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EXPRESSION IN TECHNICAL EXERCISES FOR THE CELLO: AN ARTISTIC APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING THE CAPRICES OF PIATTI AND ETUDES OF POPPER

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EXPRESSION IN TECHNICAL EXERCISES FOR THE CELLO:
AN ARTISTIC APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING
THE CAPRICES OF PIATTI AND ETUDES OF POPPER

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts
in the School of Music at the University of Kentucky.

By
Leah Hagel

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and Dr. Lance Brunner, Associate Professor of Musicology

Lexington, Kentucky

2012

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

EXPRESSION IN TECHNICAL EXERCISES FOR THE CELLO:
AN ARTISTIC APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING
THE CAPRICES OF PIATTI AND ETUDES OF POPPER

The Caprices of Piatti and Etudes of Popper are considered by most cellists to be fundamental components of the cello literature designed to provide a solid technical basis for the student. This document will provide an alternative approach to teaching and learning these works by focusing on the qualities of expression that can be developed during the process of integrating these studies into one's repertoire. After providing contextual information for the both composers and the works, I will examine how this concept of "artistry through technique" has been adopted by other art forms, used in training students on different instruments, and can be applied to these particular studies.

KEYWORDS: Piatti Caprices, Popper Etudes, Technique, Artistry, Expression

Leah Hagel

November 13th, 2012
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For my grandfather, Raymond C. Hagel
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Part I—Document
1. Introduction

In every art form, there is a fine distinction between technical mastery and expression. To succeed in a given field, the two entities must be seamlessly integrated. In music, technique is easily defined with respect to intonation, tone production, bow or breath control, and all physical aspects of instrumental playing, whereas expression calls to mind an ever-changing combination of nebulous terms including, but not limited to: musicality, presence, voicing, phrasing, and color. Despite the fact that the qualities that exemplify expression in music are not as tangible, they are essential, along with a solid technique, to create a modern, well-rounded musician.

Growing up as a cellist, it is impossible for me to recount the number of times I heard something along the lines of “You can always teach technique, but you can’t teach someone to be musical.” There are many reasons why this particular slogan may have stuck with me in such a way. Possibly, it was because I relished the idea that I could be counted among the “musical” few. The more likely explanation, however, was that my technical knowledge of playing the cello was extremely limited, and I looked forward to the day when all cello technique would simply be bestowed upon me by a teacher.

Fortunately for me, this naive approach later gave way to the combination of hard work on my part and the extreme patience of many teachers. As the years have passed, and I have been granted the gift of perspective (to a degree, at least), it has become clear that technique is not one-size-fits-all, and that the combined elements which create expression can be taught, practiced and refined just as all the other
aspects of music. While it is true that learning might be simpler at first for those who have a predilection for speaking through their hands, this sort of communication (like any other) can also be acquired. This is not to say that a teacher should tell students how they ought to express themselves, but instead, that students can learn and practice the skills to share unique parts of their own personalities through the vehicle of their instrument.

However essential these trademarks of musicality are, they are much less quantifiable than the essence of basic technique. Though mastery of any specific element of technique is arduous and time consuming, the problems associated with each technical difficulty are simpler to perceive, diagnose, and eventually correct. Perhaps this is why many of the most famous instrumentalists and pedagogues began composing studies for their students which specifically addressed these underlying mechanical issues. The idea is that by isolating technical obstacles from the realm of standard repertoire, one is better able to address the problem at hand. Then, when the musician faces the same hurdle within a standard work, he is ready to conquer the hindrance with more confidence and expertise. If a certain composer’s studies garner great success, they become popular not only with his own students, but also with other future pedagogues.

The world of cello playing has produced many of these successful composers whose works are revered by teachers for developing specific skills. In this document, I will explore the compilations of two such cellist/composers: Alfredo Piatti and David Popper. However, instead of merely approaching their output as manuals designed to
impart perfect technique, I will be discussing methods of teaching the works that, while improving technique, further serve to increase the quality of artistic expression through performance.

There are many reasons for choosing to investigate Piatti’s *12 Caprices, Op. 25* and Popper’s *High School for Violoncello Playing*. Both are among the most commonly used etude books by cello professors in America. Additionally, they were the studies introduced to me when I began my journey of developing a solid cellist technique. My interest was immediately piqued and I have been studying, learning from, and enjoying them ever since. When my own students reach an appropriate level these etudes are natural choices for me to share with them. In this manner, I have seen these particular works through the eyes of a student, a professional, and a teacher. As I have grown and matured, so has my understanding of the capacity of these compositions to teach students about diverse aspects of cello playing. Finally, it is the dissimilarity of these works that drew me to examine them further. The Piatti Caprices are known for their self-accompanied melodic techniques while the Popper etudes focus more on high left hand positions that often instill fear in students. Moreover, the Piatti works may have been more geared for on-stage performance whereas Popper may have composed his studies to be prepared in a practice room and performed in the teaching studio.

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2 Evgeni Dimitrov Raychev, "The Virtuoso Cellist-Composers from Luigi Boccherini to David Popper: A Review of their Lives and Works" (The Florida State University, 2003), 81, Proquest (AAT 11836).
Much has been written about the life of these cellists; both have had biographies published by either friends or students. Two dissertations have been written about Piatti’s caprices, one comparing them to the 12 caprices of Franchomme, and the other discussing the pedagogical method of each caprice. Both provide in depth analysis of the works, but in each, the focus of teaching elements is on technical proficiency, not artistry or expression. In another dissertation, by Tomasz Jan Wojciechowski, Popper’s etudes are comprehensively explored and the collection is compared to other works, with a concentration on Piatti’s caprices. Each of Popper’s etudes is examined in detail along with his compositional techniques and playing style. Nevertheless, when contrasted with Piatti, the discussion is focused primarily on what is demanded of the player technically.

In this document, I will provide a biographical context for both Piatti and Popper as well as for the works being discussed. This introduction will be followed by a brief summation of the works, highlighting their similarities and differences both in compositional style and technical demands. After having laid this groundwork, I will outline an alternate approach to teaching the works—one that is centered around the development of the student as an artist and a performer. In doing so, I will be examining works outside the musical realm of the cello and in that of other instruments. Additionally, I will be exploring the way that technical studies are taught in other art forms and even in classrooms. I will also be drawing on my own experience as both a student and teacher of the cello, in hopes of providing new insight into how better to communicate as an artist.
Alfredo Piatti

Alfredo Piatti was born on January 8, 1822 in Bergamo, Italy. His father was the leader of the local orchestra, a position he took at the age of 18. Alfredo took violin lessons from his father until, at the ripe age of five, he was given the choice of becoming a cellist or a cobbler. Deciding on the cello, he was sent to study with his great-uncle Gaetano Zanetti, the principal cellist of the local theatre orchestra. Rather than on a cello, Alfredo played on a viola di gamba that had been cut to a smaller size. In lessons, the small child was seated atop a table. Within two years, his uncle was able to procure a position in the theatre orchestra and a year later, after his uncle’s death, Piatti succeeded him.

In 1832, Piatti gained admittance into the Milan Conservatory studying under Vincenzo Merighi who had been convinced to accept him based the youth’s performance of his own composition. Piatti studied here until the age of 15, and for his graduation performance played a concerto that he had composed. As a prize for the concert, he was given the instrument upon which he had performed. He began his first European tour a year later, and though he achieved much acclaim for his performances, he was unable to achieve financial success. In 1843, while on tour, he fell in Pest and was forced to sell his cello. On his way back to Bergamo, he stopped in Munich where he was fortunate enough to meet Franz Liszt. After Piatti explained his situation, Liszt arranged a shared concert on which Piatti borrowed a cello from Josef Mentor (the father of Sophie, who would become the wife of David Popper.)
Piatti’s playing received great accolades from the crowd and from Liszt himself who suggested that Piatti concertize in Paris. Taking his advice, Piatti made his Paris debut the next year, 1844, on another borrowed instrument. Soon afterward, Liszt presented him with the gift of an Amati cello. Piatti continued onto Germany and then England where his playing received the greatest of praise. Following his debut, he played at least six other concerts in England during which he met the young Joseph Joachim and shared a stage with Felix Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn was so impressed with Piatti’s playing that he attempted to write a concerto for him in 1847. Though the manuscript was lost, Piatti did tell others that he had seen the work and that it was not at the same level as the violin concerto.³

Piatti continued to tour in Italy and Russia before returning to London in 1846 to establish a playing and teaching career there. He joined the Italian Opera with whom he had concertized on his first visit and participated in many public and private performances including his first with a string quartet. Later he joined Joachim to play in quartets with such colleagues as Louis Ries, Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst and Henryk Wieniawsky. When the Popular Concerts were initiated, in 1859, Piatti was employed as both a soloist and in Joachim’s quartet. He would continue to play regularly for these concerts until the end of his performing career. In 1866, the recently appointed director of the Royal Academy of Music, Sir William Sterndale Bennett sought his friend Piatti for the position of cello professor. Piatti accepted and taught there until 1891, serving as

mentor for cellists of such high renown as Robert Hausmann, William Whitehouse, Hugo Becker, and William Henry Squire.

After his retirement from both playing and teaching in 1898, Piatti returned to Italy where he spent his last years surrounded by family and a community that revered him. When he died in his daughter’s house, on July 18, 1901, professors and students from the Bergamo School of Music kept watch over his body until his funeral four days later. The funeral was public, and despite poor weather, hundreds of community members—including the mayor and members of parliament—came out to pay their respects.

In addition to his legacy as a performer and teacher, Piatt’s spirit has continued to live on in his compositions. He studied composition as a student in Milan and after his arrival in London continued his studies. His instructor there, Bernard Molique, went on to write a concerto that was both dedicated to and premiered by Piatti. Though many of his works have since fallen out of the modern repertoire, Piatt’s compositions were well received throughout his career. Besides his caprices, he wrote six sonatas (which he considered his finest work), two concerti, a concertino and many programmatic works. ¹ He also published a violoncello method that was later edited by William Whitehouse, one of his former students.

Perhaps his greatest gifts to the corpus of cello music are the numerous transcriptions of compositions from the Baroque era originally written for other instruments. He was the first cellist to publish works by Locatelli, Valentini, and

Marcello, among others. He also created an edition of Bach’s first Cello Suite for cello and piano accompaniment. In these editions, he sought to preserve as much of the original as he could and thus “he only rarely resorted to the performing edition usually involving numerous markings of bowing, fingering, etc.”

As a whole, Piatti’s works are chock full of virtuosic techniques. Especially the pieces that he composed earlier in his life contain passages which make extreme demands on both hands, including: stacatto, double stops, tenths, chords, arpeggios, and harmonics. In this way, Piatti was a “representative of the romantic trend” of the 19th century. He was also known for his ability to write more serious singing lines which modeled themselves after the Italian school of Bel Canto. Several critical reviews “emphasize how much his sound resembles the human voice,” while others would go so far to “note that his way of phrasing in cantabile passages might serve as a lesson to many singers.” Another characteristic aspect of Piatti’s compositions is the way that he would create passages that used a self-accompanying procedure. Often with his use of double stops and register changes, Piatti was able to make one cellist sound like many playing together.

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6 Ibid.
7 Annalisa L. Barzanò and Christian Bellisario, Signor Piatti : (1822-1901) : Cellist, Komponist, Avantgardist = Cellist, Composer, Avant-gardist (Kronberg Im Taunus, Germany: Kronberg Academy Verlag, 2001), 249.
David Popper

Born on June 16, 1843 in Prague, violoncello champion David Popper began his musical studies on the piano. His family was a musical one, as his father was the cantor of the Prague Synagogue. At the age of six, he started to take lessons on the violin, as it was considered more likely that he would be able to pursue a career as a violinist than as pianist. He progressed very quickly and at age 12 was accepted into the Prague Conservatory based on his skills at both instruments. (His biographer, Stephen Deak, relates anecdotes wherein later in life Popper was able to accompany the entire first movement of the Beethoven Violin Concerto on the piano—without any music.)

Luckily for cellists everywhere, when Popper auditioned for the Conservatory, it was experiencing a dearth of cellists. When he was accepted, it was conditional on the premise that he must switch from the violin to the cello. Popper joined the class of Julius Goltermann, less well-known than Georg Goltermann (with whom he shared no relation) but still one of the most eminent virtuosos of the time. Within three years of beginning study on his instrument, Popper was asked to substitute for his teacher with the opening orchestral solo of Rossini’s William Tell. Upon graduation, at the age of 18, he was recommended for the position of assistant principal cellist of the Löwenberg Court Orchestra at the suggestion of Hans von Bülow, one of the foremost conductors of the 19th century. He took over as principal the following year, and by 1864, at the age of 21, he was sought by the composer Robert Volkmann to premiere his Concerto in A minor, op. 33. Under the leadership of Von Bülow with the Berlin Philharmonic, Popper gave the first performance of this work.
By 1868, Popper joined the Imperial Opera orchestra in Vienna as solo-cellist. He remained there for five years and joined the Hellmesberger Quartet. He achieved much acclaim in these positions, but after being denied a leave from the orchestra to pursue his solo career, Popper gave up both jobs. He concertized throughout Europe, often performing with his wife, pianist Sophie Mentor, a student of Liszt’s. During this period he gave the first performances of concertos by Schumann and Haydn—works preeminent in the cello repertoire. It was not until 1886, the same year that saw the dissolution of his marriage, that Popper accepted a professorship at the Hungarian Academy in Budapest, a position he held for the remainder of his life. During this time, he formed the chamber music division of the school as well as the Budapest String Quartet (also known as the Hubay-Popper Quartet) along with violinist Jenő Hubay. The quartet was often joined by Johannes Brahms for premieres of his chamber works.

Popper died on August 7, 1913 in Baden, near Vienna, having composed over 75 works, most of them written for the cello. Those published included four concerti, a requiem for three cellists, a string quartet, a suite for two cellists, and cadenzas for multiple concerti including those by Saint-Saëns and Schumann. However, besides his etudes, Popper was best known for his salon and character pieces of which there were 68, many of which are still popular with today’s cellists. He often composed these for his own concerts and encores, but they became favorites not only of his cellist colleagues, but also with violinists of the time. According to Raychev, though cellists
had long been transcribing violin works for their own instrument, Popper’s compositions inspired violinists to transcribe and publish versions of his cello works for the violin.⁸

Popper’s compositional style demonstrates a variety of aesthetic goals. First and foremost, he wrote pieces that he believed his audiences would appreciate. As his works “mirrored the public taste for zestful entertainment,” they tended to remain light and “seldom spoke of deep human sentiment or dwelt on life’s shadowy riddles.”⁹ In both his character pieces and his concerti, Popper tended to keeps his thematic material simple and then expand upon it in different iterations. His choice of tonality was very much influenced by late 19th century romanticism and especially by Wagner with whom he shared a mutual admiration. Popper transcribed many of Wagner’s works for the cello, and in his studio kept a bas-relief of the composer.

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⁸ Evgeni Dimitrov Raychev, "The Virtuoso Cellist-Composers from Luigi Boccherini to David Popper: A Review of their Lives and Works" (The Florida State University, 2003), 81, Proquest (AAT 11836).
12 Caprices

In many ways, Piatti’s caprices represent the distillation of his essence as a composer. Because many of them are centered around tremendous technical challenges, while at the same time requiring the execution of a singing, simpler line, the works are often considered “excellent study material, as well as beautiful and interesting enough to perform in public.” The “12 Caprices,” are dated June 26, 1865 but were first published in 1874, edited by both Piatti and his former student, Whitehouse. Since then, they have been republished by five different companies, each with a different editor. In several of these editions, the editor provides comprehensive preparatory exercises seeking to highlight some of the most difficult sections while at the same time offering suggestions of simplified practicing methods.

Before composing the caprices, Piatti spent a great deal of time studying the virtuosic and pedagogic styles of Italian works for violin. His investigation into Pietro Locatelli’s works not only led him to transcribe the baroque composer’s violin sonata, but also certainly influenced Piatti’s perception of bowing technique and may have served as stimulus for his creativity with the right hand. Another of Piatti’s inspirations would have to have been that of Nicolò Paganini. There is no evidence that the two prodigies actually met, but there is no doubt that Paganini was the musical icon for all the students of the Milan Conservatory at the time when Piatti graduated.

Paganini was giving concerts in Italy at that point, despite living in Paris, and his most

\(^{10}\) Ozan Evrim Tunca, “Most Commonly used Etude Books by Cello Teachers in American Colleges and Universities” (The Florida State University, 2003), 23, Proquest (AAT 11836).


\(^{12}\) Ibid, 15.
important student, Camillo Sivori was a close friend of Piatti’s. Of course, one also must not overlook the fact that Paganini published his “24 Caprices” in 1819 and that Piatti would have grown up hearing them. By 1832 (when Piatti was 10), Schumann had already published his études modeled after Paganini’s caprices.

Piatti dedicated his caprices to Bernard Cossmann, his contemporary (they were born the same year), friend, and colleague. Piatti was very familiar with his friend’s Studies, a compilation of drills for the agility of the left hand. Though many of Piatti’s caprices focus on right hand techniques, they rely on a stability and flexibility of the left hand. Cossmann’s work builds that foundation by focusing on the independence of fingers while maintaining the integrity of intonation with the use of double stops and chromatic scalar passages. In several of the caprices, Piatti imitates the Studies in the way the left hand serves as melody and harmony at the same time by the use of double stops. Piatti’s admiration for Cossmann was clearly reciprocal, as Cossmann’s later Concert Studies were dedicated to him.

I first heard all 12 caprices in concert in 2001 at the University of Michigan. They were performed on a faculty recital by my teacher, Erling Blöndal Bengtsson, one of the first cellists to record the collection as a whole. Afterwards, when his students flocked to the green room in awe congratulating him on his performance, his response was something to the effect of, “You know, Piatti really knew what he was doing. He knew

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16 Ibid, 19.
how to make the keys work together.” At the time, I did not focus on what he had said, and instead wondered how he had performed the caprices live and made them sound the exact same way that they sounded on his recording: impeccable.

In retrospect, he was absolutely right. The caprices are well organized in both order of keys and variety of melody and style. The keys of the caprices are in order as follows: G minor, E♭ major, B♭ major, D minor, F major, A♭ major, C major, A minor, D major, B minor, G major, and E minor. Every degree of the chromatic scale is represented, with the exceptions of F♯ and C♯, both being tonalities that are rarely used.17 By interweaving both major and minor modes throughout the opus, Piatti was able to ensure variety in mood when the selections are performed one after the other.

The techniques that were most often used in his other works were also very prominent in the caprices, and Piatti took care to distribute them in a manner that would not seem repetitive. For example, caprice nos. 1, 7, and 8, all make use of one of Piatti’s most typical tools, the self-accompanying technique (SAT) which demands a very flexible right hand in order to make all of the voices speak. The second and fifth caprices share bowing complications with difficult left hand intonation patterns. Caprice no. 4 undertakes the challenge of chord progressions which no. 8 also does while at the same time focusing on trills. The third, tenth, and eleventh caprices contain differing approaches to double stops, and the fifth and twelfth focus on upbow spiccato. Additionally, while caprices in general are assumed to be upbeat in nature as well as

17 Evgeni Dimitrov Raychev, "The Virtuoso Cellist-Composers from Luigi Boccherini to David Popper: A Review of their Lives and Works" (The Florida State University, 2003), 56, Proquest (AAT 11836).
tempo, Piatti includes two in his collection, no. 2 and no.6, that are marked a *tranquillo* andante and adagio largamente, respectively.\(^{18}\)

It is worthwhile to note that Piatti played “in the old style,” which is to mean that he did not use an endpin. The modern endpin was invented circa 1845 by Adrien Servais, the preeminent cellist of the period before Piatti rose to prominence.\(^{19}\) Prior to this point, the cello was still played with the lower bouts resting on the player’s calves. It has been suggested that Piatti played this way because he was “distrustful of new ideas.”\(^{20}\) Regardless of the reason that Piatti played in this manner, it likely did affect the caprices. Many of the left hand positions required force the hand to be square to the fingerboard. Holding the hand and grouping the fingers in this way (especially during double stops and chords) has been cited as a source of tension and even injury to those attempting the caprices.\(^{21}\) In his dissertation, Wojciechowski proposes the theory that Piatti had a very large hand which may have simplified these hitches in playing. Just as well, however, Piatti’s ease in playing could also be attributed to his posture without the endpin. Most likely, as has been evidenced in surviving pictures from the period, Piatti kept his left elbow rather low.\(^{22}\) This setup could have aided Piatti in keeping his hand square enough to play the notes and chords desired without physically straining himself.

\(^{18}\) Evgeni Dimitrov Raychev, "The Virtuoso Cellist-Composers from Luigi Boccherini to David Popper: A Review of their Lives and Works" (The Florida State University, 2003), 56-57, Proquest (AAT 11836).


\(^{20}\) Evgeni Dimitrov Raychev, "The Virtuoso Cellist-Composers from Luigi Boccherini to David Popper: A Review of their Lives and Works" (The Florida State University, 2003), 55, Proquest (AAT 11836).

\(^{21}\) Jan Tomasz Wojciechowski, “The Essence of Instrumental Technique in David Popper’s ‘High School of Cello Playing, Op. 73,’ In Comparison with Some Other Important Collections of the Era, With Emphasis on Alfredo Piatti’s 12 Caprices, Op. 25” (DMA diss., Indiana University, 2003), 41.

Today, the endpin is ubiquitous, but the works can be performed regardless of hand size as long as special attention is given to the arrangement of the left arm as a whole.
High School of Cello Playing

I was first introduced to Popper’s etudes during a summer program before my last year of high school. After having heard me play for the first time, the teacher to whom I was assigned enquired about my cellistic plans. When I told him that I planned to go to music school to study in order to become a professional, he responded by handing me a stack of photocopies and saying, “Leah, meet Mr. Popper.” In this way, I received my first Popper etudes and my first assignment which was to purchase the entire collection. I was fortunate in that I had stumbled upon a teacher who immediately recognized my weaknesses and sought to correct them using Popper’s studies. He was not alone in appreciating the Popper etudes as a pathway to success for a cellist in the music world. Frank Miller, Leonard Rose’s teacher and cousin, claimed that to be able to play all of Popper’s etudes, along with four-octave scales and arpeggios, was all one need to achieve professional status as a cellist.²³

The etudes comprising the High School of Cello Playing, Op. 73 were mostly composed while Popper was teaching in Budapest between the years 1895 and 1898, though apparently at least one (no. 19) was composed while he was with the Vienna Opera Orchestra (1868-1873) to assist and instruct the members of his section.²⁴ The etudes were published in four volumes, each containing ten studies, between 1901 and 1905 under the German title Höhe Schule des Violoncellspiels. The common English translation of “High School” leads some falsely to believe that the works are meant for

young cellists attending high school. In fact, the German word “Höhe” in this case means a high, or advanced level of playing. The first volume, published in 1901 by Hofmeister was dedicated to Alwin Schröder, well-known cellist and teacher, famous today for his 170 *Foundation Studies for Violoncello*. The second volume was released in 1902 and was dedicated to cellist Bernhard Schmidt who later edited Popper’s Op. 76 exercises. The third volume came out the same year, and its dedicatee was Edouard Jacobs who had held the post of professor at the Brussels Conservator since 1885. The last volume was published in 1905, bearing a dedication to Edmund Mihalovich, Hungarian composer and principal of the academy of music in Budapest.

Though the etudes were definitely intended for students to develop their skills and abilities, they can also be seen as a codification of the many technical innovations that cellists had seen throughout the 19th century due to increased dexterity as well as changes to the instrument like the endpin. As Popper’s biographer Deák explains:

> For many years preceding the publication of the *Höhe Schule des Violoncellspiels*, the technique of the violoncello had been passing through an evolution. Much of the fresh material which expanded the scope of cello technique, and which can be found in his most popular pieces, are also discovered in broadly expanded form in the great études. His technical principles, innovations, and practical applications of the modern technique (of the late nineteenth century) were put down in these forty études.

As he was composing studies to help tackle the greatest challenges of the day, he modeled many of his etudes after the issues that contemporary composers had posed for cellists in their works.

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Given that Popper was a tremendous admirer of Wagner, and that Wagner was composing some of the most difficult music of the time, it is not surprising that multiple etudes seem specifically suited for the purpose of being able to play Wagner’s music. The aforementioned No. 19 is also known as the “Lohengrin” which is a reference to Act Three, Scene Three of the opera bearing the same title. The etude was originally meant to help the cellists in Popper’s section master the repeating figure that occurs for the first 111 measures of the score. In the same way, the rhythmic pattern in No. 5 is drawn from Walküre, Act Three, Scene 1. The works of Beethoven and Bach may also have been a source of inspiration for some of the studies. More specifically, the first bars of no. 25 are reminiscent of the opening to the third movement of Beethoven’s Op. 127, while No. 2 is very similar to Bach’s G Major Prelude. Meanwhile, other etudes were simply motivated by Popper’s life, in particular his long journeys during tours. He told Deák that the ascending and descending scalar passages in No. 36 were meant to suggest the momentum of a train.

As was the case in Popper’s compositional output outside of his etudes, the musical language he uses for them stem from the late nineteenth-century Romantic tradition. However, instead of following the rules of harmony explicitly, he tends to use them as guidelines to achieve the clear presentation of a specific technical issue. In each etude, he focuses on one issue that cellists grapple with—either from specific

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works or those that he imagined being challenging. Charlotte Lehnhoff argues that
despite the complexity of each study, the original “problem” is always revealed clearly in
the opening bars. The rest of the etude serves to develop the “problem” in both
musical and technical manners. By the end of the exercise, Popper has explored the
difficulty at hand in a variety of ranges and registers. In this way, “the compositional
developmental activity is inseparable from the technical problem, and it is this feature
which differentiates the Höhe Schüle from all other etudes.”31 The studies are not
presented gradually in order of difficulty, but instead presume a thorough knowledge of
instrumental technique from the outset.

Like Piatti, Popper wrote his studies using a variety of keys. However, whereas
Piatti focused on a pattern of keys designed to let the volume function as a whole,
Popper spent more time with the keys that best lent themselves to the cello, specifically
dealing with its large range, harmonics, and open strings.32 In fact, in highlighting the C-
string specifically, Popper wrote six of his etudes in C major, the key he used the most
throughout all four volumes. The next most commonly employed key was that of D
major, centered around the cello’s second open string, and appearing five times in the
collection. There are four etudes written in G Major and three in A major, making use of
the cello’s other strings. No other key is used more than any of these. Also in contrast
to Piatti are the variety of suggested tempi. Though many of today’s performers
consider the most successful versions of Popper’s etudes to be the ones played with the

31 Charlotte Lehnhoff, “The Popper School of Cello Playing,” Internet Cello Society, Accessed June 24,
32 Jan Tomasz Wojciechowski, “The Essence of Instrumental Technique in David Popper’s ’High School of
Cello Playing, Op. 73,’ In Comparison with Some Other Important Collections of the Era, With Emphasis on
Alfredo Piatti’s 12 Caprices, Op. 25” (DMA diss., Indiana University, 2003), 19.
most speed, Popper tended to be much more cautious in his suggestions of tempo. There is only one *Presto* (No. 38) amongst all the studies and another *Allegro vivace* (No. 36). Meanwhile, markings of *sostenuto*, *moderato*, and *grazioso* are much more frequent.33

For the most part, each of the studies follows a relatively standard form. Most can be categorized as simple binary or ternary, rondo, song forms, or fantasia.34 The highly chromatic nature of the etudes, however, creates challenges for both the hand and ear in terms of intonation. If the student has solely relied on his ear to be able to play a passage and does not possess a strong stability of hand position (particularly in the higher registers and thumb position) it will become impossible for him to replicate physically what he hears. Likewise, if a student has a strong physical foundation within positions, but has not developed his inner ear to the extent that it can hear chromatically, he may be able to estimate the correct notes, but his pitches will not be centered. Popper focuses on this conundrum with his extensive use of both ascending and descending sequences. The emphasis then becomes moving from one position to another while using all of the notes within any given hand position, in effect teaching the student to both feel and hear them properly.35 The ability of Popper’s etudes to so efficiently train the ear and the hands has given them their esteemed status in cello pedagogy for over a century.

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2. Technique and Artistry

Many teachers and students hold the conviction that technique is easier to teach than expressiveness. Not only is it more difficult to quantify communicative ability than technical aptitude, but it can also be more challenging to evaluate one’s success at achieving artistic goals. This is partially because these goals are very complicated and difficult to define. For some, successful musicality means that every member of the audience agrees that the performer has expressed himself in a pleasing manner. For others, the ability to play creatively and unhindered by the expectations of others is an all-consuming objective. It becomes as tricky to identify artistic success as it is to try to explain why we can love one performance and have an aversion to another which is much like the first. Because it is so problematic to evaluate artistic achievement, teachers look for signs of improvement instead of “success.” When dealing with technique, however, though there are varying degrees of aptitude, it is simpler to recognize mastery. As a result, teachers take formulaic steps in order to achieve this level of skill.

Throughout the process of improving technique by learning scales and etudes, young musicians invariably find themselves at some point questioning the benefits of such training. Usually, teachers respond by assuring their young protégés that the skills learned through the exercises will later make them much more capable of handling the tasks that will befall them as they continue through the repertoire. In general, it is accepted that in any form of art, one must establish a solid technical basis before one can achieve true artistry. Yet this conviction becomes paradoxical as every musician,
writer, painter, or dancer realizes that his or her technique alone will not yield to success as an artist. In fact, there are countless examples of those who have achieved artistry when their technique is not considered standard or even proper. R. G. Collingwood attempts to explain this inherent contradiction:

The artist must have a certain specialized form of skill which is called technique...[technique] does not by itself make him an artist; for a technician is made, but an artist is born. Great artistic powers may produce fine works of art even though technique is defective; and even the most finished technique will not produce the finest sort of work in their absence; but all the same, no work of art whatever can be produced without some degree of technical skill.36

Given this dichotomy, it is the responsibility of all teachers and performers not to make artistry and technique widely separate endeavors. For musicians, this becomes paramount in the way that we approach those methods which we categorize as “technical studies.” Before delving into these, however, it is helpful to examine the ways in which artists outside the musical realm approach this incongruity.

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In Other Mediums

As children, the idea of perfect “technique” is often first instilled in us through the process of learning to communicate through speaking and writing our language. We first learn the rules from our families and communities, and these rules are expounded upon when we learn how to write in school. We are taught to view spelling, syntax, and grammar as qualities by which to judge the success of one’s writing. Then, as we get older, we read the works of Mark Twain and learn that spelling isn’t necessarily as important as communicating an entire time, place, and dialect through the use of letters. We study Emily Dickinson and discover that using different syntactic forms can actually be more expressive than the ‘correct’ ones. Then we indulge in E. E. Cummings and realize that sometimes defying all of the proper technique only serves to make writing more powerful. Eventually it becomes clear that following the rules does not necessarily make one a poet. In order to make writing come alive, the poet has to first know and acknowledge the rules, but then must do more than make the subject agree with the verb.37 Not abiding by the rules can become a viable and more effective technique than strict adherence to rules we learn as children.

As such, technique in writing is not stagnant. It is transforming when approached with flexibility and creativity. In fact, Mark Schorer, one of the early proponents of applying strict literary criticism to prose fiction writing and not just poetry, argued that it was this sort of technique that truly allowed one to create art:

Technique is the means by which the writer’s experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means

he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying his meaning, and, finally, of evaluating it. 38

In other words, developing technique at the highest levels in writing is not adhering to guidelines, but instead creating a method for expression of subject matter. In that way, the definition of the word “technique” is redefined. It is not simply the means to an end; rather, it is “the entire process by which an artist executes a conception.”

Furthermore, the perfection of such a process is, in its most basic state, solely a vehicle for the “ever more profound expression of ideas.” 39

This concept of technique as an artistic process is not limited to the domain of the written word. Though we are not all taught the “rules” of drawing and painting in the same way that we are instructed in grammar, as soon as we are old enough, we begin to recognize the imperative of drawing within the lines. As artists develop, they become bound by stricter rules which govern the way they produce their art. Some of these rules exist solely to develop skills and dexterity, while others may serve to delineate the manner in which the audience would be able to appreciate such work. In his book on expression and function within craftsmanship, Howard Risatti explains the relationship between artist and society and the boundaries the relationship implies:

Leonardo and Michelangelo understood, as do all artists, that for something to be a sign and signify, to actually mean something to an audience, it must be a part of a signifying system that both maker and viewer share...what the fine artist and craft artist are free to do is ‘push,’ ‘pull,’ and ‘stretch’ its rules; to manipulate the structure given them by their society for aesthetic, expressive ends; what they are not free to do, if they wish to communicate, is totally abandon the system. In short, the

freedom given the artist (like that given to the rest of us) is always within limits, never total.40

Edward Hopper and Jackson Pollock can serve as contrasting examples of stretching the boundaries in 20th Century American art. Hopper painted images that society immediately recognized as familiar and conventional. His technique was individual to him, but it functioned within the parameters of his audience’s comfort. As such, once he became known, his work received consistent commendation. His contemporary, Jackson Pollock, was no less skilled as an artist, but his techniques were new and broke many of the traditional “rules.” Though many considered his output to be remarkable, his technique was not without criticism. Though it was meant to be humorous, when the Times gave him the moniker “Jack the Dripper,” there is an implication of violence and madness in his technique.41 In the world of music, contemporary society often determines the rules of “acceptable techniques.” When composers push these boundaries, musicians often resist playing their works due to either the increased difficulty or unfamiliarity. In the same way, performers can stretch the limits of convention with unusual playing styles. For doing so, they are, at times, criticized for not delivering exactly what the audience is accustomed to hearing.

Technique in visual art is not just analogous to music in terms of output, but also with regard to how it is taught. In both mediums, students, regardless of age, are looking for solutions to the difficulties with which they struggle. They are aware that

they want their work to look or sound different, yet often look to their teachers first for simple answers diagnosing a skill they are not using correctly. Sometimes, a correction aimed at fixing a particular technique will help to overcome the obstacle, but often the problem has more to do with the student’s exploration process. In both teaching music and painting, one of the more complicated tasks “is to overcome the idea held by many students that their creative problems can be solved by technical solutions.”42 Instead, the teacher holds the responsibility of helping the student learn how to explore. Henry W. Peacock, a painter known for his unconventional paintings, describes the discovery process:

You are involved in a search, particularly in your early stages of creative development, to find solutions to the problems that are inherent to your idea of painting. The way you brush paint on a canvas, whether it is powerful or subtle and refined, dry-brushed or handled wet into wet, blurred or hard-edged, is a result of discovering a private world full of colors, forms, and meaning.43

This method of encouraging personal growth to create one’s self as an artist can be broadened even further to the entire educational sphere. In his book about designing and evaluating school programs, Eliot Eisner argues that all education, but the arts in particular because of their emphasis on this process, “is learning how to become the architect of your own experience and therefore learning how to create yourself.”44

In no art form can this self-exploration be neglected in favor of technical focus; the technique is to be derived throughout the course of exploration.

43 Ibid, 177.
The balance of technique and artistry in teaching is also applicable to the discipline of dance. Just as in any of the aforementioned fields, dancers are judged by their performance in terms of expression and technical prowess. Teachers, then, must decide how to approach this equilibrium regardless of student age or ability. In their book on curriculum and dance methods for K-12 teachers, Kassing and Jay suggest that artistry is embedded into the learning process even from the earliest ages. The teacher “keeps proportion in teaching the components of technique and style within the artistic vision of the dance form. This vision guides the dancer from his status as a student performing in the classroom to a dancer performing on stage.”\textsuperscript{45} Even so, determining that proportion presents many dilemmas for both student and teacher.

Teachers know that real, communicative dancing is limited if one does not possess the skill to successfully accomplish the choreographer’s intent. However, the student can become determined to solely attend to his or her own technique leaving out the exploration of the art the technique is supposed to develop. It is because “artistic excellence is associated with technical perfection and the rigor and discipline of its development, [that] students may feel a need for the ‘whip’ of technical discipline.”\textsuperscript{46} If the student doesn’t feel “whipped” enough of his own accord, he will look to a teacher for the remainder of his thrashing. The teacher is then challenged to recognize that the desire for self-punishment through technical exercise, though seemingly beneficial, may do more harm than good.

\textsuperscript{45} Gayle Kassing and Danielle Mary Jay, \textit{Dance Teaching Methods and Curriculum Design} (Chicago: Human Kinetics, 2003), 123.

On Other Instruments

In music, students most often seek this punitive sentence through a strict regimen of scales and etudes. Ever since such exercises were composed, there has been debate as to their utility and to their place within both the pedagogical and performing domains. The 19th century gave rise to violin and piano virtuosos known for their unparalleled technical skill and tantalizingly difficult compositions. It quickly brought on a debate amongst players, critics, and audiences about the place of technical virtuosity in performing etudes and in the repertoire in general. Some believed that etudes were no more than a “sugar-coated” pill to disguise technical development as a piece of music.47 Others believed that though the technical expertise was always readily apparent, a true virtuoso brought something more than his ability to play notes.

Paganini was the most famous violinist of his time and the foremost virtuoso of his generation. Many of the most demanding string techniques of the present day are associated with his playing, and his compositions were designed “to exploit his prodigious playing skills.”48 Paganini’s Caprices are still standard in the repertoire and are considered by many to be an apex of technical achievement when performed well. However, he brought more to the caprices than complexity. In explaining how Paganini captured the hearts of millions, violinist Adila Fachiri describes the works:

Each of the Caprices is a masterpiece. The are musical; they have subtlety, fire, rhythm, and are full of varied, and at times, touching melodies...There is nothing merely mechanical in those Caprices, and it is

our fault if they sound laboured. [For Paganini], technique was a means to an end and not an end in itself. 49

Paganini’s Caprices not only inspired violinists such as Ernst and Wieniawksy to create showpieces of their own in his style, but also impelled both Schumann and Liszt to create études modeled directly after the works.

Schumann and Liszt were considered to be of two different mindsets when it came to composition—especially with regard to virtuosity. Schumann was critical of what he referred to as the “insipid virtuosity” of pianists like Herz and Czerny which he contrasted to the “spellbinding virtuosity” of Paganini. 50 He composed two sets of Concert Études based on Paganini’s work. He believed them to be appropriate for performance on a concert stage just as much for technical development. He noted that though they were very difficult, they also contain much genius which elevated them from purely an exercise. 51

Liszt also composed two sets of études in the style of Paganini known today as the Grand Études and the 12 Transcendental Studies. Each of the Grand Études focuses on one technical device equivalent to those in the violin works. The Transcendental Studies are related more in terms of their style and virtuosity. Though Liszt created at least 3 different versions of the works, the original compositions were too difficult to play by most pianists. Schumann reviewed them and said that they were exercises in

51 Ibid, 560
“storm and dread...fit for 10-12 players in the world.”\textsuperscript{52} Though the later versions were more playable, they are still considered to be at the peak of difficulty for pianists. Because of the complexity of these works and others, as well as his advocacy for a more modern style of composition, Liszt’s works were sometimes thought to be frivolous in nature despite the fact that when he played them there was always an inherent musicality. Alan Walker, eminent Liszt researcher, makes the assertion “one of the chief obstacles faced by Liszt’s music is that of finding satisfactory interpreters. It tends to attract those players who think that their duty is done if they play it fast and loud.”\textsuperscript{53}

Chopin did not write etudes based on Paganini, yet his were some of the most popular of the day. Schumann believed them to be the pinnacle of pianistic etudes. Chopin was able to create works which focused on individual technical issues, while at the same time retaining formal organization and imagination. He struck a comfortable equilibrium between technical virtuosity and expression. Each of his etudes, “rather than being a dry repetitive exercise, has its own musical story to tell...there is an emotional aspect that transcends the mere playing of notes, and takes a true virtuoso to execute well.”\textsuperscript{54} Chopin, along with Paganini, made the concert etude one of the most popular genres of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, which, in turn, would affect the way Piatti and Popper approached their own works.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid
3. Expression in Piatti and Popper

In an effort to show middle school students that etudes can be a fun listening and learning activity, I recently performed one of Popper’s Etudes (no. 22) during 6th, 7th, and 8th grade orchestra periods. Before playing, we discussed what etudes are, how they are generally used, and whether we enjoyed working on them more or less than “regular pieces.” The consensus was that etudes were like scales and were supposed to make you better, that you played them before you worked on “real music,” and that in terms of enjoyment they ranked fairly close to doing household chores. None of this, of course, came as any surprise, given that I had felt the same way about etudes—and not just until middle school. After I played the etude, fortunately it was deemed “cool” and “awesome,” but I was pleased to see that they could note several of the techniques it had helped me develop in learning it. I fielded questions about how long it took me to learn, whether I had to work on it in sections, and if it had been more fun or hard to learn (to which I responded, “both.”)

A question that I did not anticipate, however, came up in each class: “Is that book full of etudes?” When given an affirmative response, the corollary question of “How do you know all of them?” directly followed. I tried to explain that they had taken years to learn and that I had approached each with different goals in mind. Still, to a middle school student, an in-depth knowledge of over 90 pages of complex music seems impressive, futile, and impossible all at the same time. Later that night, I asked myself why I had learned all 40 of Popper’s etudes. Some had been assigned to me, some I had wanted to learn to help me with certain techniques, others had simply intrigued me,
and a few I learned because I wanted to be familiar with the entire collection. I realized that what had been driving me in this final pursuit was that I felt that in order to be able to teach most effectively, I needed to have thorough knowledge of each of my tools.

A large component of teaching both Piatti and Popper is to know what each piece can offer to one who learns it. It is the teacher’s responsibility to perform the “subtle balancing act” of presenting and selecting items that are in the teacher’s repertoire and presenting them in a manner that is not outside the grasp, interest, or ability of the student. To do this of course, requires the teacher not only to have an intimate knowledge of the music, but also a thorough understanding of the student’s starting point, both technically and mentally. If a student is capable of playing a technical work but doesn’t believe himself or herself to be competent enough to do so, it is more than likely it will result in failure when attempted. In an article on the 170 Foundation Studies compiled by Schroeder (considered by many to be a precursor to Popper and Piatti), cello pedagogue Louis Potter asserts:

The mark of a really resourceful teacher is that fine perspicacity and instinct for assessing each student’s ability and for choosing the right material which is sufficiently challenging to sustain interest and to take the student along the path toward progressively higher levels of technical and musical achievement in a well-ordered sequence.

Likewise, cellist and Popper scholar, Mark Moskovitz argues that because the etudes are, in many senses, randomly collected (not placed in order of difficulty) it is essential for the teacher to be familiar enough with the contents so as to be able to choose the

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work that best improves the problem (or problems) at hand without exceeding the limitations of the student.57

With this in mind, not only must a teacher have a complete knowledge of the works, but he or she also must understand the learning process of the student. The benefit of working with both Popper and Piatti is that the combination can help almost every type of advanced student learn to be creative and expressive when performing. Every student is different, and often, the teacher’s primary role is to find “the appropriate solutions for each individual.”58 However, with teachers providing feedback on certain goals (like expression or technique), students will tend to categorize themselves. Some cellists consider themselves very musical, while others are very comfortable with technical challenges. Some are excited by the process that occurs in a practice room, and others love to perform on stage. These classifications are neither stagnant nor mutually exclusive. Students will place themselves in multiple and different categories throughout their cellistic development. In many cases, these conclusions are based partially upon self-evaluation and are not even accurate. Regardless, being aware of how the student feels about his or her own playing is paramount in helping him or her achieve a higher level of artistry. Enter Piatti and Popper:

How can studying caprices and etudes help cellists who feel comfortable with their musicality develop their expressive capabilities? For many students, myself

included, who find phrasing and timing to be a natural phenomenon, problems arise when a more technically challenging section of a piece threatens one’s capability to continue the creative process while performing. Many “musical” players are daunted by the concept of technique because it, unlike their innate musicality, has been challenged by their teachers. Sometimes, it doesn’t even mean that the cellist has a poor technique, but the player may feel that way simply because it has been the focus of lessons. Other times, the cellist has relied on their ability to express in order to make up for technical blunders. Irrespective of the cause, when a technically challenging section of a piece appears (especially one that is infamously difficult), the result is often that the student becomes so focused on performing the given technique that he or she no longer continues to phrase and express and is “choked” by the passage.

The *Concerto in B minor, Op. 104* by Dvořák is one of the most regularly performed works within the repertoire. As it is considered a benchmark of development, cellists look forward to learning and mastering the piece. The concerto, however, contains many passages that are considered notoriously difficult. One example is the ricochet section in first movement beginning at m. 158. The bowing and hand positions are challenging, but the cello is actually accompanying the woodwinds and needs to be able to phrase with the melody line. Some cellists begin learning this passage as an exercise long before they plan to play the piece. Others work on the section incessantly for both bow control and intonation. When it comes time to perform the work, cellists can find themselves obsessed with “nailing” the passage instead of the phrasing.
The obvious solution might simply be to work on technique until there is no discomfort and one is free to express. However, this can lead to a vicious cycle; the more technique the student works on, the more pressure there is to “nail” the technical excerpt. Instead, the focus ought to be on maintaining a musical line while solving technical difficulties. There is no better exercise to practice doing so than a Piatti Caprice. In each Caprice, there is a tremendous amount of difficulty on the same level as anything one might see in a concerto. Yet, if approached with the mindset not of accomplishing the technical feat but of making the phrase come alive, the learning process changes. While teaching at the University of Illinois-Urban Champaign, Brandon Vamos assigned Piatti Caprice No. 2 to one of his students he considered “very musical.” He wanted her to concentrate on the character of the work instead of its technical challenges. Vamos’ student was happy to approach working on technique in this
manner because she found that when she enjoyed herself musically she was more likely to improve.\footnote{Yore Kedem, Performance, Conservation, and Creativity: Mentoring for Musicianship in Four String Music Studios” (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008), Proquest (AAT 11836), 160.}

Caprice No. 2 opens with slow, prayer-like double stops. The player must focus on bringing out both voices and keeping the separate lines smooth despite the difficult shifts that could break the somber mood.

Figure 2. Piatti Caprice No. 2 mm. 1-23

The contrasting section of this caprice is comprised of a legato, slurred line accompanied by 32\textsuperscript{nd} note figures. This accompaniment is fraught with string crossings and difficult finger patterns. The cellist must first ensure that all of the smaller notes are heard and then work to keep the longer melodic line prominent and moving regardless of the string crossings.
All of the caprices, because of their multiple voicings and playful lines appeal to one who is musically minded. The teacher, then, as well as the student, demands that each voice and each line is maintained despite the difficulties that arise. After gaining confidence in making music during entire caprices, continuing to make music during a particularly tough section of a concerto becomes a lot easier.

Not every “musical” student is hindered by his or her technique. Even so, etudes still provide a means for artistic development. Just because a student has musicality as a strength does not mean that it cannot be improved. Popper’s etudes provide an opportunity for honing musical skills because the phrasing is not as obvious as it is in most pieces in the repertoire, or even in Piatti’s Caprices. Pablo Casals, revered cellist and teacher, made the statement while conducting Beethoven that “the art of interpretation is not to play what is written.”

In his etudes, beyond the notes themselves, Popper gives little instruction besides dynamics and tempo markings. His

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60 David Blum, *Casals and the Art of Interpretation* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 19977), 69.
post-Wagnerian tonalities are not always predictable. Some of the etudes follow classical expectations and others do not. In addition, given that each etude highlights a particular technical issue, there tends to be a lot of repetition. The player must be able to vary each of the statements in order to maintain interest and create a convincing total work.

The aforementioned Popper Etude No. 22 is one that involves such repetition, as well as unexpected harmonic progressions. The opening bars of the etude are replicated 4 separate times throughout the etude.

Figure 4. Popper Etude No. 22, mm. 1-5

Meanwhile, the majority of etude is based on the exact melodic shape of these measures. The melodic contour remains the same while Popper wanders in and out of different key areas.
Just as the etude seems as though it is becoming overly predictable, Popper capriciously changes his melodic line to a very chromatic passage which can be difficult for both the player and listener to interpret.

If the musically inclined student can approach one of these more complex etudes as a performance piece, he or she will have to come up with musical solutions to all of these issues that are not always present in the staples of the repertory. In doing so, not only will the cellist have developed the ability to create music in the midst of technical hardships, but also to find unexpected musical solutions applicable in both etudes and in standard repertoire.
For those students who enjoy a technically hard exercise, it would seem like assigning etudes and caprices might be obvious. Nonetheless, besides allowing cellists to further sharpen their technical skills, Popper and Piatti can also help compensate for other areas in which the player does not feel as confident. Students have many reasons for preferring to work on technical exercises. An explanation I have heard from multiple students is that “etudes are easier to work on because I don’t have to worry about being musical.” On the surface, this may seem like a juvenile response, as it is clear that all music should be approached from the standpoint of complete musicianship. This, however, is an instance where it is important to consider why a student would make such a statement. When taken at a basic level, it implies that phrasing, expression, etc. is a worry—a true concern, and something that is stressful. I have seen this to be true for many students and have tried to figure out why it is the case. For many, it derives from a huge fear of not doing phrasing “correctly.” Though as teachers we know and try to instill that there is no “correct” way of making music, unfortunately every time we offer a suggestion that differs from their attempt, we are, in a sense, confirming their fear.

It does not help that many of the pieces in the repertoire provide this fear and stigma of their own accord. A movement of a Bach Suite is a requirement for almost every cello audition. The solo aspect not only displays one’s technique, but also one’s personal interpretation. That in itself can instill fear. I had one student who astonished me at times with her technical competence, but assigning Bach to her was like a torture sentence. She expected to be told that she needed to do more phrasing, and she felt
she would never be able to—a perpetual cycle of disappointment. As she got older and
I was able to dig under the surface of this quandary, we discovered together that her
inability to phrase wasn’t because she wanted to play strictly in time or because she was
stubborn, but actually because whenever she experimented with phrasing it just
sounded silly to her. It seemed preferable not to phrase at all than to appear ridiculous
to me, her colleagues, and herself. When she tried to interpret, it never sounded as
good as when she listened to recordings or her teachers. What she didn’t realize at the
time was that learning how to express takes just as much practice and experimentation
as learning how to shift does. Moreover, in the beginning, most attempts will not be
met with success. Yet, when we are learning to shift, we allow mistakes to happen; we
are afraid to make mistakes when it comes to interpretation, especially when we start
to understand how interpretation reflects on us as musicians.

With this student and others, I found a solution in Popper etudes. Though there
is music within each study, they are not performed as regularly and there tend to be less
standard interpretations. This allows students to experiment without the feeling of
failure nipping at their heels. There is no defined way to play certain chromatic
passages, and the student may for the first time feel freedom instead of restriction
when it comes to interpretation.

To produce this sort of reaction, I often assign Popper Etude No.6. When it was
first introduced to me as a student, I was told that I should actually try to play it like
Bach. Since I loved learning and performing Bach, this suggestion helped make the
etude easier to learn and enjoy. When I give this etude to a student a student
intimidated by works like Bach, I ask them approach it as an exercise in creativity. The first bars of the etude contain arpeggiated chords for which there are many valid interpretations.

Figure 7. Popper Etude No. 6, mm. 1-3

I ask the student to try experimenting with timing to see which notes they think should be emphasized with length. Then, I ask them to discover notes which could sound interesting to speed up or slow down. While doing so, I reaffirm that there is no right or wrong way to do any of this; instead, the real key is simply trying new, even uncomfortable, ideas.

Often after playing a few wildly interpretative Popper Etudes, taking time in Bach doesn’t feel as constrictively right or wrong. This process of exploration and experimentation gives the student many options when it comes to performance. In discussing the art of musicianship, Jospeh Bassin defines the differences between art and craft. The starkest distinction between the two, he maintains, is that when one performs a craft, one knows the outcome before it has happened. Artists use the same tools as a craftsman, but never can predict the end result as it changes with each
Popper’s studies can help a student start to discover their options while practicing and performing simply because they provide an opportunity for experimentation with less risk.

Not every student who begs to play Poppers and Piattis does so because he or she feels comfortable with technique-based exercises. There are cellists who feel more comfortable with the process of learning than they do performing. However, depending on the ability of a teacher to comprehend the student’s justification for such an approach, Piatti and Popper can be used to push the boundaries of comfort until one is at ease not just in a practice room but on stage while performing. I was one such student who craved the Etudes and Caprices, but not because of any technical confidence. On the contrary, early on in my undergraduate days, I had had the (self) revelation that nothing I played could be performed well if I continued to be unable to “master” the technique it involved. Until I was able to accomplish this feat, I considered myself unworthy of performing anything in the literature.

Certainly, my logic in reaching this conclusion was questionable and looking back I wish I had taken a less negative approach with myself, but it does not matter, as it is what I believed to be true at the time. I saw scales, etudes, and caprices as the only way I could reach a point of performance that would be in any way “acceptable” to an audience. So, that is what I brought to my lessons each week. The process did not seem boring to me at all; instead I devoured all that I could find musically in the etudes and attempted to make the passages that challenged me sound as easy as the passages that

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just seemed to fall under my fingers. Even though the Piatti’s required technique that exceeded my knowledge of the fingerboard and the development of my ear, I was able to make it work because of the ever-present musical line. Popper demanded such understanding of character that I was able to focus on bringing varied phrasing to repeated and shorter motives. Of course, my teacher at the time wanted a wider range in my repertoire than just Piatti and Popper, and he had me work on a concerto as well. Since I considered myself unworthy of such an undertaking, I was not able to approach it with the same open mind. Instead, learning it was a tedious chore during which I agonized over all of my shortcomings.

Luckily for me, I had a teacher who was perspicacious enough to realize that my approach to my concerto was unhealthy, especially when compared to the way in which I could practice Piatti and Popper. He questioned why I was able to allow myself to enjoy the experience of learning one type of music but not another. He probed further until I admitted that I felt undeserving of the right to practice or perform works because I had technical flaws. To his credit, he did not dismiss my thought as ludicrous, but continued to examine my reasoning. In her article about learning and teaching the creative process, Marissa Silverman explains the process my teacher encompassed:

Meaningful learning occurs when students become more and more able to find and solve musical problems themselves, with appropriate, caring guidance (and modelling [sic]) from their teachers, and with mutual dialogue. Back-and-forth questioning is a key principle of constructivist teaching/leaning. In these ways, students can learn how to guide, coach, and teach themselves, in the present and, most importantly, in the future.62

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My teacher’s questions allowed me to further investigate my own rationale behind my attitude pertaining to repertoire. He also helped me figure out how to take the approach I was able to cultivate with Popper and Piatti and apply it to the concerto. Moreover, instead of the etudes being a punishment for my faulty technique, they became a tool in my approach to learning any piece. They may have aided my technique on their own, but I will always see them as my bridge to being able to approach repertoire.

For those cellists who are feeling at home on the concert stage, Piatti and Popper are no less beneficial. In achieving virtuosity on stage, one must not only feel comfortable with the most challenging sections of the works to be performed, but also be able to express ideas with ease, clarity, spontaneity. Each of the Piatti Caprices encompasses self-accompanying techniques so that while the cellist is playing the melody line, he is also serving as his own duet partner. A non-musician friend who first heard a recording of the Caprices assumed that multiple cellists were playing together.

Often, composers create these multiple lines by using double, triple, or quadruple stops on string instruments. Piatti definitely used these methods in his caprices, yet his accompaniment techniques did not solely rely on multiple voices playing at the same time. In his Caprice No. 7, even though there is almost always only one note being played, the way that lines are articulated gives the sense that at least two different ideas are occurring at the same time. Piatti notes that the bass line should be well marked, and he provides accents to help the listener discern that line separately from the other notes.
The notes that aren’t in the bass line are usually played more lightly and quickly affirming their status as a simple accompaniment figure. To provide contrast, when the solo bass line reaches a resting point, the accompaniment takes over the melodic role until the bass line’s movement becomes prominent again.

The Caprices allow the player to not only be a soloist, but also to be his or her own backup orchestra. Usually, however, with an orchestra the soloist is often
constricted to playing in time with the conductor and all of the other musicians on stage. With Piatti, the performer has the freedom to follow the lines that the underlying harmonies imply while pushing and pulling the melody to account for changes in timing. The freedom required in attaining this sort of virtuosity is applicable to all pieces, though not easily achieved. This concept is in line with Casals’ ideas about cello playing in that the style will yield not towards display, but a controlled, incisive, and intense expression, determined wholly by the music being interpreted. Learning how to use the self-accompanying lines in Piatti will help any performer to listen, understand, and react to accompaniment when it is being provided by someone else.

For some students, the question of being musical is less about their own fears and background with the instrument, but more about their underlying conception of harmony. The difference between ease in performance and truly communicating with an audience can be determined by the way a cellist reacts to an implied harmony that is not being played. The Popper Etudes can be used to develop this skill. For example, in Etude no. 15, there are parts where harmonies are almost changing with every measure. If the cellist does not hear these changes in chordal structure, it will be difficult find a character that matches the harmony.

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If the cellist is able to differentiate the harmonies, he can then adapt his timing to bring out the playfulness that occurs when a chord is unexpected.

There is no evidence that Popper wrote accompaniments for his op. 73 etudes, but in class he occasionally improvised accompaniments on the piano when a student performed a study particularly well. He did compose accompaniments for many of his preparatory etudes, as was common of many of his cellist and violinist predecessors. Though many editions leave out the second part, Duport, Kummer, and Franchomme also wrote etudes meant to be played with an additional subordinate cello line as did Dont and Wieniawsky for a second violinist. Though Paganini did not compose a second part to his caprices, Schumann later created piano accompaniments for them. The accompaniments can serve to provide an additional harmonic foundation to which the performer can respond musically.

For these reasons, cellists such as Carter Enyeart have created second cello parts for the Popper Etudes. His goal was to provide “a new voice that will help students more clearly perceive the often confusing harmonic progressions that occur frequently

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in the studies, and to inspire an appreciation of the studies as musical works created for a technical purpose.⁶⁵ In addition, with accompaniment, some view the Etudes more as performance works than exercises. This is helpful for integrating Popper’s etudes into the performance repertoire, but also in allowing the performer to experience the etudes as music to make with someone else. The sharing of concepts and ideas would not cease to exist if the accompaniment were then removed. The student will still be able to hear the foundations of the underlying harmony even when performing without it. These listening skills and harmonic understanding can then be used in all repertoire.

4. Conclusions

It is impossible to remove the connection between etudes or caprices and the development of technique. The term etude is derived from the French and Latin language meaning “to study” while the term caprice implies an ability to make any technical difficulties seem carefree. One cannot argue that working on etudes or caprices will not have a positive effect on the development of capabilities in playing difficult passages. However, if such works are only approached in this manner, an important aspect of student development has been overlooked. Etudes should be used as tools of musicianship. They can exist not only to solve technical quandaries, but also to develop in every type of player a keener ability to communicate as an artist.

The approach that makes these technical studies into artistic tools is not limited solely to Piatti and Popper. These compositions are well suited to the task, as there is so much musical material in them and they are often approached in a single-minded technical manner. Not many, if any, cello studies have achieved great fame since Piatti and Popper, yet there have been many works composed for the instrument which involve extended techniques and a broadened harmonic vocabulary. Often, we tend to stray away from these works, either out of fear of difficulty, or because the musical output is not deemed worthwhile. Perhaps, if approached in the same manner as we ought to approach Piatti and Popper, not only would these newer works become more accessible, but also more popular. It is imperative that musicians, and cellists in particular, be open to communicating in new and different manners, and modern works
can be used to do so in the same way that etudes and caprices have been used in the past.

Underlying this argument is the concept that the technical works of Piatti and Popper are well suited for the concert stage. If one truly subscribes to the idea that the works promote both musical and technical excellence, there is no reason not to share them with an audience. Additionally, it is likely that were these pieces to be more often performed in public, they would achieve more acclaim for matters other than technique. Before Pablo Casals began to perform and advocate for the Bach Cello Suites, they were used solely as tools for technical development. Because Casals made them famous through performances and recordings, they are now considered a standard of musicality for cellists. As Casals explained in his autobiography:

> They had been considered academic works, mechanical, without warmth. Imagine that! How could anyone think of them as being cold, when a whole radiance of space and poetry pours forth from them! They are the very essence of Bach, and Bach is the essence of music.66

Not every cello etude is destined to become as popular as the Bach Cello Suites, but there is no reason that each should not be explored with that possibility in mind.

Both the works of Piatti and Popper are quintessential for cellists because inherent in them are the means to help create well-rounded musicians and performers. Because of the variety and contrast of the two composers and their works, every type of cello student can develop musically. Much of this growth is dependent on the teacher who has a responsibility not only to know what each etude or caprice offers technically

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and musically, but also to have an awareness of the student’s starting point. Only if the teacher has a notion of what is occurring in the mind of students, will he or she be able to guide them to approach the works in a manner that can help them artistically.

Just as in writing, art, and dancing, in music, perfect technique alone will not produce a communicative, creative artist. Moreover, though technique is a vital component in the ability to express, it should never be emphasized outside the larger framework of musical maturation. An important component of becoming a complete musician is learning how to follow all the rules and then stretch or break them as need be. Meanwhile, teachers must maintain an awareness of the student’s progress in developing an approach that includes areas of comfort and discomfort so that he or she can continue to grow. The Caprices of Piatti and Etudes of Popper give ample opportunity for this growth and exploration in both student and teacher and therefore ought to be considered part of the pedagogical and performance repertoire for every cellist.
Part II—Recital Program Notes
Composed in 1934, the **Sonata in d minor, op. 40**, was Dmitry Shostakovich’s first large-scale chamber music work. This was a turbulent time in both his personal and professional life. He was briefly separated from his wife due to his extramarital affair with a younger translator. The work was completed on the heels of his opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which played a large part in the Soviet censure of Shostakovich’s music. The Sonata was premiered on Christmas day by Shostakovich and his friend, cellist Viktor Kubatsky, the work’s dedicatee.
Structurally, the Sonata is fairly conservative. It is a four-movement work, the first of which is written in sonata form. In fact, the Allegro non troppo is the first time that Shostakovich used a repeated exposition in any of his compositions. The first movement begins with a graceful melody in the cello accompanied by arpeggios in the piano. This theme becomes darker and more violent before the piano introduces the second theme decorated by sighing gestures and harmonics in the cello part. The movement ends with a recapitulation wherein the first theme is repeated by a muted cello in a much slower tempo.

The second movement is a rollicking, sarcastic dance featuring an ostinato accompaniment figure split between both players. Shostakovich uses the wide registers of both instruments to his advantage as he plays with different timbres. The Largo contrasts with all of the other movements not only because of the tempo but also because of the darker, somber mood it achieves. The cello part, marked with a mute, requires the player to use the higher regions of the lowest string, creating a muffled sound setting the tone for the entire movement. The sonata closes with a sardonic rondo. The playful theme is introduced by the pianist and the episodes are full of scalar figures for both pianist and cellist.

At the time that the Sonate for violoncello solo was composed, modernist music was not allowed in the Soviet controlled Hungary where Ligety lived. The two movements of the work were composed at separate times, the first in 1948 and the second in 1953. The authorities allowed the work to be recorded for public radio, but it
was only broadcast once. The formalistic style of the second movement meant that the work could not be performed in public. It remained unperformed until 1983, but has gained popularity ever since.

Influenced heavily by both Bartok and Kodaly, Lygeti opens his Dialogo movement with a pizzicato glissando chords reminiscent of late Bartok quartets. The melody that follows and returns throughout both movements is more suggestive of Kodaly. The first movement is comprised of 16 measures, each with a different amount of beats. The movement ends with another glissando pizzicato chord, this time employing a Picardy third.

The second movement is a flurry of notes from beginning to end with small breaks for melodic material. The opening motive appears throughout the virtuosic movement. The tempo marking is Presto con slancio and Lygeti takes full advantage of all of the registers in which the cellist can play. Before the final recapitulation and coda, there are sections which employ tremolos and the use of a pedal tone.

The Sonata in F Major, op. 99 is the second sonata Brahms wrote for the cello. It was written over 20 years after the first, and by many it is considered to be a more mature work though still full of the energy of youth. The sonata was composed (along with the second violins sonata and third piano trio) during the summer of 1886 which he spent in Switzerland. The work was inspired by the cellist Robert Hausmann, a close friend of Brahms and the cellist in the Joachim Quartet. Brahms and Hausmann gave the first performance of the work together in Vienna on November 24, 1986.
Hausmann was known for his large, strong tone and other cellists criticized Brahms for writing in a manner that made it so difficult for the cellist to be heard.

The Allegro vivace begins with an outburst of piano tremolo over which the cello enters and introduces the first theme in its upper register. Instead of a long lyrical line, the melody is comprised of fragments and intervallic leaps. The piano introduces the second theme, and both instruments trade the tremolo figures throughout. The slow movement is in the unrelated and surprising key of F-sharp major. It opens with the melody in the piano as the cello gives a passionate pizzicato accompaniment. The cello line then enters with the soaring melody in its upper register. The two instruments continue to exchange melodic lines in the middle, more impassioned, section of the movement before the opening is recalled at the end.

The third movement, a scherzo marked Allegro passionate, opens again with a brooding, quiet storm in the piano. The cellist enters with rhythmic accents and joins the dark mood. The trio section of the movement reveals a gentler theme which is mostly explored by the cello. The final movement of the sonata, a rondo, is possibly the lightest of all the movements. The cello begins with a graceful melody which later gives way to a stronger march-like figure. When the original theme returns at the end of the movement, it is plucked by the cellist instead of bowed lending a nuanced character to the end of the work.
December 12, 2008
The Niles Gallery
Lucille Caudill Little Fine Arts Library
7:30 p.m.

Suite No. 2 in d minor, BWV 1008                                            Johann Sebastian Bach
   Prélude
   Allemande
   Courante
   Sarabande
   Menuett I & II
   Gigue

Concerto No. 1 in a minor, op. 33                                                                Camille Saint-Saëns
   Allegro non troppo
   Allegretto con moto
   Allegro non troppo

-Pause-

Elfentanz, op. 39 “Dance of the Elves”                             David Popper
(1843-1913)

Chaconne for two cellos                                                             Johann Sebastian Bach
   Arr. by C. Jaffe and J. Perron
   from Partita in d minor, BWV 1004

J. S. Bach wrote six suites for the cello around the year 1720 while he was serving
as Kappellmeister in Cöthen. Each suite is comprised of six movements, a prelude and
five dances. The original manuscripts of the suites were lost, and the earliest known
copy is in the hand of Bach’s wife, Anna Magdelena Bach. Later copies have been
discovered with discrepancies in bowings and some of the notes. This leaves choice in
how to perform the suites at the discretion of the cellist. The six suites were not often performed until Pablo Casals discovered an edition at a used music store in 1889. He began performing them regularly and recorded them in 1925, slowly increasing their popularity. Today, the suites are so integrated into the cello repertoire that they have been coined “the cello player’s bible.”

The **Suite No. 2 in d minor, BWV 1008** was defined by Pablo Casals as tragic. It is one of only two minor suites in the collection (the other is Suite No. 5.) The Prélude expands upon an arpeggiated figure introduced in the opening bars. The last measures of the movement are chords which were likely meant to be embellished by the performer as was fitting in baroque performance practice. The Allemande is notable for its improvisatory feeling, particularly in its scalar runs, while the Courante moves quickly between high and low registers in a quick triple meter. In contrast to the fast pace of the Courante, the tragic character of suite is epitomized in the Sarabande with its slow moving chords. The Minuets follow, juxtaposing an assertive character marked with chords and a flowing melodic line. Then, with a strong rhythmic foundation, the Gigue closes the suite with energetic flourishes.

Piano prodigy Camille Saint-Saëns composed the **Concerto No. 1 in a minor, op. 33** in 1872. At the time, there were three competing orchestras in Paris all eager for new works. Saint-Saëns wrote this first of two cello concertos for Auguste Tolbecque in response to this demand. Tolbecque premiered the work at the Paris Conservatoire in January, 1873.
The concerto is written in three continuous movements in which the solo part weaves in and out of the orchestral texture. The orchestra strikes a resounding chord and the soloist responds by erupting in the first triplet theme. This motive is elaborated upon by both the soloist and the orchestra before the cello introduces the slow-moving contrasting section. The orchestra and soloist continue to exchange gestures for the rest of the movement while Saint-Saëns varies the textures.

The next movement begins with a change of key and timbre as muted strings open with a sweet, simple minuet theme. When the cello enters, the strings continue their minuet which now takes on an accompaniment role to the solo cello melody. As the movement draws to a close, the orchestra interrupts with the triplet theme from the opening movement. This blends seamlessly into the last, and longest movement, consisting of two contrasting themes, the first loving, and the second virtuosic. The orchestra and soloist move energetically into a coda that moves the concerto from A minor to A major.

David Popper is best known to cellists for his collection of 40 etudes in the High School of Cello Playing, op. 73. However, Popper was also famous for his character and salon pieces of which he composed 68. Many of these are short pieces that express a mood, but others are fiendishly difficult, virtuosic works designed to impress an audience. Elfentanz, op. 39 falls into the latter category. Lasting between three and four minutes the piece exploits the highest registers of the cello while at the same time
maintaining a sautille stroke for the duration. The performer faces the challenges of
difficult string crossings and octaves while moving at the fastest possible speed.

The **Chaconne** movement from Bach’s Partita in d minor, BWV 1004 for violin is
one of his most often transcribed works, as every instrumentalist wants to be able to
revel in its glory. The partita itself was written in 1720 when Bach returned home from
a three month trip to be told that his wife has died. The chaconne is the final
movement of the partita and it encompasses feelings of loss, despair, hope, and peace.

The chaconne theme is eight measures long and Bach writes 39 variations for it.
Each variation brings out new elements and voicings. This version, transcribed for two
cellos, trades the original violin part between the two instruments. The cellist not
playing the melody is usually filling in some of the harmonies that Bach originally wrote
in chord form. Although it does not sound the same as the work when played on the
violin, the Chaconne for two cellos brings out nuances and tone colors that can be just
as moving as the original version.
May 1, 2009
The Niles Gallery
Lucille Caudill Little Fine Arts Library
5:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Clarinet Quintet in A Major, K. 581
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
Allegro
Larghetto
Menuetto
Allegro con Variationi

-Intermission-

Clarinet Quintet in B minor, Op. 115
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Allegro
Adagio
Andantino
Con Moto

The clarinet was still a newly invented instrument during Mozart’s lifetime, and it has been said that no single composer has done more for the instrument than he. Mozart first heard the clarinet on a trip when he was seven years old and the instrument’s wide range and sonority stayed with him throughout his lifetime. His close friendship with Anton Stadler later cemented his appreciation for the instrument and desire to write music for it. Mozart wrote not only the clarinet quintet with Stadler in mind, but also the Kegelstatt Trio and Clarinet Concerto. The Clarinet Quintet in A
Major, K. 581, was completed in September of 1789 and the premiere was given in December with Stadler as clarinetist and with Mozart playing the viola.

The first movement of the work is in sonata form. The strings open with a serene theme that the clarinet then expands. The first violin introduces the second theme and continues the dialogue with the clarinet. In the development section, all the instruments pass 16\textsuperscript{th} notes amongst each other before the opening theme returns. The slow movement, Larghetto, calls for all the strings to play with mutes, dampening their sound. Mozart shows his mastery of color and texture as over the string background the clarinet sings a warm melody.

The third movement Menuetto stands out in that it has two trio sections. In the first of these, the clarinet does not participate leaving the strings to play with a full quartet sound. The second trio is in the form of a Viennese Ländler, a precursor to the waltz. Whereas many of Mozarts closing movements are Rondos, the last movement in the quintet is a set of variations. The clarinet is the principal voice in the first variation and the strings take over the two following as the clarinet introduces countermelodies. The clarinet returns in a virtuosic manner in the next variation which is followed by an adagio. The adagio ends with a short clarinet cadenza that leads into the final coda.

When, in 1891, Brahms decided to write his Clarinet Quintet in B minor, op. 115, he had stopped composing for over a year. Some attribute this to retirement and others to a creative roadblock, but regardless, after he heard Richard Mühlfeld perform Weber’s clarinet quintet, he decided that he must write clarinet works. Just as Stadler
served as Mozart’s muse, Mühlfeld inspired Brahms to write four works for clarinet before the end of his days. The Brahms quintet pays homage to Mozart’s work in both its four-movement form, and in the substance of each movement. However, instead of highlighting the clarinet part throughout, as Mozart did, Brahms usually created five equal parts.

Just as in the Mozart, Brahms begins the first movement in sonata form with strings alone—in this case, just the two violins. The motive introduced by the violins evolves throughout the movement and even is a source of material for the second theme which is introduced by the clarinet. The adagio movement is the emotional cornerstone of the work. As in Mozart, the strings are muted and the clarinet introduces the serene first theme. This gives way to the next part of the movement full of commotion, wherein the range of the clarinet sails over the rhythmically aggressive strings to sing a melody reminiscent of gypsy music. The final section returns to the peaceful opening material which then sounds nostalgic after the turmoil of the music preceding.

One would expect a lively scherzo to follow such an adagio, and Brahms does deliver, but not before he deceives the listener with a rich, lush opening melody typical of the composer. The final movement again echoes Mozart with a set of variations. Brahms, however, brings the piece full circle by recalling the opening of the entire quintet in a dynamic coda. The work ends with a quiet B minor chord demanding reflection of the entire piece.
May 2, 2010
The Niles Gallery
Lucille Caudill Little Fine Arts Library
1:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Kol Nidrei, op. 47                        Max Bruch
                                                (1838-1920)

Suite No. 6 in D Major, BWV 1012            Johann Sebastian Bach
                                                (1685-1750)
Prélude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte I and II
Gigue

-Intermission-

Cello Concerto in A minor, op. 129          Robert Schumann
                                                (1810-1856)
Nicht zu schnell
Langsam
Sehr Lebhaft

Bruch composed his Kol Nidrei, op. 47 in 1880, the same year that he composed
his Scottish Fantasy. He was interested in incorporating ethnic themes into his work as
he had a fascination with music of other cultures. The melody used at the opening Kol
Nidrei is taken from the Jewish chant sung at the beginning of the service on the eve of
Yom Kippur, the day of repentance for Jews. The literal translation is “all vows” and the
crying, sighing gesture of a cantor is replicated by the cello in Bruch’s setting. Bruch was introduced to the chant by the Cantor Abraham Jacob Lichtenstein. The second theme, in major, is borrowed from Isaac Nathan’s arrangement of Lord Byron’s “O Weep for Those that Wept on Babel’s Stream.”

Bruch dedicated the work to Robert Hausmann who gave the works premiere. The work is subtitled “An Adagio on Hebrew Melodies.” The work opens with the Kol Nidrei theme and the mood remains intense and somber for the first half of the work. Then, the harp is featured as the second theme enters in the orchestra. The melody suggests hope and even joy. The piece ends with this optimism, though the mourning of the opening is not forgotten.

Bach’s **Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012** stands out from the other five cello suites he wrote. It, too, is comprised of a prelude and five dance movements, but it is the only suite that was certainly written for an instrument that differs from the modern day cello. Bach wrote it for an instrument with five strings. The additional string would be an E string a fifth above the A string of today’s cellos. There is some disagreement as to whether the suite was simply meant for a five-string cello, or whether it was meant for a smaller five-string instrument similar to the cello. Regardless, many modern cellists choose to play the suite, even on their instruments with four strings. This means a significant increase in difficulty, as the cellist must spend a majority of time in the higher registers of the cello and in thumb position. Additionally, cellists playing with four strings must find a way to manipulate the chords, either by the voicing or
articulation because at times it is impossible to simply roll them on the modern instrument.

The Prélude begins in a lively triple meter. Eighth notes are constant throughout, until later in the movement when Bach alternates them with 16th notes. The majority of the Prélude arpeggiates chords in different ranges of the instrument before yielding to a graceful Allemande. The Allemande maintains an improvisatory feeling and challenges the cellist to play both warmly and elegantly while fitting many notes into a single bow. The Courante which follows is buoyant and almost march-like in character. It is also the only dance movement in the suite not to use chords or double stops. The Sarabande, however, is full of chords. The cellists must work to bring out all the voices, while maintaining the melody line or lines. Additionally, it is imperative for the cellist to be aware of the implied harmonies which underlie many of the melodic gestures. The Gavottes follow the Sarabande, and both have a cheerful nature. The second in particular is notable because of the melodic sections over a ground bass which can resemble the sound of a hurdy-gurdy. The final Gigue is almost written as duet for two cellos played on one instrument. Both voices interact with each other and often play at the same time.

Before Robert Schumann moved to Düsseldorf in September of 1950 to conduct the orchestra, he had already been warned by Felix Mendelssohn and others that it was not necessarily an ideal post. Nonetheless, when he arrived, he found he enjoyed the city and conducting the orchestra. It was likely one of the last periods of happiness in
his life. He was inspired shortly thereafter to write his **Concerto in A minor, op. 129.** He wrote the work in just 14 days that October. He wrote the concerto in three movements with no breaks between them, as he found the practice of applauding between the movements to be disruptive to the mood. Even though Schumann was a pianist, when he had injured himself earlier in life and ended his performing career and had spent some time playing the cello. This familiarity ensured that the writing is well-suited to the instrument.

As Schumann was not a proponent of the virtuosic style of the day, the concerto focus more on the lyric capabilities of the instrument than showcasing the soloist. The first movement is in a straight sonata form. The orchestra begins an accompaniment figure while the cello presents the soulful opening theme. The second theme is more animated, yet still, bursts with emotion. As would be expected, the development explores both of these themes before the recapitulation. There is, however, no first movement cadenza as might be anticipated. The second movement employs a singing solo line accompanied by pizzicato in the string section. At one point, the soloist joins the principal cellist for a duet. The final movement is lively, joyful, and full of spirit. The cellist must jump quickly between registers to present the material from which much of the rest of the movement develops. Near the end of the piece, Schumann includes a short accompanied cadenza before a final coda ends the work on a jovial note.

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Bibliography


Vita

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Degrees Earned

Boston University
Master of Music in String Performance, May, 2007

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Full Tuition Scholarship, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2002-2004

James B. Angell Scholar, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
2002

Rogel Scholars Award, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
2000-2002

Leah Hagel
Student’s Signature