Carl Flesch, the Austrian violinist and pedagogue once criticized Ysaÿe’s interpretation of the Beethoven violin concerto, and he thought it was too subjective. Flesch also said Ysaÿe performed Bach Concerto in E major BWV 1042 with too much rubato.\(^{38}\) There was an interesting story of Ysaÿe’s performance of the Brahms Violin Concerto op.77. He first performed the piece at the age of 45. The performance was not convincing; Ysaÿe himself was not satisfied. According to Irma Saenger-Sethe, a student of Ysaÿe, the only person who came to congratulate Ysaÿe was actually Joseph Joachim, to whom the concerto was dedicated. Joachim said to Ysaÿe: “you have shown me a perfectly new Concerto. Perhaps it is more the concerto of Ysaÿe than that of Brahms, but don’t worry, it is as beautiful as ever and you should have no doubts in offering your own interpretation.”\(^{39}\) After that, Ysaÿe worked on this piece for two more years before he returned to the stage with this concerto.

\(^{38}\) Ginsburg, 285

\(^{39}\) Ginsburg, 294
Composition Style

Ysaïe’s compositions played an important role in the violin history as well. They contained elements from Baroque, Classical, Romantic and limitless imagination of the contemporary style. His compositions opened up new doors of musical innovation for violin repertoire. Ysaïe showed his interests in composition from a young age. His early works contained influences from Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski. As a young composer, he wrote six concertos that he later did not consider to be of artistic value, because they were just imitations of Vieuxtemps, and lacked originality.\textsuperscript{40} He wrote one opera \textit{Pier’li Houyeu}, and over thirty instrumental pieces, (some were lost or remained unpublished.) Besides Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski, he was also influenced by Mendelssohn and Schumann, in his attempt to make virtuosity serve for the music. However, none of these early works played an important role in his later career, since they do not represent his mature style, and were not popular in recital programs. What really made Ysaïe a significant composer, were his Poèmes (Table 2) and Sonatas for solo violin. Ysaïe’s Poèmes and Sonatas were his most significant and original works, they demonstrate Ysaïe’s own style and present a unique combination of past and future.

Table 2. List of Ysaïe’s Poèmes (1892-1917)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poème élégiaque- violin and piano</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Scene au Rouet}- violin and piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Chant d’Hiver} – violin and piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Extase} – violin and piano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\footnotesize{(table cont’d.)}

\textsuperscript{40} Ginsburg, 307
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Méditation – cello and orchestra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amitié – two violins and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poème Nocturne – violin, cello and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exil – Strings without bass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Poèmes

The composition of his eight Poèmes demonstrated his creativity and imagination. The style of poem matched his own personality and desire of expression; it provided a lot of freedom for the composer to express his imagination and creativity, without much limitation. Therefore, Ysaïe found freedom in these types to fully express his personality and musical gifts. Ysaïe once wrote:

The form of poem has always appealed to me…It is admirably suited for the expression of feeling and is free from the restrictions of the concerto. It can be dramatic or lyrical, for by its very nature it is romantic and impressionistic; it allows for weeping and singing, for depicting light and shadow—it is a refracting prism. It is free, it lays no restrictions on the composer who is able to express feelings and images outside any literary framework…I think that the poem marks further progress in my creative output…It signifies a decisive stage in my experimentation, in my striving for independence, for combining musical interest with virtuosity.  

The form of poem allowed Ysaïe to express his emotions. He composed based on his feeling and imagination more than structure and harmonies, or any form of calculation or formulas. These compositions showed his amazing gifts of creativity and the sensible feeling of balance between lyrical and virtuosity. He always wanted to avoid becoming the second Vieuxtemps or Wieniawski, and strived to seek originality and individuality in his composition, and the form of poem allowed him to be himself in the music.

The title of each work (Table 2) would reflect the varieties of characters and styles between each poem; there were meditation, nocturne or elegy and etc. This showed again that Ysaïe had complete freedom to write anything without restriction, and these poems were mostly based on images and feelings. The imagery of these poems were mostly inspired by Liszt’s symphonic

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poems.\textsuperscript{42} The instrumentation had no restriction as well, most of them were for violin and piano/orchestra, others included cello, or combination of cello and violin, or string ensemble.

\textit{Poème élégiaque} was the most popular one, and still remains popular nowadays. This poem was an inspiration from Ernest Chausson’s \textit{Poème}, Op, 25, and it was dedicated to Gabriel Fauré. This poem had a well balance between musical expression and technical virtuosity. It was a model of showing that technique served for the music. Difficult technique was there for the purpose of creating musical tension and dramatic emotion, meanwhile the performer still had chance to show off his own virtuosity and abilities with the violin. Ysaïe was able to combine lyrical singing phrases and fast dramatic passages in this one piece, creating huge growth of dramatic tension and emotional contrast. The image and feeling were delivered effectively to the listeners, and the range of emotional growth were beyond expectation.

One unique feature of the \textit{Poème élégiaque} was the use of scordatura. The performer needed to tune the G string of the violin down a whole step to F natural. This showed the incredible creativity Ysaïe had in his mind when writing this work. The piece was named \textit{élégiaque}, and the general mood of the poem was in the sad and dark elegy mood. Due to Ysaïe’s wild creativity and ambition, he was not satisfied with the limitation of color on the violin. He wanted to create a darker color that was beyond the ability of the violin. Therefore, he tuned the G string a whole tone lower to the low F that did not exist on the violin, and therefore creating a really deep and dark sound. This particular change was very successful, and the low register did create a very dark color and expressed extreme sadness of an elegy.

\textsuperscript{42} Ysaïe Antoine, 309
From the performer’s perspective, it is challenging to read this piece due to the change of G to F. The middle section, *Grave et Lent*, contains a long passage on the G(F) string, and the notes are still labeled as if the string was not tuned lower (no transposition), which means the player still reads the note G as the open string, but the pitch that comes out of the instrument is F. (Example 1) This section is extremely dark and sad, and it reflects the reason why he wanted the G string to be tuned to F. The key of this section is in B flat minor, and F is the fifth of B flat. Therefore, he wanted to create the dark color based on the Dominant, which is a low F.

Music example 1. Poème élégiaque: Grave et Lent (violin part)

In the score, Ysaïe would indicate where he wants the player to play on the G string with the number “4” showing on top of the line. In this section, the entire 26 measures at the beginning are all played on G string, but the notes are not transposed down a step. When the performer read
the note G, he/she would still play the open string which was F, instead of first finger which would be the actual G. This in some degree provides efficiency for the performer in reading the score, since transposition would be a real challenge especially to string players. Violinists almost never have to transpose the score in their repertoires, therefore Ysaïe’s strategy of notation is making the reading easier. (Since he was a violinist, he must knew how hard it was for violinist to transpose). However, it still requires some practice especially for the ear to get used to it, because when the player read G but comes out as F, it would be a huge distraction for the ear especially for intonation accuracy. Players with perfect pitch would had a nightmare playing this piece, since their ear are tuned with fixed do, and listening to a note this different with the notation would cause a lot of confusion for them.

The most impressive feature of this poem is still the range of expression and dramatic contrast showed through the music. As the music develops, it goes from calm lyrics to high emotional climax. The beginning of the poem is indicated soutenu et calme (calmly sustained), and the dynamic is in piano. (Example 2)

Music example 2. Poème élégiaque (Beginning)
The music keeps in this calm mood for 23 bars, with some attempts of raising dynamic but does not leave the mood. Until measure 24, the music starts to grow with the *poco a poco crescendo*. (Example 3)

**Music example 3. Poème élégiaque: mm 24-25**

Within 9 measures of growing, the music reaches from *piano* to a climax of *ff*, then to *fff* in the next measure. At measure 33, the music completely left the calm mood set at the beginning of the piece, and reaches a climax of high emotional tension. (Example 4)

**Music example 4. Poème élégiaque: mm 32-35**
The ascending octave scale in the violin part in measure 33 builds the music into the *largamente* section. The syncopated rhythm and the sharp accents with a dynamic of *fff*, and all the fast runs make a thick and intensified texture for the music. The piano part changes its rhythmic texture as well, as shown in both example 2 and 4, the piano always had the same rhythmic pattern, with the left hand playing the harmony on the beat with quarter or half notes, and the right hand repeating the same quadruple pattern with a sixteenth rest on the down beat. Starting from measure 33, the piano part fills in the down beat rest in the right hand, with accented chords on the beat, creating a very heavy and intense support for the violin. The technical difficulty for the piano is no less than the violin part, considering the amount of notes for each chord, and the rapid change of harmony, it demonstrates virtuosity for the pianist as well. Ysaÿe had huge varieties in the harmony, he liked to use chromaticism, and move harmony chromatically. This can be discovered from measures 3-5 in example 2, and measure 32 in example 4, the harmony in the piano part moves chromatically up and down. The variety of harmony creates a colorful palette for the music. After the climax, the music calms down to *piano* again within 13 bars. In measure 45, the music returns to the beginning mood, and finishes the section calmly. (Example 5)

Music example 5. Poème élégiaque: mm 45-46
From this first section, it is enough to demonstrate the huge range of emotional contrast Ysaïe delivered. All the emotional growing up and down happened quickly, but smoothly with gradual crescendos and decrescendos. Nothing is against the nature of human feeling. The composition is largely improvisatory,\textsuperscript{43} expressing varieties of images and emotions with rich harmonies and rhythm. It represented the style of Ysaïe’s own composition, which was based on his massive imagination and wild creativities that combined both musicality and violin virtuosity. Ysaïe was satisfied with this work. He said:

I think that 'Poème élégiaque' marks a definite step in my work as a composer for it contains clear evidence of my desire to link music and virtuosity—the true virtuosity which had been neglected since the instrumentalists, departing from the example set them by the early masters, had ceased composing themselves and had left this art to those who ignored the resources of the violin.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{43} Ginsburg, 313
\textsuperscript{44} Ysaïe, Antoine, 218
Ysaÿe’s Six Sonatas

Ysaÿe found his originality and his own style through his compositions of the poèmes, and they were seen as his representative works. The composition process of the eight poèmes took place from around 1892-1917. In 25 years Ysaÿe was reveling in the realm of poème. However, what really gave him the prominent reputation as composer in the contemporary world, were his later compositions of the six violin sonatas. With Ysaÿe’s creative approaches, each sonata contained varieties of styles from different period of time. The varieties in these sonatas showed compositional possibilities and represented Ysaÿe’s huge contribution as a composer. These sonatas are still overly popular nowadays, and they achieved the deep artistic values similar to Bach’s violin sonatas and partitas.

The six sonatas were written in 1923, about 6 years after the poèmes, and they contained high artistic values. He had achieved the combination of Baroque, Classical, Romantic and early 20th century violin elements with significant musical depth. “Working ceaselessly to perfect his art, Ysaÿe gradually overcame his youthful infatuation with virtuosity and became increasingly interested in the music of the old Italians Corelli, Vivaldi, and Tartini and in the great creations of Bach.”45 As Ysaÿe became more mature in his later years, he was more interested in the Baroque period music, and the Baroque impact was shown in his sonatas.

He had written six sonatas, each one of them was dedicated to a friend of him. The inspiration for composing the sonatas came from a recital Ysaÿe attended given by the famous violinist Joseph Szigeti, and the program featured Bach Violin Sonata no. 1 in g minor. Therefore the first sonata Ysaÿe wrote was dedicated to Joseph Szigeti. However, besides Szigeti’s playing, what

45 Ginsburg, 45
really inspired him was the composition of Bach. These sonatas had huge influence from Bach’s six sonata and partitas, but they were not limited by Bach’s writing. Ysaïe was the only composer who wrote solo violin sonatas with the same (if not higher) artistic values and musical depth with Bach’s solo sonatas and partitas, yet they contained more varieties and elements than Bach’s works which brought violin solo sonatas to another level of artistic attainment. Later generations see both sets of works as the Bible of violin playing, the Old and New Testament.46

**Sonata No. 1**

Ysaïe’s violin sonata No. 1 in g minor was dedicated to Joseph Szigeti. As mentioned above, the inspiration of the composition came from Szigeti’s performance of the Bach g minor sonata. The first sonata has significant similarities with Bach’s first violin sonata. First, both sonatas are in the key of g minor. The structure of the two sonatas are also similar: both have four movements. All movements stays in g minor, except the third movement is in the relative major (for both works). The first movement of Ysaïe’s sonata is a *Grave*, a slow movement with a lot of polyphonic chordal structure, which is similar to Bach’s Adagio of the g minor sonata. The second movement is a *Fugato*, and this matches the Fugue movement of Bach’s g minor sonata. The third movement is *Allegro poco scherzoso*. This movement is in the relative major, B flat major, and this matches with the third movement of Bach’s sonata, *Siciliano*, which is also in B flat major. The finale is different from Bach’s setting of the g minor sonata, this movement contains more virtuosity and it is a reminiscent of Paganini.47 Bach’s last movement of the g minor sonata, *Presto*, is also the most virtuosic movement of the sonata, however, it is in

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46 D. Sekulic, *Solo violin repertoire, with special focus on works of Bach and Ysaïe - Solo Sonatas (and Partitas) for violin: “Bach and (Vs.) Ysaïe. A timeless and endless journey. To unknown.”*

monophonic setting with only one voice, and Ysaïe’s Finale is in polyphonic setting which adds a lot more technical difficulties to the player.

Beside Bach’s inspiration for the piece, Ysaïe was also able to insert Romantic elements from the 19th century into the sonata. This distinguished Ysaïe from Bach, and showed his originality. In the first movement *Grave*, measure 15 to 33 are a reminiscent of Chausson’s *Poème*, which was dedicated to Ysaïe. This section contains a lot of neighbor tones with double stops, and it is similar to Chausson’s *Animato* section of the *Poème*. (Example below)

Music example 6. Ysaïe Violin Sonata No. 1, Grave, mm 15-18

Music example 7. Chausson’s Poeme, Animato

The structure of both works have similarities, with double stops moving neighborly, and with the same triplet and sextuplet rhythm in sixteenth notes in both examples.
Sonata No. 2

If the first sonata is not enough to prove Ysaÿe’s obsession with Bach, the second sonata will definitely prove it. The second sonata begins with an exact two-bar quotation from the Prelude of Bach’s E major Partita No. 3 BWV 1006. (Example 8, 9)

Music example 8. Ysaÿe Violin Sonata no. 2, beginning

Music example 9. Bach E major Violin Partita, Prelude

Ysaÿe quoted the first two bars of Bach’s partita in his sonata no 2, and this makes the beginning of this sonata sound like Baroque music. However, after the first two measures, there is a long pause with a fermata, and then the music suddenly changes into a dramatic and contrasting style for three measures. (Shown in example 8 above) The marking of brutalement, and the accents on every note put this phrase in a Romantic style. After that, with a fermata, the music goes back to another two bar quotation of Bach. This is a new approach that Ysaÿe demonstrated through his work, a direct comparison of two different styles, bringing a time travel between Baroque and Romantic period. The Romantic elements of bar 3-5 could be
interpreted as Ysaÿe’s answer to Bach, and thus creating a conversation between himself and Bach, a conversation between Baroque period and 20th century.

This sonata was dedicated to French violinist Jacques Thibaud, and Ysaÿe was aware of Thibaud’s dedication to Bach. Thibaud would warm up every day with the prelude of Bach’s E major partita⁴⁸, and that was one of the reason Ysaÿe started the piece with the quote from that partita. The movement is titled *Obsession*, representing his or Thibaud’s obsession with Bach’s works. It is impressive how Ysaÿe took an original element from Bach and inserted so much freedom and imagination into it. The original motive in Bach’s partita no 3 is continuous and does not have any rests, and it gives a feeling of obsession. However, Ysaÿe wanted to break that feeling by putting fermatas in between the motives to provide long breaks. So when the audience is expecting the motive to continue, they would be surprised of the sudden pause. It could be interpreted as a joke Ysaÿe played with Bach and the audience. The conversation between Baroque and Romantic styles had provided brand new artistic values to this particular piece that was no less than Bach or any composers in the past, and this also opened the door to new possibilities to later composers.

**Sonata No. 3**

The third sonata has less direct imitations from Bach’s works, either the structure of the piece or the motives are less similar with Bach’s sonatas. However, the piece is still in polyphonic structure. This sonata is one of the most lyrical and poetic piece of all six sonatas. It was dedicated to the Romanian composer, and violinist George Enescu (1881-1955). A friend of Ysaÿe, as a violinist, Enescu had a knowledge of a large repertory. He knew every note of

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Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and also most of Bach’s works. Therefore the third sonata begins in a recitative setting which is an operatic element. The sonata is subitled *Ballade*, suggesting a narrative poetic setting in a single movement. This piece contains full of imagination and improvisatory elements. Ysaïe said himself: “I have let my imagination wander at will. The memory of my friendship and admiration for George Enescu [who was a court musician at the Romanian Court] and the performances we gave together at the home of the delightful Queen Carmen Sylva have done the rest.”\(^{49}\) This sonata is closer to the style of his poems. The variety of colors and expressions broke a new limit to the style of violin sonata.

**Sonata No. 4**

In contrast with Sonata No. 3, Sonata No. 4 goes back to a Baroque setting, and it is the one that sounded closest to a Baroque style sonata. The sonata was dedicated to the Austrian violinist, Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962). A composer as well as a virtuoso, Kreisler liked to re-arrange old pieces into contemporary styles. Baroque music was a large category in Kreisler’s list of rearrangements, he rearranged music by Bach, Vivaldi, Tartini, etc. This was possibly the reason that Ysaïe named the movements of Sonata no 4 in Baroque style names.\(^{50}\) This sonata is in three movements: *Allemande, Sarabande*, and *Finale*. The first two movements are named after Baroque dances that Bach used multiple times in his violin partitas and elsewhere.

The first movement is an *Allemande*, and it begins with an improvisatory introduction. Ysaïe’s use of harmony and the freedom of tempo in the movement, however, do not belong to the Baroque style. In this section, he begins with a motive, and repeats it for four times, however this

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\(^{49}\) Campbell, Margaret. 6  
\(^{50}\) Andrey Curty. *A pedagogical approach to Eugène Ysaïe’s Six Sonatas for Solo Violin*, Opus 27. The University of Georgia, 2003
motive never come back again in the entire piece. From measure 5, the music changes into broken chords. The harmony of these chords are in chromatic relations; each chord goes half step lower than the previous chord. (See example 10)

Music example 10. Ysaÿe Sonata No 4, introduction

The chromaticism of this passage is more typical of the Romantic style of music, and not so common in the Baroque period. The tempo also indicates the Romantic quality of this section. As seen in the example above, the tempo gradually slows down in the broken harmonies. There is an allargando showing in bar 6, and in bar 7 there is another ritardando. The music is written with a lot of freedom for the performer to move the tempo around, it is not meant to be played in strictly metronomic time. These features show the Romantic quality of this section.

In measure 8, the main theme of the piece begins in a polyphonic Baroque style. (Example 11)
This is a completely different setting compare to the introduction. This section establishes the main theme of the piece in the tonic key e minor, which comes back again in the last movement as well. The theme is in polyphonic chordal structure, which is very similar to the first movement of Bach’s three sonatas (Chords with passing notes in between). The theme is three measures long, starting in the tonic chord of e minor, and it travels back and forth between tonic and the subdominant, eventually arriving on the dominant chord at the end of bar 3 (of the example above) with a half cadence, then repeats again in bar 4. The harmony is in a typical Baroque/Classical style which moves between I-IV-V, and this harmonic motion can be found in any Bach violin sonatas.

One interesting thing to be noted was that the meter of this section becomes triple, as in the introduction, the meter is in 4. This is a very interesting detail Ysaïe wrote which shows again his creativity in combining different elements of different periods. In the Baroque period, the Allemande was always in duple or quadruple meters, which means they were usually in 4. In the case of Bach, both Allemande he wrote in partita Nos. 1 and 2 were in the meter of 4. In fact, Ysaïe also began his Allemande in quadruple meter, a reference to the Baroque Allemande. However, in the 18th century classical period of Mozart and Beethoven, Allemande became another type of dance in triple meter, anticipating the style of Waltz. Mozart and Beethoven both
produced sets of German Dances in this style.\textsuperscript{51} Therefore, Ysaïe was combining two different Allemande from the Baroque and Classical period. This feature proved his uniqueness and creativity in the compositional technique, and added varieties of musical meanings and artistic values.

In the middle of the Allemande, the music is written again in broken chords, but maintaining Bach-like style. (Example 12)

Music example 12. Ysaïe Sonata No. 4, mm. 20-33

The broken chords are a reminiscent of Bach’s d minor Chaconne, where Bach also used a lot of broken chord. Note that Ysaïe used three different expression markings within three bars, bar 1 (of the example above) starts in tranquillo, then sensible in the next bar, and then con express. in the third bar. This quick change of expression adds a layer of Romantic style to this Baroque

\textsuperscript{51} Eisen, Cliff. “German Dance”. Grove Music Online (8th ed.). Oxford University Press. 2001
setting. Note he also wrote hairpins on some of the down beat notes, for example in bar 3, and this would leave freedom for the performer to express and create individualities.

The second movement of this sonata is a Sarabande, a triple meter Baroque dance. Bach had also wrote Sarabande in his partita Nos. 1 and 2. This movement is in a fugal style, where the subject keeps repeating throughout the movement in polyphonic setting, with counter-subjects in other voices. The subject is a short one bar folk-like motive in the meter of 3. (Example 13)

Music example 13. Ysaïe Sonata No. 4, main motive of Sarabande

\[ \text{Example 13} \]

The movement begins immediately with this motive, and repeats throughout the entire movement.

The beginning of this movement is in a pizzicato section. (Example 14)

Music example 14. Ysaïe Sonata No. 4, beginning of Sarabande

\[ \text{Example 14} \]
This section contains multiple voices, and the main motive repeats in every single measure, hidden within the other voices. The first 11 measures are played in *pizzicato*, and this adds much more technical difficulties to the performer, because the performer needs to be bring out the main motive from the other voices, and with *pizzicato*, it requirs extra effort for the performer to be able to do that. On the other hand, this is another compositional technique Ysaÿe used to insert the 20th century virtuosity into this Baroque setting music.

In the last section of the *Sarabande*, the motive is hidden in broken chords. (Example 15)

Music example 15. Ysaÿe Sonata No. 4, *Sarabande*, mm. 30-35

![Musical notation](image)

Note that for the first two lines, the motive is indicated in the second note of the chord. This adds technical difficulties to the performer again, because usually it is easier to emphasize the first note of the broken chord, but in this case, the second note needs to be emphasized, which is against the nature of the bow movement. From the third line, it goes back to the natural way with the motive on the down beats. Ysaÿe is having fun creating contrasts within small details, and this shows again his creativity.

The Finale of the sonata is in *Presto ma non troppo*, and it is a reminiscent of Bach’s presto of the g minor sonata. This movement is written with folk-like elements. Kreisler was particularly
interested in 19th century Viennese folk music, and the folkish elements in the finale of Sonata No. 4 is a reflection of Kreisler’s interest. Compare to the previous two movements, this movement is extremely virtuosic with continuous fast sixteenth notes, creating excitement. The technical level of this movement is highly demanding. In this movement, Ysaïe is creating virtuosity through different articulation of the sixteenth notes, the different articulation also creates contrasts in the music. (Example 16)

Music example 16. Ysaïe Sonata No. 4, *Finale*

![Music Example 16](image)

Just by looking at the first two bars, the sixteenth notes are articulated differently, the first measure is played in detaché on the string, and the second measure has slurs, then switches to detaché again for one beat, then changes to spiccato. The rapid change of articulation adds huge technical difficulties for the performer, as well as virtuosity and contrast. If that is not enough to display virtuosity, the repeating trills would definitely create another layer of technical excitement. Constant trills in fast passages was a common compositional technique in virtuosic pieces in the 19th century. For example, Sarasate used it a lot in his virtuosic pieces, such as the *Carmen Fantasy*. Viotti, the father of the Franco-Belgian school, uses the same technique in his violin concertos. (Example 17)

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52 Andrey Curty, 47
As shown in the above example, there are rapid trills in fast sixteenth-note passages which creates a sense of virtuosity. Therefore, Ysaÿe used the same technique in the Finale, and with the different articulations on the sixteenth notes, the music has much more varieties and contrasts of characters. The finale contains multiple elements, the basic texture which is a reminiscent of Bach’s presto, the folkish elements reflecting to Kreisler, and the contemporary violin virtuosity. Ysaÿe showed again the possibility of combining multiple elements from different periods into one piece.

In the middle of the Finale, the main theme of the first movement comes back again, and this recall of the first movement would connect all three movements together, making unity for the entire sonata.

Sonata No. 4 contains elements from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic and 20th centuries, and it fully demonstrated Ysaÿe’s ability and creativity in compositions, combining different periods of music into one piece. The artistic achievement in this sonata was phenomenal.

**Sonata No. 5**

Sonata No. 5 has one of the most clearly programmatic and descriptive content. It is in a two movement setting, the first movement is drawing a musical picture of sunrise, the impression of
the birth of the day. The movement is in the style of impressionism, which was a leading trend in music compositions of the 20th century. The second movement is in ternary form, and the first and third section are in dance rhythms with alternating meters between 5/4, 7/4, ¾, 4/4.

This sonata was dedicated to Belgian violinist Mathieu Crickboom, who was Ysaÿe’s student, and as well as the second violin of Ysaÿe’s string quartet. The beginning of the sonata has simpler techniques compared to other sonatas. The dynamic begins in piano, and stays soft for quite a while, drawing an unawaken scenery. The use of left hand pizzicato is a Romantic period technique that, Paganini often uses a lot in his compositions, in order to display his virtuosity. However, in Ysaÿe’s Sonata, it is not used to show off techniques, but to create the impressionistic style for the music, and the pizzicatos are very improvisatory. The music stays in piano, and gradually getting stronger and eventually reaches to fff at the end of the first movement with broken chords, which is again a reminiscent of Bach’s composition.

The second movement begins in dance rhythms, it is named Danse Rustique. The middle section changes from dance rhythms back to more impressionistic style in bar 22. The rhythmic groups of two thirty-second notes and a sixteenth note with the descending pitch imitates laughter, which can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of Ysaÿe and Crickboom’s close relationship. In the last section, the music returns to the dance character, and the pacing of the last section is much faster than the first section of the movement, creating virtuosity and excitement, eventually finishes with an intense ending.

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53 Ginsburg 341
Sonata No. 6

Sonata No. 6 is definitely the most technical demanding one out of the six sonatas. It is in one movement, like the third sonata, and dedicated to Spanish violinist Manuel Quiroga. It requires brilliancy in the technique referring to the brilliant playing of Quiroga. The music is associating with Spanish elements. In the middle section *Allegretto poco scherzando*, he used the *habanera* rhythm, which is a Spanish dance. (Example 18)

Music example 18. Ysaÿe Sonata No. 6, *Allegretto poco scherzando*

The *habanera* rhythm suggests a Spanish style; Ysaÿe rarely writes in this style, and this showed that he was able to master any style of music into his composition. The 5th and 6th sonata contains its own uniqueness, No.5 contains impressionistic elements, and No.6 with the Spanish dance elements. By comparing all six sonatas, we could realize that each sonata contains multiple elements from different periods of time, especially the combination between Baroque and contemporary styles, (clearly in No1, 2, 4). Also, every sonata is very different, he did not want to make all six sonatas in the same style. His limitless creativity and imagination gave uniqueness to each of them. Therefore, these six sonatas obtains individual artistic values, and together, they brought the genre of violin solo sonatas up to another level of depth and possibilities.
Conclusion

Eugène Ysaÿe made phenomenal contributions to the modern violin playing and composition style. As a violinist, he was able to deliver musical values and technical virtuosity at once in his playing. He inherited the style of Franco-Belgian school, which had incredible virtuosity in the playing, but unlike other Franco-Belgian players, he did not let his virtuosity take over the original message from the composer. His techniques served for the musical content, and he achieved a balance between virtuosity and the originality of the music. This approach had put Ysaÿe as the most complete violinist in his time, and his interpretation established the new trend of playing for the later generation. Violinists nowadays still believed in his style.

As a composer, he opened up new doors of musical expression, imagination, and combination of multiple elements from different periods at once. In his poems, he expanded the range of expression, the music would go from a very calm mood to extreme dramatic emotion within short amount of time. In his first poem, Poème élégiaque, he tuned the G string down a whole step to an F, because he wanted to create a darker color that did not exist on the violin. His sonatas were written based on Baroque style, referring to Bach’s six violin solo sonatas and partitas. However, on top of the Baroque settings, he inserted Classical, Romantic, and 20th century elements which made the sonatas full of varieties. The audience could hear multiple elements from different time periods within one piece. Furthermore, his six sonatas are very different in the structure and texture, some of them are in the structure of Bach’s solo sonatas, with multiple movements, others include single movement poem like style, or dance movements, impressionism, and folkish style. The creation of the six sonatas had significant meanings, which they established a new level of musical innovations for solo violin sonata.
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Vita

Naiyin (Jerry) Hou, born in China, studied violin from the age of 4 with his father and grandfather. At the age of 12, Naiyin immigrated to Toronto, Canada, and continued studying violin with Arminian violinist Martin Bazarian. He attended to an art high school, and played in symphony orchestras and chamber ensembles from age of 12. In 2013, Naiyin was accepted to Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, studied with renowned violinist Keng-yuen Tseng. He pursued both Bachelor and Masters degree from Peabody Institute. Naiyin is currently pursuing the Doctoral degree in violin performance at Louisiana State University, studying with Dr. Lin He. Naiyin is also a current member of the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, Rapides Symphony Orchestra, and Acadiana Symphony Orchestra,