

TCHAIKOVSKY'S FIVE PIECES FOR THE VIOLIN: A PERFORMER'S GUIDE

by

PAULO BATSCHAUER

(Under the Direction of Levon Ambartsumian)

ABSTRACT

This study analyses through performer lenses Tchaikovsky's *Sérénade mélancolique*, Op. 26; *Valse-scherzo*, Op. 34; and *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, Op. 42. The author deconstructs the performance practice issues related to each of the works. A background on Tchaikovsky's violin works, and a detailed performance guide aimed at violin students and professionals are included. Recommendations are given for practice routines, technical challenges, practical fingerings, and optimal bowings. Discussion regarding articulation, phrasing, tone, and color is also provided. The commentary will be based on analysis, professional recordings, and existing literature.

INDEX WORDS: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade Mélancolique*, *Valse-scherzo*, *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, performance guide, fingerings, bowings, phrasing.

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PAULO BATSCHAUER

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PAULO BATSCHAUER

Major Professor: Levon Ambartsumian
Committee: David Haas
David Starkweather

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) wrote all his violin works between 1875 and 1878. They are respectively, *Sérénade mélancolique* op. 26 (1875); *Valse-scherzo*, op. 34 (1877); the Concerto for Violin in D Major, Op. 35 (1878); and *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, op. 42 (1878). After summarizing and contextualizing the five short pieces, *Sérénade mélancolique*, *Valse-scherzo*, and *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, the author will analyze performance practice associated with them.

Even though in 1875, Tchaikovsky's depression was progressively getting worse, Tchaikovsky did not cease to work and compose. *Sérénade mélancolique* was originally a violin piece that Leopold Auer (1845-1930) requested from Tchaikovsky. As a violin instructor, Auer was a recent addition to St. Petersburg Conservatory, succeeding Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880). He was already considered an accomplished violinist, excelling as a soloist, orchestral, and chamber musician. Today, Leopold Auer's legacy also lies in the number of world-class violinists he taught; names such as Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz, Efrem Zimbalist, and Nathan Milstein. Even though *Sérénade mélancolique* was composed for Auer, he was not the one to premiere it in 1876. Adolph Brodsky gave the premiere instead. This piece demands much sensibility from the performer. The song-like qualities require planning bow distribution in the long phrases, creativity when dealing with the repetition of materials, and the mastery of color and tone.

While the *Sérénade mélancolique* claims its origins in song, the *Valse-scherzo* claims its origin in dance.¹ Despite not having enough evidence to place a precise time and date for *Valse-scherzo*'s composition, Wiley argues that judging from Kotek's letters to Tchaikovsky, the composer promised to write him something as early as January 1877, and it is thought to have been composed around that time.² *Valse-scherzo*'s manuscript reveals a dedication to Kotek. Iosif Kotek (1855-1885) was an important figure in Tchaikovsky's life and is known to have had direct involvement in Tchaikovsky's violin concerto. The point of the piece is bravura for the soloist. The technical challenges are many, and the violinist is required to comfortably perform them to convey the elegance attributed to the dance-like quality of this piece.

While *Sérénade mélancolique*, and *Valse-scherzo* were requests from Auer and Kotek respectively, the origin of *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* is linked to Nadezhda von Meck, yet another important figure in Tchaikovsky's life. The numerous letters exchanged between them are responsible for much of what is known today about Tchaikovsky's personality and thinking. Nadezhda von Meck strongly appreciated Tchaikovsky's compositions and particularly liked violin works. In April of 1877, Meck requested a piece for violin and piano from Tchaikovsky, but he rejected the offer, stating that he lacked the necessary inspiration. He could not make himself write something not genuine. This changed in 1878 after he spent some peaceful time in Brailov at one of Meck's estates. Tchaikovsky repurposed the original second movement of the violin Concerto, joining it with "Scherzo" and "Melodie," naming it *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*. He then left it at her estate as a token of gratitude. This was perhaps a substitute for Meck's

¹ John Roland Wiley, *Tchaikovsky* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 145.

² John Roland Wiley, *Tchaikovsky* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 145.

request back in 1877. A letter exchange from April 1878 reveals Tchaikovsky's intention of putting *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* together: "Today I wrote another andante, more suitable to the adjacent movements of the concerto. The first will become an independent violin piece, which I shall join with another two violin pieces I have conceived. They will comprise a separate opus, which I shall also supply you with before publication."³

The extensive repetition of material poses the highest risk in "Meditation," as the violinist is responsible for creating a cohesive line throughout the piece. There are clear references to the first movement of the violin concerto, which will be explored in this document. The "Scherzo," on the other hand, makes its case on sheer energy.⁴ The violinist is propelled forward by the constant stream of notes, and while it explores fewer violin techniques than *Valse-scherzo*, the piece poses problems for the left hand. The third piece from op. 42 set is "Melodie," or *chant sans paroles* as referred to at times by Tchaikovsky. Marked by its expressively melodic theme contrasting with the middle *grazioso scherzando* passages, "Melodie" balances expression and simplicity.

Purpose of study

When violinists first encounter a new piece, the primary focus is on the most basic issues associated with it, such as intonation, tempo, rhythm, and technical challenges. Often the student is presented with bowings and fingerings without realizing their purpose, and in many cases, those can be ill-suited for the stage. The purpose of this study is to present the author's rationale behind the choices of possible fingerings,

³ John Roland Wiley, *Tchaikovsky* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 205.

⁴ John Roland Wiley, *Tchaikovsky* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 205.

bowings, phrasing, and shaping, as well as commentary and suggestions on how to deal with the highest technical challenges present in the works chosen.

Delimitations

This document will only address the performance aspects of the violin part, but at the same time, brief, relevant observations about the accompaniment will be included. In addition, each piece will be addressed independently so that a future reader inquiring about one piece is not required to read the entirety of the document.

The author will not perform a bar-to-bar commentary and analysis but will focus only on a selected number of relevant passages. Whenever there is a repetition of material, it will only be addressed a second time if significant expressive changes are expected of the performer. While a general description of the pieces will be provided, the purpose of this document is not to provide a complete harmonic or formal analysis. The author will use Vasily Bezekirsky's (1835-1919) arrangement instead of the original for the *Valse-scherzo* chapter.

The scope of the historical background present in this document will be limited to a brief contextualization of the pieces and Tchaikovsky's life up until 1878. The author will not attempt to provide a psychological or emotional assessment of Tchaikovsky's mind at the time of composition.

Methodology

After multiple playthroughs of the analyzed pieces and careful score study, several passages were selected. Each selected passage will contain issues a violinist should be mindful of when performing the piece. The issues will be generally classified

according to two distinct groups: those of technical nature (technique, fingerings, and bowings) and expressive nature (phrasing, character, tone, and color). To substantiate my views, commentary, and suggestions, I also consulted the following resources: recordings, articles, thesis/dissertations, and books. Some of the author's commentaries are based on a practical point of view, meaning that not always the suggestion of fingerings or bowings aim at the ideal color or sound but also consider the reliability necessary when performing on stage.

CHAPTER 2

Sérénade mélancolique, op. 26

The title reveals much information about the intended character and tone. While serenade implies vocal and song-like qualities, *mélancolique* reveals to us the intended character. Therefore, tone, articulation, and phrasing must be carefully thought out to match expectations. The second important piece of information lies in the sheer repetition of material in *Sérénade mélancolique*. In both this piece and “Meditation,” Tchaikovsky develops the accompaniment material to propel the emotional narrative.

The main melodic material appears in its complete form twice, from mm. 12-34 and mm. 130-152. In addition, Tchaikovsky transposes the second half of the main melody one octave up from mm. 59-69 and slightly alters the main melody at the very end of the piece, mm. 203-208, creating a cyclical aspect to this piece, a technique also used in “Meditation.”

Example 2-1: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 12-34

Violin

Example 2-2: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 59-69

Example 2-3: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 202-208

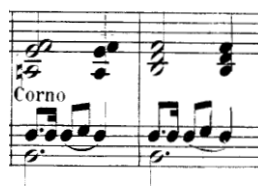
As shown in the examples above, not only does the melodic material repeat itself, but its rhythmic structure's repetitive nature can easily lead to an uninteresting performance. On the other hand, the accompaniment undergoes multiple transformations, as shown below.



Example 2-4: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 11-12



Example 2-5: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 25-26



Example 2-6: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 60-61



Examples 2-7 & 2-8: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 131-132 & 143-144



Example 2-9: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 203-204

It is thus, through the accompaniment, that Tchaikovsky builds his emotional narrative. As the music progresses, the texture and rhythmical character gets thicker. The context changes with each restatement of the main melody, which allows the violinist to approach phrasing and expression in contrasting ways. As mentioned before, there are hints of a cyclical structure that help unify *Sérénade mélancolique*; not only does the closure of the piece use material from the beginning of the violin exposition, but the accompaniment texture also follows a cyclical aspect, with both outer sections having a thinner texture. At the same time, it gets increasingly thicker and more complex towards the middle.

A third important matter for the performer revolves around the piece's climax. Tchaikovsky prepares this climax for over forty measures, slowly building up tension and energy, reaching the cathartic moment in measure 113. Therefore, the violinist must be

careful not to undermine the overall goal of this section by reaching the limits of sound production and expression too early.

While *Sérénade mélancolique* demands much from the violinist expressively, the technique required is not demanding. The main technical issue can be reduced to the octave passage that begins in measure 113 (example 2-11), which marks the climax of the entire piece, thus, holding a place of great importance in the overall structure. There are two challenges involved with these double stops. First, there is the challenge of carrying the melody first heard in measure 97 (Example 2-10), with multiple big leaps.



Example 2-10: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 97-100

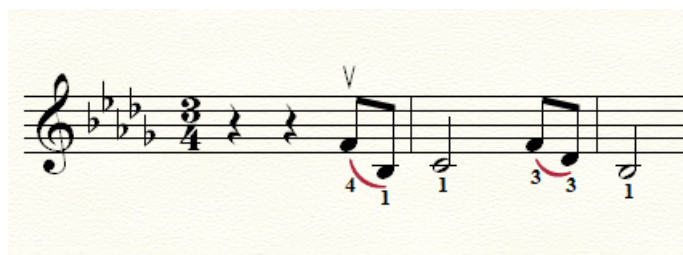


Example 2-11: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 113-116

The doubling because of the double stops raises the overall dynamic, so no extra weight is needed compared to its first version at measure 97. Adding too much weight to generate more sound can inhibit the natural resonance of the violin. This affects tone while at the same time adding undesired tension to your body, which then makes it harder to execute the leaps accurately. Furthermore, if the left-hand squeezes the violin's neck due to undesired tension, it will become more difficult to vibrate each note and execute

the double stops accurately. Since the double stops only occur between the A and E strings, this simplifies the general motions associated with shifting since no string crossing is involved. A second aspect worth noting is how to use the bow during such passages. Special attention to the right arm movement is needed for clarity and a good tone during shifts. The bow should be kept at a good contact point, with even weight and speed during the shifts.

The choice of fingerings in *Sérénade mélancolique* impacts mostly color and expression, with a few suggestions that aim for reliability and ease of play. For instance, the printed fingerings⁵ in the opening violin melody highlighted in the example below result in portamento.



Example 2-12: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 12-14

This aims at expression and should mimic the portamento of the human voice. A possible alternate fingering (Example 2-13) can save this expressive tool for later occurrences of the melody throughout the piece.

⁵ Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, Op. 26, in *Melankholicheskaïa Sérénada; Val's Skertso; Razmyshlenie; Skertso; Melodiia*, edited by Yuri Yankelevich, Moscow: Muzyka, 1974.



Example 2-13: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 12-14

The alternate fingering reduces the use of portamento at the same time that it matches the thinner and simpler texture of the opening and closing sections of the piece. Similarly, in mm. 31-34 (Example 2-14), the violinist can avoid using portamento by staying in position.



Example 2-14: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 31-34

In mm. 51-52, the following fingering allows the violinist to explore the color and tone of the D string.



Example 2-15: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 50-52

The printed fingering in measure 16 allows the violinist to add another layer of expression by changing fingers when rearticulating F. But this adds another shift to the passage. No alteration is needed if the violinist is comfortable with the extra shift. The alternate fingering reduces the number of shifts required.



Example 2-16: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 16-17

Some fingerings can often be unreliable. Reducing the distance of shifts allows for a safer execution. An example of this unreliability lies in the printed fingerings in mm. 19-20. The alternate fingering (Example 2-17) keeps the shifts at a minimal distance, increasing reliability and room for expression.



Example 2-17: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 18-20

In measure 58 (Example 2-18), an alternate fingering can also increase reliability, although the printed 4-4 shift is possible and seems logical since the fourth finger would be in a position to play B-flat. But this is a highly expressive passage, requiring a rich vibrato from a weaker finger. The alternate fingering extends the third finger instead, adding expression and reliability.



Example 2-18: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 57-58

In mm. 75 and 83 (Example 2-19), the printed fingerings result in unnecessary shifts; the alternate fingering keeps the left hand in position and assists with intonation. Contrastingly, in mm. 79 and 87 (Example 2-20), the printed fingering prevents the string-crossing from D-flat to C-flat, which would otherwise result in differences in color and tone inside a slur.



Example 2-19: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 73-76



Example 2-20: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 77-80

The printed bowings from *Sérénade mélancolique* do not require much alteration. The different choices of bowings are, for the most part, aimed at the convenience of bow

distribution. For example, between mm. 18-20, the printed bowings convey the phrasing intentions of Tchaikovsky, but sustaining the phrase can be difficult because of its length. An alternate bowing solves this issue (Example 2-21), but the violinist must be aware, as mentioned earlier of how the original bowing affects the shape of the phrase. The alternate bowing should not create extra articulations.



Example 2-21: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 18-20

The printed bowing suggestion in mm. 33-34 (Example 2-22) is highly recommended since it allows the violinist to execute the hairpin, using the bow's natural tendency, a crescendo towards the frog, and a diminuendo towards the tip.



Example 2-22: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 33-37

The following printed suggestions from mm. 38-45 (Example 2-23) assist with bow distribution. Separating the slur, the violinist has more bow for the following

passage. The downside of this suggestion is that it can easily affect phrasing if the violinist creates too big of a gap between the first and second notes.



Example 2-23: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 38-39

In mm. 93-96, the printed suggested bowings follow a similar purpose, to provide the violinist with more bow. But the expressiveness and articulation are not easily reproduced when alternating down and up bows. In addition, the natural tendency and weight of the frog play a significant role, especially in mm. 95-96. Therefore, the suggestion is to follow the original printed bowings below.



Example 2-24: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 92-96

It is important to address that the printed suggestions in mm. 111-112 add articulations, so be mindful if you remove the slurs to have more bow for the crescendo.

Due to the inherent length of Tchaikovsky's melodies, each idea must be developed having the end goal in mind and its place in the overall narrative of the piece. Also, the repetition of the material requires even more planning to convey a coherent

emotional development. The lyrical, song-like qualities of these melodies require that the natural tendencies of the bow are reduced to a minimum not to influence the shape of phrases when undesired.

The changes of color and character will often be associated with tempo changes, such as in measure 38 in *pochissimo piu mosso* with a *dolce* expressive marking and later at measure 73 in *piu mosso agitato e un poco rubato* with an *agitato e molto espressivo* expressive marking. The clear distinction between these sections in terms of color and character creates more variety for the listener.

When approaching highly expressive passages or in transitional material, Tchaikovsky often blurs the sense of meter for the listener, employing hemiola (Example 2-25) or avoiding emphasis on strong beats. In addition, the transitional materials are often accompanied by a *ritardando*, which further blurs the sense of meter and tempo.



Example 2-25: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 54-57

Starting at measure 73, Tchaikovsky sets up the climax at measure 113. The violinist must be cautious not to reveal his intentions too early. In measure 97, Tchaikovsky writes the first fortissimo of the piece, but this is not yet the climax. He introduces the climactic melodic material in the mm. 97-104 and at mm. 113-120 reaches the piece's climax with the expressive marking *con tutta forza*.

Starting in measure 88, the accompaniment initiates a melodic motive (Example 2-26) based on the violin melody in measure 73. The violin picks up from this new accompaniment material, leading to the fortissimo passage in measure 97 through a hemiola. Therefore, the violin must continue the accompaniment line dynamic and expression.

Example 2-26: Tchaikovsky, *Sérénade mélancolique*, mm. 89-92

Therefore, because of the limited material in *Sérénade mélancolique*, the previously discussed topics of fingerings, bowings, and phrasing become all more important to the violinist that wishes to perform this work. Additionally, the changes in character, color, and tempo between sections are important to establish some variety. Also, the violinist should grasp the development of the emotional narrative which offers alternate ways to explore the repetition of material. Thus, the violinist must be aware of the available expressive tools and how to cohesively and coherently apply them, enhancing the listener's experience and retaining their interest.

CHAPTER 3

Valse-scherzo, op.34

The virtuosic writing style of *Valse-scherzo* sets it apart from the other pieces under discussion. In addition, the high technical demands, elegance, and brilliance required to evoke the dance character set a high bar for violinists attempting to perform this piece. Amongst the techniques that Tchaikovsky used in *Valse-scherzo* are up-bow staccato, double stops, fingered octaves, consecutive multiple stops, harmonics, ricochet, complex string crossings, and sequences.

The up-bow staccato technique is at the core of this piece, appearing in multiple passages in various ways. Some common issues with learning this technique arise from the need to achieve good tone, clarity, and speed. Also, up-bow staccato can become increasingly difficult when string crossing is involved. A recurrent issue when executing this technique comes from over-pronating the wrist, or excessive weight, collapsing the stick on the string, producing more of a percussive sound instead of actual pitches. Another issue comes from excessive tension on the elbow, consequently locking it during the stroke. This does not allow the full use of the bow, hindering the ability to execute it towards the lower half. Therefore, the player should be mindful not to collapse the stick with each attack and allow the elbow to remain loose during the passage. Finally, whenever double stops are involved in an up-bow staccato passage, there are no

significant changes in the execution, but this adds a layer of difficulty to left-hand coordination.

The alternation between the triplet double stops and the open G and D strings in mm. 53-83 generates mostly clarity and intonation issues. The left hand must shift accurately between triplet units while removing the 1st finger from the D string to play the open G and D strings. The practice routine below targets first the shifts between triplet units, adding more complexity with the addition of notes and different rhythms. Each step should be carefully done, aiming at proper intonation and a relaxed hand frame.



Example 3-1: Paulo Batschauer, Practice Routine for mm. 53-56



Example 3-2: Paulo Batschauer, Practice Routine for mm. 53-56



Example 3-3: Paulo Batschauer, Practice routine for mm. 53-54

If the violinist encounters in measures 90-93 issues with intonation and clarity due to the shifts, a similar approach from the previous practice routines can be applied.

The double stops at mm. 57 & 65 require left and right-hand coordination. The difficulty lies with clarity and tone. The shift in both passages requires more time than the rest, and if the violinist is not aware of that, it can cause the bow to attack slightly before the left hand is properly placed. For example, the fingering suggestion below spaces shifts apart 57 while in measure 65, it avoids shifting into a second and fourth finger double stop.



Example 3-4: Tchaikovsky, *Valse-scherzo*, mm. 57-58



Example 3-5: Tchaikovsky, *Valse-scherzo*, mm. 65-66

Although measures 134-137 look similar to measures 53-56, they need a slightly different practice routine. The coordination problem comes between the triplet and the quarter note, where clarity and intonation can become a real problem. Thus, the suggestion is to improve the coordination of the left hand with the following practice

routine. The idea is to add notes backward from the quarter note focusing on where the coordination problem is.

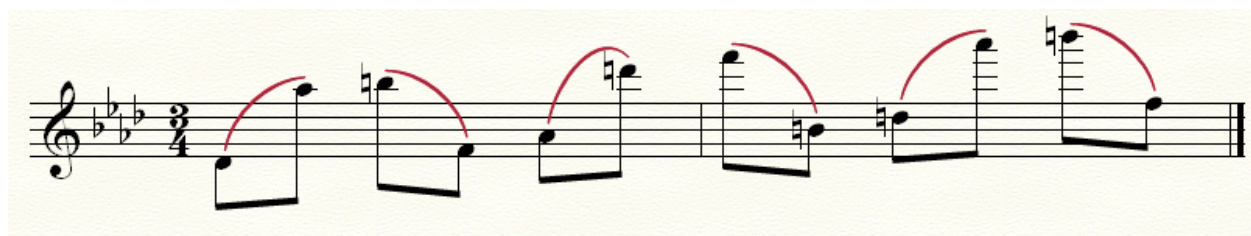
The image displays three musical examples, labeled 3-6 to 3-8, illustrating a practice routine for measure 134. Each example is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. Example 1 (top) shows a sequence of notes with red arcs indicating bowing patterns and 'v' marks above the notes. Example 2 (middle) shows a sequence of notes with red arcs above them. Example 3 (bottom) shows a sequence of notes with red arcs above them.

Examples 3-6 to 3-8: Paulo Batschauer, Practice routine for measure 134

The basic premise of a ricochet is to allow the natural bouncing of the bow to attack each note. If there is a lack of control involving the number of attacks, speed, or clarity, check the movement of the bow for unwanted rotation.

The sequential passage in measures 240-244 requires accurate shifts and complex string crossings that obstruct tone and clarity. A smooth weight transfer is necessary to have consistent tone and evenness of sound production. A recurrent mistake is to focus entirely on the accuracy of the left hand when tackling these kinds of passages. A continuous slow bow allows the awareness to shift and control the tone and string

crossings. Simplifying the passage is also useful. The example below showcases one of the many possibilities.



Example 3-9: Paulo Batschauer, practice routine for mm. 240-241

The speed of the bow and transfer of weight as one executes triple and quadruple stops is one of the leading factors for producing a good tone. But also, the contact point should not be too close to the fingerboard. The violinist should constantly be aware of the natural resonance of his violin. Adding excessive weight without enough bow speed disrupts the natural resonance of the violin and leads to a poor harsh tone.

Fingered octaves require a relaxed hand frame. However, establishing a hand frame anchored on the 1st or 2nd fingers ultimately leads to the extension of the 3rd and 4th fingers, and this causes tension. Therefore, a relaxed hand frame becomes increasingly important, especially whenever tackling multiple consecutive-fingered octaves. Otherwise, it becomes impossible to play it consistently with proper intonation. Therefore, experimenting and finding your comfortable hand frame is a priority before working on the fingered octaves in mm. 273-274 & 314-322.

A general goal for fingerings is to reduce the shifts to the smallest possible distance. Therefore, the following fingering suggestions target this issue at mm. 44-47, and mm. 50-51.

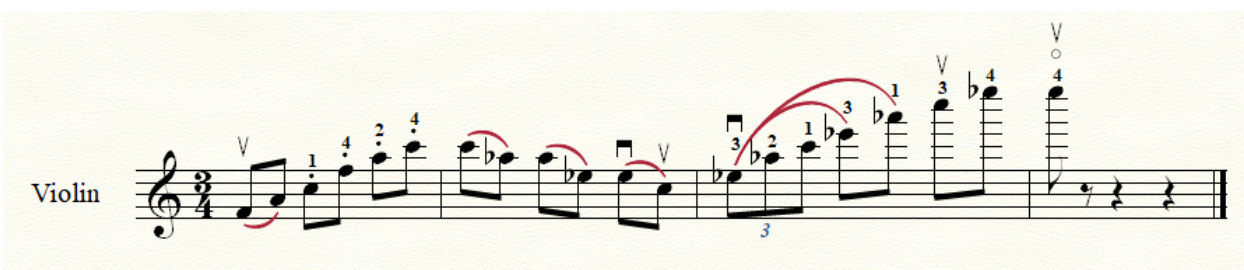


Example 3-10: Tchaikovsky, *Valse-scherzo*, mm. 44-47



Example 3-11: Tchaikovsky, *Valse-scherzo*, mm. 50-51

Finally, avoiding redundant string crossings or weak fingers in virtuosic passages can simplify the challenges. For example, the following suggestion targets mm. 296-299 avoiding the D string at the same time that it simplifies the bowing.



Example 3-12: Tchaikovsky, *Valse-scherzo*, mm. 296-299

CHAPTER 4

*Souvenir d'un lieu cher, op. 42***“Meditation”**

“Meditation” shares several characteristics with *Sérénade mélancolique*. First, Tchaikovsky creates a cyclical structure by tying both ends of the piece together with the main melody. Secondly, there are no real transformations of the theme, with only an octave transposition of the second half of the main melody, just as in *Sérénade mélancolique*. Without modulations or transformations of the main melody, the violinist becomes responsible for creating interest. The third similar aspect to *Sérénade mélancolique* is that with each restatement of the melody, the accompaniment texture gradually becomes more complex. Communicating this difference through the violin part is the key to achieving unity in the performance of “Meditation.”

When comparing “Meditation” and the first movement of the violin concerto side by side, it is possible to reveal a clear connection between the two pieces through the ascending gestures from mm. 97-100 (Example 4-1 & 4-2), the triplet section in measure 101 (Examples 4-3 & 4-4), as well as the transitional material from mm. 142-143 (Examples 4-5 & 4-6).

Violin

Example 4-1: Tchaikovsky, "Meditation," mm. 97-100

Example 4-2: Tchaikovsky, Concerto for Violin in D Major, First movement, mm. 99-

100

Example 4-3: Tchaikovsky, "Meditation", mm. 101-102



Example 4-4: Tchaikovsky, Concerto for Violin in D Major, First movement, measure 57



Example 4-5: Tchaikovsky, "Meditation", mm. 59-60



Example 4-6: Tchaikovsky, Concerto for Violin in D Major, First movement, measure 74

The modulation to B-flat major in measure 75 contrasts with the darker and melancholic character from the D minor opening theme. But the graceful ascending gestures rapidly turn into a descending chromatic motive betraying the lighter mood brought by the B-flat major section. As Tchaikovsky repeats the ascending gestures, an agitated sequence of ascending scales leads the transition back to the opening theme.

A common trend throughout Tchaikovsky violin melodies lies in their quasi-vocal characters. This impacts the connection of notes between slurs and the legato of passages. This is critical due to the length of melodic lines in Tchaikovsky's music, and to create a sense of direction, it is unwise to break the melodic line into many smaller segments.

Adding rubato or ritardando, where it is not specified in the piece, causes similar issues. The violinist should be aware of bow speed, weight, and the use of vibrato, especially when the note changes. Countering the natural tendencies of down and up-bows and mitigating their influence when it is not convenient for the desired phrase. String crossings can also impact tone, clarity, and direction. A blurred initial response when string crossing is due to an unsmooth weight transfer from one string to the next. This not only impacts the sense of direction but affects tone and clarity. This is necessary throughout several passages in “Meditation,” from mm. 50-54, mm. 75-76, and mm. 97-100.

There is no consensus concerning the choice of tempo. A common approach is to adopt a slightly slower tempo in the opening section and transition to a faster tempo at measure 40⁶. A distinct approach is to play both sections at the same tempo⁷. By choosing the latter, the violinist must know that a too-slow initial tempo distorts the accompaniment at measure 40. Aside from the *Andante molto cantabile* at the beginning of the piece, there are supposedly no other tempo markings. Thus, the choice of tempo varies greatly amongst different recordings.

Due to the piano dynamic and thinner texture from the opening, the bowing suggestion at measure 24 (Example 4-7) is recommended. The slur over the entire bar improves the bow distribution and allows the violinist to keep the bow in the lower half

⁶ “Souvenir d’un lieu cher, Op. 42: 1. Méditation (Arr. Parhamovsky),” Video clip, uploaded by Maxim VengerovTopico, April 15, 2015, Youtube-Broadcastyourself. Accessed March 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8mDjr1Bx4A>.

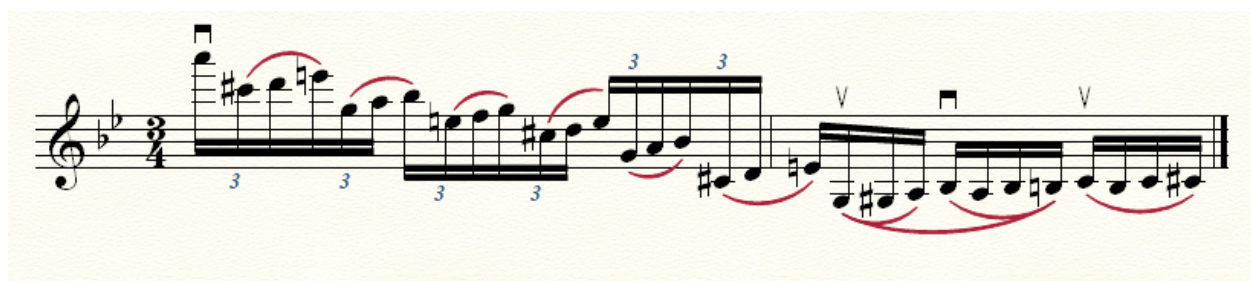
⁷ “Viktor Tretyakov plays Tchaikovsky – video 1981” Video clip, uploaded by ADGO, November 11, 2017, Youtube-Broadcastyourself. Accessed March 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8mDjr1Bx4A>.

for the expressive crescendo at measure 26. However, this slur is no longer required in the second occurrence of the theme in mm. 103-110 since the thicker texture allows the violinist to use more bow regardless of the piano dynamic.



Example 4-7: Tchaikovsky, "Meditation," measure 24

The arrival at measure 101 with a fortissimo requires that the violinist have a comfortable amount of bow. The bowing suggestion (Example 4-8) solves this by starting in a down bow and placing the bow near the tip for the subito piano at measure 102. The bowing is then divided in measure 102 to begin measure 103 in a down bow.



Example 4-8: Tchaikovsky, "Meditation", mm. 101-102

The following fingering suggestion promotes a finger pattern that is constant throughout the passage, which improves reliability. Unfortunately, the annotated fingering in measure 100 creates two problems for the violinist. The first is that it changes the finger pattern that was previously used. The second problem is that the 1st

finger on G-sharp is not parallel to the upcoming D, which is less practical than the suggestion below.



Example 4-9: Tchaikovsky, “Meditation”, measure 100

“Scherzo”

While *Valse-scherzo* demands a wide variety of violin techniques, the Scherzo from *Souvenir d’un lieu cher* bears quite different performance practice issues. It is rather short, amassing about four minutes of music, but the energy and intensity required to perform the constant stream of notes transform this piece into quite an athletic feat. The form can be summarized as a small ternary with two distinct sections, the Presto *giocoso* C minor and *con molto espressione ed un poco agitato*, a songful middle section in A-flat major. Apart from the athletic nature of the piece, there are some problems concerning the left hand in the A section, while there are issues concerning phrasing in the B section.

Accuracy is an issue between measures 9-11 (Example 4-10). Playing the interval of E-flat and F-sharp in a fast passage with the 3rd and 4th fingers can often fall short. An alternate fingering (Example 4-11) solves this issue by staying in the first position for most of the passage. But it is not a solid solution since it creates a second problem for the violinist, requiring some left-hand coordination to play F-sharp first with the second finger and then with 3rd finger. Since there is no definite solution for the awkwardness of these passages, the violinist must choose what suits their style the best.



Example 4-10: Tchaikovsky, "Scherzo," mm. 9-12



Example 4-11: Tchaikovsky, "Scherzo," mm. 9-12

Between measures 63-69, there is a need to keep the left hand from doing extra movements. First, the 4th finger hops from F in the A string to D in the E string can easily cause unwanted tension in the fourth finger. Because it is the weakest finger for the violinist, it can cause the hand frame to become distorted. Additionally, the interval between the first and fourth fingers will change in different directions in measure 67 and again in measure 69. To accurately perform this passage, the left hand must confidently execute these shifts in a relaxed and independent manner, maintaining a proper hand frame.

The triple stops in the A section are typically played in one of two ways. Either the violinist performs them using the bow or pizzicato. Due to the lack of time to execute a pizzicato in the last triple stop in measure 16 or the double stop at measure 46, it is common to return using the bow for the last note instead. This improves the clarity and reliability of the passage. However, this is not an issue if the whole passage is bowed.

The contrasting lyrical B section at measure 95 constitutes 4 bar ideas that form part of a bigger 16-bar phrase structure. This iteration happens five times before transitioning back into the A section. The bowing suggestions in the example below avoid unwanted accents and articulations and allow the violinist to direct the phrasing better into a 4-bar melodic idea.



Example 4-12: Tchaikovsky, “Scherzo”, mm. 95-98

An exception to the suggested bowing can be made between mm. 135-142. The original bowing (Example 4-13) allows the violinist to add more expression by contrasting bowings. An example of this type of execution can be heard in Viktor Tretyakov’s performance⁸.

Musical notation for Example 4-13, showing two staves of violin music in 6/8 time. The top staff is labeled "Violin" and contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. Red curved lines indicate bowing suggestions, showing a mix of longer and shorter strokes. The bottom staff shows a lower melodic line with quarter notes, also with red bowing suggestions.

Example 4-13: Tchaikovsky, “Scherzo”, mm. 135-142

⁸ “Viktor Tretyakov plays Tchaikovsky – video 1981” Video clip, uploaded by ADGO, November 11, 2017, Youtube-Broadcastyourself. Accessed March 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8mDjr1Bx4A>.

“Melodie”

“Melodie” shares very similar traits with *Sérénade mélancolique*. There is a clear reference to song music. A vocal lyricism that the violinist must mimic while performing this music, thus portamentos, and expressive nuances are very welcome in this piece. Also, similarly to the *Sérénade*, Tchaikovsky’s use of slurs carries significant importance not solely for bow distribution but for phrasing and expression purposes. The choice of character and color are the contrasting features between “Melodie” and *Sérénade mélancolique*. Unlike the introspective, darker tone required for *Sérénade* in “Melodie,” a lighter, warm tone suits the piece better. The overall form can be summarized as a small ternary with the A section spanning from mm. 1-18, the B section from mm. 19-49, and the return of A at measure 50. While the A section expresses lyrical ideas, the contrasting B section follows a playful, humorous style. Possibly due to misprints in earlier international versions of the score, such as Schirmer’s 1908 edition, there are, to this day, recordings that wrongfully place an A-flat on measure 14 instead of an A-natural.

While there are multiple ways to shape the opening melody, one is to direct the shape of the phrase toward the half notes. This can give a better sense of direction and flow by not fragmenting the phrase. An example of this kind of execution can be heard in Vadim Repin’s performance⁹.

⁹ “Vadim – Repin – Tchaikovsky – Melodie, Op. 43/3,” Video clip, uploaded by Passion for Violin, June 15, 2012, Youtube-Broadcastyourself. Accessed March 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOsYsTyuG0E>.

Violin

Example 4-14: Tchaikovsky, “Melodie,” mm. 1-8

A second approach focuses on voice leading, with a slight emphasis on G to F, D to E-flat, C to F, and F to B-flat, conveying the idea of an underlying voice leading. An example of this kind of execution can be heard in Leonid Kogan’s performance¹⁰.

Violin

Example 4-15: Tchaikovsky, “Melodie”, mm. 1-8

Tchaikovsky uses the up-bow staccato technique, but rather than a virtuosic expressive idea, it is intended to evoke a more gracious, dolce one. The accompaniment part also allows the violinist to execute them freely. Thus, they do not to be executed in tempo.

¹⁰ “Leonid Kogan – Tchaikovsky Melody Op.42 No.3,” Video clip, uploaded by Grandesmusicos, February 06, 2011, Youtube-Broadcastyourself. Accessed March 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTN2sXPYLHE>.

The *grazioso, scherzando* marking sets the beginning of the B section at measure 19. Tchaikovsky mixes the playful rhythmically active motive in measure 19 with the reminiscent of a lyrical vocal line found in mm. 20-22. The clear articulation of the up-bows in this section is important for clarity and to convey the theme's playfulness. These contrasting themes also form a rather symmetrical motion. While the direction of the first is downwards, the second is upwards. This pattern will be repeated three more times until Tchaikovsky prepares for the return of the A section. The bottled tension from mm. 32-36 is released in the trill section in mm. 37-41. Even though the only fortissimo dynamic is written in measure 37, mm. 63-70 has more melodic interest and room for expression for the violin part.

Leonid Kogan's performance also showcases his brilliant use of the bow. He seamlessly connects the last eight measures from "Melodie," which is quite challenging when string crossings and shifts are involved. In addition, he transfers the weight smoothly from one string to the next with an even bow speed to avoid emphasizing particular notes and changes in bow direction.

CONCLUSION

Tchaikovsky captures through his violin works every aspect of violin playing. His songful melodies require the mastery of tone and color and a unique approach to each piece, from the dark, melancholic, and sorrowful to the painful, vibrant, heroic, and finally to the graceful, humorous, and loving tone. Attaining the flexibility and sensibility to capture these emotions makes the performance of these pieces rise to a higher standard. In addition, the elegance is intrinsic to his use of virtuosity and demands that the technical challenges have been thoroughly dealt with to attain it. And finally, the creativity and thought necessary to understand and fulfill his ideas that span through countless measures make these pieces incredibly challenging for the performer.

Through this study, it was possible to deconstruct and analyze the uniqueness of each work, comparing possible fingerings and bowings while explaining the rationale behind each one. Furthermore, it was possible to devise practice routines that help the violinist overcome technical difficulties, and to raise awareness of recurrent mistakes when executing them. Finally, comparing recordings made it possible to understand the phrasing preferences of live performances.

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APPENDIX

LECTURE RECITAL SCRIPT

Slide 1 - Title of the lecture-recital

Good afternoon. I would like to first thank you all for attending my lecture recital. We will, through the course of my lecture, walkthrough some of Tchaikovsky's violin works, them being: *Sérénade mélancolique*, Op. 26; *Valse-scherzo*, Op. 34; and *Souvenir d'um lieu cher*, Op. 42. I will break down from a performer's perspective the important issues associated with the performance of these works. I will address differences in fingerings and bowings, as well as issues related to tone, color, and character. When dealing with specific technical challenges, I will present a possible solution to these mechanical problems. But first of all, I will briefly contextualize each piece and Tchaikovsky's background.

Slide 2 – Tchaikovsky background

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was the second son of Ilya Tchaikovsky and Alexandra Assier. He manifested a clear interest in music from his early childhood, with his earliest recorded attempt at composition at the age of four. Tchaikovsky was also among one of the first students to graduate from the newly founded St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1865, and shortly after, Tchaikovsky earned a teaching position in music theory at the Russian Musical Society, soon thereafter renamed the Moscow Conservatory, where he remained for the next twelve years. He resigned from his position partially because of his

growing financial relationship with Nadezhda von Meck and because of the increasing success of his published works which allowed him the financial freedom to focus his efforts entirely on the creative work.

Slide 3 – Auer and *Sérénade mélancolique*, Op. 26

Sérénade mélancolique was originally a violin piece that Leopold Auer (1845-1930) requested from Tchaikovsky. Auer was, at the time, a reasonably recent addition to St. Petersburg Conservatory, succeeding Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880) as a violin instructor. He was already considered a fully-fledged violinist, excelling as a soloist, orchestral, and chamber musician. Today, Leopold Auer's legacy also lies in the number of world-class violinists he has taught, names such as Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz, Efrem Zimbalist, and Nathan Milstein. Composed in 1875 and the first of his published violin pieces, Serenade demands a lot of sensibility from the violinist when it comes to color and tone. The song-like qualities require precise planning of bow distribution and creativity dealing with the long phrases, as well as with the repetition of materials.

Slide 4 – Iozif Kotek and *Valse-scherzo*, Op. 34

Despite not having enough evidence to precisely place a time and date for *Valse-scherzo*'s composition, there is enough evidence from Tchaikovsky's exchange of letters with Iosif Kotek that placed *Valse-scherzo* in early 1877. As some of you may know, this is the violinist that was directly involved in the creation of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto. The main attribute of this piece lies in its brilliant virtuosity. But Tchaikovsky really makes use of this virtuosity subordinate to the elegance and dance character associated with the *Valse* genre. In order for the violinist to be able to convey this, the technical challenges must be comfortably mastered.

Slide 5 – Nadezhda von Meck and *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, Op. 42

While *Sérénade mélancolique* and *Valse-scherzo* were directly linked to Auer and Kotek, respectively, *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* origins are linked to Nadezhda von Meck, yet another important figure in Tchaikovsky's life. It is through their endless letters exchanges that we are able to know more today about Tchaikovsky's personality and thinking. As we all know, Meck had a strong appreciation for Tchaikovsky's compositions as well as a special liking for violin works. She would request a piece for violin and piano from Tchaikovsky around 1877, which he rejected, stating that he lacked the necessary inspiration. Later in 1878, Tchaikovsky would eventually repurpose the original second movement of the violin concerto, joining it with "Scherzo" and "Melodie," two short pieces that he wrote independently, and named it *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, or "memory of a dear place." He had just stayed in one of Meck's estates, and *Souvenir* is considered a gift for her generosity. Now, please enjoy the performance. When I finish playing through all of the pieces, I will begin my comments on the issues related to their performance.

Slide 6 – *Sérénade mélancolique*

The title already reveals a great deal of information. It gives us the general character, color, and desired tone. While serenade implies vocal and song-like qualities, *mélancolique* reveals to us the intended character, the color associated with this kind of emotion, and so forth. Therefore, there are important expectations to be met when performing this piece. The vibrato, for instance, should not be done in a passionate way or the dynamic in a triumphant, glorious way. The sound production and tone should not

exaggerate its dramatic qualities. Perhaps a more introspective approach, with darker colors, help highlight the melancholic aspect of this work.

Slide 7 – Length of phrases (show example 2-1)

If we take a closer look at the example above, we can see how Tchaikovsky's melodic ideas take several bars to unwind. This gives the violinist a really difficult time. How to creatively form a cohesive line through the span of multiple measures? Not only that but with a lack of rhythmical diversity and development of the smaller ideas within. But I would say that, on the one hand, it really fits with the melancholic narrative of this work. A stillness, a struggle to move on and act. But it also means that it is quite easy to lose your audience, failing to retain interest and direction in your phrases.

Slide 8 – Repetition of Material

Not only is there a concern regarding the length of phrases, but the violinist must also be aware of the sheer repetition of material throughout this piece. The violinist might successfully retain the interest the first time the melody appears, but since the melody appears the same way multiple times, retaining an interest in the following restatements is substantially more difficult. Just repeating it the same way might not have the same impact. Fortunately, Tchaikovsky's accompaniment gives us some hints on how to approach this issue.

Slide 9 – Accompaniment's narrative (Show the differences in accompaniment pattern)

If we now take a closer look at these excerpts I selected from the piano reduction, the context that surrounds the violin melody changes with each repetition. The accompaniment gets increasingly more complex and agitated towards the middle, and at

the very end, it returns back to an empty and still texture. Therefore, I believe Tchaikovsky had an emotional narrative in mind, a cyclical aspect where the experiences the main character has brings him up exactly where he left off, which further helps with the melancholy.

Slide 10 – Choice of fingerings and portamento (Show 2 different fingerings portamento)

One way of addressing the repetition of material and the flow of this narrative can be through our choices for fingerings. In *Sérénade mélancolique*'s opening melody, there are several opportunities for the violinist to use portamento as a lyrical, expressive tool. But the stillness of the accompaniment from the beginning and end of the piece gives us an opportunity to do something more introspective and choose instead a set of fingerings that avoids portamento. This allows us to save this expressive tool for later when the accompaniment is more agitated. This may provide some variety to each restatement of the theme and a cohesive line that unites the overall emotional narrative of the piece.

Slide 11 – Choice of fingerings for reliability (Example 2-17 and 2-18)

Not only choices of fingering are important to consider because of its expressive qualities, but it is important to consider reliability and practical solutions when performing on stage. The following examples showcase two distinct ways of improving reliability. The first is opting to shift in the smallest intervals possible. Performing the first shift between slurs allows for a clean whole-step shift, while the second allows for a half-step shift inside a slur and a final extension back to A-flat at the end, making it a lot easier to hide from the audience.

Slide 12 – Choice of fingerings for reliability (Example 2-18)

The second example I chose may initially seem like it contradicts the purpose of reliability, but in reality, it does not. It might seem logical to use a 4th finger since we would be in a position already to do so. But this is a highly expressive passage, requiring a rich vibrato and shift from a weaker finger. Instead, I would recommend the extension of the 3rd finger, which is much stronger, enabling both more expression and reliability.

Slide 13 – Transitional material (Example 2-25)

Now I want to talk about how Tchaikovsky often blurs the sense of tempo and meter approaching new sections or highly expressive passages. Tchaikovsky either employs hemiola or avoids emphasis on strong beats in an almost improvisatory style. The transitional materials are often accompanied by a *ritardando*, which further blurs the sense of meter and tempo.

Slide 14 – Pacing expression in the middle section. (Show mm. 73-113)

Lastly, I would like to give attention to the climax of the piece. The arrival at measure 113, along with the expressive marking *con tutta forza* and fortissimo dynamic, marks the ultimate goal of this section. Tchaikovsky slowly builds this effect over the span of 40 measures. The violinist then next to be careful with his expression and dynamics. Reaching the limits of expression and dynamic too early undermines the arrival at measure 113, limiting the listener's experience of this section.

Slide 15 – *Valse-scherzo*, op. 34

If the *Sérénade mélancolique* claims its origins in song, the *Valse-scherzo* claims its origin in dance. The virtuosic writing style of *Valse-scherzo* sets it apart from the rest. The high technical demands, the elegance, and the brilliance set a high bar for violinists

attempting to perform this piece. Amongst the techniques that Tchaikovsky used in *Valse-scherzo* are up-bow staccato, double stops, fingered octaves, consecutive multiple stops, harmonics, ricochet, and many challenging string crossings.

Slide 16 – Clarity and intonation in the double stop sections (mm. 53-83)

The first technical aspect I would like to address is the alternation between the triplet double stops and the open G and D strings shown above. Not only the violinist here is required to produce a triplet double stop in tune and with clarity, but he needs to shift in rapid succession. The string crossing on top of that adds yet another layer of difficulty. I believe a logical way of addressing this collection of issues is to separate them and build the technique necessary from the bottom up, adding more and more layers of challenge along the way.

Slide 17 – Building the technique from the bottom up (Example 3-1)

The first thing I did here was isolating the shifts. The violinist needs to become comfortable with the size of the shifts, direction, and placement of fingers. I decided to use both a different rhythm and slur in order to focus on the desired outcome. With the use of this rhythm, it is possible to both have time to plan the shift while the shift itself happens in the shortest amount of time. The slur, on the other hand, allows the violinist to slide the fingers with constant sound production while performing the shift.

Slide 18 – Building the technique from the bottom up (Example 3-2)

After the violinist becomes comfortable with the shifts, it is possible to add the triplet double stops. The goal in this stage is to be able to hear clearly each and every note that you play. In other words, we are addressing clarity as the top priority. Because the coordination necessary to alternate between 1-3 and 2-4 properly and not just get in tune

can also pose a clarity problem, this choice of rhythm allows time to prepare for each unit.

Slide 19 – Building the technique from the bottom up (example 3-3)

And finally, we can add the open strings. I would recommend now getting closer to the real bowing and rhythm, also staying on the lower half of the bow, near the frog.

Slide 20 – The up-bow staccato

Now I will address the up-bow staccato. Although they are generally only five to six notes long in this piece, with only two passages reaching up to ten notes, they are slow enough that you would expect to hear the pitches clearly and with good tone but fast enough that it requires quite a bit of dexterity to pull it off. One of the obstacles I noticed for a good tone comes from overpronating the wrist, which does not allow the bow to bounce properly, creating a harsh and percussive sound in the process. Another problem comes from locking the elbow during the passage, which results in a not resonant and small sound due to the violinist using a small amount of bow. I would recommend practicing this technique slowly and increasing the tempo as you get more comfortable producing a good quality up-bow staccato. Often if you try to play fast from the start can lead to bad habits that are then difficult to retrain.

Slide 21 – Fingered octaves (mm. 273-274)

The alternation between 1-3 and 2-4 fingers during fingered octaves not only creates a coordination issue but covering the distance of an octave with this setting makes these kinds of passages quite challenging for the violinist. The first thing I would suggest is to check your hand frame. Often the 3rd and 4th fingers can end up hyperextending instead of adjusting to the new interval distance. Hyperextension leads to excessive

tension, which makes it far more difficult to perform these passages accurately and with speed. Instead of extending the 3rd and 4th fingers, my suggestion is first to find a relaxed position for the size of your hand which allows you to drop the fingers as effortlessly as you can. The rest is a matter of building up dexterity. With a properly relaxed hand frame, fingered octaves are not as difficult as they may seem.

Slide 22– Sequential passage cadenza (mm. 240-244)

The passage shown above requires constant shifts and string crossings on D, A, and E strings, all of that are executed at a reasonably fast tempo. Some of the underlying issues from this kind of passage come from an uneven tone and lack of clarity from each separate note. It is partly because of the weight transfer during the string crossings. A way of thinking about weight transfer is paying attention to the bow's hair tension. If the tone is inconsistent during this passage, chances are the tension is varying in an uncontrolled way in between string crossings.

Slide 23 – Sequential passage cadenza (Example 3-9)

Now, addressing the shifts can be a lot easier since it is sequential. The first step is learning the intervals at which your entire hand must shift. You can simplify the passage by omitting the middle note and focusing entirely on the shifts. As soon as you become comfortable with the distances, you can start adding the middle note as well.

Slide 24 – *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* “Meditation”

Now, the first piece of the *Souvenir* set is named “Meditation.” This work was the original second movement from Tchaikovsky's violin concerto. And it does share quite a few similarities with it that I will show later on. But in fact, I believe that it not only has

striking similarities with the concerto, but it does resemble *Serenade melancholique* quite a bit as well because of its structure.

Slide 25 – “Meditation” similarities with the Concerto. (Example 4-1 & 4-2)

Notice how Tchaikovsky uses these consecutive ascending runs, which always reach the same destination pitch. He reaches D in “Meditation” and E in the Concerto, as you can see. This technique is really effective in building tension along each repetition.

Slide 26 - “Meditation” similarities with the Concerto. (Example 4-3 & 4-4)

Now if you look at these triplet passages, it becomes really clear that he still had the 1st movement of the concerto in mind when composing “Meditation.”

Slide 27 - – “Meditation” similarities with the Concerto. (Examples 4-5 & 4-6)

The final example I would like to showcase is this ascending chromatic line that Tchaikovsky uses to transition back to a theme.

Slide 28 - “Meditation” similarities with the *Serenade melancholique*

Tchaikovsky gives a cyclical nature to this piece by tying both ends of the piece together with the main melody. Secondly, there are no real transformations of the theme, with only an octave transposition of the second half of the main melody, just as in *Sérénade mélancolique*. Without real transformations of the main melody, the violinist becomes responsible for creating interest. The third similar aspect to *Sérénade mélancolique* is that with each restatement of the melody, the accompaniment texture gradually becomes more complex.

Slide 29 – Direction in Tchaikovsky’s melodies

A common theme amongst all of Tchaikovsky’s violin melodies lies in their quasi-vocal or vocal characters. This affects how the violinist considers the connection of

notes between slurs and also on legato passages. The violinist should be aware of bow speed, weight, and the use of vibrato, especially when the note changes. Countering the natural tendencies of down and up-bows and mitigating their influence when it is not convenient for the desired phrase. This is even more important due to the length of these lines. If the line is split too much into smaller segments, it distracts the listener from understanding the whole picture. The excessive use of rubato or the addition of ritardando, where it is not specifically marked, causes the same issues. The phrases become too segmented.

Slide 30 – Choice of tempo

The choice of tempo is not unanimous. A common approach is to adopt a slightly slower tempo in the opening section and transition to a faster tempo at measure 40. A distinct approach is to play both sections at the same tempo. By choosing the latter, the violinist must be aware that a too-slow initial tempo distorts the agitated accompaniment at measure 40.

Slide 31 – “Scherzo”

The “Scherzo” is rather short in length amassing about four minutes of music in total, but the energy and intensity required to perform and the constant stream of notes transform this piece into quite an athletic feat. The form can be summarized as a small ternary with two distinct sections, the Presto *giocoso* in C minor and *con molto espressione ed un poco agitato*, a songful middle section in A-flat major. Apart from the athletic nature of the piece, there are some problems concerning the left hand in the A section, while there are issues concerning phrasing in the B section.

Slide 32 –Left-hand coordination (mm. 9-11)

This particular passage can feel somewhat awkward to play. The first example requires the 3rd and 4th fingers to be playing quite a bit spaced apart, while the second fingering suggestion might create a coordination issue because of F-sharp being played by two different fingers in a short time frame. It is mostly a matter of preference, and I prefer to play the second fingering.

Slide 33 – Pizzicato vs. bowed triple stops

The triple stops shown above are typically played in one of two ways. Either the violinist performs them using the bow or with pizzicato. But due to the lack of time to execute a pizzicato in the last triple stop, it is quite common to hear in recordings that they return using the bow for the last note instead. This improves the clarity and reliability of the passage. However, this is not an issue if the whole passage is bowed, although the fast sequence of triple stops can be just as challenging to get a good tone from.

Slide 34 – Contrasting middle section (Example 4-12)

Although Tchaikovsky spares the violinist a bit from the perpetual motion from the A section, this lyrical B section still requires intense, expressive playing. The issue for the violinist here is the repetitive nature of the rhythmical structure. Without much rhythmic or melodic variety, the violinist must find ways to connect the measures into bigger phrases.

Slide 35 – (Example 4-12 & bigger phrase)

For example, there seem to be basic melodic ideas that occur every four bars, and this is already our first step. So, when playing this, we must find a way to unify every

four bars together. Now if you look into the second example, it is possible to realize that Tchaikovsky uses four of these 4 bar units in order to create a 16-bar bigger phrase structure. Finding a way to highlight this macro structure is key in order to avoid dull and mechanical playing.

Slide 36 – “Melodie”

Here, portamentos and expressive nuances are very welcome since there is a clear reference to song music, a vocal lyricism that the violinist should try to mimic. The choice of character and color are the contrasting features between “Melodie” and the other pieces. Different from the introspective, darker tones required for *Sérénade*, or “Meditation,” in “Melodie,” a lighter, warm tone suits the piece better. The overall form can be summarized as a small ternary. While the A section expresses more lyrical ideas, the contrasting B section falls into a more playful, humorous style. Possibly due to misprints in earlier international versions of the score, such as Schirmer’s 1908 edition, there are, to this day, recordings that wrongfully place an A-flat on measure 14 instead of an A-natural.

Slide 37 – Shaping the opening melody (Example 4-14 & 4-15)

Something interesting that showed up when I was listening to various recordings is the different ways violinists decide to shape the opening melody. I tried from the examples above to highlight expressive nuances that they did to specific notes inside the passage. Vadim Repin, for example, only gives emphasis to the beginning of each slur and half note. This creates a rather symmetrical phrase, and it is useful in order to create a predictable direction. On the other hand, Leonid Kogan seems to highlight an underlying voice leading by a slight emphasis on G to F, D to E-flat, C to F, and F to B-flat. This

carries some risk if not done properly since it can lead to an unnatural, overly fragmented phrase.

Slide 38 – Up-bow Staccato in “Melodie”

Tchaikovsky makes use of the up-bow staccato technique, but rather than a virtuosic expressive idea, it is intended to evoke a more gracious and dolce one. The accompaniment part also allows the violinist to execute them freely. Thus, they do not need to be executed in tempo.

Slide 39 – B section

Tchaikovsky mixes a playful, rhythmically active motive with the reminiscent of a lyrical vocal line. The clear articulation of the up-bows in this section is really important for clarity, but it helps convey the playfulness of the theme, so to me, it is unwise to neglect it. These contrasting themes also form a rather symmetrical motion. While the direction of the first is downwards, the second is upwards.

Slide 40 – Conclusion

With this, we conclude the lecture recital. Thank you so much for attending it, and have a great day.