I, Kuan-Chang Tu, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Violin.

It is entitled:
In the Fingertips: A Discussion of Stravinsky’s Violin Writing
in His Ballet Transcriptions for Violin and Piano

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In the Fingertips: A Discussion of Stravinsky’s Violin Writing in His Ballet Transcriptions for Violin and Piano

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by

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Abstract

Igor Stravinsky always embraced the opportunity to cast his music in a different light. This is nowhere more evident than in the nine pieces for violin and piano extracted from his early ballets. In the 1920s, the composer rendered three of these himself; in the 1930s, he collaborated on five of them with Polish-American violinist Samuel Dushkin; and in 1947, he wrote his final one for French violinist Jeanne Gautier. In the process, Stravinsky took an approach that deviated from traditional recasting. Instead of writing thoroughly playable music, Stravinsky chose to recreate in the spirit of the instrument, and the results are mixed. The three transcriptions from the 1920s are extremely awkward and difficult to play, and thus rarely performed. The six later transcriptions, by contrast, apply much more logically to the instrument and remain popular in the violin literature.

While the history of these transcriptions is fascinating and vital for a fuller understanding, this document has a more pedagogical aim. That is, it intends to use Stravinsky and these transcriptions as guidance and advice for future composers who write or arrange for the violin. Specifically, this document will explore how Stravinsky first approached these transcriptions; how Dushkin and Gautier influenced changes; and how the composer learned to write for the violin idiomatically in a modernist style. In his 1936 autobiography Chronicle of My Life, Stravinsky states that the composer who knows an instrument from a player’s perspective has more tools than the composer who simply refers to a textbook. In this vein, this document hopes to serve as a bridge, using Stravinsky’s transcriptions to assist composers and arrangers for the violin in creating music that is not only fresh and expressive, but truly fitting the instrument.
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Chapter I
A Fruitful Partnership

As Europe began to recover from the devastation of World War I, many artists and composers turned away from the exaggerated emotion of the 19th century in favor of clarity and concision. With the Bolshevik Revolution having made him a Russian exile in Paris, one of the leading art capitals on the continent, Igor Stravinsky took note of these trends, especially neo-Thomism. Based on the philosophy of the medieval scholar Thomas Aquinas, neo-Thomism dictated that art should have structure and discipline, expressing something greater than the artist or his condition. As such, Stravinsky became one of the leaders of the neo-classical movement in music. But even his fellow composer Bela Bartok knew that Stravinsky could not help but leave his imprint on his scores:

The opinion of some people that Stravinsky’s neoclassical style is based on Bach, Handel, and other composers of their time is a rather superficial one… he turns only to the material of that period, to the patterns of Bach, Handel… Stravinsky uses this material in his own way, arranging and transforming it according to his own individual spirit…. Had he tried also to transpose Bach’s or Handel’s spirit into his work, imitation and not creation would have been the result.1

Similarly, whenever Stravinsky arranged his own work for smaller forces, whether it be reducing the orchestra of The Firebird or shrinking The Soldier’s Tale to a trio for clarinet, violin, and piano, his music remained vibrant and powerful.

The same is true for Stravinsky’s collection of works for violin and piano. He transcribed nine pieces from his ballets for this medium—three by himself (1920s), five with Polish-American violinist Samuel Dushkin (1930s) and the last one with French violinist Jeanne Gautier (1947). But instead of writing playable music for the desired

instrument, Stravinsky chose to return to the essence of the music and rewrite or recreate the music in the spirit of the new instrument, even if the outcome was unusually difficult. In this vein, he channeled his music not simply through the score, but through the violin’s distinct personality.²

These transcriptions can be sorted into three categories. The three works completed in the 1920s are exceedingly awkward and as a result, they are rarely performed today. The five works completed in the 1930s with Dushkin are much more idiomatic, even if they remain challenging. To this end, Stravinsky took the advice of another fellow composer, Paul Hindemith, who stated: “A certain ignorance concerning a given instrumental technique is an advantage rather than a disadvantage since a composer thus runs no risk of seeking his salvation in routine constant.”³ In other words, while Stravinsky listened carefully to Dushkin, he also refused to compromise his aesthetic. As such, the nine transcriptions for violin and piano can serve as good models for composers and arrangers who cannot play the violin but still wish to write for it without changing what they intend to communicate to the audience.

Always a provocative figure, Stravinsky over his long life and career offered many opinions on music and art, even if he later contradicted or corrected them. To this end, the failure of his early violin transcriptions (1920s) may be more than just simple ignorance. In his 1936 autobiography *Chronicle of My Life*, Stravinsky mentioned his decision not to write for piano in his chamber piece *The Solder’s Tale* (1918):

> I should have had to use it as a solo instrument, exploiting every possibility of its technique. In other words, I should have had to specially careful about the pianism of my score and make it into a vehicle of virtuosity, in order to justify my choice of medium.⁴

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That is, Stravinsky avoided the piano because he felt that its presence in the group would have led the audience to expect solo passages, and if he had to write solo passages, he would have felt pressure to write technically brilliant music. For this reason, perhaps, he allowed his early violin transcriptions to approach the edge of being unplayable. They are ill-suited to the instrument and not well-designed for the player; even if the performer overcomes all the obstacles, the effect is questionable.

In 1931, while still living in Paris, Stravinsky was contacted by his publisher, the German firm B. Schott, suggesting that he write a work for the young Polish expatriate violinist Samuel Dushkin. When Blair Fairchild, an American diplomat and Dushkin’s patron, agreed to underwrite it, and Stravinsky decided to be ambitious, and he conceived a three-movement concerto. At first, Stravinsky regarded the Concerto simply as a chance to collaborate with Dushkin and learn the violin more intimately. After finishing the concerto, though, Stravinsky found that he wanted to write more:

I had formerly had no great liking for a combination of piano and strings, but a deeper knowledge of the violin and close collaboration with a technician like Dushkin had revealed possibilities I longed to explore.

With Dushkin’s assistance, Stravinsky completed a Duo Concertante for violin and piano and arranged several pieces from his operas and ballets. He also revised two of his transcriptions from the 1920s: the Berceuse from The Firebird and the Suite italienne. These new versions are much more comfortable for the player, and as such, the intended effects are magnified. Even Stravinsky was impressed by what he was learning. In his autobiography Chronicle of My Life, he wrote: “To know the technical possibilities of an

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6 Ibid, 169.
instrument without being able to play it is one thing; to have that technique in one’s finger-tips is quite another.”

Even during their partnership on the Concerto, though, Dushkin’s sensed that Stravinsky’s individual personality posed new problems of technique for his instrument. In addition, Stravinsky was often curious as to what new possibilities could be realized on “old” instruments. Idiomatic violin writing can be approached in two ways—one through the textbook, the other through what the composer wants to communicate. Stravinsky’s early violin transcriptions are problematic in both of these areas, but the later ones with Dushkin enable the soloist to bring forth the composer’s ideas without sacrificing the effect. The philosophy of placing sonority first and ease of execution second inevitably creates some prickly passages amongst otherwise agreeable writing, but these passages are the most interesting aspects of the music. They are not difficult for the sake of being difficult, nor are they trying to make the violin something it cannot be, as in a badly-done transcription. Rather, they are original ideas fashioned with the violin in mind—a modernist response to a traditional Western instrument—and a study of these transcriptions will reveal how Stravinsky changed his writing for the violin without changing his aesthetic.

The early transcriptions, rendered by Stravinsky alone, are the Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi (1926) from Pulcinella; and Prelude et Ronde des princesses (1929) and Berceuse (1929) from The Firebird. With the help of Dushkin, Stravinsky revised the Berceuse (1933) and turned the Pulcinella material into

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8 Dushkin, 186
Suite italienne (1934). Together, they created Danse russe (1932) from Petrushka; Scherzo (1933) from The Firebird; and Divertimento (1934) form The Fairy’s Kiss. They also worked on Ballad from The Fairy’s Kiss, but Stravinsky was not satisfied with outcome, and the piece remained unpublished until his collaboration with Jeanne Gautier in 1947. While the impetus for the later transcriptions was the success of the Violin Concerto, Stravinsky had a more pragmatic reason. From 1932-1937, the composer and Dushkin toured Europe and the United States as a violin piano duo, and his transcriptions gave them fresh yet familiar repertoire that, unlike an orchestra, would not require much rehearsal, and would therefore pave the way for more performances and more income.10

10 Dushkin, 189-190.
Chapter II
Original Versus Revision

Every technical obstacle in music has pedagogical value as long as the problem can be quantified and the solution found. The trouble spots in the *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi* (1926) from *Pulcinella* and in the *Berceuse* (1929) from *The Firebird* are too knotty to produce a satisfactory resolution, but the ones in the revised *Berceuse* (1933) and *Suite italienne* (1934) retain both the inherent challenge and the fulfilling reward. Most of the complexities in the early transcriptions revolve around three techniques: *saltando*, double harmonics, and left hand pizzicato.

*Saltando*

Also known as ricochet, *saltando* is a bowing in which the player throws the bow at the lower end of the middle third and from about 2.13 inches above the string, producing a rebound a “bite.”¹¹ Two to four notes often occur with little difficulty, but 19th century Hungarian violinist Leopold Auer stated that, in an absolutely rhythmic bow stroke, six and eight notes were possible.¹² The more notes in one bow, of course, increases the effort to play them evenly (*Example 1*), and if the music requires the changing of strings, hand coordination becomes an issue (*Example 2*). Some composers, though, write a finger-glissando for the left hand, indicating that exact pitch in execution is less important than the overall effect (*Example 3*). Additionally, the use of the middle section of the bow produces a weak dynamic and a natural decrescendo (*Example 4*).

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In this early transcription, this passage resides completely in the right hand; the only issue is even execution. Still, this kind of bowing as accompaniment is unusual (Example 1).

**Example 1:** Stravinsky--*Serenata* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, m. 23

Ideally, every note in this ascending scale should be heard so that it can fulfill its function as an upbeat. But the ability to provide strong direction to the downbeat requires perfect coordination between both hands and the natural decrescendo might weaken the effect. On the other hand, a sudden change of color to piano just before the G-natural can be artistically convincing (Example 2).

**Example 2:** Stravinsky--*Gavotta, Variazione II* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 9-10
In his *Fantaisie Brillante* on Gounod’s *Faust*, Op. 20, the 19\(^\text{th}\) century Polish violinist-composer Henryk Wieniawski writes a long ricochet bowing as an exciting technical display. A ricochet like this, though, calls for a loud knocking of the bow that would not be appropriate for a more linear phrase (*Example 3*).

*Example 3: Wieniawski--* *Fantaisie Brillante* on Gounod's *Faust*, Op. 20

In measures 11-12 of Stravinsky’s *Finale* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, a ricochet bowing will not come across well at the marked dynamic because the required tension will naturally drop (*Example 4*). The revised version (*Suite italienne*, 1934) allows the soloist to abandon the ricochet bowing in exchange for an effective decrescendo (*Example 5*).

*Example 4: Stravinsky--* *Finale* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 11-12
Example 5: Stravinsky—Finale from Suite italienne for Violin and Piano, mm. 11-12

Double Harmonics

While ricochet is widely considered a right-hand technique, it becomes more complex when the performer is required to match the changing notes of the left hand. Likewise, in double-stopped harmonics is deemed a left-hand technique even though the right hand has much to do. Double harmonics occur through the simultaneous sounding on adjacent strings two natural harmonics, two artificial harmonics, or a combination of them.¹³ The famous 19th century French composer Hector Berlioz notes that however impressive the ability to play, the technique is sometimes not worth the trouble.

Some virtuosi can play double-stopped harmonics, but this effect is so difficult and so risky that composers would be well advised not to write it.¹⁴

The 20th century violin pedagogue Ivan Galamian states why the double-stop harmonics is such a difficult technique:

The double harmonic represents a special problem. Not only should the fingers be set very precisely, but also the bow should have a clear and even pressure. Sometimes one of the harmonic notes will change pitch because of the unevenness of the bow pressure. Generally speaking, it is possible to play out of tune because of wrong and uneven bow pressure.¹⁵

¹³ Yampolsky, 114.
Nevertheless, the early 20th century Hungarian violin pedagogue Carl Flesch gives some advice on how to handle it:

To succeed with simple and double harmonics, absolutely exact placing of the fingers with firm pressure of the upper, and a lighter one on the part of the lower finger, and rapid and pressureless bowing with the stick inclined, are necessary. In no other branch of technique does one have to struggle harder against the malice of the object than in this.\(^\text{16}\)

Yet sometimes a small trick can help. Most violinists apply the bow parallel to the bridge for sonic quality, but harmonics are sensitive to the sounding point and the lower string needs to be closer to the fingerboard. As such, the bow should slant slightly to left to aid with execution. Even so, Leopold Auer notes that the execution of double-stopped harmonics relies not just on the performer’s abilities, but good fortune:

Even with all the natural aptitude and favorable physical prerequisites imaginable, there always remains a certain amount of risk in playing double harmonics in public. At time, when atmospheric conditions raise or lower the diapason, the string will not stay in tune.

In that event it is humanly impossible to make double harmonics sound, and no matter how skillful the performer may be, one or another will misfire, to the great astonishment of those of the audience who have no knowledge of the real cause of the catastrophe.\(^\text{17}\)

Regardless of the complexity, though, two natural harmonics are almost always simpler to play than two artificial harmonics or a combination of natural and artificial harmonics. In his original transcription of the Berceuse (1929) from The Firebird, Stravinsky adds a glissando to a set of double artificial harmonics, raising issues for both hands (Examples 6 and 7). In the left hand, when the fingers travel between first position and fourth position, the distance comprising the first and fourth fingers must be narrower going away and wider upon return. Meanwhile, the right hand must change the sounding

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\(^\text{17}\) Auer, 60.
point because of the position change in the left hand. The resulting effect is rather awkward, and the performer may wonder if the passage is worth the trouble.

**Example 6:** Stravinsky--*Berceuse* (1929) from *The Firebird*, mm. 33-36

Nevertheless, Stravinsky very much desired this timbre and he was willing to alter it slightly for ease of execution. After consulting with Dushkin, the technique in the revised *Berceuse* (**Example 8**) has two natural harmonics, and it is much simpler to play.

**Example 7:** The Execution of *Berceuse* (1929) from *The Firebird*, mm. 33-36

**Example 8:** Stravinsky--revised *Berceuse* (1933) from *The Firebird*, mm. 33 and 40-41
Left-Hand Pizzicato

Pizzicato is the only string event that can be played in either hand. Compared to right-hand pizzicato, the left-hand pizzicato often comes across as thin and ragged, since the finger in action can make no far-reaching movement. Nevertheless, pizzicato is an impressive procedure, whether in rapidly plucked descending scales or alternation with bowed notes in a melody and accompaniment structure. As one of the innovators of left-hand pizzicato, early 19th century Italian violin virtuoso Niccolo Paganini employed the latter technique in his Solo Caprices (Example 9). Outside of the showpiece, left-hand pizzicato is useful in places where the performer does not have the time to change from bowing to right-hand pizzicato. Every note plucked in the left hand must be prepared before execution, and the finger holding down the note to be sounded must also be firmly set or the resultant sound will be unsatisfactory.

Example 9: Paganini--Caprice No. 24, Var. IX

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19 Macdonald, 27.
21 Galamian, 30.
In his early version of the *Pulcinella* suite for violin and piano, though, Stravinsky requests left-hand pizzicato in very tricky passages. In measures 22-24, the shifting and the tempo disable the preparation needed to set up the necessary motions. If the tempo were slower, the execution would be cleaner, but the *Vivace* marking leaves the left hand no time to do the job and keep the integrity of the phrase (Example 10).

**Example 10:** Stravinsky—*Scherzo* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 22-24

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**Respecting the Phrase**

Composers who write for the violin often fall into one of two traps. One is a blind following of textbook orchestration, which leads them to write gestures without thinking about how it fits into the larger phrase. The other is forgetting that the four strings of the violin produce only one sound at a time. Music that looks normal or easy on piano can cause a great deal of trouble on the violin because of complicated double-stops and triple-stops. Such problems usually happen to the left hand because while the soloist can change the bowing, the printed notes are another matter. The following three excerpts from Stravinsky’s early transcription titled *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi* illustrate some of these issues (Examples 11-13).
Example 11: Stravinsky—*Introduzione* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, m. 17

![Example 11](image)

Example 12: Stravinsky—*Gavotta* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 24-26

![Example 12](image)

Example 13: Stravinsky—*Berceuse* (1929) from *The Firebird*, mm. 9-11

![Example 13](image)

The first two excerpts have a large leap with almost no preparation possible, and the latter two excerpts require the soloist to shift frequently. In the first (Example 11) playing a precise F-natural is very difficult on the D string, and even if this is done, the right hand sounding point raises another issue. Violinists play closer to the bridge for the note in higher position like F on the D string; however, the same sounding point is not good for an open G, which needs the sounding point closer to the fingerboard. To this end, a slant bow toward the left is required, but even here; the slant bow increases the risk
of sliding the bow on the strings. In the second passage (Example 12), one large leap (mm. 24-25) is followed too quickly by a demanding shift (mm. 25-26); even if cleanly executed, the resulting effect comes across as arduous instead of effortless. In the third passage (Example 13), the E-flat in octaves (m. 10) happens too suddenly for the performer to prepare. While the octave gesture is not difficult in isolation, the fingers must land perfectly at the right spots or intonation will suffer. Additionally, the performer cannot vary the bowing in this measure, and a break between the second beat and the third beat is unavoidable.

The Perfect Fifth

The violin is tuned in open fifths, and to play most perfect fifths, one finger is placed on two strings. In this vein, the perfect fifth appears to be friendlier than the third, the sixth, or the octave, but the natural curve of the human finger causes slight variations in intonation, and the nature of the perfect fifth insists upon nothing less than flawless intonation. In measure 39 of the Minuetto from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, the G pedal requires the open G string, but the notes above the G pedal on the second beat (the A-E perfect fifth) places the soloist in a bind. The open A and E strings are not possible, and while other solutions are possible, the outcome risks bad intonation. Moreover, one might question if the effect is worth the trouble—-the E is simply a passing tone and the A is simply a neighbor tone (Example 14).

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Example 14: Stravinsky--Minuetto from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, m. 39

In the revised version of the same passage (Example 15), Stravinsky and Dushkin picked another chord tone, changing the fifth to a sixth. The result is not only smoother for the soloist, but magnifies the composer’s quirky rhythm.

Example 15: Stravinsky--Revised Minuetto from Suite italienne, m. 39

If a passing tone creates a perfect fifth, the soloist has few options. In the seventh measure of Stravinsky’s Introduzione from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, the violinist must sustain a B for two beats while the lower voice descends. In order for the B-E interval on the second beat attain perfect intonation, the second finger must be set at the very beginning, and this sacrifices fluidity elsewhere. Immediately after the B-E perfect fifth, for instance, the second finger must twist and give way to the first finger, which risks technical clarity in the passage (Example 16).
Example 16: Stravinsky--*Introduzione* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, m. 7

On the other hand, if the fifth is the last double stop of a phrase, a change of fingers is a good solution because the soloist avoids sustaining a particular pitch for a long period of time and thus not does run into a finger-lift problem (Example 17).

Example 17: Stravinsky--Revised *Berceuse* (1933) from *The Firebird*, m. 35

Repeating Notes

Composers that write at the piano need to remember idiomatic passages on the keyboard may not be idiomatic on another instrument. Repeating pedal notes may look easy to play, but in measure 29-30 of the *Gavotta Variazione I* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, the violin’s four strings (G, D, A, and E) do not allow the soloist to play the repeating on the open A string with D and C on the same string. In order for the soloist to approach the effect that Stravinsky desires, both hands must become involved (Example 18).
Example 18: Stravinsky--Gavotta Variazione I from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi mm. 29-30

As the following passage from the Introduzione from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi demonstrates, violinists on repeating notes cannot use the same finger or stay in the same position because the nature of the passage may require shifting to new positions (Example 19).

Example 19: Stravinsky--Introduzione from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, mm. 21-24

One Extra Note

Sometimes a composer adds one more note to increase the sonority of a chord, and while this change is simple on the keyboard, it is more complicated on a string instrument. In measures 44-47 of the Tarantella from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, Stravinsky entire passage with a pedal A, but the
middle note of the chord jumps in and out of the texture. It appears in measure 45, leaves after the beginning of measure 46, and rejoins later in the measure. Because each string of the violin can make only one sound at one time, the triple stops in measure 45 require the A not to be played on the open A string, but played with the fourth finger on the D string. The rest on the first beat of measure 45 allows the soloist to establish the second and fourth finger frame of the left hand, but in measure 46, Stravinsky’s writing necessitates the open A and E strings in order to play the double stops. This breaks the second-fourth finger frame and because the music continues without pause, the soloist does not have time to set it up again (Example 20).

Example 20: Stravinsky Tarantella from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, mm. 44-47

One answer to this problem would to add the C-sharp as another repeating note. This would keep the fingers in place and stabilize the passage (Example 21).
Example 21: Possible Solution for the Stravinsky *Tarantella*, mm. 44-47

A glance at the piano part, however, brings up the following question: Since the keyboard covers the written middle notes in the violin in measures 46-47, are these middle notes even necessary? Here is the decision that Stravinsky and Dushkin made in the revised version of the *Tarantella*, now part of the *Suite italienne* (Example 22).

Example 22: Stravinsky--*Tarantella* from *Suite italienne*, mm. 44-47

**Changing the Score**

In fact, one of the key adjustments that Stravinsky made to these arrangements was the turning of a complex sonic texture into a simpler one. That is, the original versions doubled a lot of the pitches, and while the keyboard part was idiomatic, the violin part was rife with difficult double-stops and passages of awkward bowing. In the revisions with Dushkin, however, Stravinsky streamlined the process, placing the melody chiefly in the violin and the harmonic accompaniment chiefly in the piano.
In the original version of the *Introduzione*, only four measures out of the total 44 measures contain a single-line melody. In the revision, by contrast, 29 measures are single-line and the remaining 16 measures have very playable double-stops (*Examples 23 and 24*). Similarly, in the *Gavotta*, the original version calls for double stops in 25 of the 32 measures, while the revision leaves a great deal of the harmonic content to the piano (*Example 25 and 26*). Even with short fragments from the scores, the visual difference in each set is striking.

**Example 23:** Stravinsky--*Introduzione* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 1-9

![Example 23](image)

**Example 24:** Stravinsky--*Introduzione* from *Suite italienne*, mm.1-9

![Example 24](image)

21
Example 25: Stravinsky--*Gavotta* from *Suite italienne*, mm.1-10

![Example 25: Stravinsky--*Gavotta* from *Suite italienne*, mm.1-10](image)

Example 26: Stravinsky--*Gavotta* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 1-10

![Example 26: Stravinsky--*Gavotta* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 1-10](image)

Arrangement of the Chord

Stravinsky’s voicing are important to the violinist because the choice of note in the violin determines the effort with which the soloist can transition from one passage to another. *While* various arrangements of a chord will sound different, the function will always be the same due to the left hand of the piano in charge of the bottom line.
In measures 47 of his revised *Tarantella* from *Suite italienne* (**Example 22**), for instance, Stravinsky changes the third finger D to an open D, which not only enables him to make the D minor chord more resonant, but make the triple stops easier to play. In measure 17 of the *Serenata* from the same suite, Stravinsky alters only one note from the original version (F-natural) to the revised version (B-flat), but even this simple switch solves two problems. In the original version, the soloist must shift between first position and third position constantly, and the modification of the note eliminates the shifting and keeps the first and third fingers on the strings. Moreover, the new fingerings are far less complicated, resulting in a more comfortable hand position and thus a more resonant sound. As the American composer and theorist Walter Piston states in his 1955 textbook *Orchestration*, a good rule of thumb for strings is to place higher-numbered fingers on higher strings.\(^{23}\) Indeed, the fingering of 1332 in the revised version is superior to the awkward 3211 fingering in the original version (**Examples 27 and 28**).

**Example 27:** Stravinsky--*Serenata* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, m. 17

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Example 28: Stravinsky—Serenata from *Suite italienne*, m. 17

Piston correctly observes that the interval of a sixth is a more secure fingering than the interval of a third. In measures 10-14 in both versions of the *Introduzione* to the same suite, the melodic line is the same, but the A-natural pedal moves to a lower octave, changing the interval of a third in the original to the interval of a sixth in the revision. Hence, in the first two measures of the revised version, the double-stops come across not a series of chords but as a single-line melody (Examples 29 and 30).

Example 29: Stravinsky—*Introduzione* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 10-14

Example 30: Stravinsky—*Introduzione* from *Suite italienne*, mm. 10-14
In measures 123-124 of the *Finale* of the same suite, Stravinsky moves the melodic line to a higher octave, eliminating the original quadruple-stops and leaving more time for the left hand to use an open string on the second beat of the second measure. From an artistic standpoint, though, the melody in a higher octave gives it a brighter color that brings it immediately to the listener’s ear (Examples 31 and 32).

**Example 31:** Stravinsky--*Finale* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 123-124

![Example 31](image1)

**Example 32:** Stravinsky--*Finale* from *Suite italienne*, mm. 123-124

![Example 32](image2)

**Bowing for the Better**

Good bowing decisions not only lead to a smoother operation of the right hand, but alleviate the burden of the left hand. Sometimes bowing is made for visual display, but bowing that produces unnecessary difficulties is usually uncomfortable to watch anyway. More importantly, bowing choices are often made to prepare for a solid execution of an upcoming passage. Yet violinists also make decisions based on how the music is notated. Trills under a slur, for instance, often induce the violinist to sustain the
trill as long as possible, leaving less time for the next required motion (Example 33). But if no slur is written, the trill would likely be treated as an accent or an ornament, and effect would take priority over line. This interpretation produces a discontinuous bowing, and it allows the left hand to move freely (Example 34).

Example 33: Stravinsky--Finale from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, mm.15-18

Example 34: Stravinsky--Finale from Suite italienne, mm. 15-18

Most composers know that bowing has a finite length and to this end, they sometimes tell the string player when to change the direction of the bow. But an uneven bow can cause just as many problems. In measures 21-29 of the Finale from the Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, for instance, the violinist has the time to change bowing direction, but the sheer number of long note values and the shortage of short note values produce a disproportionate number of down-bows and up-bows, and as such, the soloist constantly runs the risk of running out of bow (Example 35).
Example 35: Stravinsky--Finale from Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi, mm. 21-29

In his revision of the Finale for the Suite italienne, however, Stravinsky makes two major changes. First, in measure 22, he adds a slur over the last three notes, allowing the soloist to change from the detached spiccat o bowing (middle of the bow) to the frog (butt of the bow) and thus more bow for the long high E-natural. Second, in measure 26, he directs a bowing change so that the soloist will have more down-bows to come (Example 36).

Example 36: Stravinsky--Finale from Suite italienne, mm. 21-29

Some bowing situations have more options than others. If a string player must alternate repeatedly from lower string to higher string, a down-up motion is the only choice. But if the pattern is from higher string to lower string, the player can either start off string from the frog for a down-up motion or from the tip of the bow for an up-down motion. In the original chamber version of his Tarantella from Pulcinella, Stravinsky in measures 26-27 writes a down-bow on the beginning of the eighth-note figure and an up-bow on the slurred two notes (Example 37). But no matter the written articulation
pattern, triplets with the bow on the string are best rendered with two notes slurred on a
down-bow and the remaining note as an up-bow. With Dushkin’s advice, Stravinsky
made the bowing change in the *Suite italienne* (Example 38).

**Example 37:** Stravinsky--*Tarantella* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 25-27

![Example 37: Stravinsky--*Tarantella* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 25-27](image)

**Example 38:** Stravinsky--*Tarantella* from *Suite italienne*, mm. 25-27

![Example 38: Stravinsky--*Tarantella* from *Suite italienne*, mm. 25-27](image)
Chapter III

The Value of Idiomatic Writing

The following chapters discuss Stravinsky’s six transcriptions for violin and piano of the 1930s and 1940s. As noted previously, these transcriptions were finished in collaboration with leading violinists, and as such, they display an increase in idiomatic violin writing. One important aspect that Stravinsky had to consider was the process from an orchestral ballet score to a version for violin and piano and how that version should be adapted to these instruments. Another is giving the soloist time to prepare for radically different or unusually complicated passages and envisioning how he or she would use the hands as a way to anticipate a potential problem and design an appropriate solution. The performer can isolate a difficult passage in the practice room, yet he or she can still botch it on stage, especially if the composer gives the performer little space in the score to get ready. Composers who write for string players can help them realize the music with an array of small tricks like the open string, the rest, the comma, harmonics, rhythm, bowing, and even left-hand pizzicato.

The Open String

The eminent 20th century Soviet violin pedagogue I.M. Yampolsky stated the following regarding the open string:

By using the open strings, the violinist is able to change the position of the hand unnoticeable and to avoid the extraneous sounds which occur when changing positions in other ways. This device is particularly apt for changes to distant positions.\(^{24}\)

\(^{24}\)Yampolsky, 43.
In the *Sinfonia* to his *Divertimento*, Stravinsky makes notable changes for the soloist. In the fourth and eighth measures of the following excerpts, Stravinsky moves from standard writing to virtuosic display, but he gives the soloist the tools to scale the obstacle. In the chamber version, the open A facilitates the large leap of the left hand, and the rest in the eighth measure gives more time for the soloist to shift. Moreover the open string creates a brighter sonority that creates excitement (Examples 39 and 40).

**Example 39:** Stravinsky--*Sinfonia* from *Divertimento, Suite Symphonique*, mm. 127-135
Example 40: Stravinsky—*Sinfonia* from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 100-108

The Rest

In the overcoming of a technical hurdle, the rest is just as effective as an open string, and the use of other instruments—namely the piano—can ensure that the phrase remains intact. In measure 49 of the *Scherzo* from *The Firebird*, the violinist must switch from the swaying lyrical line of the clarinet to dazzling octave leaps. As such, the piano ceases with the snaking chromatic line of the viola to articulate an E dominant seventh chord on the downbeat, giving the violinist time to frame the first and fourth fingers for the octave leaps (*Examples 41 and 42*). In the *Sinfonia* from the *Divertimento* for violin and piano, the rest allows the performers to change mood without breaking the flow of the music. The lyrical phrase and the intense tremolos are assigned separately to woodwinds and strings, but in the chamber version, the violinist must jump between these characters three times in five measures. To this end, Stravinsky’s sixteenth rest permits the right hand to change strings (E to G); allows the soloist to switch to the middle of the bow for the *spiccato* bowing; and gives the soloist the space to trade one emotional state for another (*Examples 43 and 44*).
**Example 41:** Stravinsky--*The Firebird* for orchestra, rehearsal numbers 60-61

**Example 42:** Stravinsky--*Scherzo* from *The Firebird* for Violin and Piano, mm. 45-51
Example 43: Stravinsky—Sinfonia from *Divertimento, Suite Symphonique*, mm. 51-55
**Example 44**: Stravinsky—Sinfonia from Divertimento for Violin and Piano, mm. 51-55

**Left-Hand Pizzicato**

In measures 45-50 of the Danse Russe from Petrushka for violin and piano, Stravinsky uses the violinist’s left hand as a way to create preparation time for the right hand. The ponticello in measure 49 requires the bow to set up very close to the bridge, and neither bowing nor right-hand pizzicato can effective sound the chord in measure 48 without putting at risk the desired effect in the next measure. In this vein, left-hand pizzicato not only makes the right hand free to move the bow for the ponticello, but also generates a variety in the timbre (Example 45).
Example 45: Stravinsky--*Danse Russe* from ballet *Petrushka*, mm.45-50

![Musical notation](image)

**The Comma**

While the rest is useful for technical preparation and mood change, the comma can accomplish this without altering rhythm or phrase. In measure 37 of the revised *Berceuse* from *The Firebird*, the comma in the violin and the unresolved seventh chord in the piano create tension, but it also gives time for the soloist to organize the fingers for the perfect fifth in the next measure (Example 46). This is crucial because Stravinsky begins the principal theme again, reinforcing its seductive and mysterious character with the markings of *piano* and *dolce*.

Example 46: Stravinsky--revised *Berceuse* from *The Firebird* mm. 36-39

![Musical notation](image)
Natural Harmonics

Harmonics is a highly expressive feature of the string instrument, but the wise composer can use the technique as a portal to more interesting moments. Yampolsky writes that:

It is well known that a natural harmonic continues its sound for a short while after the finger producing it ceases to touch the string. One is able to use the feature of natural harmonics to make unnoticeable position changes. The finger producing the natural harmonics, which is not firmly pressed on string, frees the fingers and hand from tension at the time of moving to the new position, allowing the hand to move unnoticeably to the new position under cover of the harmonic which is still sounding.25

While harmonics can earn the left hand extra time to shift, they will not ring long after their initial sounding without the involvement of the bow. At the same time, the bow cannot stay on the string too much; otherwise the open string timbre will dominate. Thus, the bow should either move off-string or to another string. In Minuetto from Pulcinella and its revised chamber edition in the Suite italienne in the violin and piano, Stravinsky attempts to balance vocal integrity with instrumental considerations. At rehearsal number 184 in the original ballet, Stravinsky writes a four-plus-two phrase, but in the violin and piano version, he modifies the phrase to three-plus-three as a result of a directed bow change after an occurrence of harmonics (Examples 47 and 48). As the Hungarian-American violinist Robert Gerle writes in his 1991 book The Art of Bowing Practice, the hint of separation in bow change can serve as a means of phrasing.26 But in his 1930s book series The Art of Violin Playing, Carl Flesch notes that articulation, too, influences phrasing, and that bad bowing decisions can result in unintended artistic consequences.27

25 Yampolsky, 43-44.
Example 47: Stravinsky--*Pulcinella*, ballet in one act for small orchestra with three solo voices, rehearsal number 184

Example 48: Stravinsky--*Minuetto* from *Suite italienne*, mm. 42-44

**Rhythm**

Rhythm can also give the string player time to prepare for an upcoming technical obstacle. Syncopation, dotted rhythms, and long-short-short patterns can create a small amount of space in which the player can move his or her hand, fingers, or bow. To wit, in measures 16-19 of the *Scherzo* from the *Divertimento* for violin and piano, the dotted eighth note allows time for the soloist to move the left hand and prepare for the downbeat. The staccato mark on the following sixteenth note, however, gives the violinist two choices: break the slur to execute the shift early, or shift between the staccato mark and the downbeat to keep the slur intact (Example 49).
Example 49: Stravinsky--Scherzo from Divertimento for Violin and Piano mm. 16-19

In measures 20-25 of the Introduzione from the Suite italienne, Stravinsky again gives the soloist two places to shift: one before the off-beat accent and the other right after the off-beat accent. The one before the accent involves the lifting of the bow to emphasize the accent, and because this kind of accent fades quickly, the violinist can use the tiny space after it to shift again.

Example 50: Stravinsky--Introduzione from Suite italienne, mm. 20-25

The eighth two-sixteenth note figure is tricky for many musicians because of the temptation to compress the sixteenth notes and move the tempo forward. A slight pause between the eighth note and the two sixteenth notes, however, is useful not only for rhythmic integrity, but for the string player who needs to prepare for a difficult passage. In measure 41 of the Danse Russe from Petrushka, for instance, the two sixteenth notes can act as an upbeat to the next beat and turn the eighth note from a starting point into an arrival point (Example 51).
Example 51: Stravinsky--*Danse Russe* from *Petrushka*, mm. 40-42

![Example 51](image1)

**Rhythmic Bowing**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the addition of separation within bowing can allot time for the next motion. The gesture of the constant down-bow also has the same effect. In measure 67 of the *Sinfonia* from the *Divertimento* for violin and piano, a retake of the bow allows the violinist to hurdle the descending diminished seventh between C-sharp and B-flat. Moreover, this bowing works well in forceful rhythmic passages in which the soloist wishes to emphasize every note.

Example 52: Stravinsky--*Sinfonia* from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 66-73

![Example 52](image2)
Planning Ahead

Composers who wish to write idiomatically for particular instruments have a variety of tools at their disposal, including key changes, note changes, and register changes. Aware and responsible writing will not only delight the performer, but will also make the composer’s artistic statement that much more powerful. One aspect of good writing that affects all instruments is the key signature. Yampolsky writes that:

In certain cases composers deliberately write works for the violin in keys which exclude the possibility of using open strings in order to achieve a particular artistic effect. … The fact that it is impossible to use the open strings in such cases makes the choice of fingering and the technical performance of these works considerably more difficult.

In the revised Berceuse from The Firebird, for example, Stravinsky moves the key a half-step above the original--G-flat major to G major. The switch from the trouble of six flats to the ease and brightness of open strings makes a big difference, especially with regard to harmonics. In the original, Stravinsky requested double harmonics, but because open strings were not available, he had to write double artificial harmonics (Example 53). In the revised version, though, the access to open strings allows Stravinsky to write double natural harmonics, which are not only more facile, but more resonant (Example 54).

Example 53: Stravinsky--Berceuse (1929) from The Firebird, mm. 33-36

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28 Yampolsky, 95.
Example 54: Stravinsky--revised *Berceuse* (1933) from *The Firebird*, mm. 33 and 40-41

Transcriptions also need to take into account the transfer of lines from one instrument to the other and how to fit that line to the new instrument. In measures 66-73 of the *Sinfonia* from the *Divertimento*, for instance, Stravinsky places melodies from the oboe (mm. 69-70), the first violin (mm. 70-71) and the flute (mm. 71-72) in the violin (Example 55).

Example 55: Stravinsky--*Sinfonia* from *Divertimento, Suite Symphonique*, mm. 69-72
If Stravinsky had copied the music literally, the big leap on the second beat of measure 71 would become very awkward. Curiously, Stravinsky seems to add more difficulty through octaves in measures 70 and 71. But the octaves keep the intensity of the music strong and it makes available the open D string as an excellent choice for shifting. The octaves also allow the left hand to move from a lower string to a higher string, making the shift even easier to execute (Example 56).

Example 56: Stravinsky--Sinfonia from Divertimento for Violin and Piano, mm. 66-73

The re-ordering of a chord, too, can deliver the desired sonority without requiring a difficult or troublesome movement. In the case of measures 37-38 of the Minueto from Suite italienne, however, a new note can make a positive contribution. Stravinsky writes a note that does not appear in the original. At first, Stravinsky transcribed the soprano and tenor parts literally to the violin, requiring the soloist to shift and up down merely to play the octave (Examples 57 and 58). In the revised Minueto of the Suite italienne, though, Stravinsky adds an E on the downbeat of measure 38 to keep the left hand in first position and to create a fuller sonority. The function of the chord is now different--instead of being a resolution from the previous measure, it now acts a transition chord to another passage. But Stravinsky goes along with it, changing the chord on the second beat to help the harmonic sequence continue and the flow of the music to keep moving (Example 59).
Example 57: Stravinsky--*Pulcinella*, ballet in one act for small orchestra with three solo voices rehearsal number 183

Example 58: Stravinsky--*Minuetto* from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi*, mm. 37-38

Example 59: Stravinsky--*Minuetto* from *Suite italienne*, mm. 37-38

Because the orchestra has a tessitura several times wider than any one instrument, change of register is common in pieces that boil orchestral scores down to chamber scores. While most composers will simply move a phrase or an entire section to a new register, Stravinsky in his *Scherzo* from *The Firebird* achieves his goal through the manipulation of individual notes. At Rehearsal 55, on the second beat of the second
measure, the quintuplet in the first violin becomes a sextuplet in measure 7 of the violin and piano version. Although the violinist in the orchestra version can use the rests to set the third finger for the quintuplet, the violinist in the chamber version must play the trill from the flute part, a figure that is difficult to execute with the third and fourth fingers. If the violinist uses the second and third fingers, the trill is easy, but the stretch of the left hand is too wide for the quintuplet. As such, Stravinsky drops the E-natural down an octave and adds an extra E-natural to allow the violinist to re-set his or her hand during the sounding of an open string. The open string hides the shift, yet the music retains its colorful character (Examples 60 and 61).

Example 60: Stravinsky--*The Firebird*, ballet, rehearsal number 55

Example 61: Stravinsky--*Scherzo* from *The Firebird*, mm. 6-9
Chapter IV
Stravinsky’s Aesthetic

While idiomatic writing can benefit both the composer and the performers, some may ask if a composer can both respect the so-called boundaries of an instrument and maintain his personal approach to music. If his collaboration with Dushkin and Gauthier is any indication, Stravinsky answered this question in the affirmative. In fact, Stravinsky felt that the visual aspect of performance was crucial to audience understanding. In his *Chronicle of My Life* (1936), Stravinsky wrote that:

I have always had a horror of listening to music with my eyes shut, with nothing for them to do. The sight of the gestures and movement of the various parts of the body producing the music is fundamentally necessary if it is to be grasped in all its fullness. All music created and composed demands some exteriorization for the perception of the listener. As a matter of fact, those who maintain that they only enjoy music to the full with their eyes shut do not hear better than when they have them open.  

The performer who renders a flashy passage with ease is usually a more breathtaking scene than the performer who struggles through a set of awkward measures. Although each hand on the violin can create its own visual and acoustic effect, the result is always more satisfying when they work together.

In measures 64-71 of the *Coda* from the *Divertimento* for violin and piano, the soloist plays the melody from the oboe (mm. 64-66 and 68-70) and the first trombone (mm. 66-68 and 70-72) (*Example 62*). If Stravinsky had transcribed the music literally, the passage would be trouble-free, but he places almost every single note in a different octave for an array of technical fireworks that demands the left hand to jump repeatedly around the strings.

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29 Stravinsky, *Chronicle of My Life*, 122-123.
The composer, though, knows what he is doing, and he puts the soloist in the best possible position to succeed. First, the left hand is always stable; the writing requires the hand to be parallel from the strings (a position change) or vertical from the strings (a string change), but never simultaneously, and this decreases the chances of a missed note. Second, the natural harmonic G-natural in measure 68 is easier to play out and in tune than the actual G-natural itself because it is a harmonic in high position on outside
strings. While the actual note insists on the finger hitting a specific spot, the harmonic allows a small area to produce the same pitch. Moreover, the proximity of the G-natural to the C-sharp in measure 68 allows the soloist to keep the left hand in the same position and not have to search for the high C-sharp. This last trick comes with a price—the right hand must deal with a difficult string crossing—but it can be overcome with practice and the effect is worth the effort (Example 63).

Example 63: Stravinsky—Coda from Divertimento for Violin and Piano, mm. 64-71

The left hand can also delight with variations in timbre. In measures 104-109 of the Danse Russe from Petrushka, Stravinsky requires the left hand to produce natural harmonics, pizzicato, double-stops, and triple-stops. But the composer deceives the audience with the difficulty, as the entire passage can be played on open strings, thus allowing the soloist to hurdle these obstacles without breaking too much sweat. In their 1971 article Bowing for Better Sound, American string pedagogues Robert Cowden and Glenn Muegel write that an up-bow helps place the right hand at the string, and indeed, Stravinsky is thinking the same thing. The bowed note before pizzicato is marked as an up-bow so that the right hand will be near the string at the finish of the bow stroke (Example 64).\(^\text{30}\)

The right hand can create similar effects. As Leopold Mozart wrote in his 1756 work *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, the string player can vary the color of an individual figure through bowing, even if that figure contains only a few notes\(^{31}\). In most cases, however, the wise composer indicates these bowings and the wise performer follows them exactly. Curiously, in measures 15-22 of his *Tarantella* from *Suite italienne*, Stravinsky does not provide any such bowing indications, but the carefully applied articulation should give the performer some ideas. In measure 16, for instance, the slur over the first two notes calls for a weighty agogic accent, and in measure 18, two up-bows will create a forward motion that makes the first note of the figure come across as an arrival point (Example 65).

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In the symphony orchestra, the strings must coordinate all bowing decisions for aural organization and visual impression. This rule holds true in a straightforward passage such as the tarantella dance from *Pulcinella* (Example 66), or fragmented staccato lines, such as in measures 124-128 in the *Divertimento, Suite Symphonique* (Example 67).

Example 66: Stravinsky--*Pulcinella*, ballet in one act for small orchestra with three solo voices rehearsal number 134-135
Example 67: Stravinsky--Sinfonia from Divertimento, Suite Symphonique, mm. 111-128
In the solo repertoire, however, the string player can choose from a wide assortment of bowings, not only to display his or her skills with the bow, but to offer delicate nuances and new means of expression. Measures 107-123 of the *Sinfonia* from the *Divertimento* for violin and piano mirror the measures 111-128 of the *Divertimento*, *Suite Symphonique*. In the chamber version of this excerpt, both hands contribute in their own ways. In measures 112-116, for instance, the left hand rapidly shifts on rest and harmonics and the right hand engages in richochet bowing. While the brisk movement of the left hand and the hitting gestures of the right hand are visually entertaining, the high pitches of the broken octave, the percussive timbre of the richochet bowing, and the use of natural harmonics all add aural excitement. Furthermore, the constant variation in note groupings plays with the audience’s expectation. In each set of sixteenth notes, accents appear on either the first note or the third note, and through the use of an eighth rest, Stravinsky moves the starting point from the downbeat to the off-beat (*Example 68*).

**Example 68**: Stravinsky--*Sinfonia* from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 107-123
Given Stravinsky’s careful notation, especially in his revised transcriptions, the enterprising violinist may wonder how much room he or she has to place a personal stamp on the music. Indeed, during his lifetime, Stravinsky repeatedly objected to musicians who took liberty with the score. In *Chronicle of My Life*, he writes that:

> music should be transmitted and not interpreted, because interpretation reveals the personality of the interpreter rather than that of the author, and who can guarantee that such an executant will reflect the author’s vision without distortion?  

Later in his autobiography, he makes a complaint about conductors that reveals his frustration not with a lack of knowledge and understanding, but with outright laziness:

> Most conductors are inclined to cope with the metric difficulties of these passages in such cavalier fashion as to distort alike my music and my intensions. Fearing to make a mistake in a sequence of bars of varying values, they ease their task by treating them as equal length.... There are other conductors who do not even try to resolve the problem confronting them, and simply transcribe such music into undecipherable nonsense.

Thus, in Stravinsky’s worldview, interpretation is nothing more than performer willingness and proficiency. But he also thought that the composer bears some responsibility as well. When his student and friend Robert Craft asked him if the composer should indicate to the maestro how to conduct the music, he answered:

> I think [the composer] should always indicate the unit...and whether or not the subdivision is to be felt. Also, he should show whether the conductor is to beat the rhythmic shape of the music or if the shape is against the beat.

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33 Ibid., 224-225
34 Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, 117.

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At the same time, though, Stravinsky knew the limits of careful notation. Very late in his life, he made a striking statement that seems to transfer more power to the performer than he had previously acceded. In his 1970 book *Poetics of Music*, he articulates the following:

> It is taken for granted that I place before the performer written music wherein the composer’s will is explicit and easily discernible from a correctly established text. But no matter how scrupulously a piece of music may be notated, no matter how carefully it may be insured against every possible ambiguity through the indications of tempo, shading, phrasing, accentuation, and so on, it always contains hidden elements that defy definition, because verbal dialectic is powerless to define musical dialectic in its totality. The realization of these elements is thus a matter of experience and intuition.\(^{35}\)

His son Soulima Stravinsky, a concert pianist and later longtime keyboard professor at the University of Illinois, may have realized this side to his father sooner than anyone else. In the 1971 interview following his father’s death earlier in the year, Soulima related a curious anecdote:

> In a Town Hall concert I played his music, in a quite different way. It was more human, more elaborate, more evaluated. I didn’t tell him I had reworked it. He was delighted. He said, “You never played my music better! Don’t change anything.” So I know I was going in the right direction.\(^{36}\)

In this vein, Igor Stravinsky may be no different than any other composer who takes pride in the finished score. That is, individual interpretation has a role in execution as long as the performer correctly grasps the essence of the music. The violinist who endeavors to play Stravinsky’s transcriptions, therefore, should feel free to exercise personal judgment with regard to bowing as long as his or her decisions are in line with the composer’s phrasing, rhythm, and signature events.


\(^{36}\) Ben Johnston, “An Interview with Soulima Stravinsky,” *Perspectives of New Music* 9-10 (Spring-Summer and Fall-Winter 1971): 16.
Bowing as Phrasing

As Robert Gerle states in *The Art of Bowing Practice* (1991), the bow change indicates articulation or phrase structure with its natural hint of separation.\(^\text{37}\) In music that contains irregular rhythm and phrasing, however, string players must be sensitive to how the composer groups the notes and what these groupings mean for bowing decisions.

In his *Poetics of Music* (1970), Stravinsky makes a clear distinction between meter and rhythm. He defines meter as:

>a purely material element, through which rhythm, a purely formal element, is realized. In other words, meter answers the question of how many equal parts the musical unit which we call a measure is to be divided into, and rhythm answers the question of how many equal parts will be grouped within a given measure. … What strikes us most in this conflict of rhythm and meter is the obsession with regularity.\(^\text{38}\)

In other words, rhythm requires meter in order to be understood. Moreover, as British musicologist Jonathan Cross explains in his 1998 book *The Stravinsky Legacy*, the composer considered meter as the regular framework against which rhythm operates.\(^\text{39}\)

In a conversation with Samuel Dushkin, Stravinsky explains further, this time in a rather mathematical way:

>There are an infinite number ways of arriving at the number seven. It’s the same with rhythm. The difference is that whereas in mathematics the sum is the important thing; it makes no difference if you say five and two, or two and five, six and one or one and six, and so on. With rhythm, however, the fact that they add up to seven is of secondary importance. The important thing is, is it five and two or is it two and five, because five and two is a different person from two and five.\(^\text{40}\)

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\(^\text{37}\) Gerle, 56.

\(^\text{38}\) Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music: In the Form of Six Lessons*. 37


\(^\text{40}\) Dushkin, 185.
In measures 63-66 of his Sinfonia from the Divertimento, Suite Symphonique, Stravinsky displays one of his trademark techniques: structural rhythm. In the second violin and viola parts, the rhythm acts against the meter: 5 (♩) +3+3+3 (Example 69).

In the violin and piano transcription, though, the cello is no longer available to reinforce the conflict, so Stravinsky adds down-bow requests to outline it (Example 70). In his violin treatise, Leopold Mozart states that passages with specified bowing require not just the following of directions, but a totality of bowing decisions that separate the passage from others. To this end, agogic accents on the written down-bows in the Divertimento chamber version will draw the listener into the conflict more than just a straight rendition.

Example 69: Stravinsky--Sinfonia from Divertimento, Suite Symphonique, mm. 93-96

41 Mozart, 123.
Example 70: Stravinsky--Sinfonia from Divertimento for Violin and Piano, mm. 99-102

The mechanics of the string bow make the down-bow a strong gesture and the up-bow a preparatory gesture. As such, the down-bow usually begins a phrase and the up-bow creates direction to the next downbeat. In measures 38-44 from the Coda of the Divertimento for violin and piano, Stravinsky plots a four-plus-three rhythmic pattern against duple (2/4) meter. Upon viewing the time signature, the trained musician will naturally think “strong-weak,” but the down-bow indicated on second beat of measure 41 should give the violinist the confidence to start the phrase without regard to how the music is notated (Example 71).

Example 71: Stravinsky--Coda from Divertimento for Violin and Piano, mm. 38-44
At the same time, if a composer considers note groupings as more important than the time signature, the performer may speculate about the sincerity of a written meter. Robert Gerle advises the string player that other domains play a role in how a performer should render the rhythm of a passage, particularly key, harmonies, modulation, the shape of the melodic line, and form of the piece.\(^{42}\) Hence, a composer who writes a conflict between rhythm and meter can provide clues for the performer if he or she requires a specific interpretation.

In measures 58-64 of the *Coda* from the *Divertimento, Suite Symphonique*, for instance, the meter change is meaningful because accents and rests outline the phrase structure, dividing the eight-beat phrase into 3+2+3 (*Example 72*). In measures 57-64 of the violin and piano version, though, register changes, rest changes, and the down-bow directive in measure 58 helps keep the dialogue going between the two voices. As such, the eight-beat phrase turns into two smaller four-beat phrases, and the meter change plays very little role in the music (*Example 73*).

**Example 72:** Stravinsky—*Coda* (first violin) from *Divertimento, Suite Symphonique*, mm. 58-65

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\(^{42}\) Gerle, 80.
Example 73: Stravinsky--Coda from Divertimento for Violin and Piano, mm. 57-64

![Example 73]

The Ballad for violin and piano from the ballet The Fairy’s Kiss is an excellent example of how Stravinsky combines rhythm with other musical domains to modify the flow of the music. At rehearsal number 108 of the orchestral version of The Fairy’s Kiss, the metric pattern of 4/4 plus 2/4 plus 4/4; the final quintuplet at the dynamic marking of piano; and the dotted eighth of silence combine to finish the phrase before the eighth-note theme in the fourth measure. As a result, the eighth-note theme begins a completely new idea (Example 74). In the Ballad for violin and piano from The Fairy’s Kiss, however, Stravinsky changes the metric pattern to 4/4 plus 4/4 plus 2/4; adds accents to the quintuplet figures in both the violin and piano; offers an unfinished sextuplet in measure 39 of the violin rather than a quintuplet; maintains dynamic markings of forte and fortissimo throughout; and writes in measure 41 of the violin part a long quarter on the second beat. These decisions together create an acceleration in rhythm and volume that, despite the dotted eighth rest, propels the old phrase into the new phrase. Now, the eighth-note theme that begins in measure 42 is a continuation of previous ideas rather than an entirely new one (Example 75).
Example 74: Stravinsky--*The Fairy’s Kiss*, ballet, rehearsal number 108

Example 75: Stravinsky--*Ballad* for Violin and Piano form *The Fairy’s Kiss*, mm. 39-42
Bow Stroke

In any piece of music, string players can use the bow stroke to communicate a variety of inherent features. One of the most challenging aspects in Stravinsky’s violin and piano transcriptions is the composer’s block form, in which each section of music stands alone with no transition from one to the next, proceeding not with flow, but against opposition or discontinuity. The change of the bow stroke between blocks is not a problem for the violinist as long as the composer grants enough time, but a single particular bow stroke cannot fully show the transformation of character. In this vein, the violinist who wishes to bring to life Stravinsky’s violin and piano transcriptions must consider how to utilize the bow stroke effectively for each block.

The Scherzo for violin and piano from The Firebird is a series of blocks, most of which are eight measures, and each with a different character. The bow stroke in the first block (mm. 1-8) is not very significant, as the dominant feeling is one of mystery and uncertainty rendered by the trill in the left hand. In second block (mm. 9-16), however, the bow stroke must quickly become short to execute the fast stacatto and to give clarity and breadth to the subito piano (Example 76). The third block (mm. 15-24) has two elements that require the violinist to open up the bow gesture--the ricochet bowing and the accented syncopation, which calls for fast bow speed instead of heavy bow pressure (Example 77).

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43 Cross, 19.
Example 76: Stravinsky--Scherzo for Violin and Piano from *The Firebird*, mm. 1-16

Example 77: Stravinsky--Scherzo for Violin and Piano from *The Firebird*, mm. 15-24

The fourth block (mm. 24-34) is very different from the previous blocks. Stated elements and new elements compete for space in the first four measures (mm. 24-27), and then variation on the new element becomes the dominant theme. To bring out this sudden character change, the violinist must switch the bow stroke from off-the-string to on-the-string, but the flow of the line plays a role as well. The angular melodic line and sudden accents naturally create a strong vertical feeling, but the swooping arpeggios and scales call for a horizontal feeling, much like a singing vocal line (Example 78).
The fifth block (mm. 34-41) is a reprise of the second block (mm. 9-16), but this time an octave higher, requiring the violinist to change the bow stroke from long to short. The sixth block (mm. 41-59) is unexpectedly lyrical, calling for a long and singing bow stroke (Example 79).

Example 78: Stravinsky--Scherzo for Violin and Piano from The Firebird, mm. 24-34

Example 79: Stravinsky--Scherzo for Violin and Piano from The Firebird, mm. 39-48
The seventh block (mm. 59-70) is the final new block, after which Stravinsky recycles previous material to the end of the piece. The seventh block combines elements from the third block (mm. 15-24) and the fourth block (mm. 24-34), once again creating a conflict between disjunct vertical figures and flowing horizontal lines (Example 80).

**Example 80**: Stravinsky--Scherzo for Violin and Piano from The Firebird, mm. 57-65

Sometimes, though, the clue to the proper bow stroke change is found not in the violin part, but in the piano part. In the first twelve measures of the Danses suisses from the Divertimento for violin and piano, Stravinsky writes three blocks of music, each of whose character is dictated by the keyboard. The first block (mm. 1-7) in the piano consists of steady tenuto quarter notes and lightly separated eighth notes, and this should indicate for the violinist longer bow strokes. The second block (mm. 8-10) in the piano consists of staccato eighth notes in the left hand and off-beats in the right hand, and this should call from the violinist shorter bow strokes, especially to give the grace notes a sharp enunciation. The third block (mm. 10-12) turns quickly to a lyrical melancholy in cut time (Example 81).
Example 81: Stravinsky--*Danses suisses* from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 1-12
Chapter V
Idiomatic Writing for Variety

While the bow stroke is a powerful method by which to bring out the specific character of a passage, the violinist has other tools at his or her disposal as well. With the help of Dushkin and Gautier, Stravinsky took full advantage of these tools, manipulating an idea or a section of music to fit the personality of the violin. In the *Sinfonia* to the *Divertimento* for violin and piano, for instance, Stravinsky varies a single motive in several ways--rhythmic dislocation (Example 82); broken octaves (Example 83); hidden pedals (Example 84); and quick grace notes (Example 85). He also creates temporal confusion--metric displacement through the skipping of an eighth rest (Example 82); the extension of the principal motive (Example 83); indicated down-bows that give the impression of a meter change (Example 84); and bowing requests that emphasize the dotted quarter note (Example 82-85).

**Example 82**: Stravinsky--*Sinfonia* from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 80-85

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\begin{music}
\begin{musicmbox}
\begin{musicnote} \wedge \end{musicnote}
\begin{musicnote} 2 \end{musicnote}
\begin{musicnote} 3 \end{musicnote}
\end{musicmbox}
\end{music}
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**Example 83**: Stravinsky--*Sinfonia* from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 155-158

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\begin{music}
\begin{musicmbox}
\begin{musicnote} \wedge \end{musicnote}
\begin{musicnote} 2 \end{musicnote}
\begin{musicnote} 3 \end{musicnote}
\end{musicmbox}
\end{music}
```
More than any other member of the string family, the violin has garnered respect for its variety of personalities. In his famous *Treatise on Instrumentation* (1843), French composer Hector Berlioz wrote that the violin “possesses, as a composite force, lightness and grace, accents both gloomy and gay, thought and passion.”\(^{44}\) One of Berlioz’s early 19\(^{th}\) century contemporaries, the renowned French violinist Pierre Baillot, compared his instrument to several of its cousins in the orchestra:

> The timbre is so varied that the violinist can give it the pastoral character of *oboe*, the penetrating sweetness of the *flute*, the noble and touching sound of the *horn*, the warlike brilliance of the *trumpet*, the fantastic wave of the *harmonica*, the successive vibration of the *harp*, the simultaneous vibrations of the *piano*, and finally the harmonious gravity of the *organ*.\(^{45}\)

In the *Danse Russe* for violin and piano from *Petrushka*, Stravinsky takes advantage of the violin’s array of sonic possibilities. Among his experiments are the plug sound (*Example 86*); the *sul ponticello* (near the bridge) effect (*Example 87*); and loud and resolute double stops (*Example 88*). The most interesting variation, though, takes place in measures 59-63, where Stravinsky molds the tune into a quasi-retrograde ABBA

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\(^44\) Auer, 62  
\(^45\) Baillot, 8.
pattern accompanied by off-beat accents in the piano. The dynamic marking of piano suggests from the violin a light and deft bow stroke (Example 89).

Example 86: Stravinsky--Danse Russe for Violin and Piano from Petrushka, mm.45-47

Example 87: Stravinsky--Danse Russe for Violin and Piano from Petrushka, mm.49-51

Example 88: Stravinsky--Danse Russe for Violin and Piano from Petrushka, mm.53-56
Each of the violin’s four strings, too, has a different character that composers can exploit. In most passages, the choice of string rests with the player, but sometimes the composer makes a special request.\footnote{Baillot, 8.} In the fifth edition of the textbook *The Technique of Orchestration*, American theorists and composers Kent Kennan and Donald Grantham offer insight into the array of available colors:

The G string is characteristically full, rich and rather dark in quality. From about $d''$ upward, its tone becomes curiously intense, as if charged with emotion. The D string is less dark and full, the A considerably brighter, and the E especially brilliant and penetrating.\footnote{Kent Kennan and Donald Grantham, 8.}

In the *Ballad* for violin and piano from *The Fairy’s Kiss*, Stravinsky links specific strings to his desired timbre. In measures 47-51, the *meno forte* dynamic, expressive glissandos, and indication of the G string creates a somber and bittersweet atmosphere. In measures 52-55, the D string and *subito piano* in measure 53 combine to keep the character restrained yet sweet. In measures 56-59, the soloist ascends to the A string, where the tone becomes slightly more brilliant and glowing, and this brings the sensitive to an emotional peak (Example 90).
The attentive composer is careful with high position in the inner two strings. From a technical standpoint, high position on inner strings carries the risk of the performer touching adjacent strings and faltering on the passage. From an expressive standpoint, though, the upper register of these strings is rather dull and should only be used when a particular tone quality is desired. Likewise, the arch of the bridge places each of the four strings at a different height. The placement of fingers in high position will lower the height of the inner strings and put them at the same height or a lower height than that of the adjacent strings. The violinist can circumvent this problem by moving the sounding point closer to the bridge, but this requires superb control and may not always be foolproof. In measures 94-95 of the Ballad from The Fairy’s Kiss, Stravinsky asks for the passage to be played on the D string, but the piano dynamic keeps the bow from applying too much pressure and lowering the string even more. In addition, the employment of harmonics on the highest note of the passage--the A-natural above the staff--can take even more pressure off the string (Example 91).

Example 90: Stravinsky--Ballad for Violin and Piano from The Fairy’s Kiss, mm. 47-59

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48 Yampolsky, 37.
Example 91: Stravinsky--Ballad for Violin and Piano from The Fairy’s Kiss, mm. 94-95

The enterprising composer can also create contrast by indicating different fingers or strings for the same pitch. Such requests tell the string player that the composer is looking for an alteration in color and strength.\(^{49}\) From a performing point of view, though, using different fingers for shifting and changing strings avoids finger lifting that will interrupt the phrase, especially in legato passages\(^{50}\) (Example 92).

Example 92: Stravinsky--Serenata from Suite italienne, mm. 9-11

From Orchestra to Solo Violin

If the violin, as Pierre Baillot states, can imitate the personalities of other instruments in the orchestra, then composers who wish to transcribe orchestral music for violin and piano should be free to explore all timbre possibilities. This not only captures the essence of the original, but it gives the violinist a clear idea of what the composer needs to create a special moment in the new version.

\(^{49}\) Yampolsky, 19.
\(^{50}\) Ibid, 23.
The flute and oboe melody at rehearsal 158-159 in *Pulcinella* becomes the property of the violin in the *Gavotta* of the *Suite italienne*. Given the tessitura of the melody in the flute and the oboe, the best reproduction on the violin is likely the middle position of the D string for the flute and the low position of the A string for the oboe. The former imitates the breathy and velvety middle register of the flute, and the latter pierces through the texture much like the low register of the oboe. The dynamic marking of *piano* in measures 11-14 of the *Suite italienne* reinforces the flute-like color change with which the middle position of the D string can assist the violinist (*Examples 93 and 94*).

**Example 93**: Stravinsky--*Pulcinella*, ballet in one act for small orchestra with three solo voices rehearsal number 158-159
Example 94: Stravinsky--Gavotta from *Suite italienne*, mm. 5-16

At rehearsal number 166 in *Pulcinella*, Stravinsky divides the melody between the solo flute and the solo horn, and in the first three measures of the *Gavotta Variazione II* of the *Suite italienne*, the violin plays this melody in its original register. If Stravinsky in *Pulcinella* had placed this melody in only one instrument, the violinist would be advised to seek only one color (Example 96). Because Stravinsky sends the melody into the horn, however, the violinist should account for this mellow timbre with a string change. The melody in the flute would best render on the sweet and glowing higher strings, and the melody in the horn would be most appropriate on the richer and darker lower strings (Example 95 and 96).

Example 95: Stravinsky--*Pulcinella*, ballet in one act for small orchestra with three solo voices rehearsal number 166
Harmonics

Harmonics are a special feature for strings because the timbre is very different from the rest of the instrument. The soft color resembles more closely that of a woodwind instrument or the falsetto human voice. Artificial harmonics are popular with composers because the intervals between the fingers are fixed, namely the minor third, major third, perfect fourth, and perfect fifth. Natural harmonics are more effective, but trickier to write because they require an open string for their full capacity. In the violin and piano transcriptions done with Dushkin and Gauthier, Stravinsky handles natural harmonics very well, combining them with artificial harmonics or actual pitches.

The first five harmonics can be produced with the use of the open string and third position. Beginning with the sixth harmonic, however, the violinist must be creative as clean execution becomes increasingly challenging. But with a little help with artificial harmonics in the higher tessitura, a scale made entirely of harmonics is possible. The three most logical scales derived from harmonics are those on the most often used open strings: G major, D major, and A major. Thus, with proper key choices in violin music, composers can generate opportunities to use natural harmonics and take advantage of this unique sonic world (Examples 97 and 98).
Example 97: The most common natural harmonics--from middle of the string to the nut:

Example 98: Harmonics Scale

In his revised transcriptions for violin and piano, Stravinsky employs natural harmonics in several places, notably the the Danses suisses from the Divertimento and the Danse Russe from Petrushka. The former takes place in G major, where thirteen harmonics are available, and the latter takes place in C major, where twelve harmonics are available. As such, the violinist can render these passages almost exclusively in third position with the exception of the C-natural in measure 115 of the Danses suisses (Examples 99 and 100).
Example 99: Stravinsky--*Danses suisses* from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 113-116

Example 100: Stravinsky--*Danse Russe* for Violin and Piano from *Petrushka*, mm.112-114
Chapter VI
Awkward Passages

Despite the more fluid writing in Stravinsky’s later violin and piano transcriptions, unusual episodes still remain. Some of these are due to the composer’s wish for distinct sonorities, and as such, they may be considered as new ways of thinking about the violin that should be considered and pursued. Other writing, though, continue to contradict what the instrument does well, and in the words of the Soviet pedagogue I.M. Yampolsky, they constitute “technically awkward” passages. But difficulty does not always mean impossibility.

Finger Extension

The natural position of the fingers on the left hand may be described as a perfect fourth between the first and fourth fingers. This can be extended to augmented fourth; a perfect fifth in the lower register; and a sixth or seventh in the upper register. The first octave requires half the length of the string and the second octave requires a quarter of the length of the string. As the tessitura moves higher, the distance between each finger lessens, and as such, finger extension is more of a possibility in higher positions than lower positions. Early in their collaboration, Stravinsky pushed Dushkin on the subject of finger extension. During his work on the Violin Concerto, the composer proposed a chord that required the interval of an eleventh across two strings (Example 101).

51 Yampolsky, 18.
52 Ibid, 27.
Stravinsky took out a piece of paper wrote down this chord and asked me if it could be played. I had never seen a chord with such an enormous stretch, from the “E” to the top “A” and I said, “No.” Stravinsky said sadly, “Quel dommage.” (“What a pity.”) After I got home, I tried it, and to my astonishment, I found that in that register, the stretch of the eleventh was relatively easy to play, and the sound fascinated me.  

Example 101: The Stravinsky-Dushkin Chord

With the possibilities of finger extension in the high position now open to him, Stravinsky went even further in the revision of his violin and piano transcriptions. Thus, in measures 30-33 of the Scherzino from the Suite italienne, the composer asks the first and fourth fingers to play an octave (Example 102). Since the lower D-natural is already in sixth position, this octave is even easier to execute than the bottom seventh in the aforementioned chord in the Violin Concerto (Example 101).

Example 102: Stravinsky--Scherzino from Suite italienne, mm. 30-33

Finger extensions in the lower positions, though, are not out of the question. Yampolsky notes that such gestures are best made in the reverse--that is, from the fourth finger to the first finger.  

53 Dushkin, 182.  
54 Yampolsky, 27.
the interval between them is a major sixth, and this interval is much wider than the
natural position of the perfect fourth (Example 103).

Example 103: Finger Extension on the Violin

In measure 39 of the Ballad for violin and piano from The Fairy’s Kiss,
Stravinsky writes a widely-spaced diminished chord that covers two-and-a-half octaves.
Isolated from the passage, the chord will likely prompt the violinist to place the first,
second, and fourth fingers from low to high, which can be done, although it is rather
difficult (Example 104). But Stravinsky prepares an easier finger extension with a set of
spacious falling arpeggios that force the soloist to place the fingers from high to low.
Specifically, these chords require the violinist to frame the second and fourth fingers and
use the first finger only as an extension. As a result, the violinist is in a great situation to
execute the diminished chord (Example 105).

Example 104: Stravinsky--Ballad for Violin and Piano from The Fairy’s Kiss, mm. 39
**Example 105**: Stravinsky--*Ballad* for Violin and Piano from *The Fairy’s Kiss*, mm. 39

![Example 105](image)

**The Same Finger**

Yampolsky states that when a string player moves from one position or one string to another, he or she should avoid using the same pair of fingers in succession.\(^{55}\) The employment of different fingers as opposed to the same fingers is only one extra lifting motion, but this gesture is not advisable. In a slow tempo, it will interrupt a legato phrase, and in a fast tempo, it is very uncomfortable. In measures 157-160 of his *Danses suisses* from the *Divertimento* for violin and piano, Stravinsky both confronts this issue and provides a solution. In measures 157-158, Stravinsky specifies the fingerings 1-3 and 2-4, requiring the continuous use of the fourth finger in shifting and changing strings in later measures. But the difficulty of this motion is lessened through the angular and rhythmic nature of the passage, as well as the constant down-bows that buy extra time for the violinist (**Example 106**).

**Example 106**: Stravinsky--*Danses suisses* from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 157-160

![Example 106](image)

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\(^{55}\) Yampolsky, 75.
Two Fingers

When two fingers go in different directions, the position of each finger is either extension or contraction, and depending on the context of the passage, the string player can move these fingers on or off the strings. Moving fingers off the strings is a more relaxing gesture, but it will also create a tiny space in the playing area that makes bowing slurs more complicated. In his violin and piano transcription of the minuet figure at rehearsal 183 of *Pulcinella*, Stravinsky fuses the soprano and tenor voices into the violin. In his original transcription, his slur implies that the fourth finger in a single bowing must move on the string from A-natural to B-flat and back to A-natural. This motion brings about an awkward stretch in the left hand, and while the fourth finger can move off the string, it risks breaking the slur. In the revision titled *Suite italienne*, however, Stravinsky breaks the slur himself and creates a more comfortable left-hand situation for the violinist. The soloist can now taper the first A-natural, re-set his or her fingers for the next slur, and undertake a new bow on the middle B-flat. The knowledgeable violinist, however, will treat this articulation change not as a radical rhythmic gesture, but as a fresh way of thinking about the passage (Examples 107 and 108).

Example 107: Stravinsky--*Pulcinella*, ballet in one act for small orchestra with three solo voices rehearsal number 183
Example 108: Stravinsky--Minuetto from *Suite after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattisti Pergolesi* and *Suite italienne* (mm. 32)

The Trill

The trill is one of the most recognizable instrumental ornaments, but it can also be a source of great discomfort for the string player. The trill on a string instrument consists of three parts: preparation, execution, and connection to the following material. In most cases, the violinist must employ two conjunct fingers, and due to its lack of flexibility, the fourth finger is avoided unless a double trill requires it. These natural limitations compel the violinist to change fingerings or shift more than usual in order to meet the needs of the music. As mentioned earlier, Stravinsky in his revised violin and piano transcriptions took care to make the execution of a trill easier, whether it be a request for separate bowing in the *Finale* from the *Suite italienne* (Examples 33 and 34) or a chance to re-set the hands as in the *Scherzo* from *The Firebird* (Examples 59 and 60).

In measures 54–55 of the *Scherzo* from the *Divertimento* for violin and piano, Stravinsky precedes an easy G-sharp trill with a descending F minor arpeggio, two gestures that require two entirely distinct finger positions. In the original ballet score, the first violin section plays the arpeggio, and the bassoon and horn sound the trill, but in asking the violin to execute both, Stravinsky places the soloist in an awkward spot.
The last sixteenth note of the arpeggio followed by the ornament forces the violinist to employ the first finger for the C-natural and the second and third fingers for the G-sharp trill, and in order to avoid an uncomfortable first to fourth position shift and set up these fingerings properly, the soloist must set aside the textbook rendition of the arpeggio (Example 109). But Stravinsky leaves the fourth finger C-natural as an escape hatch. Although the fingering pattern is not exactly same between the first and second beats, the violinist can experiment with the idea of employing the same fingering pattern in succession over several different positions. As such, the fourth finger not only provides the opportunity to shift, but it acts as the starting point for the second fingering pattern (Example 110).

**Example 109:** Logical fingering for an F minor arpeggio

**Example 110:** Stravinsky--Scherzo from *Divertimento* for Violin and Piano, mm. 54-55

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56 Yampolsky, 99.
Chapter VII

Final Thought

The collaboration between Igor Stravinsky and Samuel Dushkin brings to light several important questions regarding a composer’s approach to solo writing for a particular instrument. Should the composer be mindful of instrument strengths and weaknesses, or should he or she direct all creativity to his or her artistic vision? Should the composer heed widely considered notions of what can and cannot be done, or should he or she challenge conventional limits? Should the music be tailored for most trained professionals or aimed only at an extremely gifted few? Most important, should the composer study extant knowledge and anticipate situations or should the composer leave all problem-solving to the performer?

Instrumentalists are fond of saying that, of all the members of the orchestra, their particular craft is the most difficult. In reality, though, each instrument has its merits and flaws. While the violin lends itself well to heartfelt lyricism, breathtaking perpetual motion, haunting timbres, and eye-popping special effects, other aspects are not as easy. Like all string players, the violinist must teach each hand to work independently and together, and each hand must develop its own procedures. Moreover, while certain features are thought to be exclusive to the left hand, such as chords, trills, and harmonics, the right hand plays a more important role in their execution. To this end, the composer must be familiar with the required conditions, such as where the bow should reside, or where the fingers should be placed. If the composer imagines himself or herself as the performer, potential concerns may be solved without sacrificing artistic intention, but if the composer decides to leave all issues to the performer, the result may be something
unexpected or not imagined.

At the same time, many special effects on the violin function both as technical necessity and inspired utterance. High position on the inner strings will create variety in timbre, but the soloist is also in danger of touching other strings and altering pitches. Harmonics in the left hand and soft bowing in the right hand, however, will produce relaxation and increase accuracy. Likewise, a down-bow may be required to emphasize an important rhythmic event, but the down-bow will only be as successful as the music allows. That is, the previous combination of notes and rhythms needs to put the performer in position to execute a down-bow, or the composer must find a way to give the soloist an ounce of space. If the composer allows the soloist to prepare properly, difficult passages and colorful technical exhibits will be embraced rather than feared or avoided.

Naturally, the composer cannot expect every violinist to be able to play everything he or she writes. In order for art to thrive, standards must be maintained and occasionally tested, and if some musicians cannot understand or execute certain passages, the composer should not feel obligated to compromise. But if the composer conceives his or her thoughts and ideas from the heart and designs the score with care, he or she will reach the right people. When Dushkin commented to Stravinsky that his revised violin and piano transcriptions remained formidable not only for the present but for generations to come, the composer offered a clever compliment and a striking philosophical stance: “What can it matter to me if all the fools do not play my music?”

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57Dushkin, 188.
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