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I, Scott Michael Schilling, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of:
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"The Importance of Transcriptions for the Modern Viola Performer:
A Complete Transcription of Ysaïe's Sonata for Violoncello Solo Op. 28"

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The Importance of Transcriptions for the Modern Viola Performer:  
A Complete Transcription of Ysaïe’s *Sonata for Violoncello Solo Op. 28*

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Abstract

The modern violist has a great selection of recently-composed repertoire to choose from when selecting works for a concert. The challenge arises when we want showpieces from the late Romantic and early 20th Century to display the vast range of the instrument. What we are missing in viola literature are transcriptions of works by Eugène Ysaÿe. I will conduct research on original and transcribed solo viola literature for the concert stage that has greatly influenced the repertoire of the violist. This includes solo works such as the *Six Suites for Violoncello Solo* and the *Six Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo* by J. S. Bach, as well as the *24 Caprices for Violin* by Paganini. These three works have been successfully transcribed for the viola and are regularly used for programming on recitals and concerts. I will then discuss the thought process and approach used in transcribing a work from the cello to the viola. This information will be applied directly to the process I will take in transcribing the *Sonata for Violoncello Solo* Op. 28 for viola. This will conclude with a complete transcription of Ysaÿe’s *Sonata for Violoncello Solo* Op. 28 for the viola.
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Chapter I

A look at Solo Viola Literature

Viola literature contains original and transcribed works that represent a wide variety of musical styles. There is literature for “solo viola of remarkable quality and unimagined quantity for every style period since ca. 1650.”\(^1\) When we look through Zeyringer’s *Literature for Viola*, the number of works that exist for the instrument is surprising, over 14,000 entries. This musical index of viola literature was published in 1985; and the number of works is even greater today with new music being composed all the time. A look through the section on literature for solo viola shows a wide range of available repertoire. Some of the most successful solo works for the concert stage are the *Six Cello Suites* of J. S. Bach, the *24 Caprices* of Nicolo Paganini, the *Three Suites for Solo Viola* of Max Reger, and the Four Solo Viola Sonatas of Paul Hindemith. The solo works of Alessandro Rolla and Maurice Vieux are also important additions to the solo viola repertoire.

A solo work is special because it reveals all that the viola is capable of expressing, musically and technically. The true sound of the instrument is explored and the true abilities of the performer are on display. Each solo piece presents its own set of challenges for the performer. When you are not playing with a piano, orchestra, or other assorted instruments, there is nothing but the performance space to resonate your sound. While this may seem daunting for some performers, the advantages of solo playing are a wider range of dynamics, expression, and freedom of phrasing.

Violists need pieces that further show the flexibility and virtuosity of the instrument. Even though we have transcriptions of the Paganini Caprices, it would be a welcomed addition to our literature if we had a transcription of solo works by Ysaÿe. Ysaÿe is very influential on the world of string playing, specifically the violin. As violists, we are indebted to him because of his urging William Primrose to pursue the viola as a solo instrument. He also influenced Bloch to pursue composition, who gave us the *Meditation and Processional*, the *Suite Hebraique*, and the unfinished *Suite for Viola Solo*.

A transcription of Ysaÿe’s Cello Sonata will give violists another virtuosic work that explores the wide capabilities of the viola. A look at our solo literature today gives us some of the Paganini Caprices that are applicable for public performance. The etudes of Maurice Vieux should strongly be considered for public performance as an alternative to Paganini because they are more violistic in character and technique. Ysaÿe’s Cello Sonata will be a great contribution to virtuosic solo repertoire and allow the violist to further explore a wide range of the instrument.

First we will take a closer look at the composers whose existing music has become standard fare for the performing violist. The most often used transcriptions for the violist are the Six Cello Suites of J.S. Bach. Despite being written for the cello, violists have gladly accepted the suites as they have become a part of our standard literature. It is very common for the suites to appear on audition lists for entry to universities and conservatories, orchestral auditions and viola competitions.
J.S. Bach

J.S. Bach composed the Six Cello Suites between 1717 and 1723 while he was Kapellmeister at Cöthen. The suites are believed to have been written for his good friend Christian Ferdinand Abel, who was a viola da gamba player and cellist in the court orchestra.²

The transcriptions of the cello suites work very well on the viola, especially the first five suites. William Primrose thought “the first five cello suites of Bach, by contrast [with the Six Violin Sonatas and Partitas], are most suitable for the viola and are not fraught with the horrendous problems in double-stopping which Bach wrote for the more lithe higher instrument.”³ The reason for Primrose not including the sixth suite is because a transcription in the original key of D leaves the violist playing in the extreme upper positions of the instrument. Bach composed the suite for a 5-string cello, so the difficulties increase with only four strings. The suite is sometimes written in the key of G for viola transcriptions, so different editions will present it in either key or both keys to show the different versions.

The question often arises regarding what the composer would think of their work being transcribed for another instrument. In the case of J.S. Bach, he “wrote on the principle, not that music is written for instruments, but that instruments (including the human voice) are made for music.”⁴ Bach would often borrow or transcribe works of his own for different circumstances. When Bach transcribed music, he “never accepted it as a


principle that the ideas of his originals should be scrupulously respected. His procedure was to devise a new composition out of given material and, guided by his own musicianship, he showed no compunction in making drastic changes.”

The Violin Sonatas and Partitas are also available in transcription for viola, but the contrapuntal nature and challenging double stops make these works less successful on the viola. Tertis would sometimes perform the D Minor Chaconne in a transcription he had done that changed the key to G Minor. The Six Cello Suites have proven most successful and appropriate for the viola in concert than the Six Violin Sonatas and Partitas.

Alessandro Rolla

The Italian composer and violist Alessandro Rolla lived from 1757 to 1841. He began playing the violin at a young age and was successful as a violinist and violist. Rolla was the first professor of violin and viola at the Milan Conservatory, maintaining this position from 1808 to 1835. Previous to his position at the conservatory he was conducting the La Scala Orchestra and continued to do so until 1833. Rolla was very influential on the string sound of the orchestra, especially in the music of Bellini and Donizetti. He also influenced many young musicians of the time: “Paganini played for Rolla in 1795 and later gave concerts with him (many of them in 1813-14) and remained

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 308.}\]


a close friend, and in 1832 Verdi consulted Rolla when looking for a private teacher in Milan.  

Rolla composed concertos and solo pieces for the viola that have proved to be idiomatically fitting for the viola. His compositions are technically demanding without the high level of virtuosity found in the works of Paganini. Rolla wrote several works for solo viola, among them Two Intonazioni in C and F, Three Esercizi in Eb, F, and G, and one Esercizio ed arpeggio in G. Although Rolla’s works are not widely performed today, they deserve a second look among violists as they are great examples from the Classical period.

Nicolo Paganini

The Italian composer and violinist Nicolo Paganini is one of the most virtuosic performers of the violin who made virtuosity an art form in itself. He lived from 1782 to 1840, and his life is filled with performances throughout Europe, along with interesting personal escapades and several children. One of Paganini’s great contributions to violin literature is his set of 24 Caprices. The Caprices were published by Ricordi in 1820, and were “immediately judged unplayable. They have since become the “Bible” of all violinists and are often used as compulsory pieces in competitions and at music schools.”
The transcriptions of the 24 Caprices for viola are excellent practice tools and are sometimes performed publicly. Some of the caprices prove more viola-friendly than others and a small viola is recommended highly when performing these works. The greatest challenges that arise for the violist in the caprices are the use of fingered octaves and the interval of tenths, which often prove unplayable for the violist. Despite these difficult technical elements which appear in some of the caprices, there are many that do work well on the viola like caprices Nos. 5, 9, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, and 24. These transcriptions are also used in viola competitions such as the Lionel Tertis Competition as well as Primrose transcriptions of Paganini works like La Campagnella in the Primrose Competition.

Max Reger

The German composer Max Reger lived from 1873-1916. His compositional style blends chromatic harmonic language with formal structures of the Baroque and Classical.¹¹ This places him as a “successor to late Nineteenth Century Romanticism and a forerunner of early Twentieth century modernism.”¹²

Reger first took an interest in music after a visit to Bayreuth in 1888 where he saw Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg and Parsifal.¹³ Wagner was an influence on Reger, specifically in his use of polyphony. He studied composition with Hugo Riemann at the Wiesbaden Conservatory and received a teaching post there after completing his highly


¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.
successful *Violin Sonata*, op. 1. He also taught at the Munich Akademie der Tonkunst in 1904, and “in 1907 he accepted the position of director of music at the University of Leipzig.”\(^\text{14}\)

The *Three Suites for Solo Viola*, op. 131d were written in the last year of Reger’s life. It is believed the suites were written in November 1915. The suites consisted of “Six Preludes and Fugues for Solo Violin, op. 131a, Three Violin Duos (canons and fugues) in the Ancient Manner, op. 131b, and Three Suites for Solo Violoncello, op. 131c. His intention was presumably to complete this opus by adding a few works for the viola.”\(^\text{15}\)

The premiere of the work was given on October 9, 1917 by Else Mendel-Oberüber in Bechstein Hall in Berlin.\(^\text{16}\)

**Maurice Vieux**

The French violist and composer Maurice Vieux lived from 1884 to 1957 and is considered to be the “founder of the Modern French Viola School.”\(^\text{17}\) Vieux studied with Theophile Laforge at the Paris Conservatory, and won first prize in viola in 1902. He joined the Paris Opera Orchestra and became principal violist in 1908. In 1918, Vieux became head of the viola department at the Paris Conservatory after the death of Laforge. His students were highly successful at the conservatory winning 103 first prizes in viola, and many continued on to win major positions in orchestras around the world. Vieux

\(^\text{14}\) Ibid.


\(^\text{16}\) Ibid. preface 4.

“honored twenty [students] who studied with him before 1928, when he published *Vingt Etudes pour Alto* (A. Leduc), with each Etude dedicated to one of his former students.”

The *Vingt Etudes pour Alto* deserve a closer look by violists as an excellent source for virtuosic solo work. Each etude is highly chromatic and requires exceptional technique for left and right hand. These pieces are a great tool for violists looking for virtuosic solo pieces like the Paganini 24 Caprices, but with more idiomatic writing for the viola. Vieux stressed the “need for violists of the Twentieth Century to develop a level of technique equal to that required for contemporary violinists.” His solo studies for viola are an excellent resource that would be advantageous to violists seeking to achieve technique of the highest level.

**Paul Hindemith**

The German composer, theorist, and violist Paul Hindemith lived from 1895 to 1963. Hindemith was “the foremost German composer of his generation and was a central figure in musical composition and musical thought during the inter-war years.” Hindemith began his studies on the violin in 1907 from Anna Heger and then went on to study with Adolf Rebner. In the early 1920’s he chose the viola as his instrument of choice for public performance. Hindemith’s first composition teacher was “Arnold

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18 Ibid., 169.

19 Ibid., 170.

Mendelssohn, a great-nephew of Felix Mendelssohn and a composer of conservative cast.”

Hindemith did much to expand viola literature composing seven sonatas for viola, four of which are solo sonatas. He also composed two viola concertos, Der Schwanendreher in 1935 and his Kammermusic No. 5. The solo sonatas are excellent solo works that are filled with chromaticism and challenging double stops. Each solo sonata thoroughly showcases the talents of the violist and the wide range of tone colors on the instrument. The solo viola sonatas are Sonata, op. 11 no. 5, written in 1919; Sonata, op. 25 no. 1, written in 1922; Sonata, op. 31 no. 4, written in 1923; and Sonata (1937).

There is a good selection of solo viola literature that spans from the Baroque to today. The combination of original and transcribed works gives violists literature that demonstrates a wide range of technique and musical expression. The works by J.S. Bach, Paganini, Rolla, Reger, Vieux and Hindemith show the diversity of existing solo viola literature.

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21 Ibid.

22 Zeyringer, 90.
Chapter II
The Transcription Process

Transcriptions have always been an important part of music. The result of transcriptions ranges from artful to tasteless, so careful consideration must be given to the reason and motivation behind transcriptions. Before any piece is selected for transcription, some important questions should be asked of the piece. Is the piece appropriate for the instrument chosen for transcription? If you see how the original piece would be maintained or enhanced by transcribing for another instrument, then consider if the selected piece suits the mood and character of the new instrument. If so, then how does the piece enhance the existing literature of the new instrument? Will it broaden the repertoire or fill in a gap in the repertoire for a specific historical period? Will the transcribed work be suitable for the concert stage? Will it be a pedagogic contribution? All of these questions must be carefully addressed before anyone can begin the process of transcription.

When all of the questions are answered satisfactorily, then it is possible to start thinking of different ways to transcribe the work. Take into account the characteristics of the original and new instrument to see if it is possible to keep the work in the original key. If so, that is very good because the character and mood of the piece can be maintained. One thing that will determine if the original key can be kept is the closeness of the range of the two different instruments. If the range is too great or too small it can cause practical problems of not being accessible for the new instrument. In the case of
cello and viola, questions of comfort and playability are important because what works on one may not work on the other.

The first question that should be asked when thinking of selecting a piece for transcription is, will the piece be appropriate for the new instrument or instruments? It is never advisable to transcribe and arrange large works “that tone-wise are too far removed from the original, such as arrangements of classical string quartets, symphonies and operas for viola and piano.”23 It is also a good idea to keep transcriptions within similar instrumental families, i.e. strings, woodwinds, brass. Successful transcriptions of solo string music are the solo works for violin and cello of J.S. Bach transcribed for the viola, and Paganini’s 24 Caprices. One work that successfully crosses instrumental families is the Two Sonatas for Clarinet or Viola and Piano of Johannes Brahms. Brahms himself completed a transcription of the viola part for the sonata and had them published as Two Sonatas for Clarinet or Viola and Piano in the original 1895 Simrock edition. This lets us know that since Brahms completed the viola part, he must have been satisfied with them as “representations of his abilities and as successful musical works in their own right.”24

The second question to ask is how will the piece enhance existing viola literature? Will it fill an important style or historical period? Will the piece be suitable for the concert stage or will it serve a more pedagogic role?

Viola literature has experienced a renaissance in the 20th century.25 There is a much better selection of music, but the need for an ever-expanding source of music spurs

23 Franz Zeyringer, Literatur für Viola (Hartberg: Verlag Julius Schonwetter, 1985), 54.


25 Zeyringer, 55.
on the idea of transcriptions. A transcribed work by Ysaÿe will give violists a virtuosic work from the 20th century by this master of the violin. All of Ysaÿe’s works are highly technical for the violin and his cello sonata is no different. A transcription of Ysaÿe’s Sonata for Violoncello Solo will be a work for concert stage by only the most capable players, as well as an added pedagogic work that will teach violists a different way of thinking about the fingerboard and viola technique.

The first step in transcribing a work from cell to viola is octave displacement. Because the strings of the cello and viola are just an octave apart, it is easier to bring the cello part up an octave to fit into the range of the viola. Sometimes it may even be possible to maintain the same range in the transcription with a clef change. Each piece will present its own challenges and complications that must be addressed on a case by case basis.

After the first step of octave displacement has been achieved, the piece must be played through on the viola to see what will work technically. There may be some places where the range becomes too extreme and will need to be lowered, but the passage must be studied carefully taking into account the overall structure of the piece or movement. Other issues for consideration are changes in phrasing with the bow. Some slurs in the original work may have to be adjusted to fit the characteristics of the new instrument. Playing on the same string for specific passages may also need modification because of tonal/sound quality issues. Bow directions may also change to better fit the viola.

Now we will take a look at transcriptions of J.S. Bach’s Six Suites for Solo Violoncello, the Six Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo, and the Paganini 24 Caprices.
In looking at these examples, we will see the different methods of transcription put into practice.

J.S. Bach’s *Six Suites for Solo Violoncello* is an excellent example of transcription methods from the cello to the viola. The suites have become a staple of viola literature and function well as works for the concert stage and as pedagogic tools for technique. They are great examples of how octave displacement should occur in works transcribed from the cello to the viola. The C Major prelude of Suite 3 is a good example of octave displacement. Here is an example from cello and viola editions.

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Other than the octave displacement, the edition for viola and cello are very similar in the use of dynamics, slurs, and articulations. This allows the violist to maintain the character and musicality of the piece while successfully performing on the viola.

The one suite that is problematic for transcription is Suite 6. There are two versions for viola, one in the original key of D Major, and one in the key of G Major. The D Major version shows octave displacement and requires the violist to play in the extreme high register of the instrument. Here is an example from the cello version.

The reason for this is that Bach composed this suite for a five string instrument,

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“variously identified as the viola pomposa, the violoncello piccolo, or another undetermined instrument.” Here is an example from the viola edition in D Major.

**Suite No. 6**

BWV 1012

Prélude

Violists often play this suite transposed up a fourth to the key of G Major.

**Suite No. 6**

BWV 1012

Prélude

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31 Ibid., 72.
This facilitates ease of playing because “the technical problems that arise from playing this suite in its original key on a normal four-string viola are so great (in comparison to the cello where thumb position facilitates the use of high registers) that any such attempts have traditionally been ruled out.”

J.S. Bach’s *Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* is an example of transcription from violin to viola. The Partita No 2 in D Minor contains the Ciaccona movement, which is a viable piece for performance on the viola. As early as “1911, Tertis played in recital Bach’s D Minor Chaconne from the violin solo sonatas, in a G Minor version he had transcribed for viola. This was one of many transcriptions that Tertis made for his chosen instrument.” The viola transcriptions of the Sonatas and Partitas are transcribed down a fifth, so the Ciaccona from the second partita is now in the key of G Minor. Here are examples from the violin and viola versions.

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32 Ibid., preface.


This method of transcription keeps the technical requirements for performance very similar to that of the original violin version. This allows the violist to perform the Ciaccona with the same technical requirements as on the violin, meaning the violist can play in the same positions as on the violin, just in a different key. The similarity is only on the most basic level because the thickness of the C string and the slower responsiveness of the viola will make playing the piece feel very different from playing it on a violin.

While the cello suites are more popular among violists the solo violin works are gaining in popularity. However, the violist must be careful in choosing the violin sonatas for public performance because the viola does not always respond with the ease of the violin. Also the change in key has an effect on the brilliance of the original work, if one is familiar with hearing them in the original key. Some double stops may become problematic because of the large intervals, but this is something that is determined by each player individually. William Primrose felt that “in the instances of the G Minor Fugue and the Chaconne, there are few student violists who have a hand large enough to accomplish the extensions that are required.”

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The third example of solo transcriptions is the Paganini 24 Caprices for violin transcribed for solo viola. The problems that arise in the Paganini transcriptions are twofold. First is the larger size of the viola which becomes problematic when double stops greater than an octave are used. Here is an example of tenths found throughout Caprice No. 4.

There is also the problem of fingered octaves which can be highly problematic on the viola, depending on the size of the viola and the hands of the violist. Here is an example from Caprice No. 23 that shows how Paganini uses fingered octaves if the violist is capable.

The second problem is the immense technical challenges of the caprices themselves. They are excellent pedagogic tools, but few violists can tackle such works

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38 Ibid., 47.
for public performance, and those who can, must choose their caprice(s) carefully. In playing any transcribed work it is important to remember that the violists’ goal is not to make the viola sound like a violin or cello, but to perform the music in an expressive way that shows the exceptional qualities of the viola while honoring the character and spirit of the original work.

There are a few of the caprices that successfully work in public performance. Some of those are *Caprices Nos. 5, 9, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21* and *24*. William Primrose tells the story of playing through Caprice No. 5 for Mischa Elman only to have Elman “exclaim ‘It must be easier on the viola!’ If the violist has the technique to perform those flabbergastings, let him go to it. They are a lot of fun and make him feel superior.”39 The caprices are anything but easier on the viola and they are successful for only a few violists, but their pedagogic uses are worth looking into for any player and teacher.

Chapter III

The Process of Transcribing Ysaÿe’s Sonata for Violoncello Solo

When I began thinking of pieces to select for transcription, I first thought of gaps in viola literature. This led me to choose a work by Ysaÿe because of his influence on the string world. I began listening to the solo violin sonatas and discovered in the process a sonata for cello solo. After carefully listening to the pieces, I decided that the Sonata for Violoncello Solo would be more idiomatic for the viola than the violin sonatas.

The next step was finding a copy of the score for the cello sonata. I found an Urtext Edition by G. Henle Verlag. Then I contacted the publisher to ask permission to use their edition as my source for transcription. After they granted my permission to use their edition, I began thinking of ways to approach a transcription for viola.

The first step I took in transcribing was octave displacement. I brought the entire work up one octave to fit into the range of the viola. In bringing up the notation, I had to find places where clef changes were appropriate for ease of reading the music between alto and treble clefs. This led me to make clef changes in mm. 5-6, 10-11, and 23 in the first movement; mm. 18-19, 44-48, and 58-59 in the second movement; there are no clef changes in the third movement; and in the fourth movement, mm. 34-37. These clef changes make it much easier to read the music in the upper register of the viola.

I then began the process of adding slurs and articulations into the part so that the viola part followed the original. I also added the given dynamics and tempo markings along with any expressive information. The final step was adding indications of which strings to use in playing certain passages.
After I completed this initial draft of the transcription, I began to play through the piece on my viola. I very quickly determined that some passages would have to be adjusted to better suit issues of playability and tonal quality.

The *Grave* first movement contains four examples of problematic passages. The first two examples focus on issues of playability and sound quality. The first example is mm. 18-19. The ascending line of thirds in m. 18 and the fourths and fifths in m. 19 are almost impossible to execute on the viola. The tone quality of the viola is not conducive to adequately reflect the character of this passage in this high register. The answer to this problem is to drop these two measures down an octave.

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This brings the technical challenges of these two measures into more approachable territory, and the tone quality of the passage improves dramatically. One reason why these two measures work on the cello in the upper register and not on the viola is because the cellist can use thumb position to assist in playing the double stops and the violist cannot. This is why the passage works better on the viola an octave lower.

The second example from the first movement is mm. 29-31. This passage is also problematic because of the register and tone quality. I chose to bring this passage down an octave to make it more accessible and tonally appropriate to the closing of the movement.

Example 2, mm. 29-31.

Other issues of editing in the first movement have to do with the length of slurs. There are several places in mm. 1-8 where the slurs should be broken up to better express the phrasing. A specific bowing issue with the slurs is found in measure 6 where the slurs follow two sets of triple sixteenth notes, see example 3.

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41 Ibid.
This bowing also occurs in the finale. The bowing may work well on the cello because of the approach to the strings from the C string side of the instrument; but this becomes problematic on the viola because violists approach the strings from the A string, so string crossings over three strings and back again all in the same bow stroke are highly difficult to execute on the viola and maintain sound quality and phrasing. The best way to remedy this bowing issue with the slurs is to divide the slurs up by every set of three sixteenths, see example 4. This allows for better articulation and flow on the viola.
Another change occurs in m. 4 where the Urtext Edition suggests playing the whole measure on the D string.

While this would work well on the cello, the viola looses intensity in the sound when playing higher on the D string. This also makes the beginning of m. 5 more challenging if m. 4 is played on the D string. By playing m. 4 on the D and A strings, it makes the phrasing connect better to what follows in m. 5.

The second movement, Intermezzo, is very challenging because of the use of higher positions to exploit the wide range of colors available on the viola. Throughout this movement, there are places that could be played in a lower position to facilitate ease of playing, but this creates a dilemma. Will the tone quality and color be sacrificed by a lower position or will it enhance the music and better express what Ysaïe was saying in the music? A good example of this is the opening, mm. 2-6, where the passage is played on the G and D strings.

44 Ibid.
This use of the fourth and fifth positions allows for harmonics that make the viola sound much more open than if played in lower positions of first and third.

Other challenges in the second movement are the use of chords in upper positions, like those in mm. 19-20. The use of chords from sixth to fourth position is a technical challenge but the reward is in the tonal effect of rolled chords.
There is one passage that requires octave displacement by lowering the musical line in the pick up to mm. 44-48.

Example 8, mm. 43-50.

This passage is almost impossible to play when in the upper octave and the sound quality is not acceptable with double stops in ninth position and above. If these measures are lowered an octave, the music is much more approachable for the performer and listener.

47 Ibid.
The transcription process for the third movement, *In modo di Recitativo*, was rather straightforward. The biggest challenge for the performer in this movement will be setting up the phrasing because of the recitative character. The pacing must be thought out carefully so that the intensity of the movement is conveyed in the performance. Technically this movement is not particularly challenging, but it will require the performer to sell the music because it is understated.

The fourth and final movement, *Finale con brio*, is another challenging lively movement that recalls the opening theme from the *Grave*, the first movement. There are three passages in the final movement that required careful consideration. The first passage deals with the use of slurs in mm. 13, and 18-19. The original slurs for the cello flow much better on the cello than they do on the viola. This led me to break up the slurs into groups of three notes instead of six notes per slur. In example 10 the first measure is

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48 Ibid.
m. 13 with the original slurs and the second measure is with the changes in the slur groupings. The slurring over six notes on the viola is challenging to make every note speak clearly, so breaking the slurs down to three notes allows for greater articulation and flow of the musical line.

Example 10, m. 13.

Here is example 11, where the same changes have been made in the slurs to allow for greater articulation and musical expression. The first two measures are with the original slurs and the second two measures show the slurs with three notes per slur.

Example 11, mm. 18-19.

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49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.
The second passage that requires some consideration is found in mm. 29-30, example 12. This section of the movement is back in the tempo of the first movement, so the purpose of the music is in creating new colors and a reflective mood. The range of these two measures is easily reached in the first and third positions on the viola; but the use of a high harmonic g on the G string gives the passage a completely different feel than if the g was played on the A string in third position.

The final passage in the fourth movement that required careful consideration explores the upper register of the viola. This passage, mm. 34-37, requires string crossings in the sixth and seventh positions that work well on the viola unlike the passages in the first and second movements that required the use of double stops in the extreme upper register of the viola. Here is example 13 to show the functionality of this passage.

51 Ibid.
The choices made throughout my transcription of Ysaÿe’s *Sonata for Violoncello Solo* are meant to allow for greater ease of playing while maintaining the character and tonal color possibilities of this great piece. The sonata has not been simplified in any way and it will require careful study and excellent technique to adequately perform.

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52 Ibid.
Chapter IV

A Complete transcription of Ysaïe’s *Sonata for Violoncello* Op. 28 for the viola, and a copy of the original work for cello.
Sonata for Viola Solo, Opus 28

Lento e sempre sostenuto

Grave

Eugène Ysaye

Copyright 2009, Scott Schilling.
Finale con brio

Allegro Tempo fermo

44
In modo di Recitativo

Adagio

Lento

poco lento
Finale con brio

Allegro Tempo fermo
Conclusion

Viola literature is ever-changing through new works and transcriptions from the past. Since transcriptions play such an important role in viola literature, it is important to continue adding and expanding the available works for the concert stage. Viola literature is filled with works for solo viola that have become staples of viola repertoire. The *Six Cello Suites* and *Six Sonatas and Partitas for Violin* of J.S. Bach are an important part of the violists practice and concert regimen. The contributions of works by Paganini, Rolla, Reger, Hindemith and Vieux only add to the rich solo viola repertoire. Now we also have a transcription of Ysaïe’s *Sonata for Violoncello Solo* available for viola. This will further serve to enhance solo repertoire and give violists an excellent virtuosic piece that showcases the wide tonal palette of the viola.

Violists should be open to new ideas of transcriptions and be eager to perform transcribed and newly composed works for the instrument. If a violist takes the initiative to transcribe a work for the viola, the most important thing to think about is how the new piece will sound on the viola? Will the sound of the viola enhance the new transcription and continue to fulfill what the composer is saying in the original work? Once the violist has answered these questions for themselves, they can begin the adventure of transcription. As violists, we are incredibly blessed to play such a colorful sounding instrument.

The transcription of Ysaïe’s *Sonata for Violoncello Solo* now gives violists our own *Sonata for Viola Solo*. I hope this transcription will bring new life to this expressive work and give violists the chance to explore their own technical and musical capabilities on their instruments to understand a new way of performing. This is a way of performing
that may cause some to rethink the use of the fingerboard; not just as something with many different positions, but as a tool to portray various colors and tonal characteristics that make the viola such a great instrument. William Primrose felt that we should “think of the whole finger-board as one position, as Ysaÿe seemed to, and as I [Primrose] do.”

It is with this freedom that we can truly begin to express what the music is all about.

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Bibliography


