EUGÈNE YSAŸE - HIS CAREER AS A
CONCERT ARTIST, TEACHER AND COMPOSER

by

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I hereby recommend that this document prepared under my direction by LOUISE SCOTT entitled EUGÈNE YSAŸE - HIS CAREER AS A CONCERT ARTIST, TEACHER AND COMPOSER be accepted in partial fulfillment of the degree Doctor of Musical Arts.

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The artistic life of Eugène Ysaïe began with his father, Nicholas, who was the first professional musician in the Ysaye clan. Ysaye was born in Liege, Belgium in 1858, and, as in preceding generations, started the violin at an early age with his father, on a small size instrument. At his first lessons he was allowed only to draw the bow endlessly across the strings. In later life, Ysaïe spoke of his early instruction:

It was my father who really taught me to play the violin. Though his manner was rough and his hand heavy, without him I should never be where I am today. Massart, Wieniawski, and Vieuxtemps of course opened new horizons for me in the realm of technique and interpretation, but it was my father who taught me how to make my instrument sing.¹

Ysaye had ample opportunities to perform. At the age of seven he was playing in the Orchestra for Light Opera in Liege where his father conducted. In addition, he played many engagements with his father to help support the family.

In 1865, now seven years old, he entered the Liege Conservatory. Being of a rather spirited and rebellious nature, Ysaye did not strive to meet their requirements

and was asked to leave. Therefore, in 1869 when he was eleven years old, he returned to his father's care and instruction.

By the age of thirteen he could play most of the repertoire of the day by memory: the caprices of Rode, Paganini, Locatelli, and the concertos of Bach, Beethoven, Ernst, Viotti, deBériot, Spohr, Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps.

Ysaïe was readmitted to the Liege Conservatory in 1873 by a coincidence. Vieuxtemps, while taking a walk, heard Ysaïe practicing and was so impressed with his playing that he talked the director into readmitting him. He was placed in Massart's class and after one year won the highest honor for performance. During his two-year study at the Conservatory he began to be in demand as a soloist in Liege and surrounding areas.

In 1875 Ysaïe planned to go to Brussels to study with Vieuxtemps. Vieuxtemps, however, was taken ill and his class was taken over by Wieniawski. The following year Ysaïe traveled to Paris to finally study with his idol, Vieuxtemps. Even though Vieuxtemps was paralyzed and could no longer play, Ysaïe gave much credit to his teaching:

At the time I was his pupil he was, alas, suffering from paralysis, though only fifty-six. But his lucid teaching opened the way for me and it often seemed to me, as I listened to his words, that I could hear him playing. He was a strict master and had little patience for mistakes, especially those relating to matters of taste or expression. . . Better than any he could perfect a talent already partly developed, but he was unable
to reach down to his pupil. The pupil had to reach up to him.²

Vieuxtemps, in turn, held the highest regard for his pupil, Ysaïe, as seen in his words:

I have endeavoured to pass on to him the fine tradition which I received from the hands of deBériot, that is to say a taste for what is natural and simple and a desire for precision and clarity in execution. With his exceptional technique, his quick intellect and his aptitude for work, there can be no limit to his success.³

In 1879 Ysaïe left Paris. Vieuxtemps had gone to Algeria for a cure and Ysaïe had to find steady employment. He accepted the position of Concertmaster of the Konzerthaus Orchestra in Berlin. Rubinstein, after being taken by Joachim to hear Ysaïe, arranged a tour of Norway and Russia for Ysaïe in 1882. After the tours Ysaïe rejected an offer to return to the Berlin Orchestra and decided instead after a four-year absence to return to Paris.

Ysaïe was soon part of the music circle of Paris that included Saint-Saëns, Franck, Fauré, d'Indy, Chausson and Chabrier. Although Ysaïe's career was improving, his biggest break was a successful concert in Paris, arranged by Saint-Saëns in 1885. The Paris critics at this time were said to be merciless, however, the reviews of Ysaïe's concert drew nothing but praise. The foreign press carried releases of the concert's success and finally Eugène Ysaïe's performing career was firmly planted.

²A. Ysaïe, Ysaïe, p. 23.
³A. Ysaïe, Ysaïe, p. 25.
In 1886 he married Louise Bourdeau de Courtrai. One condition of the marriage, set forth by Louise's father, was that Ysaïe was to accept a financially appealing offer of a professorship at the Brussels Conservatory, a position which he held until 1897. The Conservatory agreed to give Ysaïe leave of absence for tours, which in the years to follow took most of his time and energy.

**Career Summary**

Ysaïe's tours are too numerous to mention individually, however, a summary of his career reveals his general life history and personality.

A concert tour of France, Switzerland and Germany took place shortly after his marriage. The Ysaïe's first boy, Gabriel, was born in June of 1887. In 1888 Ysaïe founded the Ysaïe Quartet and took over the musical direction of the Twenty Club of Brussels. In 1889 the number of concerts increased with performances in Mannheim, Stuttgart and Cologne. An Italian tour followed in April. Publicity for the Italian tour was insured when Ysaïe's manager, Weiser, arranged for Ysaïe to play Paganini's violin in Genoa's town hall where the violin was kept. The next day Weiser called the Mayor and related that Ysaïe was so taken with the violin that he would play no other, and he wanted to buy it. Reports in the paper said that Eugène Ysaïe wanted the Paganini Guarnerius so badly that his own Stradivarius (he really owned a Guadagnini) had to be hidden.
because Ysaïe had attempted to break it since he was so disappointed. The story was a hoax, fabricated by Ysaïe's manager in order to get publicity to sell tickets. Ysaïe disliked the forced publicity, but played to capacity audiences everywhere because of the story.

In the winter of 1889 Ysaïe went on his first Austrian tour. His first concert in Vienna, the second music capital of Europe, was a success. Vienna became one of Ysaïe's favorite cities.

Two daughters, Carry and Therese were born in 1889 and 1890. A second tour of Russia followed shortly after. A year later, in January of 1891, Ysaïe sent word of his success in London to his wife.

Complete success, London conquered. Excellent Press. Audience warm, ovation before, during and after the recital.4

Ysaïe, while in London, had a chance to buy the Guarnerius which was used by Vieuxtemps. Even though Ysaïe's financial affairs were more stable, he could not afford the violin, since he had paid off a gambling debt for Louise's relative. Ysaïe was not a frugal man. He gave generously to whomever needed it, and never did know how much money he made. A letter to his wife exemplifies this attitude.

Naturally there are a few unwarranted expenses, but mostly it is a simple matter of duty. First of all comes my father, then Joseph, who works so hard to bring up his children, and whom I do not

4A. Ysaïe, Ysaïe, p. 68.
help half enough. As for the rest I own I give freely simply because I enjoy seeing happy faces around me. Also, it is very nice to help others even at cost to oneself—which only makes the help more valuable. I remember once your saying that I gave out of pride. Maybe I do, but if you are not to be proud of giving and of doing good of what are you to be proud.5

By 1891 Eugène Ysaïe's name was known in most European cities. He was in great demand. In 1894 Antoine, their fourth child, was born. Ysaïe, now thirty-six, made his first Atlantic crossing for a tour of the United States. He relates his experience in a letter to his wife.

I am not making any concessions to taste. I am playing all the most important works, and it is perhaps just that that has enabled me to conquer the American Public which is not in the habit with being treated with such a respect by its artists... If it is true that this public has been conquered by me, it is even more true that I have been conquered by it, completely and absolutely.6

Ysaïe, however, refused to sign a contract that would lengthen the tour, since he still had obligations to fulfill as professor at the Brussels Conservatory.

Ysaïe had borrowed a Guarnerius del Gesu violin from one of his students for the American tour. He later bought it and retained it throughout his life.

1896 brought a Russian tour and the founding of the Ysaïe Concerts in Brussels. It was also this year that Ysaïe's wife, Louise, accompanied him on a tour for the first time. On this tour through Italy, Spain and Portugal

5A. Ysaïe, Ysaïe, p. 70.
6A. Ysaïe, Ysaïe, p. 75
Louise wrote of a recurring problem that plagued Ysaïe through most of his career.

The other evening his hand hurt so much that he had to stop playing. He pretended that something was wrong with his violin and went into the other room for a few minutes. When he returned we were all carried away again by his playing, which as you know thrills me more than anything.

Ysaïe had other recurring problems throughout his life. He had a large appetite for not only knowledge and music, but food, drink and women as well. A great part of his biography is devoted to letters between Louise and himself in which he is constantly trying to excuse his obsessive behavior. Louise's typical reply to one such letter is revealed below.

People often envy the wives of great artists. But they are wrong, for those wives have to live with complicated, unstable, illogical husbands—except in matters of art. When you say that the man who economises his 'ego' fills you with pity and horror, when you spend your time always seeking new sensations, good or bad, you are wrong, totally wrong, my poor man. To live! To live and love! Yes, but not to abuse life.

In October of 1897 Ysaïe began his second tour of the United States. On February of the following year the Ysaïe's fifth child, Theodore, was born. Ysaïe was still touring the United States with Raoul Pugno, his accompanist, when he was offered the directorship of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Deciding that he still had time

7 A. Ysaïe, Ysaïe, p. 79.
8 A. Ysaïe, Ysaïe, p. 88.
left as a soloist, he declined the offer. At this time he also decided to retire from the Brussels Conservatory.

In 1899 Ysaÿe had over one hundred concerts arranged in various places. Feeling the work needed great maturity, in January 1900, at the age of 41, he performed the Beethoven Concerto for the first time. That year he toured in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France and Scandinavia.

In 1901-1904 Ysaÿe toured to other cities from London. During some seasons he crossed the English Channel as many as forty times. During these years, Ysaÿe was unrivaled. Sarasate and Joachim had faded and the younger generation, such as Kreisler, was not yet established.

As well as being in demand as a soloist, Ysaÿe was becoming increasingly popular as a conductor. In March of 1901 a concert in honor of Saint-Saëns was held in London in which Ysaÿe played the Saint-Saëns's Concerto No. 3 and the Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso and conducted the La Jeunesse d'Hercule. Ysaÿe described his feelings about this occasion as follows:

I feel in general that as a violinist I am still, in the opinion of the public, on the upgrade, and that I am also gaining ground as a conductor. I do not know whether I shall ever quite overcome the prejudice which refuses to accord me the double talent, but people may grow tired of criticising the one and applauding the other and in this way a balance may be struck between the two.9

9A. Ysaÿe, Ysaÿe, p. 93.
In 1904 Louise came with her husband to the United States, where he played in many cities including New York, Milwaukee, Denver and Cincinnati. He returned with enough money to insure years of security.

In 1905 his father, Nicholas died. Ysaÿe, now nearing fifty years of age was world famous, but unhappy. He wrote to his wife:

The nearer the wandering life of an artist draws to its end, the more monotonous it becomes. But though the outward life of the artist always gives out the same sound, his inner life changes. He sees more clearly, feels more deeply, and draws less pleasure from his work--for his pleasure is swamped by self-criticism.

The more I play, the more I am applauded and admired, the more I think or suffer, the more I am driven to strive for that artistic perfection which, alas, vanishes in the very moment when you think to grasp it.10

Usually Ysaÿe played his Guarnerius and brought his Stradivarius (Hercules) on stage in case a string would break. At the Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg in 1907, however, he left the Stradivarius locked in a double case backstage. When the concert was over, the violin was gone and has never been recovered. The Stradivarius was replaced with a violin made by Lupot.

By 1911 Ysaÿe's concert schedule was exhausting. Ysaÿe's health was declining and he was urged by doctors to retire. Ysaÿe could not accept this proposal, as seen by his reply:

The remedy would be worse than the disease, it would be hell, nervous exhaustion, neurasthenia, it would finish me.

No, I shall not give up my life as an artist until I have no strength left, until I feel the weakening of the will within me, of the power of my fingers, of my bowing, of my brain. To those who have given their life to it the applause of the public becomes a necessity. The esteem and admiration of the public, fame itself, are vital to me; to renounce them because death hovers behind them would be cowardly, an admission of defeat, of intellectual decline—quite apart from the material consequences of the situation. And so I shall remain where I am, on the summit of the mountain on which an artist must live, until I fall headlong at the call of destiny.11

The preceding words were probably spurned by his recent success in Vienna, which is described in his biography as being without parallel.

Ysaye was scheduled to play one hundred concerts in 1912-1913 season in the United States and even more for the 1913-1914 season. It was during this tour that Ysaye made a recording for Columbia Records. (See Appendix B for works recorded.)

In the summer of 1914 the Ysayes were reunited at a newly built summer home at Le Zoute on the Belgium Coast. Shortly after, because of the war, Ysaye decided to flee to Dunkirk with his wife and remaining children and grandchildren. From Dunkirk the Ysayes settled in London. His first concerts in London were benefits to aid his fellow countrymen. After tours in 1915 that included Madrid and

Paris, Ysaïe went to Belgium to play for troops at the front.

A two and a half year tour to the United States began in December 1916 and lasted until July 1919. It was during this tour that he accepted the position of conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

In July of 1919 the family was reunited at their summer home "La Chanterelle" at Le Zoute. In the fall of 1919 Ysaïe returned to Cincinnati with Louise to fulfill a four-year contract. During this time he no longer played in public. As conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony, Ysaïe is credited with exposing many new works to the public. Deciding that he wanted more time to devote to composing and teaching, he declined an offer to renew his contract and returned to Belgium in 1922.

Ysaïe felt the concert stage calling once again and accepted a tour of the British Isles in 1924. It was during this tour that Louise died.

Ysaïe continued to tour for the next four years. In the summer of 1928, Ysaïe married a student who had been living in the Ysaïe household. Jeanette Dincin was twenty-four years old and Ysaïe was seventy. She is credited with being the only person to have gotten Ysaïe to go on a diet. In her absence, however, Ysaïe went back to his old eating and drinking habits and as a result of the poor health that followed, had to have a leg amputated.
Ysaÿe, now with an artificial leg, was determined not to be inactive. In 1930 he traveled to Antwerp to conduct an orchestra with Kreisler as soloist. Shortly after, he conducted an orchestra of five hundred in celebration of Belgium's one hundred years of independence. Pablo Casals played the Lalo Concerto.

In March of 1931 Ysaÿe's newly composed opera Peter the Miner was performed at the Theatre Royal in Liege. This opera was sung in Walloon, Ysaÿe's childhood language. Ysaÿe was too ill to attend but spoke to the audience over radio. He viewed the second performance of the opera in Brussels a few weeks later. This was Ysaÿe's last appearance in public as he died on May 12, 1931.
CHAPTER II

YSAYE'S CAREER AS A CONCERT ARTIST, TEACHER AND COMPOSER

Eugène Ysaïe's many faceted career was mainly that of concert artist, teacher and composer. The following discussion of his career as a concert artist includes an examination of his place in history as belonging to the Franco Belgium School of violin playing as well as accounts of his playing style. A discussion of his career as a teacher includes an examination of his philosophy of teaching and his influence on modern violin technique. His career as a composer was felt not only by the legacy of his own works, but by his continual promotion of new works.

Ysaïe's Career As A Concert Artist

As a concert artist, Ysaïe holds an important place in the descendants of violinists extending back to Viotti, "the father of the modern school of classical violin playing."12

Ysaïe is quoted as saying at one of his master classes:

I am in a very fortunate position from a historical point of view... I was a disciple of both

Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski... through Vieuxtemps, I learned about deBériot who himself descended from the older Italians... Vieuxtemp knew Paganini...

In the History of Violin I seemed to have been positioned in the mainstream.13

The following chart will help to delineate Ysaïe's musical genealogy.

![Genealogy Chart]

Figure 1. Eugène Ysaïe's Musical Genealogy.

Baillot, Kreutzer and Rode, the generation of violinists after Viotti, collaborated to form the "Method of Instruction" used by the Paris Conservatory. The Belgium influence on this French School was felt in the following generation through the influence of de Bériot, Massart and Vieuxtemps. De Bériot, a student of Robberechts and Baillot, is credited with being the "father of the Belgium School who exercised also a considerable influence upon the French

School."¹⁴ Jose Quitin in record jacket notes on The Belgian School of the Violin states that "Charles de Bériot appears as the first major Belgian figure in the Art of the Violin. A product of the Viotti School, he led the French School at the beginning of the nineteenth century towards greater expressiveness." He also states that followers of Massart, who was a student of Kreutzer and later a professor at the Paris Conservatory, contributed most to the spread of the Belgium School of the Violin. He attributes the recognition by the musical world of the Franco-Belgian School characteristics to Henri Vieuxtemps. Vieuxtemps gained this recognition not only through his own playing and composing, but also through the recognition of his most famous student, Eugène Ysaÿe.

Marc Pincherle, noted French writer on history of the violin, in an article describing Ysaÿe's master classes states:

In what Ysaÿe asks for one finds the main features of the Franco-Belgian School: AN EASY BEARING, THE VIOLIN HELD HIGH, THE BOW HELD BOLDLY WITH LITTLE OR NO ACTION OF THE UPPER ARM, THE RATHER SPECIAL USE (due to Wieniawski) OF THE POINT IN CERTAIN FORCEFUL PASSAGES WHERE IT IS DRAWN AWAY FROM THE STRING ONLY TO RETURN AND STRIKE IT VIOLENTLY LIKE THE LASH OF A WHIP. FOR THE LEFT HAND, GREAT SIMPLICITY OF FINGERING IN THE STROKES, OFTEN MARKED BY OPEN STRINGS, EVIDENCES OF ACCURACY AND ELEMENTS OF FORCE AND PERSPICUIITY:... And throughout, the concern for

¹⁴E. van der Straeten, History, II, p. 134.
continuity and for homogeneousness in the use of the sonorous tints offered by the different strings, in the vibrato, in the dosage of the bow strokes...

AN ABSOLUTE RHYTHMIC COHESION: THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING ONES RHYTHM, OF PROSCRIBING ANY EXCESS OF SHADES, WHETHER AGOGIC (Accelerando, ritartando) OR DYNAMIC...\(^{15}\)

Ysaïe, however, took exception to the label "Franco-Belgian." In a statement in a master class, he defended the Belgium influence by the following statement:

I am a Belgium and am classified as a follower of the Franco-Belgian School of Violin playing... sometimes I wonder why the word Franco is attached ... it seems to symbolize a union of the two... I don't believe that is true... We Belgians, have many qualities that are ours alone... and anyway, we ran your school (French) for over seventy years... I will not live forever... the pupils of my pupils will manage to ensure the continued life of our great and glorious school from Belgium.\(^{16}\)

Ysaïe's style was an important element in the evolution to the modern style of playing. Through limited recordings made by Ysaïe and written accounts of his performances, a general idea of his playing emerges.

Carl Flesch in his Memoirs, concludes that Ysaïe's playing was a synthesis between Sarasate and Joachim.\(^{17}\) Sarasate, representing the blasé, polish and technical perfection and Joachim, representing the serious, expansive and musical performer.

\(^{15}\) Marc Pincherle, "Paris Class," p. 12.

\(^{16}\) Marc Pincherle, "Paris Class," p. 16.

Louis Persinger stated:

Eugène Ysaÿe was one of the few greats who served, so to speak, as a bridge between the old-style virtuoso-virtuoso pure and simple and the modern all-style performer of our day. He was not only a great virtuoso himself, but was one of the very greatest artists of his time, a player of enormous musical stature, with unlimited imagination, sweep, freedom and finesse in his playing.\(^18\)

**Ysaÿe's Career As A Teacher**

Ysaÿe's spiritual and technical contributions to the present style were propagated largely as a result of his efforts as a teacher.

Ysaÿe had many students, many names which will be recognizable as outstanding performers and teachers of our day. David Mannes (1866-1959) was Concertmaster of the New York Symphony and founded the Mannes School of Music in New York. André de Ribaupierre (1893-1955) was on the faculty of Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Leon Sametini (1886-1943) was head of the violin department at the Chicago Musical College, and had many fine students. Although he never directly studied with Ysaÿe, he gave Ysaÿe credit for having the most influence on him. Nicolai Sokoloff (1886-1966) founded the Cleveland Orchestra and was its first conductor. Louis Persinger (1887-1966), concert artist, served on the faculty of Juilliard School of Music. Josef Gingold (1909), presently on the faculty

at Indiana University, has taught hundreds of students and was the concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra under Szell. William Primrose (1903), renowned concert violist, is presently on the faculty of Indiana University. Ysaÿe encouraged his students to play viola as well as violin and was responsible for Primrose's permanent switch to viola.

Ysaÿe's personality inspired his students and thus played an important role in his teaching. Josef Gingold spoke about the spiritual side of Ysaÿe's teaching. He said:

... you know I finally found out what he wanted most of all from his students. He wanted them to savor life to its fullest, and then to express themselves via the medium of the violin.19

Ysaÿe was a man of the world. His biography attests to his flair for living. In Ysaÿe's time the idea of an artist as a recluse was still prevalent, however, Ysaÿe believed the musician should expand into many fields of knowledge.

In a typical lesson, Ysaÿe would play for his students and accompany them on his violin with as much of the orchestral accompaniment that he could play and sing. He believed in a clear mental concept of the work before playing. If technical difficulties were encountered, the student and Ysaÿe would work out a plan for mastery.

Ysaÿe's attitude toward teaching was summarized with the words:

...it is infinitely better to stimulate the pupil to penetrate into his own defects and to solve them through individual thought and concentration.20

Ysaÿe believed in extremely slow practice with complete concentration on every detail. He stressed that total relaxation is paramount to fine playing, and that disciplining the mind to shut out distractions is the road to achieving relaxation while practicing and performing. He encouraged his students to listen to everyone, but imitate no one. Ysaÿe believed that everything had to be settled individually.

He was a staunch defender of Paganini and believed that a violinist's technique should be built on the works of Paganini, Vieuxtemps and Wieniawski.

Several bowing concepts are attributed to Ysaÿe. The first is the art of sustaining long tones with the bow while maintaining firm contact with the strings (called sons filés). Another bowing technique that Ysaÿe stressed was the gradual changing of strings by the bow, following the arc of the bridge. A former student described Ysaÿe's execution of these two bowing concepts:

He would hold a tone until one felt he had no bow left, but just when it seemed impossible to play

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any more, he would turn the embellishment with great charm and beauty...

The four planes covering the four strings melted into a perfectly timed curve. Ysaïe led with his bow. The bow dictated to his fingers. Once he started to play, his bow set the timing and his fingers obeyed. It was this innate sense of timing that set Ysaïe apart from other artists. 21

Following are two bow exercises which Ysaïe used to help master these two bowing concepts.

Figure 2. Ysaïe's Bowing Exercises. 22


Another bowing practice that is attributed to Ysaÿe, is the execution of repeated notes with alternate down and up bows, instead of using all down bows. For example, Bachmann in his Encyclopedia of the Violin, explains that Sarasate played the opening of the Saint-Saëns Concerto in B minor all down bows; however, Ysaÿe was the first to play this passage with alternate down and up bows.23

Bachmann also states that Ysaÿe marked a great advance on the older school of violin playing with regard to the tie, and to sustained notes. The tie or syncopation of tones or sounds consists in expressing them without noticeable change of bow. In order to do so, the notes must be given breadth of bow which extends them beyond their actual time value.24

Primrose related that Ysaÿe played with a low upper arm in contrast to the high tilted elbow of Sevcik students. He concluded that this allowed Ysaÿe to pull the tone from the weight of the arm instead of using pressure on the bow.

As a result of observing a tremor in Ysaÿe's bowing later in life, Carl Flesch criticized Ysaÿe's bow hold.

According to my close observation, the fundamental technical cause in Ysaÿe's case was that he did not use the little finger of his right hand at the nut where he grasped the bow only with the three fingers and with an iron-tight grip.25

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24A. Bachmann, Encyclopedia, p. 185.

25Flesch, Memoirs, p. 81.
Contributions to left hand technique include the use of five and six note chords. The notes of the chord are to be played as simultaneously as possible. Ysaïe uses this device in his solo sonatas, as seen in the following figure.

![Musical notation]

Figure 3. Sonata No. 3, Lento molto sostenuto.

Although several different accounts exist, most sources give credit to Ysaïe as the first to employ a consistent vibrato which varied for expressive means. He used the technique of beginning a long note without vibrato then gradually intensifying it.

Ysaïe was a large man, standing 6'5". His use of unique fingerings has been attributed to his large hand. Primrose relates that Ysaïe did not think in positions but regarded the entire fingerboard as a single unit. "For Ysaïe, shifting was a means of bringing out the expressive qualities of the music rather than just a method of moving the hand from one place to another."\(^\text{26}\) As a result, Ysaïe was one of the originators of the modern concept of extension.

fingering. Ysaïe is said to be the last world-famous performer to use pure gut strings on all but the G.\textsuperscript{27}

**Ysaïe's Career As A Composer**

Eugène Ysaïe is important in the history of music for several reasons. As well as paving the way to the present style through his playing and teaching, he brought contemporary music to the attention of his colleagues and audiences through concerts he organized or helped to organize, as well as through his many solo and quartet performances.

The most important series of concerts organized under his influence were named the Ysaïe Concerts and the Twenty Club Concerts in Brussels. Ysaïe strongly felt that the artist should take the responsibility of promoting new music. He stated:

> One of the most profound joys of the interpretative artist is to devote his talent to spreading the knowledge of works which are new and possibly quite unknown. It is in submitting such works to the judgment of the public, with a total disregard for personal success, that the interpretative artist performs his highest duty.\textsuperscript{28}

One of the many works that Ysaïe brought to fame was the *Sonata in A Major* for Violin and Piano by Cesar Franck. The Sonata is dedicated to Ysaïe and was presented to him on his wedding day. Ysaïe's frequent performances of this


\textsuperscript{28}A. Ysaïe, *Ysaïe*, p. 159.
work brought fame to Franck, who was nearly sixty years old before he was widely known. One of the first performances of the Franck Quartet was given by the Ysaÿe Quartet in Belgium.

Vincent D'Indy dedicated his Quartet No. 1 and Istar Variations for Orchestra to Ysaÿe. In later years, Ysaÿe arranged for D'Indy to be guest conductor of the Cincinatti Symphony.

An important composer that studied with Franck and was influenced by Ysaÿe was Ernest Chausson. Chausson's Concert for Piano, Violin and String Quartet was first performed at the Twenty Club in 1892 and is dedicated to Ysaÿe. For years Chausson had been promising Ysaÿe to write a work for violin and orchestra. After hearing Ysaÿe's Poème Élégiaque, which is credited as being the first poem written for violin, Chausson composed the famous Poème. He dedicated it to Ysaÿe, who played the first public performance of the work in Nancy, France, at the Conservatory with Guy Ropartz conducting.

The Chausson Poème, as well as many other works, became part of the standard repertoire due to Ysaÿe's constant promotion, often in the face of criticism. For instance, Ysaÿe replied to a program request for only established works—that he would play Bach or Beethoven only on the condition that Chausson's Poème be included.
Debussy, another student of Franck, was introduced to Ysaïe in Paris about 1885. Debussy dedicated his only quartet to Ysaïe Quartet, who gave the first performance in Paris in 1893. Initially the music was foreign to the members of the quartet and continuation of rehearsals took considerable encouragement by Ysaïe. He persisted and finally the members of the quartet began to like the work. Despite public criticism, the Ysaïe Quartet performed the work frequently.

Ysaïe continually asked Fauré for works to perform. His Quintet was premiered in Brussels in 1905 by the Ysaïe Quartet. Other works which Ysaye helped to popularize were the Berceuse for violin and piano, the Second Piano Quartet, Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano, and the Requiem.

A sonata that was frequently played by Ysaïe was the Sonata in G Minor by the Belgian composer, Guillaume Lekeu. The work was commissioned by Ysaïe. It contains an interpolation of a Walloon folksong, the native language of both men.

Sonata No. 1 and the Symphony No. 2 by Guy Ropartz are both dedicated to Ysaïe. Guy Ropartz summarized the importance of Ysaïe's influence with the following statement:

It is impossible to say how many composers turned to chamber music owing to the certainty which they had that their works would be ideally executed by him (Ysaïe) and his co-artists. Without him would we have had, for instance, the Poème of Chausson,
the Quartets of D'Indy, or that of Debussy? French music can never be sufficiently grateful to him.²⁹

Not only through performances of new works did Ysaïe influence the musical scene, but he gave many performers opportunities to play in his concerts. Younger composers were influenced by his music. As an example, Ernest Bloch, who was a student of Ysaïe's, was encouraged into composition by him.

Most of Ysaïe's energies were spent touring and performing. He composed intermittently, with more frequency toward the end of his life when he would no longer play in public. He often finished works years after he had started them. In other cases, works that had been germinating for years in his mind, saw their birth quickly. With the exception of a complete opera, all of his works are written for strings. Ysaïe, however, wrote mainly for and through the violin. Josef Gingold revealed his method of composing.

...he would noodle and noodle around until he got a theme that he liked, then he would filigree around it the most fantastic variations, utilizing the entire fingerboard.³⁰

His music is in the Late Romantic style, influenced by

²⁹ A. Ysaïe, Ysaïe, p. 200.
Wagner and Franck. He was progressive by the fact that he used quarter tones in several passages in his solo sonatas, as seen in the figure below (\(X\) = lowered quarter tone).

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V}\text{v}\text{V}
\end{array}
\]

Figure 4. Sonata No. 1, Allegretto foco Scherzoso, measure 44.

Among the unpublished works are ten violin concertos, a violin method and a guide to the solo violin sonatas which was left incomplete and has been lost. His first compositions were six concertos for violin. He played only No. 5 in E Minor in public. He did not consider them worthy of receiving an opus number. Appendix A lists Ysaïe's works which are, or were at one time, published. This list is as it appears in Ysaïe's biography.

It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss all of Ysaïe's compositions, however, a few works bear historical importance. More detailed information is given on Sonata No. 2 since it was performed as part of the lecture recital.

Opus 10, two Mazurkas in G Major and A Minor were his earliest published works and are said to have been inspired by Wieniawski. Opus 12, Poème Élégiaque, is credited as being the first poem written for violin. The
composing of this work marked a new style for Ysaye with emphasis on more freedom of form and a more fluid character. Ysaye spoke of his efforts:

The form of the "Poème" has always attracted me because it affords greater freedom without being tied down by the rules which govern concertos. As for myself, the poem represents a decisive step in the attempt to join musical expression with virtuosity.  

The following works can be classified as poems: Poème Élégiaque, Opus 12; Scène au Rouet, Opus 14; Petite Poème Romantique pour Enfant, Opus 14A; Chant d'Hiver, Opus 15; Méditation for Cello, Opus 17; Extase, Opus 18A, Exil, Opus 22; Amitié, Opus 22; Poème Nocturne, Opus 23.

The Six Sonatas for Violin Solo, Opus 27, were all written in 1924. They are a culmination of Ysaye's many years of experience. Each sonata is dedicated to a different violinist, all of whom were colleagues of Ysaye. Each sonata is intended to exemplify the style of the performer through the music of Ysaye. In the words of Ysaye:

Speaking of methods, one could possibly think of my solo sonatas in that light... everything is there... almost everything I have ever done... including the new harmonies. They had been bubbling in my brain for a long, long time... never complete on paper... there are only six and I could only dedicate them to six violinists... don't let the dedications fool you... they are not portraits of the dedicatees... they are portraits of, if Szigeti were Ysaye, how Szigeti would play. I have bowed and fingered my sonatas as finely and thoroughly as possible... you must follow and look for the hidden treasures in each one...  

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31 Record jacket notes for Ysaye, Extase: Poem No. 5, Opus 18 for violin and orchestra - 1913 (Vigave Culture 10023)

32 M. Pincherle, "Paris Class," p. 15.
Sonata No. 1 in G Minor is dedicated to Joseph Szigeti whose performance of Bach inspired the writing of this work. This sonata in turn gave Ysaÿe the impetus to compose the other five sonatas.

Sonata No. 1 reportedly gave Ysaÿe little trouble in composing—as opposed to the later sonatas. Szigeti, in his book *With Strings Attached*, discusses this work.

His Solo Sonatas... probably are more important as a violinistic testament than as a creative effort that can stand critical evaluation in cold blood. What gives them significance is that they are a repository of the ingredients of the playing style of this incomparable interpreter.

He was well aware of the importance of his intensely individual double-stop chords, and "across the strings sweep" techniques in the history of violin playing...

A glance at some of the pages showed me that here indeed was a work in the making that would permit later generations to reconstruct a style of playing of which inadequate Ysaÿe recordings give us barely a hint.... They were, perhaps a sub-conscious attempt on his part to perpetuate his own elusive playing style.33

The Sonata No. 2 in A Minor is dedicated to Jacques Thibaud. Like Sonata No. 5, it bears programmatic titles to the movements. The Dies Irae chant provides most of the melodic and harmonic material for this work. When confronted with a possible story to this sonata, Ysaÿe said:

Your story is very well conceived, but I thought nothing of the sort. There is the mystery of the musical thought which most of the time is beyond the intellect. Now, the obsession of Bach's theme led me to the "Dies Irae", but in the last analysis

I simply wrote music for and through my violin, while trying to escape from Bach.\textsuperscript{34}

Ysaïe always felt a strong domination by Bach. In his efforts not to sound like an imitation he was almost driven to giving up the whole project. Ysaïe wrote:

The genius of Bach frightens one who would like to compose in the medium of his sonatas and partitas. These works represent a summit and there is never a question of rising above it.... Nevertheless, in spite of their difficulty, more in appearance than reality, the works for solo instrument of J. S. Bach do not constitute an evolution in the instrumental technique.\textsuperscript{35}

Ysaïe found a way to deal with this domination in the Second Sonata. The first movement called "Obsession" is marked "Prelude Poco Vivace". The opening statement, a quote from the beginning of the Prelude of the E Major Partita of Bach, is to be played "sotto voce" at the tip, as if heard from a distance. Immediately Ysaïe's obsession is answered with a passage marked ff (brutalement), as seen in the figure on the following page.


\textsuperscript{35}A. Ysaïe, \textit{Historical Account}, p. 4.
Figure 5. Sonata No. 2, Obsession, measures 1-5.

Other quotes from the Prelude occur in a piano dynamic, always returned by Ysaïe's forceful answer. The funeral hymn "Dies Irae" appears for the first time in the Prelude. This first appearance is shown below.

Figure 6. Sonata No. 2, Obsession, measures 20-21.

The second movement, "Malinconia," (Melancholy) is marked, "Poco Lento" and played with mute. This 6/8 movement is written in two voices almost throughout. The movement can be divided into three sections. The material of each section is an elaboration of the opening phrase, as seen in the figure on the following page.
Poco Lento.
(con Surdino)

Figure 7. Sonata No. 2, Malinconia, measures 1-2.

Dies Irae is stated at the conclusion with the instructions ad lib.

Figure 8. Sonata No. 2, Malinconia, measures 24-25.

The third movement, "Danse des Ombres," (Dance of the Shadows), is marked "Sarabande (lento)." It is a variation movement built on the Dies Irae melody. The initial statement is chordal pizzicato section, which is repeated, arco, as the concluding section. One of the more unusual variations, a Musette with an open g string sounding continuously above a melody played on the d string, is shown below.

Figure 9. Sonata No. 2, Danse Des Ombres, measures 19-21.

The fourth movement, "Les Furies" is marked "Allegro Furioso" and is characterized by extreme contrasts of two
different sections. The first section consists of faste forte double-stop movement as seen in a portion of initial section, shown below.

![Musical notation](image)

**Figure 10. Sonata No. 2, Les Furies, measures 1-13.**

Contrasting sections are chordal arpeggiated statements of the Dies Irae melody often played ponticello, as seen below.

![Musical notation](image)

**Figure 11. Sonata No. 2, Les Furies, measures 41-46.**
The initial section returns at the end followed by a coda consisting of the arpeggiated Dies Irae section.

The Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, is dedicated to Georges Enesco (1881-1955), the famous Rumania violinist. This work is subtitled Ballade and is the most frequently played and recorded sonata. The sonata is built on chromatic motives and is in three large sections played continuously. Ysaÿe spoke of composing this work.

I let myself be drifted with my fantasy. The remembrance of my friendship and admiration for Georges Enesco and the performances we gave together.. . .guided my pen.36

Sonata No. 4 in E Minor is dedicated to Fritz Kreisler and is said to be the most classical in its form. The third movement contains a Kreisler-like imitation of the classics with allusions to Kreisler's Preludium and Allegro.

Sonata No. 5 in G Major is dedicated to Mathieu Crickboom who was Ysaÿe's pupil and second violinist in the Ysaÿe Quartet. This sonata is in two movements with subtitled, "L 'Aurore" (The Dawn) and "Danse Rustique."

The Sonata No. 6 in E Major is dedicated to Manuel Quiroga, a Spanish virtuoso of the day. Quiroga's playing reminded Ysaÿe of Sarasate and it is in this style that the sonata is written. Like the Ballade it is in one movement.

36A. Ysaÿe, Historical Account, p. 11.
Ysaÿe's last complete work was an opera, written at the age of seventy. Peter the Miner was the first opera to have been written in Walloon, Ysaÿe's childhood language. It was produced eight days before his death in 1931.

**Summary**

In 1937 Queen Elizabeth of Belgium, who was Ysaÿe's violin student, established the Eugène Ysaÿe International Competition, now known as the Queen Elizabeth Competition. This is a competition established in Ysaÿe's memory to provide an opportunity for young artists. Established for the perpetuation of his influence and works, is the Eugène Ysaÿe Foundation in Brussels.

The influence of Ysaÿe's career is best summarized by a statement made by Geza de Kresz in 1958 (then professor of violin at the University of Toronto) on the occasion of the centenary celebration of Ysaÿe's birth. He stated that: "There is no violinist in the world today, from Kreisler, Elman, Milstein and Francescatti to Stern or the modern Russians, who does not bear the direct or indirect influence of Ysaÿe."³⁷

Through his career as a concert artist, teacher and composer, Ysaÿe has left a rich and far-reaching legacy.

APPENDIX
## APPENDIX A

The Published Works of Ysaÿe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Publisher</th>
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<td>Two Mazurkas, Op. 10 for Violin and Piano</td>
<td>Schott Freres, Brussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poème Éléégiaque, Op. 12 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
<td>Breitkopf, Leipzig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lointain Passé, Op. 11 for Violin and Piano</td>
<td>Breitkopf, Leipzig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scène au Rouet, Op. 13 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
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<td>Chant d'Hiver, Op. 15 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
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<td>Rêve d'Enfant, Op. 16 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
<td>Enoch, Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Méditation, Op. 16 for Cello and Orchestra</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trio de Concert, Op. 19 for Two Violins and Viola</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
</tr>
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<td>Berceuse, Op. 20 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extase, Op. 21 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serenade, Op. 22 for Cello and Orchestra</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Les Neiges d'Antan, Op. 23 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divertimento, Op. 24 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exil., Op. 25 for Strings without Basses</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amitié, Op. 26 for Two Violins and Orchestra</td>
<td>A. Ysaÿe, Brussels</td>
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<td>Six Sonatas for Violin Solo, Op. 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. 'G' Minor, dedicated to J. Szigeti</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. 'A' Minor, dedicated to J. Thibaud</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 'E' Minor, dedicated to G. Enesco</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 'D' Minor, dedicated to F. Kreisler</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. 'G' Major, dedicated to M. Crickboom</td>
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<td>6. 'E' Major, dedicated to M. Quiroga</td>
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<td>Sonata, Op. 28 for Cello</td>
<td>A. Ysaïe, Brussels</td>
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<td>Harmonies du Soir, Op. 31 for Quartet</td>
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<td>Fantasie, Op. 32 for Violin and Orchestra</td>
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<td>Caprice d'Apres l'Etude en Forme de Valse de Saint-Saëns</td>
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<td>Paraphrase of a theme of Mendelssohn</td>
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Arrangements Made by Ysaÿe

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2. Chopin Eight Waltzes A. Ysaÿe, Brussels
3. Handel Aria A. Ysaÿe, Brussels
4. Bach Aria A. Ysaÿe, Brussels
5. Pasquali Sonata in 'A' Minor A. Ysaÿe, Brussels
6. Locatelli Sonata au Tombeau in 'A' A. Ysaÿe, Brussels
7. Bach Inventions A. Ysaÿe, Brussels
8. Vivaldi Concerto in 'G' Minor A. Ysaÿe, Brussels

Works not included in this list are manuscript only.
APPENDIX B

Recordings by Eugene Ysaÿe for the Columbia Gramophone Company, New York

Piano accompaniment by E. de Creus

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<td>2. Albumblatt</td>
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<td>Mendelssohn</td>
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<td>9. Caprice Viennois</td>
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<td>10. Berceuse</td>
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<td>12. Ave Maria</td>
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Record jacket notes for Ysaÿe, Extase: Poem No. 5, Opus 18 for violin and orchestra - 1913 (Vitgave Culture 10023).


