

Unfinished Business: Completing Eugène Ysaÿe's Sonata for Solo Violin

by

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ABSTRACT

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A sketchbook now referred to as the “Lavergne Manuscript” was revealed in 2015 to include a unique sonata for solo violin by Eugène Ysaÿe. The piece appears alongside other works from his op. 27, but it is incomplete. The third movement in particular requires significant intervention to be performable. Some renderings of the unfinished sonata exist, but they prioritize fidelity to Ysaÿe's already-written material, even borrowing directly from his op. 27. The result is a striking tension between reconstruction and independent identity.

While our understanding of Romantic aesthetics might default to fidelity for reconstruction, a cross-examination of Ysaÿe's personal brand, *sur-créateur*, actually complicates the matter. Completing the unfinished sonata in his spirit may involve legitimate creative participation. Embodying *sur-créateur*, I derived compositional parameters from Ysaÿe's oeuvre pertaining to motivic, harmonic, formal, and aesthetic features and now propose my own rendition of the unfinished sonata. In it, I prioritize its independent identity.

The broader implications of *sur-créateur* are especially pertinent for future scholarship. Multiple completions of the unfinished sonata can, and now do, coexist. *Sur-créateur* also provides an alternative framework for engaging other unfinished works. Finally, Romantic performance practice may involve the balancing of fidelity and creative participation more than favoring one at the expense of the other.

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To Eugène Ysaÿe, master and friend

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Chapter I

Challenge: Ysaÿe's Unfinished Sonata

Violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931) was hailed as a giant among men and artist among violinists. Nathan Milstein went as far as calling him the “tsar of violin.” He was hardly exaggerating. In his life, Ysaÿe was a world-touring soloist, concertmaster, and pedagogue. He also collaborated with living composers—indeed, he is the dedicatee of numerous works like Debussy's string quartet op. 10 and Chausson's *Poème*. As a composer himself, he wrote works that are now cornerstones in the repertoire and for which present-day violinists will recognize his name especially: the sonatas for solo violin op. 27. These works showcase Ysaÿe's intimate knowledge of the violin through their remarkable exploitation of its coloristic and contrapuntal capabilities. In addition, Ysaÿe wrote concerti, showpieces, chamber music, an opera, and technical studies, but it was not until 2015 that the world discovered another sonata for solo violin. This one, however, remained unfinished.

Among the first to unearth the piece was violinist Philippe Graffin, who quickly set out to complete it. His work included slight revisions to the first movement, mostly editorial decisions for the second, and outright composing a third based on a theme and singular variation by Ysaÿe himself. His 2019 album *Fiddler's Blues* features the completed unfinished sonata, and Schott published the score beginning in 2020. Describing his process, Graffin suggests “keep[ing] as much of Ysaÿe's own writing as possible.”¹ The result is a piece that borrows figuration from Ysaÿe's other sonatas op. 27 and grafts them onto this new work.

¹Eugène Ysaÿe, *Sonate Posthume*, edited and completed by Philippe Graffin. (Mainz: Schott Music GmbH & Co, 2020).

I agree with Graffin's reverence and intent—Ysaÿe was considered a musical titan for many good reasons. But as a violinist who knows op. 27 well, I believe the unfinished sonata deserves its own identity. Its material is distinct and of a quality that it should not be limited to recycling what Ysaÿe published elsewhere. Further, I believe Ysaÿe's musical philosophy—recently referred to as *sur-créateur* [super-creator]—grants the performer more license in the creative process. And in this instance, my role is literally creative, not just interpretive. My aim is to complete Ysaÿe's unfinished sonata with newly composed material, the act of which is justified by his own artistic philosophies.

Thus, my project has several related goals. First, I will contextualize the unfinished sonata, its prominent researchers, and the products of their work—most especially their iterations of the piece. Ultimately, I argue that any versions of the piece we have at present are functional but aesthetically unfulfilling. My second goal is to provide a solution for that deficit. I will describe, contextualize, and otherwise make plain Ysaÿe's philosophy of the *sur-créateur*. In so doing, I will justify the method and the ends of my third goal: to complete the unfinished sonata. To that end, I will synthesize a compositional and violinistic dialect that reflects Ysaÿe's own practices. Then, I will use that dialect to compose new material and incorporate it into the unfinished sonata, resulting in a complete performable work, simultaneously distinct from and sharing in the spirit of op. 27.

Brief Literature Review

Literature pertinent to my research serves two main goals. The first is justifying the completion of the unfinished sonata. Doing so requires sensitively handling questions of ethics and authenticity. Would Ysaÿe have wanted someone else to finish his work? If so, who is best qualified to do so? Luckily, Ysaÿe's case is somewhat more straightforward than other

composers who left works unfinished. Literature in this category helps describe Ysaÿe's aesthetics and creative disposition.

The second goal is completing Ysaÿe's unfinished sonata following the ethical process I lay out. Literature in this category includes a number of manuscripts, critical editions, and standard performance copies as well as secondary literature, primarily in the form of analyses of Ysaÿe's music. I will reference these items to compose (invent) ways of playing that feel as close to Ysaÿe's style and level of craftsmanship as possible. This portion of the literature review appears in Chapter III where it is most relevant.

Mélanie de Montpellier d'Annevoie's study of Ysaÿe's personal library is especially useful in understanding how Ysaÿe saw himself and his art.² Montpellier d'Annevoie highlights the significance and consistency of his notetaking. Around one-hundred of his books include marginalia, and most of them pertain to the notions of "genius," "brilliance," and identifying as such. What we learn here is corroborated in some of Ysaÿe's correspondence; he thought of himself as one of the greats and felt obligated to share his art with the world.

But if someone other than Ysaÿe is to share the unfinished sonata, the one best suited is certainly a violinist. In a 1919 interview with Frederick Martens, Ysaÿe is quoted saying, "...new works conceived only from the musical point of view bring about the stagnation of technical discovery, the invention of new passages, of novel harmonic wealth or combination is not encouraged. And a violinist owes it to himself to exploit the great possibilities of his own instrument."³ Ysaÿe is renowned for his enormous musicality, but clearly he values the technical mechanisms of playing the violin as well.

² Mélanie de Montpellier d'Annevoie, "La Bibliothèque littéraire du violoniste," *Textyles*, no. 61 (September 15, 2021).

³ Frederick Martens, "Violin Mastery: Talks with Master Violinists and Teachers," *The Project Gutenberg Ebook of Violin Mastery* (April 4, 2005).

Further writings about his creative philosophy are preserved in *Les Cahiers Ysaÿe*, where he elevates the performer to even higher interpretive status than the composer (*sur-créateur*). “The artist distills the essence of the subject, expressing both its substance and form; they must be both subjective and objective, penetrating even deeper than the author himself into the aesthetics of the work.”⁴ It seems Ysaÿe would have been receptive to another creative mind involving themselves in the completion of his work, itself an act of interpretation.

Ysaÿe expresses similar sentiments in various correspondence, much of which is compiled by Marie Cornaz in Ysaÿe’s newest biography, *À la redécouverte d'Eugène Ysaÿe*, [Rediscovering Eugène Ysaÿe]. Her work is critically acclaimed and less prone to hero-worship than previous biographic entries. Cornaz ultimately situates Ysaÿe as a performer and teacher in his own time, and a composer only more retrospectively.⁵ As a result, I believe being a competent violinist is requisite to completing Ysaÿe’s works.

I turn to Jessika Rittstieg’s discussion of Ysaÿe’s aesthetic model for broader socio-musical context, including national schools of thought and performance trends.⁶ Importantly, she discusses how *fantasia* elements began permeating and eventually saturating music from 1750-1850—the period just before Ysaÿe and from which his style was born. To complete the unfinished in that style seems viable. Chapter 3 “Towards Op. 27” and Chapter 9 “Eugène Ysaÿe Sonata Op. 27/6” are especially relevant.

Finally, performer-scholar Ray Iwazumi has contributed numerous documents pertaining to Ysaÿe. Two are of particular note for their relevance to compositional processes. The first is *The Legacy of Eugène Ysaÿe: Transmitted, Adapted, Reinterpreted*, in which he details Ysaÿe

⁴ Eugène Ysaÿe, “Le Rôle Créateur de l’Interprète,” *Les Cahiers Ysaÿe*, no. 2 (1969).

⁵ Marie Cornaz, *À la redécouverte d'Eugène Ysaÿe*, Belgium: Brepols, 2019.

⁶ Jessika Ulrike Rittstieg, “Continuity and Change in Eugène Ysaÿe’s Six Sonatas, Op. 27, for Solo Violin,” (Doctoral Thesis, The Open University, 2018).

materials held at the Juilliard school.⁷ Most of these materials come from two students of Ysaÿe and are held in their respective collections: Louis Persinger and Viola Mitchell. Their marked scores contain bowings, fingerings, technical advice, and interpretive suggestions direct from the hand of Ysaÿe. Notably, they are digitized. Iwazumi's other important contribution is his dissertation in which he thoroughly covers each movement of op. 27 and describes their driving developmental formal processes.⁸ Treating the material of the unfinished in similar fashions is paramount in taking something that looks like Ysaÿe on the surface to something even closer in its essence.

As for emulating Ysaÿe's compositional dialect and violinistic idiom, there are a number of important documents. I analyzed Ysaÿe's melodic content and fingering pattern idioms in my master's thesis *Updating the Violin Study Repertoire Using Eugène Ysaÿe's Op. 27 as a Model*, both of which find natural application in completing the unfinished.⁹ Similar in spirit is Karen Hoatson's dissertation, *Culmination of the Belgian Violin Tradition—The Innovative Style of Eugène Ysaÿe*.¹⁰ Hoatson's work places particular emphasis on Ysaÿe's bowing idiom. She also reinforces Ysaÿe's interest in technical innovation for violin writing, especially as it relates to collaborating with contemporary French composers like Debussy and Chausson. The sections "Ysaÿe's Playing Style" and the whole of "Later Works" are especially relevant to this project.

There are several analyses pertaining to interesting angles and works beyond op. 27 that could also prove helpful models for the unfinished. Meng-Hsun Chuang's dissertation provides a

⁷ Ray Iwazumi, "The Legacy of Eugène Ysaÿe: Transmitted, Adapted, Reinterpreted," *Notes* vol. 67, no. 1 (September 2010): pp. 68-88.

⁸ Ray Iwazumi, "The Six Sonates pour Violin seul, Op. 27 of Eugène Ysaÿe: Critical Commentary and Interpretive Analysis of the Sketches, Manuscripts, and Published Editions," (DMA Dissertation, Juilliard School, 2004).

⁹ Benjamin Ehrmantraut, "Updating the Violin Study Repertoire Using Eugène Ysaÿe's Op. 27 as a Model," (MM Thesis, University of Colorado Boulder, 2020).

¹⁰ Karen Hoatson, "Culmination of the Belgian Violin Tradition—The Innovative Style of Eugène Ysaÿe," (DMA Dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1999).

formal analysis of the double violin sonata, a work set aside during Ysaÿe's lifetime owing to its difficulty.¹¹ The piece was composed about ten years before op. 27, but shares some of its harmonic and violinistic language. Chuang's analysis corroborates many descriptors of Ysaÿe-style composition I describe in my master's thesis, and which I can use in completing the unfinished (using specific left-hand tetrachords to enable smooth chromatic voice-leading and multi-stops, for example). The ambiguous nature of this piece's form might also provide inspiration for completing the unfinished.

Ysaÿe's sonata for solo cello op. 28 is highly underrepresented in performance and scholarship compared to op. 27, but seems like another viable contributor in approaching the unfinished. Wan-Lun Tsui engages the work from both performance and formal perspectives in his master's thesis.¹² Key takeaways from op. 28 that are especially pertinent to the unfinished: cyclic form, fugal technique, dissonant melodic content, and music entirely free of barlines. Overall, the cello sonata's density matches the unfinished well and is often overlooked by violinists—it could serve as unique inspiration for this project.

Mary Lee Greitzer posits a unique embodied theoretical analysis of Ysaÿe's op. 27 no. 2 "Obsession."¹³ Greitzer is particularly focused on tracing Bach's influence on Ysaÿe's music that is only observable through the physical act of playing. That is to say, she analyses similarities of technical choreography like bowing patterns and left hand frames that are not immediately obvious through listening or score study. This concept might prove useful in

¹¹ Meng-Hsun Chuang, "Formal Ambiguity and Tonal Structure in Eugène-Auguste Ysaÿe's Sonata pour Deux Violons Seul Op. Posthume," (Dissertation, New England Conservatory of Music, May 2007).

¹² Wan-Lun Tsui, "A Study and Interpretation of Eugène Ysaÿe's Sonata in C Minor for Solo Cello, Op. 28," (Master's Thesis, National Taiwan Normal University, 2024).

¹³ Mary Lee Greitzer, "Becoming Bach, Blaspheming Bach: Kinesthetic Knowledge and Embodied Music Theory in Ysaÿe's 'Obsession' for Solo Violin," *Current Musicology* (Department of Music, Columbia University, New York 2011).

completing the unfinished, especially if Ysaÿe was already envisioning physical ties to Bach's BWVs 1001-1006. At the very least, no embodied theoretical analysis of Ysaÿe's unfinished sonata exists.

In *Elgar's Third Symphony: The Story of the Reconstruction*, author Arthur Payne asks important practical questions on macro and micro levels, all summarized in one: how do we honorably complete the work of a composer deceased, especially if there are substantial holes "where no material at all is extant." Ethical tensions are heightened further if the composer did not want their unfinished works examined, as is the case with Elgar. Payne's book is about his conclusions specific to Elgar's third symphony, which only premiered in 1998. He alludes to other hallmark completions like Sussmayr/Mozart's Requiem, Alfano/Puccini's *Turandot*, and Serly/Bartok's Viola Concerto as well. Christoph Wolff writes specifically about the Sussmayr rendition of Mozart's Requiem and tackles many of the same questions.¹⁴

While I suspect Ysaÿe would enthusiastically endorse this project, my process will still need to be measured. According to Richard Kramer in *Unfinished Music*, the Romantic world in which Ysaÿe primarily operated would say completing his fragment strips it of its ability "to become."¹⁵ Kramer covers similar situations with specific works by CPE Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. The "process of conceiving"—improvisation or active composition—is impossible in a finished work, let alone one bastardized by another creative mind. The draw to vicariously experience the act of creating through another mind, however, seems to have its Romantic gravity, thus Kramer's own foray into interpretive and literal completions of these works. Kramer's ideas will be useful for contrasting Ysaÿe's aesthetic context. They both

¹⁴ Christoph Wolff and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Mozart's Requiem: Historical and Analytical Studies, Documents, Score*. Translated by Mary Whittall. Berkeley: University of California Press (1994).

¹⁵ Richard Kramer, *Unfinished Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). chs. 1, 13, and 15.

maintain reverence for the composer's intent, but as we will see, Ysaÿe extends the process of conceiving into the concert hall. Chapters 1, 13, and 15 are most relevant.

The Unfinished Sonata and the Lavergne Manuscript

At the core of this project is Ysaÿe's unfinished sonata, first discovered in 2015 in a document now known as the "Lavergne Manuscript." Presently, it is the sole primary source for the piece. The manuscript is digitized in full, and includes about 145 pages of sketches that range from working and polished drafts of the published op. 27, the cello sonata op. 28, early sketches for a viola work, and marginalia.¹⁶ Two significant locations include material pertaining to the unfinished sonata. The first of them features material that appears to be a work in progress—hasty penmanship, eraser markings, disparate fragments of passages connected by lines and arrows, and exclamations like "bon!" are ubiquitous. Importantly, this passage features material only from the first movement. Some of it is reworked or discarded in the second location, but much of it is preserved between both. We should also note the penmanship of the second location. It aligns with the publication drafts of the other op. 27 in the Lavergne Manuscript and elsewhere, suggesting a nearly polished draft ready to submit to publishers. The nearly thirty pages between the two sections leads me to believe that there were intermediate sketches of the material. No such material has surfaced yet. Understanding that it may be lost altogether, it is a future research opportunity to scour Ysaÿe's other compositional manuscripts for material relevant to the unfinished sonata.

The Royal Brussels Conservatory (KCB) tells an appropriately Romantic story of the Lavergne Manuscript's acquisition:

On 11 May 1931, a few hours before the death of violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe,

¹⁶ Eugène Ysaÿe, Sketchbook, 1923, Lavergne Manuscript, Music Collections, Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel, School of Arts Erasmushogeschool–Erasmus University College, Brussels, Belgium, https://before2025.muziekcollecties.be/nl/Lavergne-manuscript_facsimile

the doorbell was rung at the house of the famous virtuoso. The violinist Philip Newman was waiting at the door and was subsequently let in by Ysaÿe's son Antoine. Behind the door of Ysaÿe's bedroom, Newman, unpacked his violin and he played Ysaÿe's fourth solo sonata, which brought some relief in the composer's last exhausting hours. After Ysaÿe's death, his family offered a notebook containing the first sketches, of among others, the six solo sonatas to Newman.”¹⁷

Newman passed his own collection on to violinist Josette Lavergne in 1966. In addition to being friends with Newman, Lavergne must have been the appropriate recipient owing to her connections circling around Ysaÿe. She was on friendly terms with Queen Elisabeth, herself a student of Ysaÿe and namesake of the Queen Elisabeth Competition at which Ysaÿe's music is requisite. Queen Elisabeth also contributed contents that became part of Lavergne's donation to KCB. The KCB also says that Lavergne “had good contacts” with globe-trotting cellist and friend of Ysaÿe Pablo Casals. Finally, Lavergne was teaching assistant to Josef Gingold, one of the last students of Ysaÿe, at Indiana University.¹⁸

Lavergne passed her collection to the KCB in 2015. The sketchbook containing the unfinished sonata is currently part of an archival collection of approximately six meters, and received its name, the Lavergne Manuscript, paying homage to the donor and highlighting its noteworthy contents. During archival processing, the potentially new work was flagged. It was just a few short years before violinists and scholars would bring the piece to life.

¹⁷“The Lavergne Manuscript: History,” Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel, 2025, https://before2025.muziekcollecties.be/en/Lavergne-manuscript_history

Navigating the KCB website can be difficult. At present, any of the English-translated links do not work. One can only access the facsimile through the Dutch links. The likelihood of a non-Dutch speaker happening across this material seems slim. If there are issues accessing this particular source, I recommend contacting the KCB directly. They have been enormously helpful in the past.

¹⁸“The Lavergne Manuscript: Josette Lavergne,” Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel, 2025, https://before2025.muziekcollecties.be/en/Lavergne-manuscript_josette_lavergne/

Examination of the Extant Editions: Ysaÿe, Sterckx, and Graffin

Ysaÿe left the three movements of his unfinished sonata in varying degrees of completion. The first is performable as he left it, but he crossed out a substantial portion, perhaps to be rewritten later. The second movement is effectively complete, and could serve as a standalone piece for its uniqueness and violinistic qualities. The third movement as it appears in the Lavergne Manuscript includes two themes sandwiching a variation. It requires the most intervention to become a performable work.

The second and third movements share a particular enigma. Unlike the first movement, the Lavergne Manuscript contains no sketches or working drafts of them. They only appear once, notably in very neat penmanship on par with drafts he would send to publishers. Given that Ysaÿe has numerous working drafts for other works, it seems unlikely that he wrote the second and third movements only one time. As a result, we have little context for where these movements actually fell in Ysaÿe's creative process. The first movement's working material could hold some clues. Moreover, the piece seems closer to publication readiness than the Lavergne Manuscript draft suggests.

Even so, each movement still poses challenges on the path to a performable iteration. The most valuable resources in navigating those challenges are the Lavergne Manuscript itself, the critical edition by musicologist Koenraad Sterckx, and the first published version by violinist Philippe Graffin.

Sterckx's edition appears true to the manuscript down to specific slur and articulation placements, even if Ysaÿe's markings are mistakes or simply messy. Sterckz also included an appendix tracking editorial decisions. Altogether, this will function as a condensed and easier-to-read reference than the manuscript itself, thus an important springboard for my own completion.

Graffin's completed version is important particularly as a foil. He completed the unfinished sonata aiming to "keep as much of Ysaÿe's own writing as possible."¹⁹ While successful to that end, I find it also undermines the legitimacy of the unfinished sonata as an independent work and worthwhile addition to the sonatas op. 27. Thus, the following discussion is dedicated to understanding the relationship between the Lavergne Manuscript, Sterckx's critical edition, and Graffin's published version, ultimately laying the framework for other creative approaches.

Examination: Molto moderato ma con brio

Of the three movements of the unfinished sonata, the first issues the most varied challenges. The Lavergne Manuscript includes both working and completed draft material, but Ysaÿe did not seem settled on any of it. Without explaining why, he indicates his intention to rewrite or edit several passages. We also cannot be sure of how much material might have been repurposed and how much of it outright rejected. For someone who sets out to complete the work, it is difficult to know how to treat such material.

In its loosest sense, a critical edition is a direct transcription of the manuscript, including its flaws or non-clarities. But Ysaÿe ensures even that requires editorial decisions. Consider the material from mm. 11-15, Figure 1 below. Notice the small circled numbers written in ink. "1, 2, 4, 3." Sterckx surmises that Ysaÿe intended to reorder those measures. "...the numbers encircled by Y[saÿe] indicate how he wanted to change the order of the bars, which makes the 4th bar of the example superfluous (therefore omitted in our edition)."²⁰ Sterckx's observation is astute, and could be accurate. However, adopting his perspective results in a critical edition that does

¹⁹Eugène Ysaÿe, *Sonate Posthume*, edited and completed by Philippe Graffin. (Mainz: Schott Music GmbH & Co, 2020).

²⁰ Eugène Ysaÿe and Koenraad Sterckx, "*Unfinished Sonata for Solo Violin in C Major*," Critical ed., 1923, (Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel School of Arts, Erasmus University College, 2019. Page 9.).

not correlate with any physical manuscript at all. Sterckx's version can be compared in Figure 2 below.

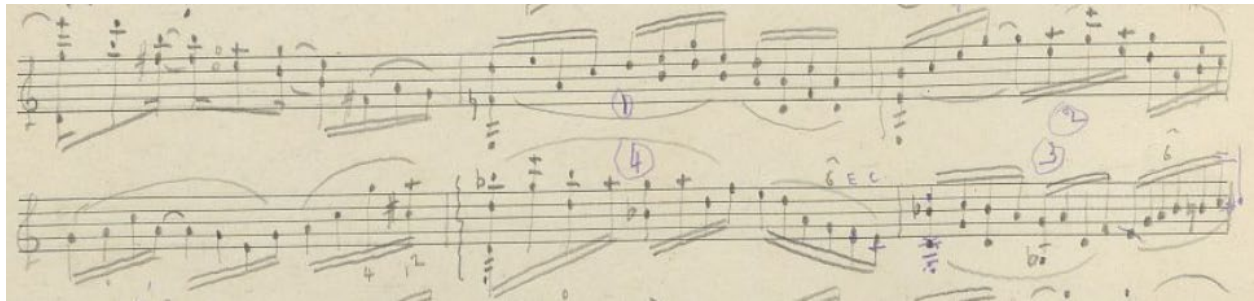


Figure 1. Lavergne Manuscript mm. 11-15. Sterckx asserts the circled numbers indicate reordering.

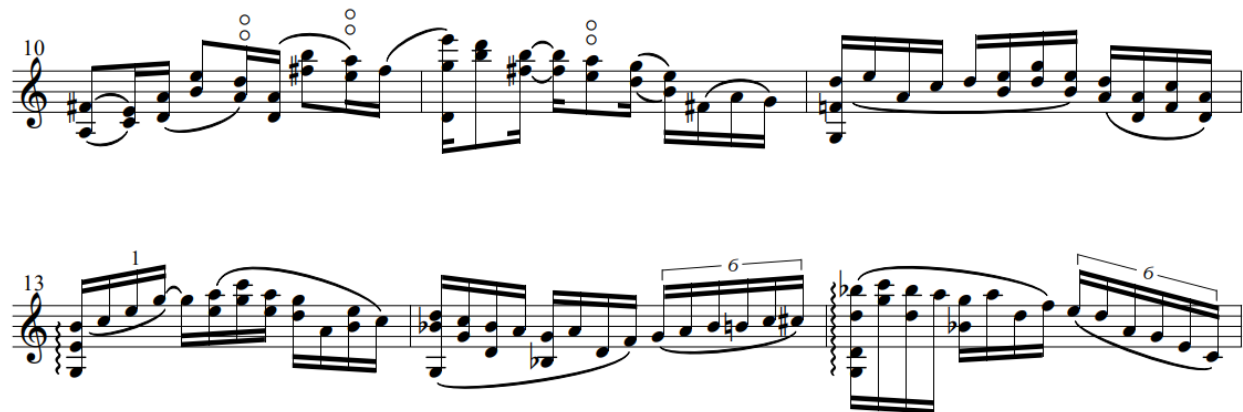


Figure 2. Sterckx realizes Ysaÿe's reordering in the Lavergne Manuscript.

Contrast that with Graffin who takes this passage without extrapolating. His version corresponds to the print draft in Figure I and ignores the circled numbers. The result is structurally sound and honors the measure attached to the circled "4" rather than discarding it. The technical drawback, and possible justification for why Sterckx might be correct, is that the voice-leading is not as smooth.

Moreover, both Sterckx's and Graffin's versions adhere to the Lavergne Manuscript but yield substantially different results. Ysaÿe himself did not seem

Editors run into a different problem when Ysaÿe is more explicit. On page 83 of the Lavergne Manuscript, Ysaÿe draws a large but light “X” across the bottom three staves of the page. The passage continues onto the next page. Ysaÿe did not continue the “X” indication, but he did leave emphatic marks two measures before the return of the primary theme. The bookends of discarded material could leave room for doubt about what should happen between them, but a margin comment from Ysaÿe illuminates his intentions. “Autre chose d'ici allant à la rentrée [something else from here, leading up to the return],” he says. The nature of that something else is unknown—Ysaÿe never came back to the passage. These passages are found in Figures 3, 4 and 5 below.

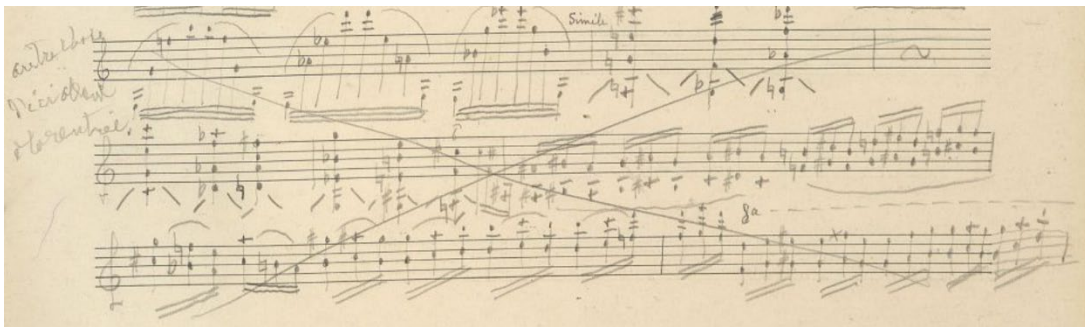


Figure 3: Discarded material from page 84 in the Lavergne Manuscript. Corresponds to mm. 50-56 in Graffin’s edition.

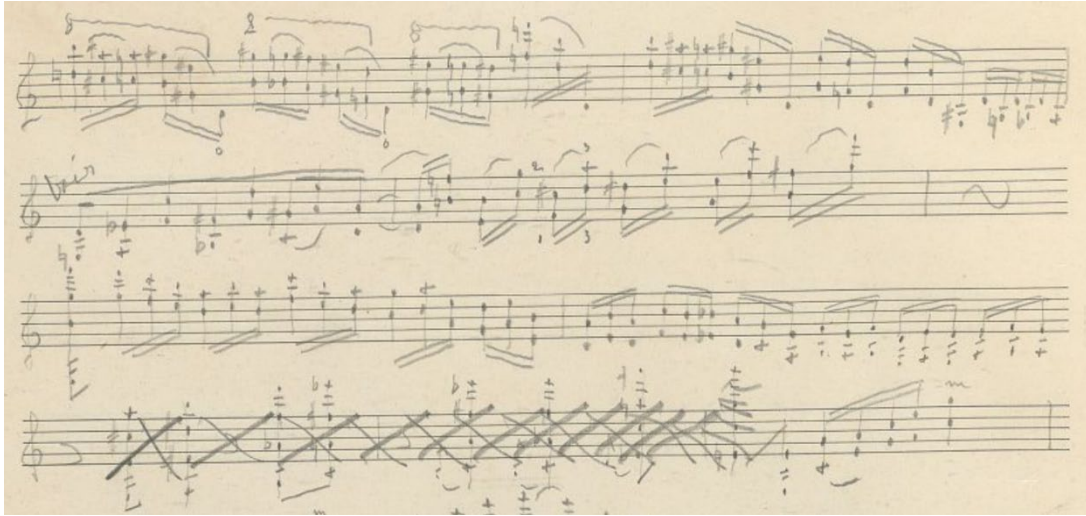


Figure 4: The second page of discarded material from the Lavergne Manuscript. Corresponds to mm. 57-62 in Graffin's edition.

Sterckx asserts a practical response, “Obviously, Y[saÿe] intended to rewrite the whole passage starting at the beginning of bar 49 and ending at the first note of bar 64.”²¹ I think it is only obvious to the point that Ysaÿe planned to revise the passage, however. Ysaÿe could have easily generated “something else” derived from the material he already wrote. Either way, Sterckx’s is a critical edition and he includes the entire passage faithfully, distinguishing it through small font size.

Since one of Graffin’s procedural goals is to preserve as much of Ysaÿe’s writing as possible, his solution to this challenge is fairly straightforward: reinstall the discarded material. Ysaÿe did write it, after all, and we can only speculate to the reasons why he crossed it out. Thus, Graffin’s edition includes everything except one other discarded passage from the end of the movement, though he does repurpose it later.

²¹ Eugène Ysaÿe and Koenraad Sterckx, *Unfinished Sonata for Solo Violin in C Major*. 1923. Critical ed., (Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel School of Arts Erasmus University College, 2019.)

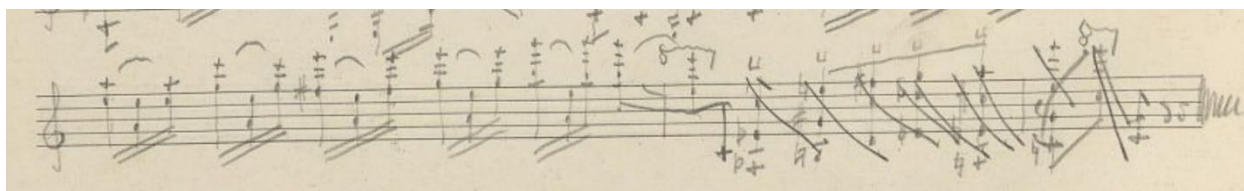


Figure 5: From page 85 in the Lavergne Manuscript. The discarded material appears in m. 69 of Graffin's Finale Giocoso.

Ysaÿe did not write many dynamic or expressive markings in this movement himself, though any that appear are preserved in Sterckx's edition. "Cédez" seems to have been particularly important to Ysaÿe. It is the only tempo indicator aside from "a tempo," appearing only twice. Graffin honors all of them as well, and adds numerous others which are practical and well-aligned with current Ysaÿe performance practice. Additionally, while Graffin preserves any of Ysaÿe's slurring or fingering indications, Graffin also offers his own suggestions throughout. He also uses some of Ysaÿe's technical shorthand, the legend for which can be found scattered throughout the Lavergne Manuscript. Sterckx compiles them conveniently in the foreword of his edition. Henle Verlag includes a congruent and more exhaustive legend in their publication of op. 27.²²

Examination: Canzona. Lento e mesto

Ysaÿe's Canzona is the least fraught movement to complete. He supplies all the musical content, as well a number of slur indications and expressive markings. Graffin keeps all of Ysaÿe's markings intact and adds some of his own. His bowing and fingering suggestions are particularly useful in this movement.

²² Eugène Ysaÿe, *Sechs Sonaten für Violine Solo Opus. 27*, edited by Norbert Gertsch, preface by Michel Stockhem (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2011).

There is one pertinent editorial question, however. Some of Ysaÿe's metric organization is unclear. The movement is marked in 3/8, but his notation between mm. 25-29 leads us to wonder if he intended it to change or if he simply made a mistake. Consider the manuscript in Figure 6 that shows the passage. Several bars have four eighth-note beats without any meter change indicated.



Figure 6. The second, third, and fourth measures of the excerpt have 4 eighth-note beats instead of 3.

Graffin's solution is to preserve Ysaÿe's notation and clarify that it is an intentional meter change. Beginning in m. 25, he indicates 4/8 time and in m. 28 returns to 3/8 time. See Figure 7.



Figure 7. Graffin makes the sudden change of meter intentional by including a new time signature in m. 25 and again in m. 28.

Sterckx's critical edition is curious in this instance. He follows Ysaÿe's notation, including the lack of formal meter change, except in m. 27. Here, Sterckx reverts to 3/8 unannounced, preempting the change in the Lavergne Manuscript by one measure. See Figure 8 below. The reasons why are unclear. I have only found one instance of the passage in the manuscript (Figure 6 above), and it is legible, fortunately. If Sterckx had reorganized the entire passage to stay in 3/8, it might make more sense (except that his work is a critical edition aimed at reflecting the source manuscript). I suspect this was difficulty with notation software or simply an oversight.



Figure 8. Sterckx uses no meter change, but also alters m. 27 from the Lavergne Manuscript.

Examination: Finale. Giocoso

The Finale Giocoso is the primary reason scholars refer to the piece as “unfinished,” and the nature of its incompleteness necessitates a slightly different approach to Sterckx's and Graffin's material. Though Ysaÿe's content in the Lavergne Manuscript looks thoughtful and worked out, he stops mid-thought, just into the second page. The obvious problem of completion is compounded by the lack of working drafts anywhere else in the Lavergne Manuscript.

Contrast this with both previous movements: the first has chaotic sketches scattered in numerous locations as well as a fully realized publishing draft. The second lacks working drafts, but itself is perhaps the cleanest and most complete draft in the entire sketchbook. So, not only is the third movement incomplete, we lack any working material that could be used to piece it together.

While we may not have working material, it seems likely that, somewhere, Ysaÿe did. The number of specific, consecutive pages dedicated to the third movement as well as their sacrosanct cleanliness suggest that he preemptively estimated the work's length. The page where the third movement trails off contains no other content, related or otherwise. Indeed, the following two consecutive pages are completely blank, as if they, too, were reserved for the unfinished sonata. The quality of Ysaÿe's penmanship and the clarity of the extant musical material further suggest that the third movement had evolved from working drafts.

It would be in character for Ysaÿe to have drafted some of his unfinished sonata elsewhere. He frequently left multiple versions of his completed works in different sketchbooks or with pages out of order, themselves ending up housed in disparate personal collections and archives. The Lavergne Manuscript is similar in that Ysaÿe's sketches do not always follow strict page order. Perhaps the working draft materials for the third movement await discovery in another forgotten sketchbook.

Confoundingly, the nearly blank second page of this movement seems to have eraser marks at the end. This is uncommon among Ysaÿe's print drafts—most corrections are done in red or blue ink. This singular quirk spawns numerous questions. Could these pages have been the working draft? Did the order of pages in the digitization get shuffled around? Are there pages missing? If not in the Lavergne Manuscript, where could the working drafts of the second and

third movements be? And what caused Ysaÿe to stop writing this draft of the third movement? At present, I can only speculate the answers. But future archival work could yield particularly interesting discoveries for the unfinished sonata.

Understanding the fraught intellectual backdrop of the third movement helps us appreciate Sterckx's critical edition all the more. He renders the third movement faithfully, including all of Ysaÿe's markings, in this case mostly slurs and articulation marks. It is worth noting that there is only one appendix entry pertaining to the third movement, compared to fourteen and sixteen for the first and second, respectively.²³ Some of this can be attributed to the brevity of the third movement, but it also highlights its legibility. Ysaÿe was clear with what he chose to write, and since there are no other versions of the work, there are no obvious discrepancies to navigate.

The content of Ysaÿe's third movement is crucial to the unfinished sonata as an independent work, but alone is not sufficient for a compelling performance. Enter Graffin, who, as we have already discussed, constructed a fully performable third movement. His version is admirably idiosyncratic to Ysaÿe's style, and he achieves this through recombining preexisting material. Graffin describes this as one of his explicit procedural goals in the foreword to his edition.

I thought we should keep as much of Ysaÿe's own writing as possible, so I looked for some similarities in the 6th sonata that he published, to see if this earlier attempt had been somehow developed or transformed. I found some in the 5th and 6th sonata and used them as a "bridge" to return to the theme. The last crossed out bars of the first movement are to be found here closing the whole piece, developed in a similar manner as in his 3rd sonata...²⁴

²³ Eugène Ysaÿe and Koenraad Sterckx, *Unfinished Sonata for Solo Violin in C Major*, 1923, Critical ed., (Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel School of Arts Erasmus University College, 2019).

²⁴ Eugène Ysaÿe, *Sonate Posthume*, edited and completed by Philippe Graffin. (Mainz: Schott Music GmbH & Co, 2020).

Comparing the pertinent passages side-by-side illustrates even more clearly why Graffin's version resembles Ysaÿe. Consider m. 39, the first material posited by Graffin, found in Figure 9 below. The measure appears quasi cadenza—small font size and obviously more notes than metrically expected. The gesture comprises three registral peaks, each ascending towards the fermata, the highest of the three, and then a tumble downwards until arriving on a trill cadence. The harmony throughout is distinctly diminished. The passage to which Graffin alludes is found in m. 149 of op. 27 no. 6, below in Figure 10. It features the same contour, register, and diminished harmony. The difference is that Graffin's is transposed down a half-step.

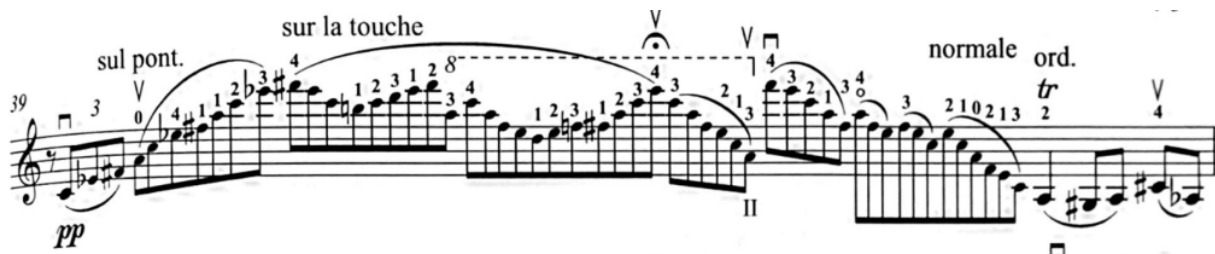


Figure 9. Graffin's quasi-cadenza passage that mirrors op. 27 no. 6.

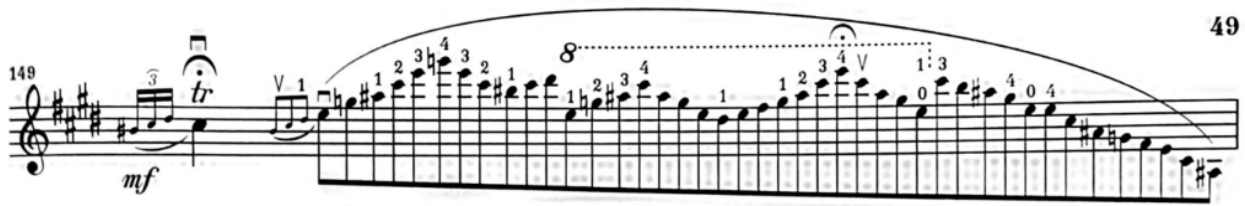


Figure 10. Ysaÿe's quasi-cadenza passage from op. 27 no. 6. Graffin's parallel passage follows it closely.

Material in Graffin's mm. 40-48 (Figure D) is also derived from Ysaÿe. Graffin uses an ascending syncopated gesture and vibrant triplet figuration to retransition back to the primary theme. It is a clever choice for two reasons. First, the material refers to the second theme of the movement (mm. 26-33, originally by Ysaÿe) almost developmentally. Second, the material parallels the analogous passage from op. 27 no. 6 from exactly where Figure S.1 ended. Which is

to say, Graffin effectively transposes the entirety of op. 27 no. 6 mm. 149-158 directly into his movement. Compare these passages in Figures 11 and 12 below.



Figure 11. Graffin’s derivation of the syncopated ascending gesture from op. 27 no. 6.

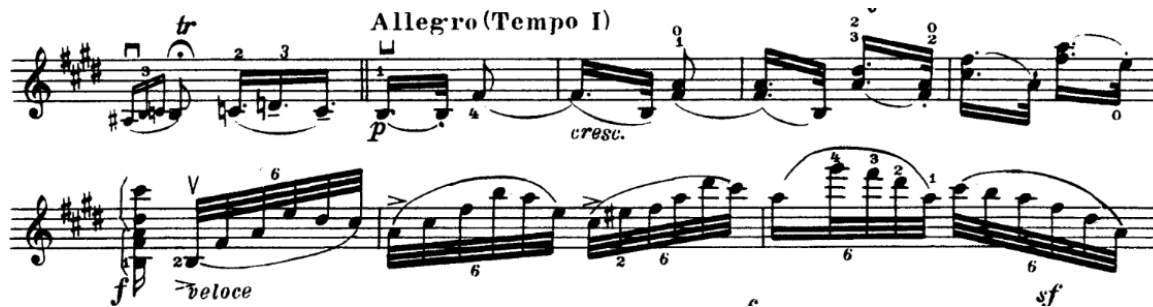


Figure 12. Ysaÿe’s original passage from op. 27 no. 6

Before returning to the primary theme proper, Graffin extends the retransition with another Ysaÿe figure. Here, he pulls a scalar left hand pizzicato flourish from op. 27 no. 5. Ysaÿe uses the same gesture before the return in op. 27 no. 5 “Danse Rustique” in m. 64. Consider Figures 13 and 14 for a comparison.



Figure 13. From Graffin’s m. 49. Strongly reflects Ysaÿe’s passage from op. 27 no. 5 in content and function.



Figure 14. Ysaÿe's left hand pizzicato passage from op. 27 no. 5 preempting the return of the theme.

Graffin reprises Ysaÿe's primary theme and first variation from earlier in the movement with slight alterations. As examples, Graffin interjects a measure of silence before the primary theme's cadence and coquettishly finishes it in pizzicato (mm. 64-65). And then, instead of following with a full reiteration of the variation from mm. 14-25, Graffin deftly pivots to the closing statement partway through. Here, he employs the discarded material from the end of the first movement (Figure 5, above) as a final flourish, giving the work a satisfying full-circle arc, and interestingly, one impossible for a listener to notice. Only those with intimate knowledge of the Lavergne Manuscript would notice.

Graffin's choice to use the first movement material is, on one hand, a smart one. Its harmonies fit well into the language of the piece. Also important is the physical nature of chord-playing, which aligns with the third movement's primary theme. However, it also parallels a different finale that Ysaÿe wrote, this time op. 27 no. 3. Compare the two endings in Figures 15 and 16, below.



Figure 15. Graffin's ending. Uses material from the unfinished sonata's first movement combined with the gesture from op. 27 no. 3.



Figure 16. From the end of Ysaÿe's op. 27 no. 3

A closer look reveals the contour of the top voice is virtually identical. The harmonies underneath are not directly parallel but share in their chained leading-tone function.²⁵ The resulting flurry is similar, but also effective and highly appropriate for a final gesture. The movement, and thus the entire sonata, is completed. Graffin's iteration makes formal sense, and, owing to his use of op. 27, is unquestionably in the style of Ysaÿe.

Conclusion: Fidelity and Aesthetic Failure

For the same reasons, however, Graffin's version also suffers for independence and unique identity. The volume of material he borrowed might not be problematic if he had developed it. In its present state, the borrowed material is grafted onto the unfinished sonata through transposition and the piece is condemned to imitation. The issue is compounded because Graffin quotes multiple other sonatas, each with their own aesthetic goals. The result is a piece that simultaneously conjures virtuosity like no. 6, pastoral elements like no. 5, and then concludes with mysticism as in no. 3. Not only is his iteration imitative then, but stylistically confusing, particularly for one who knows op. 27. So, while Graffin might be writing a love

²⁵ This may also be an instance in which Graffin is referring back to the first movement that relied so heavily on altered leading tone harmonies (BM→CM, B⁺→CM, G#m→CM).

letter, as it were, to Ysaÿe, I believe he fails to give the unfinished sonata an identity both distinct and clear.

By my metrics, fidelity to Ysaÿe, even if technically well-executed as Graffin's, fails aesthetically. But I believe there is a solution that both honors Ysaÿe and the unfinished sonata as an independent, distinct, and compelling work. It requires the same deep understanding of Ysaÿe's music that Graffin demonstrated. Equally as important, however, is an empowered creativity, one imbued to performer-composers by Ysaÿe himself. Indeed, it requires embracing the role of *sur-créateur*.

Chapter II

Solution: Ysaÿe's Romanticism and *Sur-Créateur* Inherited Tenets of Romanticism

Ysaÿe's Romanticism is no secret. Numerous scholars have discussed it, and his philosophical writings corroborate the label. The well-known anecdotal sources from Lev Ginsburg and Antoine Ysaÿe (grandson of Eugene) paint him as a giant among men, full of vitality and thirst for life. In terms of violin playing, they pointedly emphasize his original interpretations, masterful rubato, and the powerful sweep of his sound.

Romanticism as it relates to the unfinished sonata generates problems, however. If we consider musicologist Bruce Haynes's summary of its traits, we learn the importance of fidelity to the written score, that interpretive authority lies primarily with the composer, and that performers themselves are to be "transparent," which is to say, subservient, to the music.²⁶ These requisites are fine in performance. Completing an unfinished work, however, is deeply incompatible because they strip the composer of interpretive and creative agency. If we value Ysaÿe's assumed philosophical perspective, completing the sonata becomes contradictory at best and impossible at worst.

Anyone completing an unfinished work from the Romantic era would be committing similar transgressions, and even Graffin's imitation-heavy solution falls short. Though he placates fidelity and transparency by using material written by Ysaÿe, he has still overstepped the composer by dictating developmental and formal processes. But I suggest Ysaÿe's flavor of

²⁶Bruce Haynes, "Classical Music's Coarse Caress," in *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

Romanticism might actually allow for these kinds of compositional activities--aesthetic failure is rooted elsewhere.

Ysaÿe: Romantic Posterchild and Maverick

Romanticism is an enormous concept and carries more than a hundred years of historical development. While we might consider the likes of Beethoven and, say, Sibelius to be of the same era, their musical priorities and aesthetic backdrop are entirely different. Without going into detail, we should simply note the industrial revolution that ignited between their lifetimes. As musicians, we might also note how different their music sounds.

Despite the nuance necessary to grapple with what being a Romantic musician means, contemporary musicians and scholars have inherited a relatively narrow understanding. And while musicologists like Bruce Haynes argue that defaulting to Romantic performance practice detracts from earlier music (Classical, Rhetorical), I would extend the argument even further: not all Romantic music should be approached the same either. To the point, when we acknowledge Ysaÿe's Romantic heritage, what are the implications for engaging his music, and do those implications differ from other music of the time?

Ysaÿe embodies a version of Romanticism that largely aligns with our inherited understanding. First, he was trained by some of the most prominent violinists of the age, Henri Vieuxtemps and Henryk Wieniawski. Their lifetimes sit squarely within the Romantic era, and the music they wrote aligns with all of the musical traits therein. Further, we know that Ysaÿe was well-versed in that style of repertoire from a young age. He received public accolades for his performances of their music as early as fifteen years old.²⁷ Vieuxtemps especially played a formative role. He was his final formal teacher, and was remembered fondly by Ysaÿe late in

²⁷Cornaz, Marie, *À la redécouverte d'Eugène Ysaÿe* (Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2019), 18-19.

life. Speaking of Vieuxtemps, Ysaÿe says, “He was a very great man, the grandeur of whose tradition lives in the whole 'romantic school' of violin playing...” and “Vieuxtemps is the great artist who made the instrument take the road of romanticism which Hugo, Balzac and Gauthier trod in literature.”²⁸

Second, Ysaÿe’s own performing sensibilities exhibit all the traits of full-throated Romanticism. The aforementioned recordings showcase gratuitous vibrato, portamenti, and rubato, all of which corroborate accounts provided in his various biographies. Ysaÿe’s musical sensibilities took shape over time in relation to those of his venerated masters. Notably, this goes beyond the admiration of a young student. It describes the lifelong process through which Ysaÿe absorbed the philosophical and aesthetic tenets of nineteenth-century music-making. So, yes, Ysaÿe was a Romantic violinist, but he was also one who actively chose to affiliate with that tradition.

Third, Ysaÿe was clearly invested in the ever-cementing body of canon repertoire, itself dominated by Romantic composers. Scant few recordings of Ysaÿe exist, but prominent among them are some of the Romantic greats: Mendelssohn, Wagner, Schubert, and Brahms in addition to works by both Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski. Further, Ysaÿe wrote cadenzas for the concerti of Beethoven, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky (as well as Mozart’s K. 216). Moreover, Ysaÿe was saturated in the aesthetic of the great Romantic composers throughout his entire career.

The traits I have focused on foment their own cultish tendencies, which marks exactly where Ysaÿe deviates from our inherited understanding of Romanticism. Fidelity to the score, primacy of the composer, and transparency of the performer drive their adherents toward what

²⁸Frederick Martens, “Violin Mastery: Talks with Master Violinists and Teachers,” *The Project Gutenberg Ebook of Violin Mastery* (April 4, 2005).

Haynes refers to as “the cult of genius.”²⁹ In such a cult, certain members are worshipped with god-like reverence, and their work treated as sublime. The unworthy are forgotten, and their artistic contributions are viewed skeptically. But the special treatment is highly exclusive to composers.

And to be very clear, Ysaÿe was not famous as a composer during his lifetime. He was revered as a violinist and respected as a conductor. But far less can be said about his status as a composer. Josef Szigeti, whose performance inspired op. 27, summarily wrote that “[the sonatas] probably are more important as a violinistic testament than as a creative effort that can stand critical evaluation in cold blood.”³⁰ Given op. 27’s prominence in modern recitals and competitions, Szigeti’s assessment seems less damning. But there is little reason to believe these works alone would have elevated Ysaÿe to that venerated subsection within the cult of genius while he was alive.

Ysaÿe must have understood that he was ineligible to stand among the pantheon of canon composers, but that did nothing to satiate his fascination with the idea. In fact, genius seems to have been an obsession of his in its own rite. A study of Ysaÿe’s personal library reveals a man who is constantly testing himself against measures of greatness.³¹ In the margins of a passage describing a young Alexander the Great, Ysaÿe comments “Me at 20!” And upon reading Baudelaire’s description of the “modern sensitive man” in his *Paradis artificiels* (Calmann-Lévy, 1901), he confesses: “I recognize myself there?!”

²⁹Bruce Haynes, “Classical Music’s Coarse Caress,” in *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer’s History of Music for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford University Press, 2007). 79.

³⁰ Josef Szigeti, *With Strings Attached: Reminiscences and Reflections* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 116-117.

³¹Mélanie de Montpellier d’Annevoie, “La Bibliothèque littéraire du violoniste,” *Textyles*, no. 61 (September 15, 2021).

Further exploration of his marginalia shows that, to Ysaÿe, genius moved beyond singular vanity. He ruminated deeply on numerous works (Gustave Le Bon's *Psychology of Crowds*, Father Didon's *Jesus Christ*) that explore the relationships between the masses and their leaders. Judging by the great number of underlined passages and exclamation marks, Ysaÿe agreed that the greatest of men held power over but also responsibility to the masses. The inevitable extension to music then blossoms. Quoting Ysaÿe in part, d'Annevoie says it spectacularly:

The virtuoso performer must therefore be the musical equivalent of an enlightened monarch whose duty is to “transport [the masses] to the realms of beauty”³² and to make them experience “concord, fraternity, the universal embrace.”³³ According to Ysaÿe—and this is characteristic of a Romantic conception widely shared by musicians of his generation—music is understood as a civilizing force for the masses, provided that, beyond technique, musical art, and especially performance, touches the human heart and mind. Under these conditions, then, art becomes art, and the performer, a virtuoso, even a “super-creator,”³⁴ according to Ysaÿe’s formula, who understood performance as participating in the work of creation and the perpetuation of the work.³⁵

Ysaÿe’s self-identification as genius is simultaneously affirming and confounding for our earlier assessment of him as a Romantic violinist. On the one hand, he defers to the composers commonly associated with the cult of genius. Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner certainly make the cut by the measure of most any musician in modernity. On the other hand though, Ysaÿe sees himself as part of that noble pantheon, but as a violinist, not a composer.

Something about Ysaÿe’s self-identified genius is subversive. He achieved it as a performer, one who played works by those who were historically agreed upon as members of the

³² Eugène Ysaÿe, “Henri Vieuxtemps my master”, in *Les Cahiers Ysaÿe*, no. 1, 4th quarter, 1968.

³³ Eugène Ysaÿe, “Reflections on our violin competitions—Brussels 1897,” in *Bulletin of the Eugène Ysaÿe Foundation*, no. 45, 1st quarter, 1975.

³⁴ d’Annevoie’s article is offered in both English and French, and this is the first instance of scholars using the term “sur-créateur.”

³⁵ Mélanie de Montpellier d’Annevoie, “La Bibliothèque littéraire du violoniste,” *Textyles*, no. 61 (September 15, 2021).

cult of genius. But he took it steps further—artistic liberties like rubato and portamenti, claiming interpretive high ground above the composers of those very same works. Ysaÿe married virtuosity, previously antithetical to the virtues of the transparent performer in a typical Romantic ideal, with musicality. He considered the score negotiable to the needs or whims of a performer (a certain irony given the lengthy editing process and re-publication of his own op. 27). Thus we arrive at Ysaÿe’s unique brand of musical philosophy, *sur-créateur*, one part Romantic, one part Ysaÿe, and all together, an alternative to our inherited understanding of Romantic performance practice.

Implications for the Unfinished Sonata

Understood in this pluralistic light, *sur-créateur* actually transforms how we can engage with the unfinished sonata. Graffin’s approach of fidelity is no longer the only way to honor Ysaÿe—it becomes one of many possibilities that fulfill the same goals. So rather than debating what constitutes authentic Ysaÿe material, we can draw from the characteristics of the piece itself.

More broadly, the nature of the unfinished sonata’s incompleteness reveals a striking tension between Romantic fidelity and creative participation. Completing the sonata requires subtle manipulation, as in the first two movements, as well as unapologetic composition, as in the third. Fidelity and creativity are forced to coexist, and that may be the single most important aesthetic quality of Ysaÿe’s unfinished sonata.

Interestingly, the paradoxical coexistence of fidelity and creativity is only visible in unfinished works like Ysaÿe’s sonata. A complete piece of music from the Romantic era does not typically require a performer to compose. Even the cadenza was becoming increasingly driven by the composer. But if strict fidelity to Ysaÿe is impossible in the case of his unfinished

sonata, and a satisfactory completion can still be derived through *sur-créateur*, perhaps our broader understanding of Romantic performance practice is too narrow. Perhaps Romantic music necessitates both fidelity and creativity, and it is the act of balancing them where authenticity appears.

Chapter III

Application: Completing the Unfinished Sonata

Synthesizing a Compositional Dialect

In Chapter I, I established the fundamental parameters for this project—the origins and context of the unfinished sonata, as well as my claim that the piece still needs and deserves intervention to concretize its value. In Chapter II, I described Ysaÿe’s philosophical disposition, *sur-créateur*, which is itself justification and guidance for completing the unfinished sonata. Here in Chapter III, I turn from the conceptual to the practical: how could we apply *sur-créateur* in completing the unfinished sonata?

Taking *sur-créateur* to the extreme could result in wild realizations of the unfinished sonata. Capable violinists running rampant with Ysaÿe’s material and no guiding parameters is a recipe for chaos. Graffin avoided that outcome with his strict use of already-written Ysaÿe material, but, as we saw, his approach from the other end of the spectrum creates its own problems. So there is a balance to strike. Somewhere between composing free variations and hyper-fidelity are those guiding principles.

For me, a successful rendition of the unfinished sonata must sound like it could have been written by Ysaÿe. This is directly related to the harmonic language and violinistic qualities of the writing, of course. Additionally, the third movement’s completion must seal a sense of continuity across the whole piece. That is to say, the three movements together must exhibit a sense of identity. In the same way that violinists discuss the difference of flavor between “the Obsession” and “Ballade,” the unfinished sonata needs some unique impetus, some *raison d’être*, as it were. This could relate to any number of musical elements or processes, but the unfinished sonata’s material lends well to a few in particular: style, form, and meter.

As for emulating Ysaÿe's compositional language and violinistic idiom, there are a number of important documents. I analyzed Ysaÿe's melodic content and fingering pattern idioms in my master's thesis *Updating the Violin Study Repertoire Using Eugène Ysaÿe's Op. 27 as a Model*, both of which find natural application in completing the unfinished.³⁶ Similar in spirit is Karen Hoatson's dissertation, *Culmination of the Belgian Violin Tradition—The Innovative Style of Eugène Ysaÿe*.³⁷ Hoatson's work places particular emphasis on Ysaÿe's bowing idiom. She also reinforces Ysaÿe's interest in technical innovation for violin writing, especially as it relates to collaborating with contemporary French composers like Debussy and Chausson. The sections "Ysaÿe's Playing Style" and the whole of "Later Works" are especially relevant to this project.

Another important question lies in which of Ysaÿe's musical compositions best describe the language of the unfinished sonata. Ysaÿe self-reports that his mature style begins with *Poème Elegaique* op. 12 for solo violin and orchestra.³⁸ He completed the work about 1892 in addition to eight other similar poems before and after op. 27 (1923). These could serve as viable reference materials, but in this case, the genre of orchestral poem is distinct enough from the solo works that I choose to leave them out.

That step is constructing a compositional dialect. It is more than just compiling pieces that exemplify Ysaÿe's way of getting around the violin or his preferred harmonic palette, though those are also critical. This means absorbing his musical values—propensity for the melancholic, for dance and *fantasia*, and for abundant sonority. In technical terms, I am

³⁶Benjamin Ehrmantraut, "Updating the Violin Study Repertoire Using Eugène Ysaÿe's Op. 27 as a Model," (MM Thesis, University of Colorado Boulder, 2020).

³⁷Karen Hoatson, "Culmination of the Belgian Violin Tradition—The Innovative Style of Eugène Ysaÿe," (DMA Dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1999).

³⁸Andrew Morris, "Poetic Injustice: Ysaÿe," *Strad Magazine*, July 2008.

considering his treatment of style, form, and meter. To that end, I will refer to several of his compositions as well as technical exercises. These make up the first subsection here.

Ysaÿe's magnum opus, the sonatas for solo violin op. 27 form the core dialect for the unfinished sonata. These works are exemplary for all of the technical reasons we could want—virtuosic and colorful violin writing, innovative fingering and bowing patterns, and formal processes to use as models. We should also note the unfinished sonata is from the same creative era unequivocally. The drafts in the Lavergne Manuscript are dated May, 1924, the same year that op. 27 was first published. And, as we already discussed, the unfinished is sandwiched amongst drafts of op. 27. Any of Ysaÿe's models for op. 27 are likely to have influenced the unfinished as well.

To a more concrete inspiration, we know that Ysaÿe dedicated each of the sonatas in op. 27 to a violinist of the next generation, those to whom he entrusted the mantle of noble artistry. More than that, a performance by one of the dedicatees is the alleged catalyzing incident for the genesis of op. 27. That is to say, the dedicatees were in mind before, or at the very least, during the compositional process. In order, they are Josef Szigeti, Jacques Thibaud, Georges Enescu, Fritz Kreisler, Mathieu Crickboom, and Manuel Quiroga. Traits of their personality or playing style are evident in the compositions themselves, though Ysaÿe left no written accounts of exactly how.

This matters because the unfinished sonata was set to be the original installment of no. 6, and would have had a dedicatee in mind. Indeed, Ysaÿe inscribes “à Quiroga” at the top right corner of the first page of the unfinished sonata's print draft. While the op. 27 no. 6 that we know shares some common musical ideas with the unfinished, they are largely different pieces. If we

owe any attributes of the piece to Quiroga, it might be some of the common musical content (syncopated dance rhythms in particular).

Questions of musical portraiture aside, I will refer to the Henle Verlag score of op. 27 for this project.³⁹ It will function similarly to the critical edition of the unfinished sonata—a clean copy for analytical reference and to supplement Ysaÿe’s hand sketches. I will not be copying passages directly, but drawing inspiration for figuration and violin-specific compositional idioms.

Ysaÿe’s sonata for two violins op. posthume also contributes to the discussion at hand in a number of ways. While this work was completed during Ysaÿe’s lifetime, it did not receive its premier until 1967. Additionally, the first movement was first premiered in 1916 as a trio for two violins and viola.⁴⁰ The work shares a genesis somewhat parallel to the unfinished sonata in that there are slight variations among manuscript versions, particularly in the third movement.

More importantly, however, is how Ysaÿe navigates form. Meng-Hsun Chuang discusses this at length in his dissertation, “Formal Ambiguity and Tonal Structure in Eugene-Auguste Ysaÿe’s Sonata pour Deux Violons Seuls Op. Posthume.” His study corroborates Ysaÿe’s interest in pushing formal boundaries. This has been a compositional interest since Beethoven and before, of course, but understanding how Ysaÿe was experimenting in this later period of his life provides templates for the unfinished. It demonstrates what elements Ysaÿe considered cutting-edge and worth examining. The more subtle counterpart to that point is that by digesting

³⁹ Eugène Ysaÿe, *Sechs Sonaten für Violine Solo Opus. 27*, edited by Norbert Gertsch, preface by Michel Stockhem (Germany: G. Henle Verlag, 2011).

⁴⁰ Meng-Hsun Chuang, “Formal Ambiguity and Tonal Structure in Eugène-Auguste Ysaÿe’s Sonata pour Deux Violons Seul Op. Posthume” (DMA Dissertation, New England Conservatory of Music, May 2007), 2, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

the models set forth in the double sonata, we can avoid formal “innovation” that would be anachronistic. (Something that is perhaps too forward thinking, or bends the rules too far)

A common trait of Ysaÿe’s solo works is his idiosyncratic treatment of meter. Most movements maintain some regularity, but often, the meters are complex or there are spontaneous changes. All three movements of the unfinished sonata are good examples, but they are far from the only ones. For example, both movements of Ysaÿe’s sonata op. 27 no. 5 feature changing meters extensively. The first movement, *L’Aurore*, changes between 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 throughout. The second movement, *Danse Rustique*, begins in 5/4 and moves between 7/4, 3/4, 5/8, 6/8, 3/8, and 2/8 in order of appearance.

In Ysaÿe’s case, it seems like changing meter has less to do with subverting conventions and more to do with imbuing the music with organic and spontaneous qualities. This is part and parcel of the *fantasia* tradition from which his sensibilities are largely derived. Anecdotally, we might connect these traits to what many musicians and teachers today refer to as “the improvisatory quality” of his music. Looking more closely at “*L’Aurore*,” we notice the tempo indication at the beginning of the movement which includes a parenthetical “*mesure tres libre*,” [very freely measured]. Ysaÿe’s liberal use of fermati on sustained pitches and rests emphasize the free-flowing qualities of the music.

This is especially interesting given the opposite indication at the beginning of the *Danse Rustique*, “*bien rythme*” [good rhythm]. This movement is obviously intended to be dance music, even if stylized, in which case a steady pulse is paramount. Ysaÿe’s music makes a compelling argument for the difference between pulse and meter. While there are elements of music that could be more different, they are not the same and do not always share the same

purpose. Moreover, Ysaÿe uses both freedom of pulse and meter towards similar goals throughout op. 27 no. 5.

One final important example is found in Ysaÿe's sonata for solo cello op. 28. This work is perhaps even more radical in its approach to meter and pulse. Each movement makes use of changing meters as in with the previous examples, but also includes an interlude between the second and third movements totally devoid of barlines. Debating whether to call it a cadenza is beside the point—the piece is already a solo work with room for liberties. Ysaÿe's intent is to allow for maximum expressive potential in rhythmic music that is not tethered to meter. Cellist Wan-Lun Tsui puts it well: "Through shifts in time signatures within the same movement, he [Ysaÿe] creates a sense of imbalance and irregularity in the listener's perception. As a result, the beginnings and endings of phrases are no longer necessarily structured around bar lines or cadences, and the phrasing is not entirely governed by conventional musical syntax."⁴¹

It is not always clear why Ysaÿe changed meters so frequently. It could be a degree of carelessness on Ysaÿe's part, in which case editorial corrections might be warranted. However, as Wan-Lun Tsui points out in his discussion of the sonata for solo cello op. 28, the organic qualities of Ysaÿe's phrase structure often transcend the need for a regular metric pattern. Indeed, that particular piece is a case study in metric change.

Supplementing Ysaÿe's more seminal works are some of his technical exercises. Though most of his *10 Préludes pour Violon seul, Op. 35* are not concert works, they reveal some of Ysaÿe's highly idiosyncratic techniques and fingerings for double stops at the intervals unison through tenth. This edition from Schott also includes commentary from Ysaÿe about violin

⁴¹ Wan-Lun Tsui, "A Study and Interpretation of Eugène Ysaÿe's Sonata in C minor for Solo Cello, Op. 28."

technique, systems of fingering, and harmony.⁴² Notably, he postulates about the future of violin playing and music.

Similar technical insights are found in Ysaÿe's system of scales and exercises.⁴³ Distinct from the *10 Preludes*, however, this includes shifting exercises and fingerings for scales, double-stops, and arpeggios. All together, these illustrate Ysaÿe's unique preferences compared to other standard systems and will prove highly useful in engineering like-minded musical material.

The most obvious reference would be the rest of op. 27. These works provide the blueprint for Ysaÿe's harmonic language, technical understanding, and aesthetic intent without needing to consider elements of orchestration or ensemble. Further, the unfinished sonata seems to have been intended as one of the original op. 27. Along similar criteria, a few other important works stand out: the double violin sonata op. posthumous (approx. 1915), the cello sonata op. 28, *10 Preludes* op. 35, and his collection of scales and exercises. These will be my primary sources for developing Ysaÿe-style passagework and fingerings as well as references for harmony and formal structures.

From these works as well as the aforementioned analyses, I will derive a compositional dialect that sounds like Ysaÿe to a listener and feels like Ysaÿe to a violinist. This will inform how I complete the unfinished sonata in terms of content and form, as well as bowings, fingerings, and expressive indications. Establishing the dialect codifies the parameters for completing the unfinished sonata, but executing the act requires the use of compositional tools, some of which are more useful than others.

⁴² Ysaÿe, Eugène, *10 Préludes pour Violon seul*, Op. 35, edited by Charles Radoux Rogier (Brussels: Schott Frères, 1952).

⁴³ Ysaÿe, Eugène. *Exercices et Gammes*, preface by Antoine Ysaÿe and Joseph Szigeti (Brussels: Schott Frères, 1967).

Defining the Types of Intervention

If the pieces and analyses in the previous section lay out the blueprint for my rendition of the unfinished sonata, this section identifies and defines the tools with which I actually build the piece. I hope this section also functions as a sounding board for other composers to consider the various ways they could treat Ysaÿe's material.

Completion: to finish a musical idea that was started by the original composer but left unfinished. Completion could take place on many different levels of music. For example, Ysaÿe could have written a complete antecedent phrase but not provide its consequent, thus an opportunity for the intervener to complete the phrase. Or, Ysaÿe could have written three sixteenth notes of four, thus an opportunity for the intervener to complete the rhythmic group. In the task of completion, it is viable to extract musical ideas from sources other than the unfinished sonata itself.

Continuation: to extend an idea or gesture posited by the original composer. Easily achieved through sequential motion or stepwise motion. Following parallel voicing or bowing patterns may also prove useful.

Transformation: to use Ysaÿe's already-written material as a basis for a new derivative gesture. Some parallel traits should be obvious to a listener. Contour, rhythmic similarities, or motivic gestures are all good candidates. This tool is probably best limited to use on musical material from the unfinished sonata directly.

Recombination: to connect two or more previously unrelated ideas. This tool should probably use material directly from the unfinished sonata as opposed to other pieces that form the compositional dialect.

The Compositional Problems Avoiding Imitation

While performable and important in bringing awareness to Ysaÿe's unfinished sonata, Graffin's rendition fails aesthetically because it relies too heavily on imitation. Indeed, imitation is virtually Graffin's only tool in completing it. While similar projects might benefit from imitation, I argue that it is problematic in Ysaÿe's unfinished sonata because it is not just distracting, but philosophically incompatible with *sur-créateur*.

First, imitating from so many different sources, even if they are spiritually related to the unfinished sonata, risks confusing a listener. In Graffin's case specifically, the allusions to Ysaÿe's op. 27 nos. 3, 5, and 6 are not subtle. Their auditory cues draw attention away from the unfinished sonata and onto those works. And upon realizing that Graffin is quoting other works, a listener is likely to focus on finding more instances, even if they do not appear. Ultimately, the listener is distracted, and that runs contrary to everything Ysaÿe would have wanted his listeners to experience. This is especially problematic because the quotations come so close to the end of the work where the piece's aesthetic trajectory should be summarized and solidified.

Second, imitation dilutes the originality of the unfinished work and its viability as a standalone piece. This goes hand-in-hand with my previous point, but the unfinished sonata as completed by Graffin does not sound like its own piece, but rather a collection of references to other works. Would it not be more effective to play or listen to the other works?

Third, and most importantly, Graffin's form of imitation maintains Ysaÿe as the primary creative force which runs in direct contrast with *sur-créateur*. *Sur-créateur* endows the performer with expressive and interpretive authority, and even more so if the performer is also co-creator. As Ysaÿe wrote, "The artist distills the essence of the subject, expressing both its substance and form; they must be both subjective and objective, penetrating even deeper than the

author himself into the aesthetics of the work.”⁴⁴ Therefore, it is more aligned with *sur-créateur* for a performer-composer to participate in composing the unfinished sonata.

The Compositional Problems Continuity and Identity

Despite being unfinished, Ysaÿe’s sonata has a robust musical identity even without intervention. I argue it is imperative that anyone completing the work understands what comprises that identity. It is fundamental for two primary reasons: first, extending that identity into the third movement unites the entire piece into a cohesive work. Second, to misunderstand the unfinished sonata’s identity is to miss the tenets of Ysaÿe’s *sur-créateur* and risk a rendition that is technically obfuscated, aesthetically stunted, or both. Indeed, understanding what makes the piece unique is exactly how the “artist penetrates even deeper than the author into the aesthetics of a work.”⁴⁵ Thus, this section will describe the identity of the unfinished sonata, especially as it relates to and distinguishes itself from the rest of Ysaÿe’s works.

Given its incomplete nature, we might account for slight redirection or evolution of the unfinished sonata’s identity, but Ysaÿe has it largely established. The piece is hazy, fragmented, moody, but also rather earthbound—at least one foot is always grounded in dance or song, even if abstractly. All of these traits are direct results of Ysaÿe’s compositional choices, and they are criteria necessary for the addition of any new material.

The hazy qualities of all three movements can be attributed to harmony especially. Ysaÿe regularly subverts the expectations of functional harmony. Common tools he uses are chromatic voice-leading and deceptive or unpredictable harmonic motion. In the first movement, for example, Ysaÿe provides a strong G dominant harmony in m. 7 which a listener expects to

⁴⁴ Eugène Ysaÿe, “Le Rôle Créateur de l’Interprète,” *Les Cahiers Ysaÿe*, no. 2 (1969).

⁴⁵ Eugène Ysaÿe, “Le Rôle créateur de l’interprète,” *Les Cahiers Ysaÿe*, no. 2 (1969).

resolve to C major, the resoundingly apparent home key thus far in the piece. However, the cadence at m. 8 does not resolve as much as it passes through non-diatonic augmented harmony. C major is nowhere in sight as the music proceeds through both F major, D major, and ultimately arrives at an unstable G dominant in m. 12. The passage is further removed from traditional harmonic function owing to Ysaÿe's prevalent use of large and perfect vertical intervals. The passage can be found in Figure 17 below.



Figure 17. From Sterckx's edition. The passage highlights the chromatic language and spacious vertical intervals emblematic of the whole piece.

This passage can also be used as a model approximating the harmonic fluidity useful in completing the unfinished sonata. More strict tonality or radical harmonic language would not fit into the musical dialect and thus weaken the unfinished sonata's identity. Overly clear or strong cadences should be reserved only for the most important structural landmarks, and even then, used sparingly or followed by quick pivots. Harmonic functionality should also be treated

carefully. Only rarely in the unfinished sonata does Ysaÿe rely on classical tonic, pre-dominant, and dominant functions. Chromatic, deceptive, and mediant motion are much more preferable. Similarly, long-form harmonic progression must be filtered through Ysaÿe's harmonic dialect. Different key areas can and should become prominent, but they will by necessity not relate to each other in functional terms. For example, we might expect Ysaÿe's first movement to follow a large-scale I-V-I (C-G-C) prolongation, but we get something more like I-vi-^bIII-I.

Phrase structure is tightly interwoven with metric patterns, and the unfinished sonata is standout in this regard—that is, these elements are also unpredictable and reinforce the general haziness of the piece. The previous discussions on Ysaÿe's sonata for solo cello op. 28 is perfectly applicable here. We should also recall the discussion of meter in the second movement from Chapter II. In the unfinished sonata, barlines are not perfect indicators for phrase lengths, nor are phrase lengths prescribed to two-, four-, or eight-bar units. Additionally, whether a particular measure belongs to a previous phrase or the next is often nebulous. The aforementioned passage from the first movement (Figure 17 above) is a perfect illustration.

So Ysaÿe uses expression to dictate meter, not the other way around. Ysaÿe does make attempts to reconcile them though. In both the first and third movements, he implements complex meters like $3/4+2/8$. While unorthodox, $3/4+2/8$ is not entirely wild. It can be mentally reorganized into a $4/4$ without much calculus. I believe Ysaÿe broke the meter as he did to allow for gestural flexibility and to emphasize agogic accents inherent in his music. Importantly, however, is that Ysaÿe does not strictly alternate between $3/4$ and $2/8$ as we might expect. That is to say, there is no principal guiding when to alternate meters other than the whims of the musical moment. Ysaÿe's attempt to clearly describe his metrical process falls short of its goal but leaves us with an understanding of his priorities: expression over technical or notational details.

To be clear, I characterize Ysaÿe's use of harmonic and metrical non-clarity as a feature, not a bug, especially as it relates to completing his unfinished sonata. They bring the piece a strong sense of improvisation and freedom. These qualities align magnificently, if radically, with elements of *fantasia*. Further, they are the characteristics that distinguish the unfinished sonata from op. 27, and thus are indispensable to the piece's unique identity.⁴⁶

But the piece is about much more than just haziness and abstraction. Ysaÿe's expressive process remains grounded in human gestures. Song and dance permeate the unfinished sonata. The most obvious allusion is the second movement, called "Canzona," (literally, "song"). And the outer movements have dance at their core. For the first, this manifests in gliding syncopations throughout. Most importantly, its second theme (m. 34) features a highly evocative dance rhythm that returns in the third movement. Additionally, the third movement's first theme is a peasant dance similar to the one Ysaÿe includes in op. 27 no. 5. So while Ysaÿe's unfinished sonata moves closer to abstraction than some of his other works, it remains corporeal through its clear use of human idioms like song and dance.

Compositionally, this necessitates striking a similar balance between abstraction and corporeality. Too much abstraction risks losing the human qualities of Ysaÿe's music. Too much song and dance risks turning his music into old-fashioned, already-trodden works.

Thus far, the parameters are clear: avoid imitation and maintain the established identity of the unfinished sonata. In practice, this means generating new material derived from the unfinished sonata and informed by Ysaÿe's compositional dialect. The new material should be harmonically hazy and, at times, unpredictable. Meter can be treated more as a pliable expressive

⁴⁶ Other sonatas from op. 27 include metric fluidity as well, but none to the extent we see in the unfinished sonata.

tool and less like a law or rigid container to be filled. New material should also maintain a connection to song or dance idioms, though the strength of that connection can and should vary.

Altogether, this leaves the final task of completing the unfinished sonata. The following section details how I address these compositional challenges. Rather than a chronological play-by-play, I highlight specific instances in which these challenges are especially acute, and ultimately, how they exemplify Ysaÿe's *sur-créateur*.

Aesthetic Realization: How My Rendition Answers the Problems

It is both necessary and important to lay out the compositional and philosophical challenges to the project. Without further action, however, the stakes are primarily academic. It is not until a composer proposes their own rendition of the unfinished sonata that the *sur-créateur* framework holds strong or collapses. Thus, this discussion orients around the compositional choices I made—or deliberately avoided—to respond to these challenges. Rather than a chronological note-by-note examination, I have chosen to focus on the themes of the most impactful choices. These pertain to motivic recall, harmonic parallels and trajectory, formal balance, and the ending.

Motivic Recall

Motivic recall is a powerful tool for unifying material within a movement, movements across an entire work, and even works across a composer's entire oeuvre. Generally, motives are small musical units repeated and developed across time. They can be melodic, pertaining to literal pitch and contour, rhythmic, or combinations of the two. Importantly, Ysaÿe set the stage for motivic recall in his unfinished sonata, so I chose to continue in that spirit and maximize its effect.

The most important motive appears first in the first movement at m. 34. It is especially noteworthy because this is the first time a concrete melody emerges at all. Until this moment, the music is fragmented and gestural. Ysaÿe even repeats it two more times in m. 35 and m. 37.

Despite how striking it is to finally hear a melody, it is not obvious that Ysaÿe treats this material as a motive until much later in the piece. The melody appears only this one time in the first movement and not again until the third. The rhythmic similarities are undeniable, but with the entire second movement between iterations, it would be easy for a listener to miss the connection. So I took the opportunity to re-state the motive at a critical juncture in the first movement.

Recall the material from the first movement that Ysaÿe had crossed out and intended to rewrite. Obviously, he was critical of the passage, but he left no clues for how he might have revised it. Our best course of action is critically analyzing it to infer some of the reasons Ysaÿe was dissatisfied. By my estimation, there are two glaring pitfalls. First, it is even more highly chromatic for a more prolonged duration than anywhere else in the movement. Second, and to the point at hand, it is driven primarily by gesture and violinistic figuration, not by melodic material. That is to say, it lacks thematic or motivic linkage to the rest of the movement.

So my rendition aims to tighten his passage into something more grounded. I chose to preserve the passage in mm. 48-52. The bariolage over a chromatic bassline is highly idiosyncratic to Ysaÿe's style and especially useful because the final F# harmony can be interpreted as dominant-functioning. A singular cadence in this passage accomplishes two important things: first, it diffuses an incredible amount of tension that is otherwise disproportionate to the rest of the movement. Second, it creates an opportunity to revisit Ysaÿe's

motive, which is exactly what I do. My continuation of Ysaÿe's material is found in Figure 18 below.



Figure 18. Reinterpreting m. 52 as a half cadence allows for my new iteration of the theme at m. 53.

Reintroducing it here gives the piece more clarity in what is otherwise highly effusive, textural, and gestural writing. A second iteration of the motive signals its importance to a listener and simultaneously avoids being too heavy-handed. So, when its dance rhythm reappears in the third movement, the result is a stronger sense of continuity and dance-adjacent identity across the whole piece. It is also worth noting that similar rhythms appear in op. 27 no. 6, which opens the possibility for further cross-pollination (an opportunity that Graffin also took).

Ysaÿe makes deliberate use of whole tone harmonies in almost every movement of his op. 27, and I found it strange the only instance in this first movement was a fleeting passing harmony. So, rather than discard Ysaÿe's mm. 53-55 (which is perhaps not Ysaÿe's most idiomatic passage anyway), I opted to transform it. My rendition resembles the figuration from m. 45, including the 2/8 interruptions, adapted into whole tone harmony. While not literally copying Ysaÿe's material, this upholds tenets of both original creation *a la sur-créateur* and fidelity to the source material.

Harmonic Parallels and Trajectory

If motivic function generates audible continuity, then Ysaÿe's harmony directs its emotional trajectory. Owing to Ysaÿe's idiosyncratic use of harmony, however, its function is more destabilizing than not. So what harmony ultimately provides for the unfinished sonata is direction, not clarity.

At a structural level, Ysaÿe prefers mediant, deceptive, and step-wise harmonic motion over more traditional pre-dominant, dominant, and tonic functions. I chose to parallel that preference, especially in my completion of the third movement. Ysaÿe's material begins in C major, and by the second theme at m. 26 exists in something like E minor. Instead of continuing through mediant relationships, I pivot using chromatic motion towards E-flat that eventually sets up an arrival in A-flat major at m. 46. While the result is a structural C major to A-flat major mediant relationship, the path between them is unpredictable. Thus, I preserve harmonic structure common to Romantic compositional dialect, but also expand its process in ways similar to Ysaÿe. That is to say, unpredictably.

The piece's harmonic unpredictability is consistent enough to leave listeners disoriented. The opposite becomes an especially useful tool then: remaining in one key area for extended periods is grounding. I took advantage of both of these elements in my passage at m. (musicbox). It is not strictly diatonic, but it meanders in and out of A-flat major for about sixteen measures including two authentic cadences and one half-cadence emphasizing that harmony (m. 49x, m. 56x, and m. 64x). I chose to highlight this relief further with gentle melodic material in counterpoint. It is worth noting its figuration echoes the second movement, establishing even stronger continuity across movements. Compare my passage to Ysaÿe's in Figures 19 and 20 below.



Figure 19. My contrapuntal passage at m. 49 reflects material from Ysaÿe's Canzona.



Figure 20. The passage from Ysaÿe's Canzona that inspired my own begins at m. 21.

Eventually, it was important motivically and harmonically to return to the primary theme in C major. The biggest question was how to approach it. To announce its return with dominant motion would be a clear signal to the listener, and not without precedent. Ysaÿe did so in numerous places throughout the entire piece, and I added one of my own in the first movement. Here, however, I felt a softer landing could set up a remarkable contrast. After the highly chromatic passagework in mm. 76-103 modeled after the second movement, I chose to set up an E-major dominant pedal. The passage is obviously transitioning somewhere, but C major, the key of the primary theme, has not been heard for many phrases. E-major relates to C major

through mediant motion, so it fits well with the surrounding harmonic language. In this case, it works even better because Ysaÿe begins the primary theme on an A minor harmony. The motion from E major to A minor fulfills the dominant function on a local level, but the structural motion between passages subverts it. Thus, the E major pedal is retroactively realized as mediant motion.

Moreover, my use of harmony mirrors Ysaÿe's. It leans heavily into large-form structures, especially of mediant, deceptive, and chromatic relationships. Importantly, it does not telegraph those landmarks, and often allows them to be experienced retrospectively. I preserve ambiguity as much as possible, but it is not random. I also aim to guide its trajectory along Ysaÿe's preferred path, a continuation of his harmonic logic but through my own independent authorship. In meeting this balance, I also begin to fulfill my role as *sur-créateur*.

Formal Balance

Formal and structural challenges manifest within both the third movement and across the piece as a whole. The intra-movement challenges pertain primarily to proportion and the nature of its content since Ysaÿe did not complete this movement. The freedom composers can enjoy here is only limited by their creativity, though my personal parameters attached to *sur-créateur* require the product to avoid anachronism. The form of the third movement will also have inter-movement implications. These pertain to things like literal length, emotional trajectory, the distribution of motivic material, and juxtaposition. Again, these choices are dictated by the composer, but we should note that they were important considerations for Ysaÿe. That is to say, they should not be left to chance.

Ysaÿe's approach to form was multi-faceted, but it seems to have always been deliberate. Sometimes, the clarity of traditional forms suited his expressive needs well. For example, he uses

true rondo form in the finale of op. 27 no. 1. The second movement of the unfinished sonata is an exemplar ternary form. We also know Ysaÿe employed cyclic form and was interested in how it could be folded into more traditional forms as in op. 27 no. 4 (the first and second movements are dance forms) or harnessed more freely as in op. 27 no. 5 (effectively poems and highly improvisatory). In a similar spirit, the double violin sonata exemplifies how Ysaÿe blurs formal distinctions—each movement can be interpreted to have multiple formal designs.⁴⁷ Ysaÿe was clearly fluent in compositional form.

More than that, I believe Ysaÿe often thought of form on both intra-movement and inter-movement levels simultaneously, owing especially to his idiosyncratic use of cyclic form. That in combination with his experimental forms in the double sonata led me to consider that a combination of them might provide compelling templates for the unfinished sonata. What I decided on was one part cyclic and one part teleological. Thematic material from both of the first two movements would appear, recontextualize, and transform in the third. Simpler, the narrative supplied by Ysaÿe's first two movements (mostly complete) would culminate in a re-telling and conclusion in the third.

Executing that form required planning, especially as it pertains to the third movement. In the same way that the unfinished sonata must not lose its identity to any one installment of op. 27, so, too, must the third movement maintain distinction from the previous two. To enhance the third movement's thematic clarity, I use Ysaÿe's primary theme as a rondo refrain. That material appears two more times in addition to its initial statement. These are the structural anchors for the movement, and each clarifies the narrative purpose of the surrounding musical content.

⁴⁷Meng-Hsun Chuang, "Formal Ambiguity and Tonal Structure in Eugène-Auguste Ysaÿe's Sonata pour Deux Violons Seul Op. Posthume" (DMA Dissertation, New England Conservatory of Music, May 2007), 2, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Ysaÿe's secondary theme that begins at m. 26 is derived directly from the first movement theme that appears in Figure 18, above. Given how chromatic the first movement is, using the most concrete musical material from that movement strongly reaffirms continuity and incites a memory connection that allows a listener to revisit that state of mind. That is, he provided the impetus for re-telling the first two movements of the sonata. Thus, the first and second themes of the third movement are expository.

The second iteration of the primary theme that appears at m. 66 is a thorny reharmonization that takes place after the relatively stable A-flat major passage. It functions to abruptly pivot into development, another sequence of chromatic harmony drawn from the second movement, threatening to derail the piece. The third instance at m. 105x appears an octave higher, obviously indicating structural importance. Rather than bold or pesante character, however, it reverberates with tenderness and heralds the musical journey through the former chromatic passages and entry into the coda, itself a frenzied celebration of C major. These two iterations of the theme can be found in Figures 21 and 22 below.



Figure 21. The third movement's primary theme, reharmonized at m. 66.



Figure 22. The third movement's primary theme in a higher octave at m. 105. Precedes the coda.

Through the character of each of these passages, I clarify the movement's formal process and its identity as a separate movement. However, it is not the only formal process at play. The sequencing of motives from the previous two movements also reinterprets them. Taken on their own, the first two movements would finish on an especially sad note (*Canzona. Lento y mesto*). The addition of my third movement takes elements from each and completes them, but redefines them triumphantly. It turns Ysaÿe's

What the Piece is Now

Owing to my heavy use of motivic recall and a teleological long-form, an ending that honors both is appropriate. Achieving that becomes the rhetorical climax of the work. My primary consideration was what theme would dominate the final statement. On the one hand, material from the first theme, especially as I have reframed it in the third movement, would emphasize the transformation over time. Prioritizing the third movement's theme would emphasize the independence of the movement and signal more of a triumph-over-adversity narrative.

So again, I chose both by combining material from both movements. But instead of using the dance theme from the first movement, however, I used its opening flourish. To a keen

listener, it would land as familiar, but since it is more gesture than melody, it would not overtake the moment. The model passage in the first movement can be found in Figure 23 below.



Figure 23. The opening three measures of the first movement. Gesture is emphasized above melody here.

The sequencing of the motivic material was also an important factor. The final phrase begins by recalling the third movement's theme. The material from the first movement appears after, but in the reverse order. Comparing Figure 23, above, and Figure 24, below, should help clarify.



Figure 24. Third movement material begins the final gesture in m. 118, but is followed by first movement material in mm. 120-end (from m. 3 and then mm. 1-2 respectively, the reverse order in which it appears.)

The effect is joyous on the surface, and the long form concludes poetically, solidifying its identity distinct from the rest of op. 27 by recombining its own material.

Conclusion

We should be grateful for the fortuitous combination of circumstances that led to the discovery of the Lavergne Manuscript, including Graffin's scholarship. Now, contemporary violinists have the uncommon opportunity to engage in the dual creative process of composing and performing a substantial work. While I have been an enthusiastic participant in that process, my rendition of the piece does not need to be the only one, nor does it need to be the definitive one. In fact, I hope that researchers find more compositional sketchbooks and correspondence to further inform subsequent iterations of the unfinished sonata. Currently, no known sources include material pertaining to that movement, polished or otherwise.

Beyond the unfinished sonata lie a number of other unfinished works by Ysaÿe. Some are likely undergoing reconstruction even as I write and their processes will benefit from the kind of work I am doing here. The scholarly community does not need to seek the "right" way to complete Ysaÿe's music, but we do need to construct compelling ones, so I hope that *sur-créateur* becomes core to Ysaÿe reconstructions and performances. Equally as much, I hope that we collectively revisit our Romantic historical performance practice with as much nuance as we provide to Rhetorical and Classical music, and as much deliberacy as we do to modern and contemporary. *Sur-créateur* and other yet-unexplored philosophical perspectives might just be the key to liberating Romantic performance practice from our sometimes rigid approach to it.

Performance and composition are both creative acts, and while participants often adhere to guidelines of common practice or style, products are inherently unpredictable. In fact, it is doubtful any two musicians endeavoring to complete Ysaÿe's unfinished sonata would make the same artistic decisions even if they were explicitly using the same compositional dialect and core reference pieces. This inevitability highlights the most compelling implication of *sur-créateur*:

unfinished works are often closer to Romantic spirit when we embrace our creative roles in their completion. Ultimately, and I am certain he would love this, we perpetuate Ysaÿe's legacy not just through his lineage as students and performers, but now as co-creators, too.

Handwritten musical score on ten staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The score is heavily annotated with handwritten markings, including a large 'X' drawn across the first three staves, and the word 'lento' written above the fourth staff. The notation is dense and appears to be a working draft or a highly expressive musical sketch. The bottom right of the page features the signature 'M-'.

Handwritten musical score on ten staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The score is heavily annotated with handwritten markings, including a large 'X' drawn across the first three staves, and the word *lento* written above the fourth staff. The notation is dense and appears to be a working draft or a highly expressive musical sketch. The bottom right of the page features the signature *M-*.

Sol min - Grave
 lo minor - Adagio
 re minor - Adagio
 Sol min. - Presto
 mi - Adagio
 ut min - Adagio

Gème Sonate.

1851

Bre

Handwritten musical score for "Gème Sonate." The score is written on ten staves, featuring various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The notation is heavily crossed out with diagonal lines, suggesting a revision or a "cancel" of the original work. The staves are labeled with "Bre" (Breath) and "Gème" (Gème). The score includes a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 3/4. The notation is written in a cursive, handwritten style, typical of 19th-century musical manuscripts. The score is divided into sections by large, sweeping lines, and the staves are numbered 1 through 10. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "p" (piano) and "f" (forte). The score is written on aged, yellowed paper, and the handwriting is in dark ink.



R. & H. No. 1. C.
S. 12.

Handwritten musical score on ten staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is dense, with many notes and accidentals. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fifth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The sixth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The seventh staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The eighth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The ninth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The tenth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is dense, with many notes and accidentals. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fifth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The sixth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The seventh staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The eighth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The ninth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The tenth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp.

TB

hier

Opus 12

— Hurey

Handwritten musical score on three staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is dense, with many notes and accidentals. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is dense, with many notes and accidentals. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp.

Handwritten musical notation on two staves. The notation is heavily crossed out with diagonal lines. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).

Handwritten musical notation on two staves. The notation is heavily crossed out with diagonal lines. The word "Sento" is written above the first staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).

Handwritten musical notation on two staves. The notation is heavily crossed out with diagonal lines. The word "Sento" is written above the first staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).

Handwritten musical notation on two staves. The notation is heavily crossed out with diagonal lines. The word "Sento" is written above the first staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).

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Handwritten musical notation on two staves. The notation is heavily crossed out with diagonal lines. The word "Sento" is written above the first staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).

Handwritten musical score on ten staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. There are several annotations in French:

- Staff 2: *ou en pythone*
- Staff 3: *cubore*
- Staff 7: *fenna* and *autre*
- Staff 8: *desu*
- Staff 9: *desu* and *chromat.*
- Staff 10: *basse en harmon*

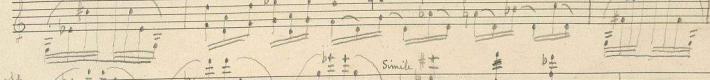
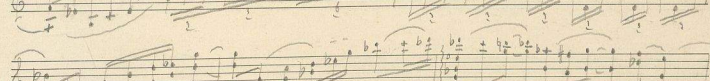
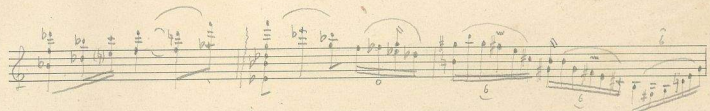
At the bottom right, there is a signature *Bee-* and the words *bon succès*.

6^{ma} Sonate

(à Giusoga)

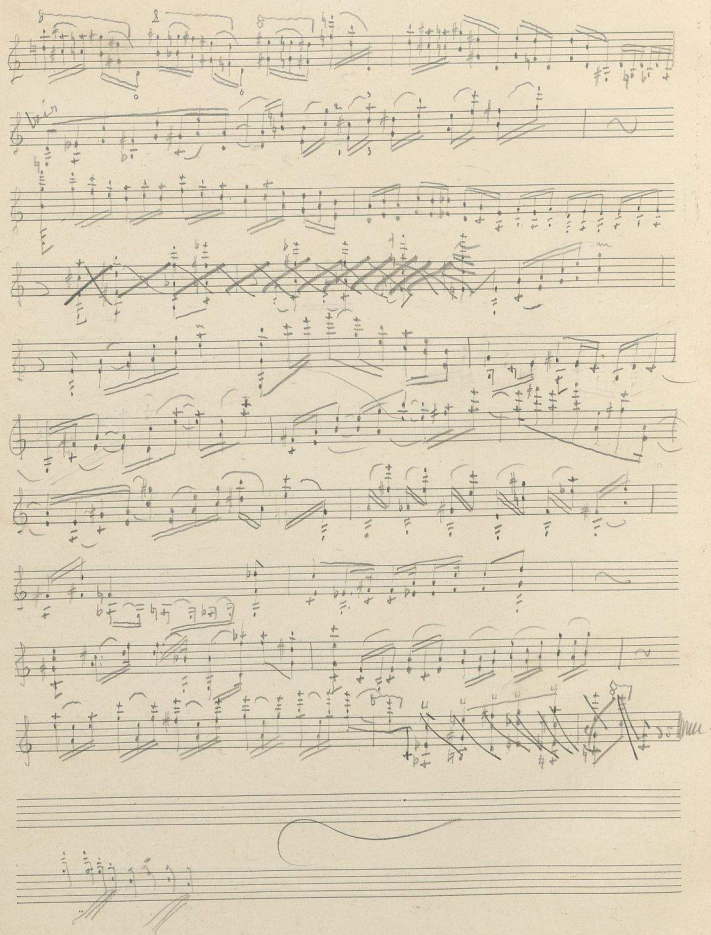
Allegretto molto moderato ma Cor. Gius.

Handwritten musical score for a 6th sonata, featuring multiple staves with complex notation, including triplets, slurs, and various accidentals. The score is written in a single system across ten staves. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, key signatures with sharps and flats, and various rhythmic values. There are numerous handwritten annotations in purple ink, including 'p', 'f', 'acc', 'buz', 'guy', and circled numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. The piece concludes with the word 'ceder' and a double bar line.



ante la
vicinitad
de la

- 9 -



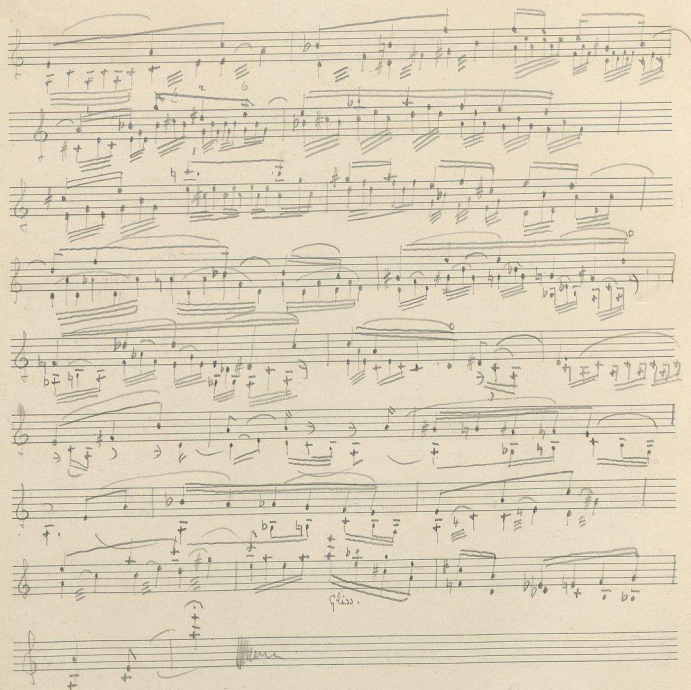
Canzona

Andante e Mesto $\frac{3}{8}$

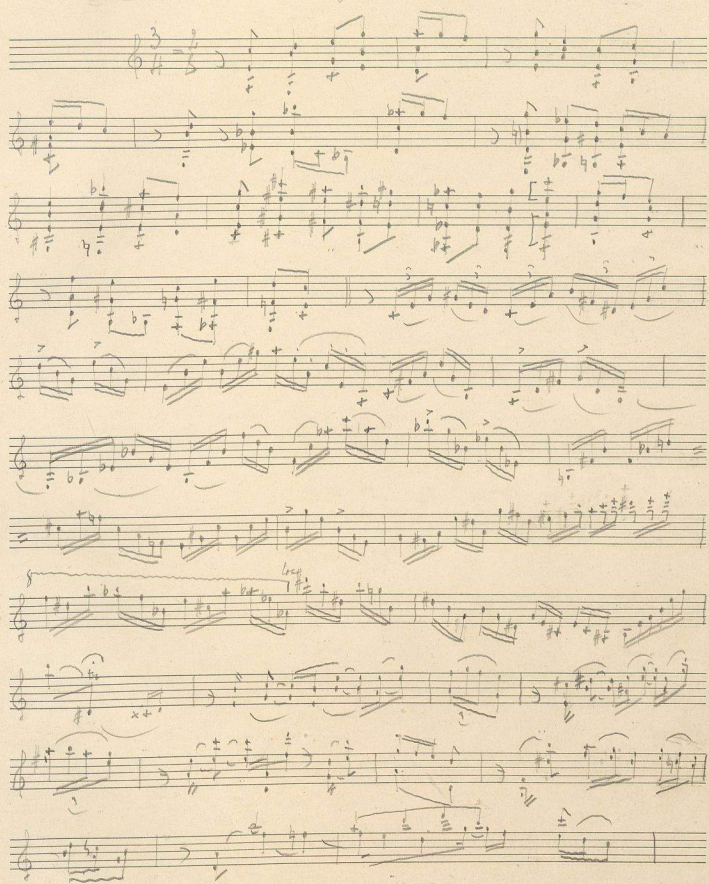
The musical score is written on ten staves. The first staff begins with the tempo/mood marking *Andante e Mesto* and the time signature $\frac{3}{8}$. The notation is in G major, indicated by one sharp (F#). The score features a variety of musical elements, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and accidentals. There are several dynamic markings, such as *tr* (tristesse) and *tr* (tristesse), and some numerical markings like 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The piece concludes with a double bar line and the initials 'R.S.'.

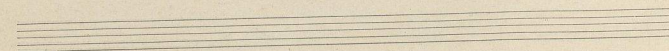
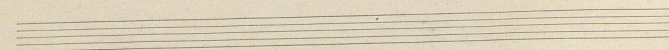
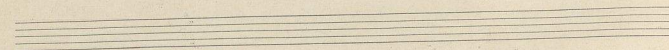
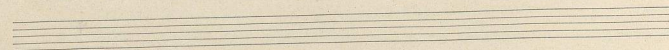
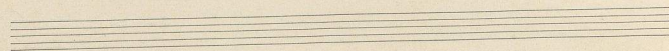
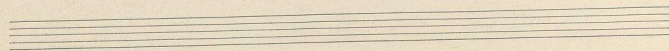
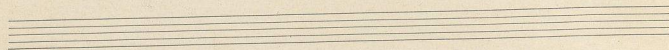
tranquillo

R.S.



Finale Giocoso





Sonata for Solo Violin in C Major

Composed by Eugène Ysaÿe
Completed by Ben Ehrmantraut

Allegro molto moderato ma con brio

The musical score is written for a solo violin in C major, 3/4 time. It consists of eight staves of music, numbered 1 through 21. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto moderato ma con brio'. The score includes various dynamic markings and performance instructions. Measures 1-3 start with a forte (f) dynamic. Measures 4-6 are marked 'con rubato' and 'dim.'. Measures 7-9 are marked 'mp'. Measure 10 is marked 'cresc.' and 'mf'. Measure 11 is marked 'Cédez'. Measures 12-14 are marked 'poco meno mosso' and 'mp con colore'. Measures 15-17 are marked 'mp'. Measure 18 is marked 'f'. Measure 19 is marked 'mp'. Measure 20 is marked 'cresc.'. Measure 21 is marked 'cresc.'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and accidentals.

4 *f*

7 *con rubato*
dim. *mp*

10 *cresc.* *mf* *Cédez* *poco meno mosso*
mp con colore

13 6 6

16 *mp* *cresc.*

18 *f* *mp*

21 *cresc.*

24 *mf agitato*

26 *cresc.*

28 *a tempo*

31 *f*

33 *Cédez*

35 *Cédez*

38 *cresc.*

40 *mp*

41 *cresc.*

dim.

espress.

dim.

dim.

44 *p* 3 3 3 3 3 3

46 *p cresc.* 3 3 3 3 3 3

49 *f* rit.

51 *dim.* 3 3

53 *rit.* *meno mosso* (♩=36) *accel.* 3 3 3 3 3 3 6

56 *p cresc.* 3 3 3 3 3 3 6

57 *f* *tempo primo* (♩=80) 3 3 3 3 3 3 *dim.*

59 *p cresc.* 3 3 3 3 3 3

61 *mf* *cresc.* 6 6 6 6 6 6 *rit.*

63 *a tempo* 8va- 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *dim.* 3 3 3 3

65 *ff* *mf* *cresc.*

67 *precipitato a tempo primo* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *cresc.*

69 *tempo primo* *f* *dim.*

72 *f* *mp cresc.* *mp cresc.*

75 *f* *mp cresc.*

78 *p* *cresc.*

81 *f* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 8va-1

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for a solo violin in C major contains measures 61 through 81. The music is written in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs, triplet eighth notes, and sixteenth-note chords. Dynamic markings range from *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano). Performance instructions include *cresc.* (crescendo), *dim.* (diminuendo), *rit.* (ritardando), *a tempo*, *precipitato a tempo primo*, and *tempo primo*. A key signature change to one flat (F major) occurs at measure 78, indicated by a 5/8 time signature. The score concludes with a final measure (81) featuring a triplet of eighth notes and a final cadence.

Canzona

Lento e mesto

p

7

13

18

23

27

32 **tranquillo**

36

This musical score is for a piece titled 'Canzona'. It begins with the tempo marking 'Lento e mesto' and a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). The music is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a 3/8 time signature. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 7, 13, 18, 23, 27, 32, and 36 indicated at the start of their respective lines. The tempo changes to 'tranquillo' at measure 32. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings. There are also some unusual symbols like a tilde (~) and a vertical line with a dot (·) in measures 18 and 23.

41

43

45

47

49

51

55

59

gliss.

Detailed description: This page contains the musical notation for measures 41 through 59 of a piece titled 'Canzona'. The music is written on a single staff in treble clef. It features a complex, fast-paced melody with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. There are several slurs and ties across measures. Measure 41 has a '6' below the staff. Measures 43, 45, 47, 49, and 51 have various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and slurs. Measure 47 has a '3' above a triplet. Measure 51 has a '3' below a triplet. Measure 55 has a '3' below a triplet. Measure 59 has a 'gliss.' (glissando) marking. The piece ends with a double bar line at measure 59.

Finale

Giocoso (♩=80)

[illegible]

39 *8va*

43 *(8)* *loco* *rit.* *cresc.* *dim.* *8va*

48 *meno mosso* ($\text{♩} = 54$) *p*

52

56

60 *rit.*

63 $\text{♩} = 80$ *f*

68 *sost.*

Detailed description: This musical score is for the 'Finale' section, spanning measures 39 to 68. It is written for a single melodic line in treble clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations: triplets, slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. Measure 39 starts with a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 43 features a 'loco' marking and a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking. Measure 48 is marked 'meno mosso' with a tempo of 54 quarter notes per minute. Measure 52 has a 'p' (piano) dynamic. Measure 60 has a 'rit.' marking. Measure 63 has a tempo of 80 quarter notes per minute and a 'f' (forte) dynamic. Measure 68 has a 'sost.' (sostenuto) marking. The score ends with a final chord in measure 68.

72

dim.

75 **rit.** **Meno mosso** (♩=54)

pp **mesto**

78

80

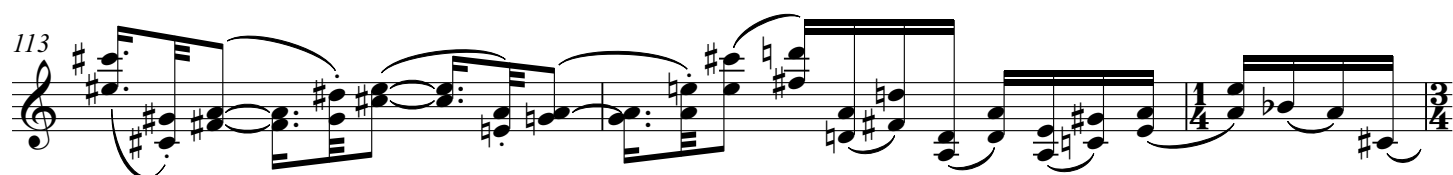
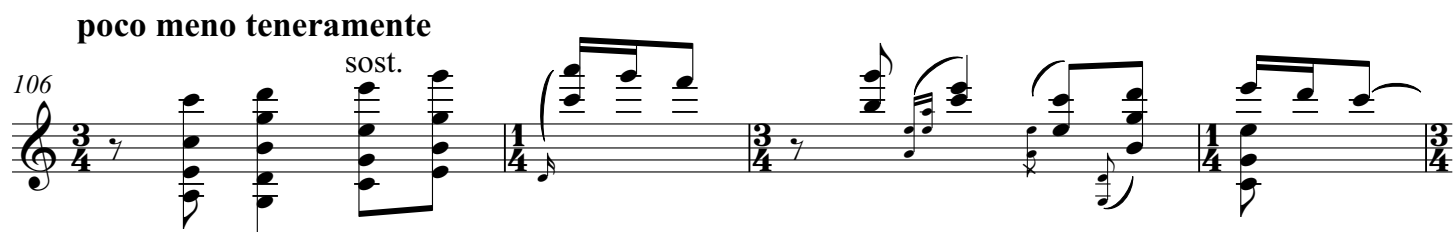
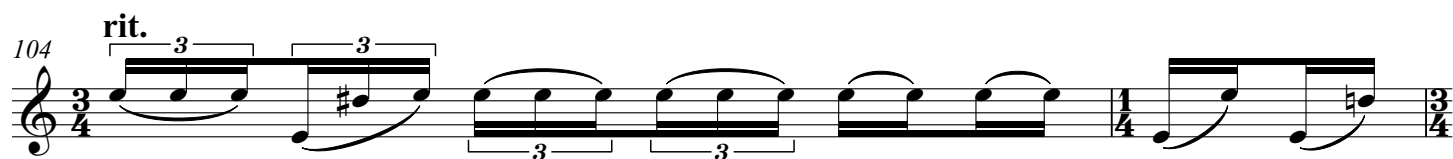
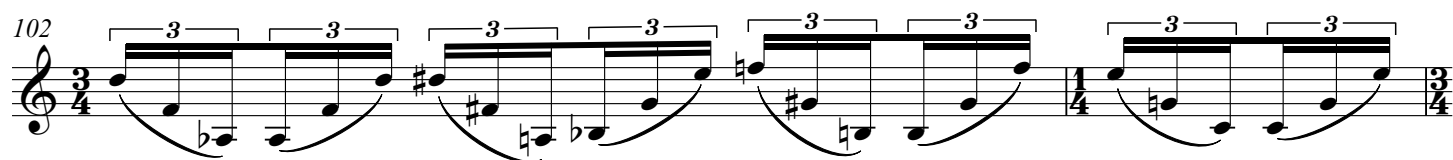
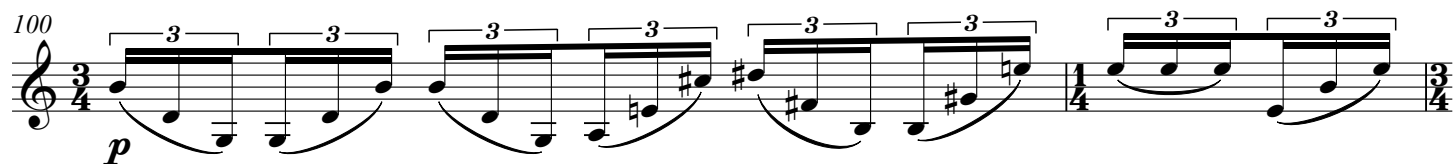
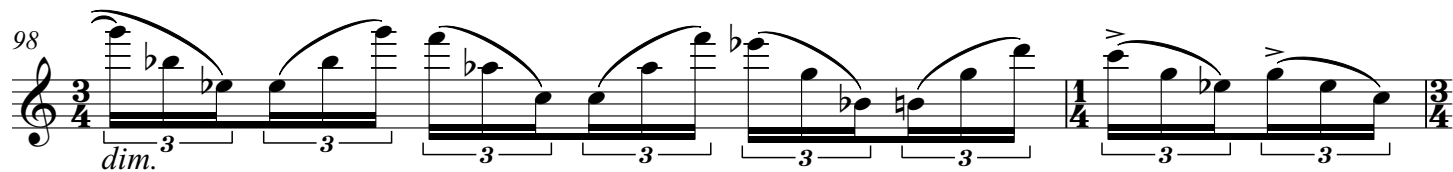
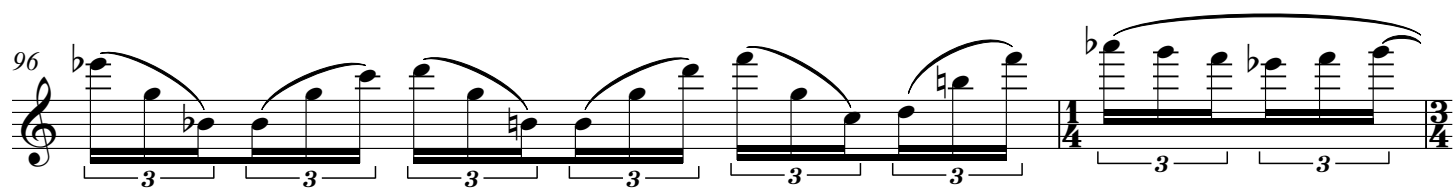
83

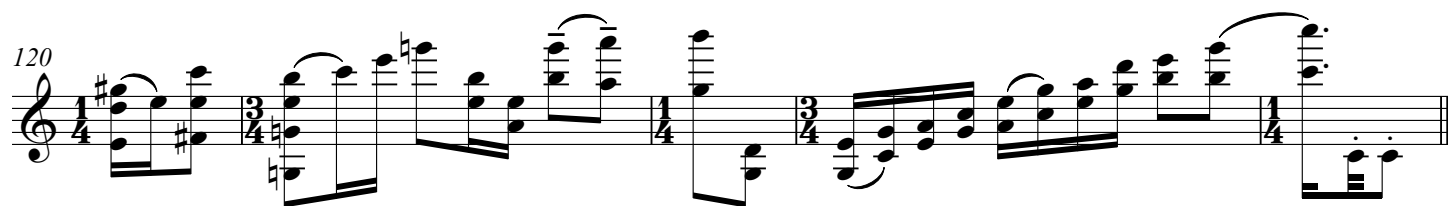
85 **Cédez**

88

91

94





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