CHAPTER IV

PAGANINI AND THE "PHILOSOPHY OF THE VIOLIN"

Aspects of a musical language

"According to my established custom of calling on Paganini every day, I went to his apartments in the Regent's Quadrant today, and found him seated on that species of throne to which artists are in the habit of exalting their sitters. He was preparing to sit for his bust. His back being turned towards the door, he did not perceive my entrance, till Dr Billing had accosted me by name, when Paganini requested me to be seated and said with a smile, 'Dateci le nuove', 'Give us the news'. I related to him all the news of his success which had been written in the papers of the day. I explained to him how they had spoken of the truth of his intonation, of the rapidity of his thirds, sixths and octaves, and of the brilliancy of those difficult beauties, his double harmonics. 'And', he interposed with a triumphant smile, as if to anticipate what they ought to have been most eloquent upon, 'della filosofia del violino!' (of the philosophy of the violin)."

Paganini frequently made the point that there was a "philosophy of the violin". In his letters to his friend Luigi Guglielmo Germi, one can find recurring allusions to "scientific and philosophical music", "musical philosophy", "musical language", and, most interestingly, to the "suonare parlante" ("the playing that speaks"). In the same vein are his statement that "poetry and music are sisters", his frequent quotations from Homer, Dante and Petrarca, and his views on musical composition:


2"...la musica scientifica e filosofica..." (PE 28), "...la misura a la filosofia musicale..." (PE 63). "...il mio linguaggio musicale..." (PE 148), "...ti darò un'idea del suonare parlante." (PE 148).

3See: Tibaldi-Chiesa, Maria. Paganini, la vita e l'opera, Milan: Garzanti, 1940, frontispiece.

"Composing is not so easy for me as you think. My great rule is 'Varietà e Unità in arte' and that is very hard to reconcile..."5 [rtl. PXB]

"Varietà e Unità in arte" summons up reminiscences of Plato (unity within multiplicity), although some commentators (including Geraldine de Courcy) have suggested that Paganini was quoting verbatim from Anton Reicha’s Komposition-Lehre.6 If this were true, his famous motto "bisogna forte sentire per far sentire" could just as easily have been borrowed from Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach’s "a musician cannot move others unless he himself is moved".7 However, these ideas existed well before Reicha or Bach. They derived from the classical Greek theories on music as passed on by Boethius and Cassiodorus. There are indications that Paganini, who learned the principles of composition from teachers attached to the old Italian tradition, further deepened his knowledge by studying textbooks on ancient Greek music.8 Another source may well have been St Augustine’s De musica, a treatise much concerned with the ars poetica, which, according to early tradition, was inseparable from music. Be that as it may, it was through serious study and patient research that Paganini arrived at his philosophy of the violin:

"One can only thoroughly acquire one science. I have devoted my entire life to my violin and to the theory of music..."9 [rtl. PXB]

8 PE 64
"It was his deep knowledge and understanding of all questions pertaining to violin playing which brought Paganini imperishable fame", writes Jutta Stüber.10 According to this German researcher, Paganini pursued the study of the violin not merely as a practical manual craft, but as a subject of rational investigation. He conducted his research with true Pythagorean scholarship, i.e. exploring systematically the physical and acoustic properties of the vibrating string:11

"My secret, if I can call it such, should give the violinists a better insight into the nature of the instrument than has been the case so far. It appears far richer than it is commonly supposed. I owe that discovery not to chance, but to serious study."12 [int. FX3]

Paganini at times explored areas beyond what could be defined as "legitimate" violin playing. However, in many cases, his experiments found a striking practical application in his music.13 As with all original


11 Paganini often referred to his favourite violin (a Guamerius del Gesù made in 1742) as "Le Canon", an allusion to the "Pythagorean canon" or monochord, an instrument said to have been recommended by Pythagoras, on his deathbed, as the "musical investigator, the criterion of truth": "(διό καὶ Πυθαγόρης φασὶ τὴν ἐν οἷς ἀναλατήριον ποιούμενον μονοχόρδου τοῖς ἔταιροῖς παραδότα δηλούντα ὡς τὴν ἀκρότητά τιν ἐν μουσικῇ νοητῷ μᾶλλον δι’ ἀριθμοὺς δὲ αἰσθητῶς δὲ ἀκοής ἀναλατήτων." "Hence they say that Pythagoras, taking his departure from here, advised his companions to play the monochord, making clear that sublimity in music must be apprehended mentally by numbers rather than perceptibly through hearing." Aristides Quintilianus. *De Musica* 3.2.6, ed. by R.P. Winnington-Ingram, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, p. 97 [int. P. Davis]


13 Paganini is reported to have played magnificently upon his violin with an ordinary reed (or rush) in a concert made at Verona in 1817. The impression made on the public and in particular on the composer Vaildabriini who had challenged him to play a new and very difficult concerto, was understandably considerable. The violin maker Ed. Heron-Allen (Violin-Making, London 1885, p.86-87) reported the observation of J.M. Fleming that bows without hair, such as that used by Paganini at Verona, were familiar to ancient Greeks as well as to Romans. The misconception that Greeks and Romans did not have bow instruments
thinkers, Paganini offers evidence of a capacity not only to acquire, absorb, and assimilate knowledge, but also to use that knowledge as a point of departure, a necessary stepping stone to discovery. Whilst respectful of earlier achievements, he was relentless in his consideration of what might be possible. In the present chapter, some aspects of Paganini's compositional and performing styles will be examined, with special consideration given to instrumental techniques which are not employed in the Caprices. It is hoped that this might contribute to a clearer understanding of Paganini's global artistic approach. However, this is in no sense intended to be an exhaustive list of Paganini's formidable musical vocabulary for, as Hector Berlioz observed:

"It would take a volume to enumerate all the new effects that Paganini has found in his works, the ingenious devices, the grand and noble forms, the orchestral combinations never before him employed or dreamed of..."\(^{14}\)

Furthermore, before attempting the delicate task of examining "single stones of the great mosaic of masterpieces",\(^ {15}\) I should like to observe that, in Paganini, the most arduous technical problems never seem to be superimposed on the overall musical structure, but rather seem to arise naturally as an integral part of the whole, using the resources of an instrument "far richer than it is commonly assumed" (Paganini's words).


\(^{15}\)Sevcik's phrase (*Concert Studies* op. 17-21, Brno: Pazdirek, 1929, preface).
1. The *suonare parlante*

*Paganini to Germi, August 30, 1830*


"When I see you again", writes Paganini to Luigi Guglielmo Germi, "I shall give you an idea of the *playing that speaks.*" In instrumental music, "parlante"17, "parlando"18 or "quasi parlando" are performance directions accommodating greater freedom in rendering than the much more frequent *canto* or *cantabile*. While in vocal music such indications simply mean that the voice should approximate speech, the instrumental *parlante* offers greater interpretative challenge. It implies a certain quality of tempo fluctuation or *rubato* as well as a special prosodic inflexion which is indicated by the articulation sign – placed over single notes, or by a slur together with staccato dots over a group of notes:

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16 What do you say to all that? It is very difficult to find a woman as loving as Elena. It is true that when they hear the language of my music, the oscillation of my notes makes them all weep: but I am not young any more, no longer handsome. On the contrary, I’ve grown very ugly. Think it over and tell me what you really think. She reasons like she writes; her speech, her voice are suggestive. She knows geography like I know the violin. Before I forget, greet my mother tenderly for me and always keep on etc. etc. As regards that fool of a brother of mine, greet him too etc. etc. as above in the way you believe. How are you treating the violin? When we see each other again, I shall give you an idea of the playing that speaks. What is Dellepiane doing? Has he recovered? Write to me at Frankfurt. Addio. Paganini."

(PE148) [tr. PXB]

17 *parlante* (it. speaking, present participle of *parlare*)
18 *parlando* (it. speaking, gerund of *parlare*)
In a few instances, the indication *parlante* or *parlando* has been used for an entire movement. Thus, Beethoven's 6th *Bagatelle* op.33, is headed *Allegretto quasi andante, con una certa espressione parlante*. Similarly, the indication *basso parlante* appears at the beginning of the second of Schumann's *Abegg Variations*. Sometimes, the composer provides a literary text in addition to the articulation marks. In Liszt's *Dante-Symphony*, passages from the *Divine Comedy* are quoted to provide a clue to the underlying musical intention:

![Musical notation](image)

While poetic texts complementing (and perhaps illustrating) the music abound in Tartini's manuscripts, they were not included in the printed editions. There, the composer cryptically transcribed verses from Metastasio and Tasso for his own personal use. Tartini's concept of the *suonare parlante* was to transfer, as it were, a poetical idea in his interpretations, thereby infusing his playing with a twofold power/an extra layer/ of expression. Here are the opening bars of the second movement of the 56th Concerto with the motto "*Bagna le piume in Lete, o placido placido sonno, e me le spargi in volto, e me le spargi in sen*":

![Musical notation](image)

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19 Tartini's cryptograms have been deciphered for the first time by the violinist and music researcher Minos Dounias (>Kuhlenkampf) in 1935.

20 See chapter II, Albi Rosenthal's "intriguing copy" of the Caprices.
Tartini's views were shared by Corelli's disciple, Francesco Geminiani, who recommended the reading of a great literary work as a means to achieve a truly inspired musical performance:

"...Emotions are indeed most easily excited when accompany'd with Words; I would besides advise, as well the Composer as the Performer, who is ambitious to inspire his Audience, to be first inspired himself; which he cannot fail to be if he chuses a Work of Genius, if he makes himself thoroughly acquainted with all its Beauties; and if while his Imagination is warm and glowing he pours the same exalted Spirit into his own performance." 21

A correlation between words and music, much in the sense of Tartini and Geminiani, appears in Paganini's works based on operatic themes:

Similarly, the second movement of the *Concerto N°1*, known as the "Prison Scene", was inspired by a dramatic scene recited by Giuseppe De Marini. 22 From a prison cell, the great actor implored Providence to put an end to his suffering by relieving him of the burden of life:

"Paganini had retired to bed, still overwhelmed by the emotions [the great actor had roused]; he could not sleep, and despairing of finding rest, he rose and found on his violin expressions which allowed him to pour out the burning intensity of his feeling." 23  

22 De Marini, Giuseppe (1772-1829). Famous Italian actor who achieved great success both in dramatic and in comic roles.
23 "Paganini se mit au lit encore sous le coup des émotions qu'il venait d' éprouver; il lui fut impossible de se livrer au sommeil: désespérant de goûter le repos, il se lève et trouve sur son violon des expressions qui lui servent à épancher toute cette sensibilité qui lui brûlait son âme...", Imbert de Laphalèque, G. *Notice sur le célèbre violoniste Nicolo Paganini*. Paris: E. Guyot, 1830, p.27
The dramatic climax of the piece is reached in the concluding bars. Of great interest is the indication *tremolando*, i.e. a trembling of the voice as when overwhelmed by emotion (not a bow tremolo):

Far more than an occasional effect, the *parlante* was a striking, ever-present characteristic of Paganini's interpretative style. The uncommon power of suggestion of his playing and the articulatory quality of his expression were frequently acknowledged by listeners as well as by music critics:

*Rahel Varnhagen von Ense to her husband, March 7, 1829*

"I heard Paganini on Wednesday...He really doesn't play the violin - he does not have the tone (or tones) of Rode, of Durand, of Haack, of Giornovichi - *he actually talks*; he whimpers, imitates a thunderstorm, the stillness of night, birds that descend from heaven but do not soar towards heaven - in short this is poetry. In the prayer from Rossini's Moise, he plays the different voices as they enter one after the other and then all together I swear to you that again and again I was forced to repeat the words of the harpist -"*Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß*" - to shudder, to weep. It was the very embodiment of the poem."^26[tr. de Courcy]"

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^24Paganini's special notation with the treble clef in mirror image indicates that the written notes do not correspond to the real pitch (in the *1st Concerto*, the violin must be tuned to F-B flat-E flat and A flat).

^25"He, who has never tasted tears with his bread" (Goethe's *Lied des Harfners*) [my note].

^26Quoted by G. de Courcy, op. cit., vol.I, p.316. Rahel Varnhagen née Levin (1771-1833) an significant and influential figure in Berlin literary circles, she presided over a famous literary salon which became the meeting place of the young Romantics. Her husband was the poet and writer Carl August Varnhagen.
Even Heinrich Friedrich Rellstab\textsuperscript{27}, the leading Berlin music critic of the
time, a man of experience and high standing in the world of music, departed
from his usual moderation and severity:

"...The audience was in a state of exaltation the like of which I have seldom witnessed in a
theater, and never in a concert hall...He spoke, he wept, he sang! I have never seen the
Berliners in such a state! And this was the effect of a simple melody"\textsuperscript{28} [tri. de Courcy]

Attentive to problems of enunciation and prosody, Paganini was highly
critical of singers who did not pronounce clearly.\textsuperscript{29} In the ideal figure of
adequation, the two aspects of song (the power of words to move the listener
and the more mysterious power of the harmony of the tones) are equally
present. Paganini developed special instrumental techniques (e.g.
combination of timbres, extra-musical sounds, employment of the unison)
to imitate the human voice to the very accents of speech.\textsuperscript{30} He was even
credited with the ability to convey the sound of words and names with his
bow. This has been reported by several biographers including Lilian Day:

"To accomplish the impossible was becoming a habit with Paganini, who was gaining a
reputation as an apostle of the spectacular. He took an impish delight in amazing his friends
and confounding his enemies. The breaking of strings in full view of the audience was the
least of his artifices. One night at the close of a concert in Genoa he said 'Buona sera' so
unmistakably on the strings that the whole audience replied, 'Buona sera'.\textsuperscript{31}

This was no doubt achieved through a skilful manipulation of timbre, pitch
and articulation, involving advanced bow and left-hand techniques.\textsuperscript{32} One

\textsuperscript{27}Rellstab, Friedrich Heinrich (1799-1860), critic at the \textit{Vossische Zeitung}.
\textsuperscript{29}PE 4, PE 63.
\textsuperscript{30}On ne se figure pas combien il a augmenté et perfectionné les procédés techniques pour se rapprocher de la
voix humaine.. On sait, par exemple, que pour parvenir à une expression de douleur, on prend simultanément la
même note sur deux cordes différentes (l'unison); jusqu'alors ce n'avait été qu'une indication isolée, qu'un accent
transitoire; Paganini, avec des sons de cette nature, est parvenu à former des phrases entières de chant, dont
l'effet, tant il est doux, pénétrant et pathétique, rappelle ces belles voix de femmes dans lesquelles on dit qu'il y
a des larmes" Imbert de Laphalèque, G. \textit{Notice sur le célèbre violoniste Nicolo Paganini}, Paris E.
Guyot,1830, p.17.
\textsuperscript{31}Lillian Day, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{32}An approximation of the phenomenon of voice production and specifically of speech on
can find an interesting parallel in literature (especially poetry) where attempts were often made to imitate the production of music by proper arrangement of rhythm, stress, timbre, and pitch. Outstanding among these attempts is the first stanza of Paul Verlaine's *Chanson d'automne*, which imitates the violin:


String instruments could be approached in the following manner. One could first arrange the vowel sounds into a spectrum. In a second stage, through systematic exploration of the different tone colours available on the violin, one would come up with a range of timbres which could then be re-arranged into the reference spectrum as closely as possible. Consonants would be treated in a similar way, but through experimentation with articulation as opposed to timbres (DfH). See also: Chailley, Jacques, "Expériences de Corrélation entre Musique et Parole", *Bulletin du GAM*, N° 19, April 1966.


2. Harmonics

Pre-Paganinian practices

Although natural and artificial harmonics\(^{35}\) were known long before Paganini, their acceptance into the violinists' technical vocabulary was slow to materialise. Some instructions concerning their employment were given by L'Abbé le fils in his *Principes du violon* of 1761,\(^{36}\) and, in 1791, Francesco Galeazzi devoted a chapter to the subject in the first volume of his monumental *Elementi Teorico-Pratici di Musica*.\(^{37}\) His detailed and painstaking exposition is a fair gauge of the knowledge of the time. As regards artificial harmonics, Galeazzi's system of notation resembles that of L'Abbé le fils, but without the advantage of the rhomboidal note. He uses a round white note for the stopping finger (or "artificial nut") and a black one for the finger(s) resting on the nodal point(s):\(^{38}\)

![Galeazzi notation](https://example.com/galeazzi_notation.png)

One of Galeazzi's most interesting examples comprises double harmonics in two different combinations (two artificial, or one natural and the other artificial). However, since he apparently did not know of the possibility of using rhomboidal notes, he had some problems with the notation of double

\(^{35}\)In violin playing, an artificial harmonic is the sound produced by pressing (shortening) the string with the lower finger and, at the same time, lightly touching the vibrating part of the string with another. The stopping finger defines the fundamental note while the other, placed at an exactly determined distance ( aliquot division), create the "harmonic" effect. The divisions of the string commonly used are 1/3, 1/4, and 1/5.

\(^{36}\)pp. 72-73, "Des sons harmoniques"


\(^{38}\)However, Galeazzi white notes are round, as the ordinary ones, which is a source of ambiguity. L'Abbé le fils, with his square notes, and later authors with rhomboids, found an elegant solution to this particular notation problem.
harmonics and had to complement his musical example with an explanatory note:

Paganini's expertise in the field went far beyond that of any of his predecessors, including Galeazzi. Not only did he extend existing techniques to the limit of their potential, but he also employed some for which there is no earlier record. Among these innovations one can mention:

- artificial harmonics in double stopping involving all four fingers simultaneously (Galeazzi employed at the most three at a time)
- the combination of harmonics and ordinary stopped notes
- trills in harmonics
- other harmonic phenomena such as secondary harmonics, pseudo-harmonic effects, etc.

In his compositions, Paganini never gave any details concerning the manner of execution, merely writing "Armonici" or "Flagioletto" over the corresponding passage. The choice of the fingering was left entirely to the discretion of the performer. However there survives a scale in double harmonics fully explicated and carefully fingered which Paganini sent as a present to his friend and lawyer Luigi Guglielmo Germi:

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39"(Es.5) Quest' esempio è nel suo genere singolarissimo, e vi vorrà qualche industria per interpretarlo, ed eseguirlo; per aiutare però il curioso, diremo, che quantunque nelle scale già date per le note artificiali, abbiamo segnate in note bianche le dita fisse, e queste poi non si segnano nelle composizioni; le note dunque, che segnate trovasi in quest'ultimo esempio, sono le sole Armoniche e però si sottintendono le dita fisse; da ciò si vede che sono effettivamente quasi tutte corde doppie; Si avverte ancora che le dette corde doppie, non sono sempre tutte e due artificiali, ma spesso una è naturale, e l'altra artificiale. Vi sono due forzature di quarto dito alla quarta, ed ottava battuta della seconda parte. Con queste cognizioni sarà più facile allo studioso il comprendere quest'esempio." (op.cit., p. 176-77).

Of extraordinary interest is the last bar, for which Paganini provides the following comment:

"As for the four not very obedient harmonics marked ☐, one must rest the finger with some degree of pressure but they are not necessary."[41] [ibid. PXB]

This is a truly remarkable example which implies the rare - indeed unique - combination of natural, artificial, and what I shall call secondary harmonics,

[41] "Li poco ubbidenti quattro Armonici qui sopra fatti ☐ deesi appoggiare il dito con qualche grado di soppressione ma non sono necessarj." (ibid.).
i.e. harmonics such as the "not very obedient" ones described by Paganini. They have been variously labelled "pseudo harmonics" (Targonski),42 "secondary artificial harmonics" (Garbuzov)43 and "sticking harmonics" (Paynton).44 As stated by Paganini, slightly more pressure must be applied on the string than is necessary with ordinary harmonics. In his Principles of Violin Fingering of 1967, Israil Markovitch Yampolski gave an example of their application in rapid diatonic succession, as an alternative solution to traditional fingerings:

The emergence of a new genre of music treatise, the Flageolett-Schulen, or special methods devoted to the study of harmonics, bore testimony to the tremendous impact of Paganini's novel and imaginative use of harmonics. The best known was Carl Guhr's Ueber Paganinis Kunst, die Violine zu spielen, an ambitious, well-documented (although not exhaustive) survey of harmonic effects as used by Paganini. The great value of this work is that it constitutes a first-hand source of information. Guhr's informative account derived from direct observation.45 The same can be said of the treatise of Niccolò De Giovanni, a pupil of the late Giacomo Costa, who also benefited from Paganini's personal advice. De Giovanni's unpublished work46 (presumably written for his own students), contains several

42 Targonski, Ivan B. The Harmonics of String Instruments, Moscow, 1936, pp.24-25
43 Garbuzov, Nikolai A. ibid., p.5 (introduction)
44 Paynton, Leonard R. Contrabass Harmonic Potential, PhD diss. University of California, 1988, Ch. II.
45 See supra survey of pertinent literature
46 De Giovanni Niccolo. Metodo teorico-pratico per ben fare sul Violino gli Armonici semplici, trillati e doppio, Genoa, c.1830 [ms. in the possession of the Conservatorio Niccolò Paganini of Genoa]
examples which come directly from Paganini. Of special interest is the notation of the trill in harmonics:

Here is Paganini’s method of playing tenths without finger extension:

As observed by Fétis, Speyer, Kestner and others, Paganini did not use harmonics only for isolated effects. They were an integral part of his musical language and he constantly introduced them in his own music as well as in that of other composers to create variety of tone colour:

Wilhelm Speyer to Ludwig Spohr, 17 September 1829
"The performance of the Beethoven Sonata op.24 was extremely interesting. Just to tell you the most memorable part of it: Imagine! After the repetition of the first section of the rondo, he played the theme in artificial harmonics!" 47 [tr. PXB]

As regards Paganini’s 24 Caprices, there exist firmly rooted performing traditions (i.e. the addition of harmonics in the Caprice 9) which may well go back to people who heard Paganini play. In the light of Speyer’s observation concerning the special treatment of the Rondo theme in Beethoven Spring Sonata, the inclusion of harmonics in the Caprices would seem to be a legitimate interpretative option.

The "marine trumpet" effect

It is well-known that the range of natural harmonics available on the violin is more limited than on larger string instruments such as the 'cello, the double-bass and, indeed, the marine trumpet. In fact, even on the more responsive fourth string, the violin range does not extend much beyond the 6th partial. Now, in the Napoleon Sonata for the G string, Paganini ascends right to partial 12:

In an article published in the first edition of the Grove's Dictionary of Music & Musicians, Edward J. Payne provided evidence that Paganini had found a method to increase the responsiveness of the string in playing harmonics:

"Paganini's extraordinary effects in harmonics on a single string were in fact produced by temporarily converting his violin to a small marine trumpet. As is well known, that clever player placed his single fourth string on the treble side of the bridge screwing it up to a very high pitch, and leaving the bass foot of the bridge comparatively loose. He thus produced a powerful reedy tone, and obtained unlimited command over the harmonics."48

The technique of the trumpet marine, a bowed instrument equipped with a vibrating bridge, primarily involved harmonics. When properly adjusted, the bridge produced a brassy tone not unlike that of a muted trumpet, but with enormous carrying power. On such an instrument, experienced players could produce all the pitches of the harmonic series through to the 16th partial. The same principle can be applied to the violin.49 We know that during his stay at Lucca, Paganini studied and played other stringed

instruments besides the violin, and that he taught the 'cello and even the double bass. It was at that time that, having perfected his technique of *monocordo* playing, he wrote his *Napoleon Sonata* which he played on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday (25 August 1807). He passed on his knowledge, and therewith the skill, to his pupil Camillo Sivori who is reported to have employed the "marine trumpet" method for the performance of the *Prayer of Moses*.  

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51 "Dans la *Prière de Moïse*, la plus célèbre, Paganini montait le Sol à côté de la chanterelle, au lieu de la corde de La, imité en cela par son élève, Camillo Sivori." ["In the famous *Prayer of Moses*, Paganini moved the G string next to the E, in the place of the A. This was copied by his pupil, Camillo Sivori"] de Saussine, Renée, *Paganini le Magicien*. Genève: Le Milieu du Monde, 1950, p.179.
3. Chromaticism

The full import of Liszt's famous letter to Pierre Wolff (already quoted in Chapter I, p.31) only appears in the light of its allied musical illustrations. Here is the relevant excerpt:\footnote{La Mara (ed.) Franz Liszts Briefe, Leipzig, 1893-1905, vol.I, p.7. (autograph letter formerly in the possession of Mr Calmann-Lévy, Paris) The musical examples were reproduced in: Bachmann, Alberto, "Niccolò Paganini", Bulletin Français de la S.I.M, p.5.}

"...And I too am a painter!« exclaimed Michelangelo the first time he saw a masterpiece. Though insignificant and poor, your friend keeps on repeating the words of the great man ever since Paganini's last concert. René, what a man, what a violinist, what an artist! Heavens! What suffering and misery, what tortures in those four strings!" Look! Here are some of his passages:

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\begin{align*}
\text{(Liszt to Wolff, ex.1)} \\
\text{(Liszt to Wolff, ex.2)} \\
\text{(Liszt to Wolff, ex.3)} \\
\text{(Liszt to Wolff, ex.4)}
\end{align*}
\]
Consecutive diminished sevenths (ex.1); four-part chordal progression with one or more voices forming a chromatic scale (ex.2); descending chromatic scale in broken sixths (ex.3); *prestissimo* triplets swirling down chromatically (ex.4); interlocked whole scales formed by a succession of diminished sevenths in reciprocating arpeggios (ex.5).² All this was adopted by Liszt and appeared in his works, as Federico Mompellio observed, "amplified and magnified through the possibilities of the keyboard".³ Liszt's appreciation of the far-reaching implications of these complicated and seemingly barren formulas is evident in some of his late compositions, where temporary suspension of tonal direction is achieved through the abundant use of diminished sevenths chords in chromatic succession. One could say that Paganini's chromaticism was, in almost a literal sense, a "science of colours". Liszt's elated reference to Michelangelo's "e anch'io sono pittore!" was, in this respect, quite revealing. Music critics too, in an attempt at capturing in words the effect of Paganini's music, often found parallels in pictorial art:

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³...tutto quanto insomma ritroveremo nella produzione lisztiana ampliato e magnificato attraverso le possibilità della tastiera." (Conestabile, Gian Carlo, *Vita di Niccolò Paganini*, ed. by F.Mompellio, Milan: Dante Alighieri, 1936,p.76-77, footnote 1).
"...In the second part 'on the G string only', he blended, as it were, voices and tones in much the same way as Raphael and Michelangelo fused light and colour on the canvas. It is impossible to express the surprise, the joy, the ecstasy with which the spectators in the most profound silence drank in his harmonies...All things considered, Paganini is a prodigy and whether he is an angel or the devil, he is certainly the genius of music." [tr. PXB]

For Paganini, scales, and in particular chromatic scales, were not merely a form of exercise. On the contrary: he loved their gleaming effect and used them in many of his works including his Caprices, his variations, his works for guitar, and his concertos. Their sound obviously enchanted him, and in several instances, he deliberately suspended the orchestral accompaniment in order to emphasise their effect (e.g. in the Concerto No. 1, 1st mvt., 1st solo, bar 42). There exist several autograph documents, in the form of album-leaves, which bear witness to Paganini's preoccupation with the chromatic scale. Here, for example, is a common, four-octave chromatic scale, entitled simply - but significantly - "Scala di Paganini":

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4° Egli nella seconda parte 'colla sola quarta corda' fuse, per cosi dire, le voci e i tuoni come Rafaello e Michelangelo hanno fuso sulle tele la luce e i colori. Non è possibile esprimere la sorpresa, la gioia, quella specie di estasi con cui nel più profondo silenzio, gli spettatori ne bevevano l'armonia...Paganini è insomma un prodigio e sia un angelo, sia un diavolo, è certamente il genio della musica." (Gazzetta di Genova, 10 October 1814, quoted in: Neill, Edward, Il Cavaliere armonico, p. 58).

5° The location of the manuscript is unknown. My transcript was is on the facsimile published in the auction catalogue N°LXXXVII, Autographen versteigerung, 19-20 February 1907, Leipzig: C.G. Boerner Buchantiquariat, p. 80.
The next example is a diplomatic transcript of a remarkable document in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden. It is a chromatic scale for piano, harmonised in contrary motion, that Paganini wrote in Clara Wieck’s album of autographs, as a gesture of affection and a mark of admiration for her young talent:

In the same vein are the *Gamme chromatique et contraire* (Paris 1837), the *Scala obliqua e contraria per Chitarra* (Prague 1829), and the astonishing *Largo con forte espression. e sempre crescendo*, dedicated to the sculptor Jean-Pierre Dantan (Paris 1837):

Scala obliqua e contraria per Chitarra

N. Paganini

[Prague, Ceské Hudby Museum] (dpl. tr. by PXB)  Si Ritroceda

7 Album of the Prince Wielhorski.
8 Manuscript rep. in: *Gitarristische Vereinigung* 13 (1912), p.4.
These documents consolidate the suggestion that Paganini, the thinker and philosopher of music, recognised the chromatic scale as an autonomous entity, much in the same sense as the Abbé Vogler, for example, who regarded it as a kind of “master scale” containing all the tonalities.

---

10 The musical lineage of the Abbé Vogler, Paganini and Liszt (and one could add Rossini) goes back to the great eighteenth century music scholar Giambattista Martini (Padre Martini): Abbé Vogler (>Padre Martini and Vallotti); Paganini (>Paer >Fortunat; Paer >Fortunati >Padre Martini); Liszt (>Paer >Fortunat; Paer >Fortunati >Padre Martini); Rossini (>Mattei >Padre Martini).
4. Chordal Playing

Double sounds

Paganini's technique of "double sounds" included a wide variety of intervals ranging from the unison (which he embellished with a double trill as in Caprice 3) to the twenty-ninth, i.e. a span of four octaves, as shown in the Gamme chromatique et contraire:

Such intervals, which the largest hand could never embrace, he mastered, according to Fétis, by means of a combination of ordinary sounds and harmonics.¹ He had a special liking for this technique (known as "mixed harmonics"), and used it not only for facility and intonation, but also for variety of tone colour. Carl Guhr has given evidence that he employed mixed harmonics in passages written modo ordinario. Here are the opening bars of the ninth variation of the Carnevale di Venezia:

And here is, according to Guhr, Paganini's manner of execution:

Paganini rarely gave technical directions such as fingerings, bowings, etc. In true Italian style, his reading of his own music, as well as of the music of others was more "philosophical" than philological. Thus, even such a

simple and generally accepted term as "double stopping" should be used with caution in reference to Paganini's playing. The expression "double sounds" would seem more appropriate to describe such intervals as thirds, fifths, sixths, octaves, tenths, and others, which he played in many different combinations of open strings, stopped notes, natural harmonics, artificial harmonics, and secondary artificial harmonics.

**Multiple sounds**

Triple and quadruple sounds occur in great profusion in Paganini's compositions. More significant for the purpose of this investigation, however, are examples such as the Largo, con forte espressione e sempre crescendo where he extends the notion of chordal playing to the stacking of up to twelve notes:

![Musical notation](image)

This idea was taken up by Eugène Ysaïe in his 6 Sonates pour Violon Seul of 1927:
There exist several short compositions in the form of "album leaves" which Paganini dedicated to various personalities of the time including Clara Wieck,\(^2\) the sculptor Jean-Pierre Dantan,\(^3\) the Baroness d'Eskeles, the senator Giovanni Treccani degli Alfieri, the Prince Wielhorski,\(^4\) Onorio de Vito, Alfred de Beauchesne, Carl Czerny, Dr Archibald Billing, Ferdinand Baake, and Eduard Eliasom (the leader of the London Philharmonic). These musical souvenirs, apart from their historical and biographical value, cast light on some of Paganini's technical and musical preoccupations. Of considerable interest is the *Capriccio per Violino Solo* [M.S. 54] which Paganini wrote in Vienna for Maurice Dietrichstein.\(^5\) On that occasion, Paganini took up the challenge of writing a four-voice chorale for the violin, which he notated in "open-score" - each stave representing a string of the violin:

\(^2\) Chromatic Scale for piano harmonised in contrary motion (see supra); Preludio per Violino (see infra)
\(^3\) Largo, con forte espressione, e sempre crescendo. (see supra)
\(^4\) Gamme chromatique et contraire. (see supra)
\(^5\) Dietrichstein, Maurice (Count) (1775-1864). Remembered chiefly as General Mack's aide-de-camp, and as the tutor of Napoleon's son (1815-1831), Dietrichstein was also a talented musician and composer, and the father of Sigismond Thalberg (see Chapter I). A pivotal figure in Viennese cultural circles, he was known as the "music Count". His generosity towards young artists was legendary and he kept his house open to poets and musicians. Among his frequent guests were Müller, Beethoven and Schubert (who dedicated *Der Ernährung* to him). Dietrichstein helped Paganini with the organisation of the Vienna concerts of 1828. As a mark of gratitude, Paganini contributed to Dietrichstein's famous collection of autographs with the *Capriccio per Violino Solo*. 

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Sostenuto playing on four and five strings
This is, to my knowledge, the only example of notation on four staves in the whole solo violin literature. However, in the baroque era, it was common practice to write violin music on two staves, especially when the composition involved scordatura:

\[
\text{(The Crucifixion)} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{H. von Biber (Mysteries of the Rosary)} \\
\text{Praeludium}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\text{Largo} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{P. Nardini (Sonate Énigmatique)} \\
\text{(ed. by PXB)}
\end{array}
\]

Paganini, followed by Ernst, also employed the notation on two staves:

\[
\text{Allegro molto} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{pizz.} \\
\text{arco}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\text{Paganini, Duo Merveille}
\]

\[6\] The manuscript autograph of the Capriccio per Violino Solo is in the possession of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (call no Biblioteca Palatina Vindobonensis, HS 18718). The theme is similar to that of Schubert's Trauerwalzer:

\[
\text{Trauerwalzer} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{F. Schubert, op. 9 (D 365)} \\
\text{(ed.by PXB)}
\end{array}
\]
As shown in the above examples, it was primarily out of concern for clarity and facility of reading that the notation on two staves was adopted, especially in the case of complex polyphonic passages. This, however, is not true of the Capriccio per Violino Solo, which, written as it is on four staves, is virtually impossible to sight-read. Paganini's "scoring" seems to respond more to philosophical considerations than to practical needs. Furthermore, it seems to present an insurmountable problem of execution: *sostenuto* playing on four strings is not possible with an ordinary bow, especially if one intends to respect the indications *dolce* and *piano*. Even the high-arched Schroeder bow (or "Vega-Bach-Bogen") does not give satisfactory results on four strings (although it allows *legato* playing on three). The Capriccio per Violino Solo requires the adoption of a method of bowing completely different from the ordinary one. This special technique was clarified by Paganini himself on the front page of the manuscript of the still unpublished Sonata a Violino e Viola:

"Da suonarsi col crine dell’arco Sopra le Corde / e l’asta, ossia arco sotto al Violino come:

7"To be played with the hair of the bow above the strings / and the stick, or bow, beneath the violin, thus [...]") (copy of the title page kindly sent by Dr Maria Rosa Moretti, Conservatorio N. Paganini, Genoa). See also Borer, Philippe. "Foglio d’Album", in: Quaderni dell’Istituto di Studi Paganiniani, Genoa: Civico Istituto di Studi Paganiniani, N° 7, October 1993, pp. 37-41.
Like the Capriccio per Violino Solo, the Sonata a Violino e Viola requires the simultaneous sounding of all four strings:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{N. Paganini (Sonata a Violino e Viola)} \\
&\text{Violin} \\
&\text{Viola} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The method of bowing described by Paganini enables the violinist to play on four strings without arpeggiation. It thus becomes possible to sustain chords and to play them in succession, legato and pianissimo, as instructed by the composer. The smooth passage of the slackened bowhair across the strings produces a sweet, albeit penetrating sonority reminiscent of the harmonium.\(^8\) Another of Paganini's "album leaves" must be mentioned with reference to the technique of sostenuto playing of chords. It is a short four bar prelude for violin which Clara Wieck pasted in her album of autographs: \(^9\)

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{N. Paganini (Preludio per Violino)} \\
&\text{(dipl. tr. by PXB)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The following words, written in Clara's hand, appear under the music:

"This is a passage which nobody can play the way I do, said Paganini, when he presented me with this album leaf."

The notation of the Preludio per Violino, with its dotted minims and legato phrasing indications, calls for the employment of the "all strings" bowing

\(^8\)This technique was also used by Alexandre Boucher and Pierre Baillot (See: Baillot, Pierre. L'Art du Violon, nouvelle méthode, Paris, 1834, pp.227-8)

\(^9\)It was on the same occasion that Paganini wrote the chromatic scale harmonised in contrary motion (16 October 1828, see supra)
method. However, the presence of a low C begs the question - how was Paganini able to play sustained chords containing five notes? It is possible, of course, that he used a five stringed instrument such as Michel Woldemar’s violon-alto. Yet, the remark "this is a passage which nobody can play the way I do" leaves an unanswered question. Moreover, the unequivocal indication per Violino at the head of the short prelude strongly suggests that it was intended for a normal violin. Now, it is at least plausible that the low C emanated not from the violin itself - Paganini having perhaps adopted the technique employed by Girolamo Frescobaldi in his 10th Caprice.

Paganini’s flourish is followed by Clara’s remark:

10 This instrument was the equivalent of a violin with an added C string, which would give it the range of both the violin and the viola. The violon-alto was perfected by Michel Woldemar who took up the idea from his master Lolli. Later versions of this five stringed instrument were devised by Hermann Ritter (the viola alta) and more recently by the Czech luthier Vladimir Pilar (the quinton).

11 Frescobaldi, Girolamo. The First Book of Capricci 1626, ed. by P. Pidoux, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949, pp. 42-47, Capriccio di obbligo di cantare la quinta parte senza toccarla (Caprice with the obligation to sing the fifth part without playing it)

12 "Das ist eine Stelle, die mir Niemand nachspielen kann", sagte Paganini als er mir dies Albumblatt schenkte. "[This is a passage which nobody can play the way I do", said Paganini, when he presented me with this album leaf” I am grateful to Dr Karl Wilhelm Geck of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden for kindly helping me to decipher Clara Wieck’s handwriting.
5. Tempo fluctuation

Contemporary reports invariably mentioned Paganini's rigorous time-keeping:

"...Even in the most difficult passages, he does not tamper with the meter. Much in contrast to most of the great instrumentalists who resort to the expedient of complacent time-keeping, never does he push nor drag the tempo to facilitate the execution. Faithful to the most rigorous proportions, he never strays, and does nothing outside the value of the meter. This law which he observes intuitively, as it were, far from stifling his verve, gives it poise and fresh vitality. The precision which he brings to the strict observance of the beat manifests itself in the quality of his sound, which he renders as pure as gold." \[\text{[tr.PXB]}\]

"...He possesses the greatest and most distinct execution in marking the unaccented subdivisions of the beat, in the most rapid tempo without altering the time:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{presto.png}
\caption{C. Guhr (Ueber Paganini's Kunst..., p.9, ex.5)}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{prestissimo.png}
\caption{(tr. by PXB from 1829 ed.)}
\end{figure}

\[1\text{Il n'est point de passage si difficile dans lequel il transige avec la mesure; bien différent en ce point de la plupart des grands instrumentistes, qui pensent sauver leur habileté en recourant à l'expédition d'une mesure complaisante, jamais il n'ouvre ni ne serre le mouvement pour faciliter l'exécution. Fidèle aux proportions les plus rigoureuses, il ne s'en écarte pas, et ne fait rien hors de la valeur du temps. Cette loi, qu'il observe comme à son insu, loin d'étouffer sa verve, en régularise au contraire l'essor, en lui donnant une vigueur nouvelle. Cette précision qu'il apporte dans la stricte observation de la mesure, on la retrouve dans la qualité du son, qu'il rend pur comme l'or.} \text{Imbert de Laphalèque, G. Notice sur le célèbre violoniste Nicolo Paganini. Paris: Guyot, 1830, p.19.}\]

\[2\text{Die größte Fertigkeit und Deutlichkeit besitzt er in dem Markiren der schlechten Takttheilchen im schnellsten Tempo, ohne Verrückung des Zeitmaasses} \text{Guhr, Karl. Ueber Paganinis Kunst, die Violine zu spielen, ein Anhang zu jeder bis jetzt erschienenen Violinschule nebst einer Abhandlung über das Flagelleitispiel in einfachen und Doppeltönen. Mainz: B. Schott's Söhnen, 1829, p.9.}\]
In view of Paganini's original and highly imaginative performing style, this seemingly clockwork precision was a further element of surprise. In a letter to Louis Spohr, Wilhelm Speyer related how Paganini varied the theme of the Rondo of Beethoven's Spring Sonata, playing it the second time in artificial harmonics.³ Further in the same letter, he observed:

_Wilhelm Speyer to Louis Spohr, September 17, 1829_

"The theme of the Adagio [of the Spring Sonata] he began each time with the upbow, proof that he does not follow the traditional usage. In spite of his many thirty-second and sixty-fourth note embellishments, I have never in all my life heard anyone play so strictly in time!"⁴ [cit. de Courcy]

The importance that Paganini attached to strict time-keeping is reflected in tempo indications such as Largo con precisione (Sonata for violin and guitar, op.2, N°6), or Adagio tenuto, con precisione (Quartet for violin, viola, guitar and 'cello N°12), etc. However, Paganini's precision probably had little to do with mere mechanical regularity. In a most enlightening passage of his Traité complet de l'Art du Chant, Manuel Garcia⁵ gave evidence that Paganini was, in fact, an expert in the kind of tempo fluctuation well known in the Italian operatic tradition:

"...Two artists of a very different kind, Garcia (my father), and Paganini, excelled in the use of the tempo rubato applied by phrase. While the orchestra maintained the tempo regularly, they, on their part, abandoned themselves to their inspiration to rejoin with the bass only at the moment the harmony would change, or else at the very end of the phrase. But this means requires before everything an exquisite feeling of the rhythm and an imperturbable poise. One can scarcely use such a procedure except in passages where the harmony is stable, or slightly varied... here is a use of this difficult means which is always favourable:

³See supra (2. Harmonics)
⁵Garcia, Manuel Patricio Rodriguez (Manuel Garcia II) (1805-1906). His father, Manuel Garcia I (> Corri >Porpora), was one of the greatest tenors of all times, thoroughly grounded in the performance traditions of the great Italian school. He passed on these traditions, including that of the tempo rubato, to his son Manuel Garcia II, who became one of the most significant teachers of singing in the Romantic era. Manuel Garcia II's students included his two sisters Maria (La Malibran) and Pauline (Viardot), Jenny Lind, Mathilde Marchesi, and others.
August Kestner, who otherwise could be highly critical of certain aspects of Paganini's performing style, greatly admired his cantabile playing. The following observation also appears to make reference to a very perceptive use of the *tempo rubato*:

"This is one of the most beautiful things I have ever heard, lyrical, played, in long sustained strokes of the bow, high in the fifth octave. The highest degree of skill dominated his performance insofar as the master recognised the bar as the basis - covered by the leisurely flow of tones - without ever allowing its structure to come to the surface."7

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6. Fingering

... 'His fingering [wrote Gottfried Weber1] which is sometimes unorthodox or, rather, is independent of the laws of fingering, is the result of a deeply reasoned method, and is not a mere caprice', a statement that he probably derived from his personal conversations with Paganini. Fétis' reaction was the same: 'his fingering bears no resemblance to that which is usually taught. He will, at times, employ the one finger instead of another, but more often he uses one and the same finger for several notes'.

Following Paganini’s concerts in Frankfurt (Autumn 1829), the violinist and conductor Carl Guhr wrote an essay for Gottfried Weber's magazine Cecilia, giving a first account of Paganini’s playing. Further observation and study resulted in the publication of Ueber Paganini’s Kunst, die Violine zu spielen, ein Anhang zu jeder bis jetzt erschienenen Violinschule nebst einer Abhandlung über das Flageolettspiel in einfachen und Doppeltönen. Based on direct observation (Guhr conducted the orchestra in most of the Frankfurt concerts) this work constituted, and still constitutes, one of the most valuable sources of information on certain aspects of Paganini’s technique, including fingerings. A remark on page 40 of the original 1829 edition confirms Fétis’s statement concerning the use of a single finger for several consecutive notes:

"Paganini plays very high descending scales with one and the same finger, as is shown in the 4th bar":

![Fingering Diagram](image)

C. Guhr (Ueber Paganini’s Kunst..., p. 40, ex. 8)

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1Weber, Gottfried (1779-1839), theorist and composer. From 1824, he edited the famous musical periodical Cecilia published by Schott of Mainz. His study of the theory of music resulted in the publication of the Versuch einer geordneten Theorie (1821), Allgemeine Musiklehre (1822), Ergebnisse der bisherigen Forschungen über die Echtheit des Mozartschen Requiem etc. Weber asked Carl Guhr to contribute to Cecilia with a technical analysis of Paganini’s playing, and supported him in his research. De Courcy doesn’t give any bibliographical reference concerning this quotation, but it can be safely assumed that it was taken from Weber’s review of Guhr’s Ceciliarticle (see infra, footnote 2).


3"Ganz hohe, heruntergehende Tonleitern spielt Paganini mit einem Finger, wie im 4ten Takt zu ersehen ist: [...]"
The descending scale "with one and the same finger" calls to mind the ah-ah-ah of the coloratura singer of which it was perhaps an imitation. In the Variazioni sul Barucabà [M.S. 71], one of the very few works to contain original fingerings, Paganini frequently indicates the same finger for two consecutive notes one octave apart, probably to serve an expressive purpose - an analogy to the portando la voce of singers:

An interesting parallel is found in Chopin:
"In very expressive melodies, Chopin often employs the same finger several times consecutively on different notes. By applying an identical pressure of the same finger to each key, and also by dint of playing legato with a single finger, he obtained a very sustained sonority close to the vocal declamation of the bel canto."

Guhr give some examples of fingered octaves and tenths:

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4 The only compositions to which Paganini appended fingerings are: a) The Cantabile e Valzer written for his pupil Camillo Sivori b) The Variazioni sul Barucabà dedicated to Germi. c) The arpeggio introduction of Caprice 5 d) The Scala obliqua e contraria per Chitarra (see supra).
5 The novelty of such fingerings was also stressed by N. De Giovanni in the opening paragraph of his Metodo Teorico Pratico: "Il metodo non ancora conosciuto in Italia, per quanto mi disse Paganini, è quello di suonare, tanto ad una come a due corde, sempre coll’istesse dita" (p.1 of ms., Biblioteca del Conservatorio N. Paganini, Genoa).
The extreme flexibility of his fingers, wrist and other joints allowed him to stop, apparently with great ease, a span of three octaves:

He executed other remarkable extensions which completely subvert the scholastic concept of "positions":

One can find fingered unisons in Caprice 3:

"...mit grosser Leichtigkeit", writes Guhr (Ueber Paganini’s Kunst..., § 13, p.43).
Curiously, Guhr made no special mention of Paganini's unconventional left thumb technique, which so astonished other violinists and which caught the attention of artists such as Sir Edward Landseer and Eugène Delacroix:

"Paganini placed the thumb of his left hand half-way along the neck of the violin and, by virtue of the stretch of his hand, could play with equal facility in the three first positions without shifting." [9] [tr. PXB]

"By dint of relentless practice, all his fingers had acquired a suppleness and aptitude difficult to conceive. He even, if necessary, bent the thumb of his left hand right into his palm, when necessary for certain shifting effects." [10] [tr. PXB]

"His fingering is peculiar to himself. Often he places one finger on top of the other. More frequently still he uses the same finger to play several notes... He seldom finishes his trills and unlike other violinists often executes them with the little finger. Sometimes, he bends the thumb into the palm. His suppleness is such that I seem to have seen him pass his thumb across the fingerboard to reach a note on the E string."[11] [tr. M. Laurie]

Fétis's remark suggests that Paganini employed his thumb not only as an aid in the execution of certain multiple-chords (the occasional G# or A on the fourth string, as demanded by Francoeur, Leclair, Petri and others),[12] but as a stopping

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10 "Par l'effet d'un travail excessif, tous ses doigts avaient acquis une souplesse; une aptitude dont il est impossible de se former une idée. Le pouce de la main gauche arrivait même à volonté jusque sur la paume de la main, lorsque cela était nécessaire pour certains effets du démarché." Fétis, François-Joseph. *Notice biographique sur Nicolo Paganini*. Paris: Schonenberger, 1851, p.43.


12 See, for example Petri, J. S. *Anleitung zur praktischen Musik für neuangehende Sänger und Instrumentalspieler*, Leipzig, 1767/R 1969, pt.III, p.409. The G# of the following bar, as advised by Petri, "should be stopped with the tip of the thumb":

![](example.png)

finger like the others. This ploy, which requires a great agility and suppleness of the fingers and the wrist, was clearly depicted by Sir Edward Landseer,\(^{13}\) in his famous sketches of Paganini:

![Sketch by Sir Edwin Landseer](London, 1834, detail)\(^{14}\)

The characteristic "thumb in the palm position " mentioned by Fétis is shown in the second sketch:

![Sketch by Sir Edwin Landseer](London, 1834, detail)\(^{15}\)

Commenting on the above Landseer sketches, Dr. Jan Sedivka\(^{16}\) recalls that Vása Prihoda (\(\text{\textgreater}\)Marák), one of the great classical virtuosos of all time, used a very similar position of the hand, often creating the impression that his palm was in contact with the neck of the violin:

"This suggests that thumb and wrist provide an upward support to compensate for the downward thrust of the fingers, thus offsetting any undue strain in the hand, and, possibly, in the shoulder region."\(^{17}\)

Similarly, both Nathan Milstein and Ruggiero Ricci have expressed the view that the violin is supported more by the left hand than by the chin and shoulder.\(^{18}\)

\(^{13}\text{Landseer, Edward William (1802-1873), famous English artist and animal painter. His works include the Monarch of the Glen and the lions of Trafalgar Square, London. He was painter to the Queen Victoria. A virtuoso in his own right, he was able to draw with both hands simultaneously.}\)


\(^{15}\text{A beautiful reproduction of this sketch can be found in: Neill, Edward, Il Cavaliere Armonico, plate 5.}\)

\(^{16}\text{Sedivka, Jan (b. Slany, Czechoslovakia, 1917) (\text{\textgreater}Sevcik and Thibaud).}\)

\(^{17}\text{Sedivka, Jan, Conversations with Ph. Borer, Hobart, February-March 1995.}\)

\(^{18}\text{Ricci, Ruggiero, Conversations with Ph. Borer, Accademia G. Veneziano, Bisceglie, July 1985.}\)
We owe to Eugène Delacroix, himself an amateur violinist and ardent concert goer, an extraordinary Paganini jouant du violon (1832). The posture, the manner of holding violin and bow, the expression of intense involvement, all contribute to an evocative and dramatic picture. Delacroix's artistic credo was that technique must be perfected until it never obtrudes on the final effect of spontaneity. He was deeply impressed by Paganini's technique, developed from endless hours of practice. As an artist as well as a violinist, he recognised the true import of seemingly trivial details like the bend of the wrist or the positioning of the thumb across the fingerboard (which he discussed in his Journal).

With reference to the advanced thumb position alluded to by Prod’homme ("Paganini plaçait le pouce de la main gauche au milieu du manche"), Mantovani's remark must also be mentioned:

"Paganini gave the impression that he always played in the third position."

Paganini perhaps eluded the problem of shifting by throwing the hand back and forth, resting the wrist against the violin and using it as a fulcrum. This technique seems to have been employed a great deal by Zino Francescatti (>Sivori >Paganini).

The following sketches attributed to R. Hamerton and P. Lyser may also give some clues as to Paganini's left hand action:

Sketch by R. Hamerton
King's Theatre, London, 1831 (detail)  

Sketch attributed to P.A. Burmeister (Lyser)
Hamburg 1830  

Sketch attributed to P.A. Burmeister (Lyser)
Hamburg 1830

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H.W. Ernst, whose instrumental virtuosity is said to have been second only to Paganini's, also seems to have favoured a rather unconventional left-hand grasp. A cast of his hand in the act of playing provides an opportunity for comparison:

![A cast of H.W. Ernst's left hand](Musee Massena, Nice)

It may be fitting to offer her a more extensive quotation from my discussions with Dr. Sedivka, who shows a remarkable ability to translate problems of seemingly forbidding complexity into accessible and often relatively simple solutions:

"...the employment of the left thumb in chordal playing, whatever the limits of its practical use, shows that Paganini was not exclusively concerned with finding spectacular "tricks" but that he has to be recognised as the true explorer of some as yet unknown instrumental possibilities. It may be helpful to look at various aspects of the presented imagery, in search of significant common denominators. We see, for instance, that, as far as the left hand is concerned, there was no question of the traditional approach of putting the hand in a pre-conceived position (generally with the thumb facing the first finger), before even considering the disposition of the touch-points on the fingerboard. Thus, the function of the thumb is reactive, i.e. adjusting constantly to the finger movements. This, after all, refers to all ordinary movements used in daily life. It is the awareness of, and the focus on the intended aim, which determines the action of the hand. This leads to the conclusion that Paganini had an uncanny understanding of the very fundamental, and ordinary workings of the hand."

**Paganini's fingerings and the 24 Caprices**

After the publication of the first edition of the Caprices, Paganini was asked why he had marked so few fingerings. According to Maria Tibaldi Chiesa, his laconic answer was: "Guardate a chi li ho dedicati!" ("See to whom I have dedicated them"). A similar reproach was made to Claude Debussy who provided the following explanation in the preface to his Études:

25Coll. A. Ernst (Courtesy of Archives of the Palais Masséna, Nice).
27The few fingerings that appear in the manuscript (and faithfully reproduced in the first Ricordi edition) are found in Caprice 1 (b.68), Caprice 2 (b.11 and 49), Caprice 5 (b.1), Caprice 6 (b.1), and Caprice 24 (var.2 and 9). They are practically all related to the choice of string. The only "technical" fingerings are those appended to the scales and arpeggios of Caprice 5.
"Quite deliberately, the present Études do not contain any fingering; here is briefly the reason for it: to impose a fingering cannot logically suit all hand shapes." Our old Masters - I want to mention 'our' admirable harpsichordists - never prescribed any fingering, trusting, no doubt, the ingeniousness of their contemporaries. It would be unbecoming to question this in our modern virtuosos.29

The idea of instrumental compositions "revised and fingered" by eminent performers and teachers is a comparatively recent one. There, the fingerings (and bowings) supplementing the original text are primarily prescribed as an aid for technically difficult passages. The practical value of such fingered editions, according to Max Rostal has only a limited life span:

"Fingerings, as well as bowings, are generally a very personal matter, for which reason even good editions have fallen into disrepute."30

A resourceful performer may even opt to change a preferred fingering, owing to external factors (broken string, humidity, acoustic conditions, unevenly balanced accompaniment, response of the audience, etc.:

"Violin fingerings are as personal as gestures and offer a range of choice and subtleties almost as wide as the alternative moves on a chess board, and although in a given situation in either field there seems only to be one best choice; nonetheless the analogy cannot be carried further for in violin playing the criteria of appropriateness are many, varied and elusive, whereas in chess, there is but one object - the swift defeat of the opponent."31

As already mentioned, the only pieces which Paganini carefully fingered were intended for a didactic purpose. Those still in existence are: 1) The Cantabile e Valtz dedicated to Camillo Sivori [M.S. 45] 2) The Variazioni sul Barucaba dedicated to Luigi Guglielmo Germi [M.S. 71]. Most of the fingerings found in these two compositions are related to tone colour and expression, not to facility of execution. Here is a characteristic example:

29 "Intentionellem, les présentes Études ne contiennent aucun doigté, en voici brièvement la raison: imposer un doigté ne peut logiquement s'adapter aux différentes conformations de la main. Nos vieux Maîtres, - je veux nommer 'nos' admirable clavecinistes, - n'indiquèrent jamais de doigtés, se confiant, sans doute, à l'ingéniosité de leurs contemporains. Douter de celle des virtuoses modernes serait malséant" Debussy, Claude, Douze Études, dedicated to the memory of F. Chopin, Paris: Durand, 1915, Book I, preface.
Fingerings, violin hold, and Paganini's "secret"

Certain peculiarities of Paganini's physique, which were described by his physician and friend Dr Francesco Bennati, may in part account for his highly individual approach to violin technique, notably in matters of fingerings and posture. Bennati in particular stressed the extreme flexibility of the hands, wrist, and shoulder. Another thing which greatly facilitated his playing, according to the Italian physician, was that his left shoulder was "more than an inch higher than the right." This observation leads to the question of the participation of the shoulder in the act of holding the violin. Paganini, who did not use any chin-rest, shoulder-rest or pad, appears, according to contemporary sources, to have, on occasions, actively supported his instrument with the upper part of his left shoulder. Here is August Kestner's important statement:

"He steps in front of his music stand, taking possession of the place with a commanding countenance: shortly before, servants had brought in his music. This heightening of his magnificence took place after his return from afar, when he appeared in Rome for the second time. Before that, he himself would carry his music. His violin he brought in himself and placed it, as usual, against the left part of his chest, but squeezed it with the upper part of the shoulder in a manner which nobody had ever seen before, while the fingers of his left hand moved up and down like the long legs of a spider and threw on to the instrument little openings of passages with consummate dexterity, like thoughts passing through the mind, and all this with the artificial, ostentatious posture of a regimental drum-major. His opening piece was, as each time, the same concerto by Rode."

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32Bennati, Francesco (1788-1834), studied at the University of Padua. His scientific writings include Du Mécanisme de la Voix Humaine pendant le Chant. He also collaborated with Savart and Cagniard-Latour in specialised studies of the vocal chords.

33See: Bennati, Francesco. "Notice physiologique sur le célèbre violoniste Niccolò Paganini" in: Revue de Paris, XXVI/17 (May 1931), pp. 52-60. This article is a condensed version of a paper that Bennati read before the French Academy of Sciences in March 1831 (Histoire physiologique et pathologique de Niccolò Paganini)

34"Er tritt vor sein Violinpult, mit einer Herrschermiene von dieser Stelle Besitz nehmend. Diener hatten kurz vorher seine Notenblätter hereingebraucht. Dieser Zuwachs seiner Magnificenz fand statt nach seiner Rückkehr aus der Ferne, als er zum zweiten Male in Rom auftrat. Vorher trug er selbst seine Musikalien herein. Seine Violine brachte er selbst mit, und setzte sie, wie gewöhnlich gegen die linke Seite der Brust, preßte sie aber mit der Oberschulter auf eine Art zusammen, wie es niemals jemand vorher gesehen hatte, während die Finger seiner linken Hand, wie die langen Beine einer Spinne, sich auf derselben umhertrieben, und kleine
The controversy generated by Paganini's technique, his method of fingering and manner of holding the instrument, has given rise to a vast literature of specialised articles, studies, sets of exercises, the avowed purpose of which is the elucidation of his "secret". It may seem somewhat Procrustean to attempt at finding the key of Paganini's artistic achievements in his method of fingering or in his playing posture. However, it must be acknowledged that the "secret" has at least served to encourage, and perhaps, in some cases, even to inspire inquiries that have subsequently shed interesting light on the art of violin playing. This includes:


Tibaldi-Chiesa, Maria. *Paganini. la vita e l'opera*. Milan: Garzanti, 1940, p.451-470, "Il Segreto di Paganini" (Chapter XXVI) [Tibaldi Chiesa mentions Aeschylus's *pathèi mathos*\(^{35}\) as one of Paganini's mottos]


Dallas, Dorothy Brandt. "Paganini's Secret" in: *The Etude* 56 (December 1938), pp.830-31 [Brandt Dallas examines the concept of "resonant intonation"]


De Meis, Jacinthe. *Les Secrets du Violon: manière d'atteindre (sans jouer) une technique formidable et de produire un son enchanteur, augmenté de quelques intuitions sur la Mécanique Transcendante de Paganini*. Paris 1922 [BN A 132] [De Meis gives an interesting version of the scale in fingered octaves:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
& 0 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\
\hline
3 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

(tr. by PXB)

[ *Bibliothèque Nationale, A. 132*]


\(^{35}\) *pathèi mathos*, "knowledge through suffering" (Aeschylus, Agamemnon 177).


Flesch, Carl. (>Grün, Sauzay and Marsick) “Apropos Paganini’s Secret” in: The Strad L (September 1939), pp.205-207. [“...I do not hesitate to suggest, that if we admit the existence of a secret of Paganini, which he thought responsible for the acquisition of his own technique and equally serviceable to others, it could only be found in the practice and acquisition of a perfect technique of fingered octaves.” (p.206)]


Jarosy, Albert. Die Grundlagen des violinistischen Fingersatzes. Paganinis Lehre. Berlin: Max Hesse, 1921 [Fingering based on the ”natural” fall of the fingers is the ”long sought solution”]


Knoch, Vladimir. ”Scordatura Secret’ of Paganini”, in: The Strad LXXVIII (June 1967), pp.67-71


Losco, Ettore (>Supino and Brengola). Paganini et sa technique ou la position violonistique de Paganini. Nice: chez l’Auteur, 1991

Macmillan, F. ”Paganini’s Lost Secret Revealed at Last,” in: Musical Courier LIV/12 (December 1907), pp.16-17.


Polnauer, Frederick. *Senso-Motor Study and its Application to Violin Playing*, Urbana: ASTA, 1964. [Polnauer, invoking the authority of the Tasmanian speech teacher F.M.Alexander, uses himself as the subject of senso-motor studies related to violin playing and tries to reproduce Paganini’s playing posture. Bilateral bowing is found to be "the most essential prerequisite in recreating Paganini's method of bowing".]


Yost, Gaylord. The Yost System, The Key to the Mastery of the Finger-Board, dedicated to the memory of Nicolo Paganini, Boston: The Boston Music Co., 1934. [System based on the "Paganini scales" i.e. scales with one and the same finger]

7. The elettricismo

"At my request, Paganini resolved to choose a motto, as an inscription to the portrait he had given me. He reflected a long time upon this. He suggested several quotations from Dante and Tasso, then finally, with a very pensive expression, he burst out with:

'Bisogna forte sentire per far sentire!'

'One must feel strongly in order to make others feel'. This personal notion seemed to me extremely suited to the artist."¹ [tr. PX8]

To regard music as a vehicle for personal emotion was a widely held attitude amongst 19th century composers and performers. They sought to embody, as it were, their own ideals and passions in their music and cultivated highly personalised, "subjective" compositional and performing styles. It has often been observed that this notion had roots in Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Essay on the True Art of playing Keyboard Instruments, which Beethoven regarded so highly. In his chapter on performance (Part I), Bach stated that:

"A musician cannot move others unless he too is moved. He must of necessity feel all the affects he hopes to arouse in his audience, for the revealing of his own humor will stimulate a like humor in the listener"² [tr. W. Mitchell]

Paganini's adherence to the philosophy of "expressive playing" was reflected in his motto bisogna forte sentire per far sentire. It is evident, in his correspondence, that these ideas preoccupied him. To Douglas Loveday, for example he writes about:

"...this faculty which allows the soul of the performer to pass right to the tip of his fingers, in order to translate the emotions into sounds."³ [tr. PX8]

¹Paganini entschloß sich auf mein Ersuchen als Unterschrift zu dem mir gewidmeten Portrait, ein Motto zu wählen. Lange sann er darüber nach: mehrere Ausprüche von Dante und Tasso wurden von ihm verworfen, bis er endlich, mit nachdenkender Miene, in die Worte ausbrach! 'Bisogna forte sentire per far sentire!' 'Man muß selbst stark fühlen, um Andere fühlen zu lassen! Diese, dem Künstler persönlich gehörende Ansicht, schien mir sehr passend zu sein..." Schottky, J. M., pp. 283-284 (Sändig-Reprint).
³"...cette faculté qui fait passer l'âme d'un exécutant au bout de ses doigts pour traduire en sons les émotions." Paganini, Niccolò, Letter to Douglas Loveday, Paris, 14 July 1838 (PE 306).
In two letters to Luigi Guglielmo Germi, he gave a clue as to the true nature of this "faculty to translate the emotions into sounds", alluding to a sort of burning current of energy which he called *elettricismo* (electricity):

"...The *elettricismo* I feel in dealing with the magic harmony does me terrible harm; but being back home and near you for a time will prolong my life."\(^4\)[ltr. PXB]

"...Not having played for six months, I can't express to you the anguish I feel at the prospect of the difficulty of having to put myself again in the *elettricismo* necessary to make people feel...I am longing for a rest. I am weary and I detest travelling. But finding myself close to London and having given my word, they would sue me if I didn't keep it. The law suit would cost me a lot according to the blessed laws of this world, so I have arranged to leave on Tuesday, the 16th inst. When I read the sensitive article that you have been kind enough to write about my Achille, I wept for joy, and my son, as touched as myself, shed many tears. He is my consolation. When I am overcome by my fierce coughing, this dear child wakes up, he gives me succour, comforts me with inexpressible feeling. May Heaven take care of him, as well as of you."\(^5\)[ltr. PXB]

It is quite plausible that the intensity of his feelings was the source of the projective energy which Paganini called *elettricismo*.

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\(^5\) "Essendo stato sei mesi senza suonare, non posso esprimerti la pena che provo di vedere la difficoltà di rimettermi nell'elettricismo onde far sentire...Non vedo l'ora di riposarmi. Sono annoiato e detesto il viaggiare; ma trovandomi vicino a Londra e per parola data alla quale mancando mi formerebbero un processo che mi costerebbe molto salato stante le benedette leggi di quel mondo, ho fissato di partire per colà martedì sedici del corrente. Leggendo il tenero articolo che ti sei degnato di scrivermi intorno al mio Achille, piansi di gioia, e mio figlio sensibile al pari di me, versò non poche lagrime. Egli è la mia consolazione. Quando mi prende la fiera tosse, questo caro fanciullo si sveglia, mi soccorre, mi conforta con un sentimento inesprimibile: il Cielo me lo conservi unitamente a te..." [ltr. PXB] Paganini, Niccolò. *Letter to Luigi Guglielmo Germi*, Paris, 12 April 1833, (*PE* 169)
ORIGINS & DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIOLIN CAPRICE

The term "Caprice" has never readily submitted to precise definition. It has been used in different artistic contexts (musical, pictorial, poetic), and has developed an association with extroversion, unpredictability and exemption from the constraints of established formal rules. For Furetière,

"Caprices are pieces of music, poetry or painting wherein the force of imagination has better success than observation of the rules of art."¹

The term was used in instrumental as well as in vocal music before 1600. One of the earliest references, according to Eric Schwandt, is found in 1561, applied by Jacquet de Berchem to a set of madrigals². In the first half of the 17th century, especially with the works of Girolamo Frescobaldi, the Caprice became more frequently associated with keyboard music. Along with the ricercar, the fantasia and the canzone, the early 17th century keyboard caprice was a piece of strongly contrapuntal character, even if according to the aesthetics of the seconda pratica, the rules of counterpoint could be broken and, in certain instances, even ignored for the sake of expressiveness. It implied a certain licence or "caprice" on the part of the composer who, for one reason or another, did not find strict fugue suited to his or her immediate purpose. In a Caprice, the musician could give free rein to what J.C. Walther called "subitus, fortuitus, animus impetus", i.e. a sudden, spontaneous inspiration.³

³Walther, Johann Gottfried. Musikalisches Lexicon oder musicalische Bibliothec, Leipzig, 1732, entry "Capriccio".

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The keyboard Caprice from Frescobaldi to Bach

In his *Syntagma musicum* of 1619, Michael Praetorius eloquently described the Caprice as: "a phantasia subitanea in which one takes a subject (fuga), but deserts it for another whenever it comes into one's mind to do so. One can add, take away, digress, turn and direct the music as one wishes. However, while one is not bound by the rules, one ought not go too much out of the mode". This definition was to be adopted by all composers of keyboard Caprices, including, in the twentieth century, Igor Stravinsky.

In 1624, Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643) published an epoch-making collection of twelve keyboard Caprices, entitled *Il primo libro di Capriccio*. In the second edition of 1626, which also includes some *Ricercari* and *Canzoni*, the composer gave the following instructions:

"In those passages which do not apparently conform to the usual rules of counterpoint, one should endeavour in the first place to discover the character of the passages, the tonal effect intended by the composer, and the desired manner of performance. These compositions called *Capricci* are not so simple in style as my *Ricercari*; but one must not judge their difficulty until one has practised them well at the instrument, since only through practice will the manner of performance reveal itself." [Frescobaldi, Girolamo, *Organ and Keyboard works*, Complete Edition, edited from the original by Pierre Pidoux, Vol.II, *The first Book of Capricci, Ricercari, and Canzoni 1626*, Kassel: Bärenreiter, Kassel. 1949, introduction.

Frescobaldi's observation that the *Capricci* make greater demands upon the instrumentalist than the *Ricercari* is quite significant. Whilst the *Capricci* share some of the characteristics that are usually associated with the *Ricercari* and the *Canzoni*, an essential identifying feature of this genre appears to be the special challenge it presents to the performer.

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4 Free paraphrase of: "Capriccio seu Phantasia subitanea: wenn einer nach seinem eigenen Plesier und gefallen eine fugam... zu tactiren vor sich nimpt, darinnen aber nicht lange immemorizet, sondern bald in eine andere fugam, wie in den rechten fugen kein Text darunter gelegt werden darff, so ist man auch nicht an die Wörter gebunden, man mache viel oder wenig, man digredire, addire, detrahire, kehre und wende es, wie man wolle: und kann in einer solchen Fantasien und Capriccien seine Kunst und artificium ebensowohl sehen lassen: sintemal er sich alles dessen, was in der Music tollerabile ist, mit Bindungen der Discordanten, proportionibus etc. ohn einiges Bedenken gebrauchen darff; doch dass er den Modum und die Ariam nicht gar zu sehr überschreite, sondern in terminis bleibe." Praetorius, Michael. *Syntagma musicum*, Wolfenbüttel 1619, p.330.


Furthermore, several of Frescobaldi's *Capricci* have a descriptive character and bear evocative titles such as *Caprice on the Cuckoo*, *Caprice on the Flemish bass*, *Caprice with the obligation to sing the fifth part without playing it*, or *Caprice on the Spagnolettta*. The two *Capricci* entitled *Ut Re Mi Fa Sol La* and *La Sol Fa Mi Re Ut* allude to the hexachordal system of Guido d'Arezzo. Their importance in relation to the genre of the Caprice and its subsequent development lies in the particular treatment of their thematic elements. According to Eric Schwandt, the "kaleidoscopic transformations" of their subjects is a recognisable move towards the variation form.\(^7\)

\(^7\)Schwandt, Eric, op. cit.

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With Johann Jakob Froberger (>Frescobaldi), Ferdinand Richter, Georg-Friedrich Händel, Domenico Scarlatti and Johann Sebastian Bach, the keyboard Caprice thrived well into the 18th century. Bach's Caprice on the Departure of his Beloved Brother exemplifies the tendency towards a form of romanticism latent in composers of all periods - often taking the form of descriptive, "programmatic" writing:

During the eighteenth century, the keyboard Caprice gradually yielded its precedence to other instrumental associations, particularly the violin Caprice. However, it must be observed that with the accentuation of a neo-classical trend in the 20th century, the Caprice regained some of its early meaning as a contrapuntal keyboard piece in the manner of a Ricercar (e.g. Stravinsky's Capriccio for piano and orchestra).

8Title as in autograph manuscript (1704). The piece was published by Peters Editions Frankfurt Nº 208c as Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo.
The Caprice, being by nature an expression of the whimsical, the changeable and the unpredictable, quite understandably defies conclusive classification. Thus, throughout the 17th century, the term Caprice was often used as a generic title indicating the spirit of the music, but including of a number of varied musical forms within the work. For example the *Diversi Capricci* by A. Mayone (1603) is a collection of *canzoni, ricercari, madrigal* arrangements, etc., but none of the separate pieces is named *Capriccio*. Similarly, G. Trabaci's *Ricercati e altri varij Capricci* (1615) include *Toccatas, Ricercari, and Partitas*, with a preliminary note urging the interpreter to observe the spirit of the music. One can also find the word *Capriccio* used as a dance title: L. Roncalli's interesting *Capricci armonici sopra la Chitarra spagnuola* (1692) include such dances as *Allemanda, Corrente, Giga* (sic), and *Sarabanda*. Similarly, Maurizio Cazzati's *Varij e diversi Capricci per camera e per chiesa* (1669) is a book of instrumental dances: *Corrente, Giga, Galletto*, and, interestingly enough, *Capriccio*. Here the term *Capriccio* is used as a generic title as well as a label for an individual piece of the collection.

### The violin Caprice

The Caprice found in the violin a propitious medium for development. Yet, the contrapuntal aspect of the keyboard Caprice had to give precedence to other compositional parameters, more suited to the nature of the instrument.

The Brescian virtuoso Biagio Marini (c.1587-1663) is generally considered the most significant of the early composers for the violin: he was successful in developing - in his violin Caprices as well as in other pieces - a specific idiom for his relatively new instrument.

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9There exists an interesting linguistic link between caprice and violin: F. Cavatore and C. Angiolieri have mentioned *capo riccio* as a possible origin of the word *capriccio*. *Capo,* (head); *riccio* (curly or scroll of a violin). Hence *capo riccio* (curly head), a metaphoric, poetic name for the violin.

10This does not mean that contrapuntal procedures are absent from violin caprices. Nardini's *Caprices N° 8, 10, 15, 17, and 22* are actual fugues, as is Kreutzer N° 40 (of the original 40 *Études ou Caprices*. Paganini's *Caprice 2* is written in two-part counterpoint. The contrapuntal treatment of *Caprice 4* is also quite remarkable.
work is brief and suggestive: Affetti musicali (musical emotions), i.e. human feelings expressed through the medium of the violin. In his op.8, Marini included a Capriccio per sonar due violini a quattro parti (1626). One year later, Carlo Farina, a Mantuan violinist employed at the court of Dresden, wrote his eccentric Capriccio stravagante in which the violin, accompanied by three other string instruments, imitates the trumpet, the Spanish guitar, the lyra, the organ tremolo, the fife, the drum, the sound of animals, the mewing and fighting of cats, etc.11 Johann Walter's Hortulus Chelicus of 1688 comprises a section in passacaglia form with 50 variations entitled "Capriccio". In 1689 the Bolognese Giovanni Battista Vitali12 published a fascinating treatise entitled Artifici musicali ne quali si contengono in diverse maniere, contrapunti doppii, inventioni curiose, capritii (sic) e sonate. In this highly original opus, which reveals an interest in complex and sometimes obscure questions of theory, Vitali experiments with rhythm, tuning and intonation. In 1705, Jean-Féry Rébel (1661-1747), a disciple of Lully and a member of the 24 Violons du Roy, wrote a violin Caprice with 53 variations on an ostinato bass. The piece, known as Le Caprice, retained much popularity during the first half of the century. A landmark in the history of the violin in general, and of the history of the violin Caprice in particular, was reached in 1733 with the publication of Locatelli's L'Arte del Violino. Pietro Locatelli (1695-1764) was a disciple of Corelli with whom he studied in Rome from an early age. He became one of the foremost virtuosos of his time, travelling throughout Europe before settling in Amsterdam, where he established regular public concerts. As a performer on the violin, his double stopping was regarded as phenomenal.

11 This piece, with its col legno, pizzicato, and other effects, reflects the inclination of the baroque towards imitation and representation (R. Boss). A characteristic tendency in the baroque era was to employ external images as a "representation" of inner emotions. In the 19th century, Paganini did much to revive certain techniques of the baroque era. His Fandango spagnolo and other "farmyard imitations" won him considerable popular success but, at the same time brought down on him severe criticism from academic circles. This somewhat controversial practice found an artistically more serious application in the 24 Caprices, where his command over the full timbral range of the violin and his familiarity with the violin's potential for tone colour enabled him to "orchestrate" his score for a single violin (see Appendices, CAPRICE 9).

12 Giovanni Battista Vitali (1632-92) (>Maurizio Cazzati), father of Tomaso Vitali, the controversial author of the famous Chaconne in G minor, edited by Ferdinand David for his Hohe Schule.
He had, according to Charles Burney, "more hand, caprice and fancy, than any violinist of his time". His technical prowess earned him the nickname of "Il Terremoto" (the "Earthquake"):

"Locatelli must surely allowed by all to be a Terremoto... Messieurs, quels coups d'Archet! Quel Feu! Quelle vitesse!" [sic]

Locatelli's epoch-making L'Arte del Violino is a collection of 12 concertos with 24 Caprices ad libitum. Each of the "added" Caprices is a meticulously composed, elaborate miniature work (if often of an improvisatory character) adding to the structure of its allied concerto. The indication "ad libitum" gives the interpreter freedom to include them or not in his performance, but in any case, these Caprices do not stand in lieu of cadenzas (as suggested by E. Schwandt, D. Themelis and others). The fact that a spot for the traditional, improvised cadenza (_topic) is always clearly indicated by the composer - usually immediately after the Caprice - disposes of the assumption that the Locatellian Caprice was conceived as a written cadenza. Although a Caprice often suggests the extemporaneous, spontaneous character of an improvisation, it must not be confused with a cadenza which has quite specific functions within a concerto (or an opera aria), and where carte blanche is given by the composer to his interpreter. Similarly, the distinction between the term Capriccio (used as a generic title) and the interpretative indication "a capriccio" (= on the whim of the performer) is often misunderstood. The instruction "a capriccio" (given under the musical text) is related to tempo fluctuation, inviting the performer to take rhythmic liberties. Whether the Caprices of Locatelli can

15 The title page of the 1733 "La Cène" edition reads: L'ARTE DEL VIOLINO / XII CONCERTI / Cioè, Violino Solo, con XXIV Capricci ad libitum / [...].
also be considered as technical virtuoso studies is a question open to discussion, but the fact that they have been published several times as a separate set by eminent violin pedagogues provides ample support for their didactic qualities. Extracted from their original context, they seem to gain an independent life of their own and constitute very effective virtuoso pieces. Evidence of their early adoption as study material by eighteenth century French violinists was given by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the entry "Caprice" of his Dictionnaire de Musique:

"A kind of free piece of music, in which the Author, without strictly following any subject, gives free play to his genius and gives himself up totally to the fire of Composition. Le Caprice of Rébel was highly regarded in his time. Today, the Caprices of Locatelli provide exercise for our Violinists." 

Among the violinists alluded to by Rousseau were Jean-Marie Leclair (>Somis), who made the personal acquaintance of Locatelli in Amsterdam, and Gabriel Guillemain (>Somis), whose difficult Amusements ou Caprices pour Violon Seul betray the influence of L’Arte del Violino. [These two master violinists shared a tragic fate, the former being murdered at his Parisian residence, a victim of the intrigues of rivals, while the latter committed suicide during a walk from Paris to Versailles in 1770, "stabbing himself 14 times with a knife as he was approaching Chaville"].

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18 J.-B. Cartier edited the fourth Caprice and included it in his L’Art du Violon (Paris:Decombe, 1738, p.324). - Choron included the 3rd and 4th caprices in his Principes de composition des écoles d’Italie (Paris:Le Duc, 1807, pp.330-331). - In the entry "Locatelli" of his Biographie universelle, Fétis refers to an op.9 by Locatelli bearing the name of Caprices Énigmatiques, apparently an early French edition of the complete set of the Caprices (See also Luce, Joan, op.cit, p.181). - An edition dedicated to "Les Mânes de G.B. Viotti" (to the memory of G.B. Viotti) was published by Frey in Paris in 1824. - Costallat (Paris, 1905, ed. by E. Nadaud) and Ricordi (Milan, 1920, ed. by Romeo Franzoni) also published the Caprices as a separate set (a 25th caprice, taken from op.6 is included in both the Costallat and the Ricordi editions).

19Jean-Féry Rébel (1661-1747) (>Lully). Member of the 24 Violons du Roy and royal chamber composer. See supra.


There is no doubt that, after their publication in 1733, the Caprices of Locatelli did contribute to a widening of the scope of violin technique. However, it was through their subsequent role as catalysts in the creative process revealed in Paganini’s own collection of 24 Caprices that they acquired their true *lettres de noblesse*: the wide tessitura, frequent use of double stops (often for imitative effect), reciprocating arpeggios, *brisures*, unusual finger extensions, rapid jumps, complex arpeggiated figurations with a fixed note (for pedal or drone effect) are all Locatellian techniques which Paganini used “in naturally expanded and exalted expressive contexts.” According to I.M. Yampolski, Paganini handled the problems posed by Locatelli with greater boldness than any of his predecessors and completely integrated Locatelli’s technical formulas within his own musical perspective:

“Locatelli was the first to break the outdated canons and dogmas. In his “Capricci” he transgressed the normal positioning of the fingers on the fingerboard. He used finger stretching and big jumps as an organic method of violin playing. In this way, he stopped the limited use of positions and so doing, he cleared the way for the development of virtuoso techniques. Locatelli used in the most various ways wide fingers dispositions on the fingerboard. Using anatomic and physiological finger particularities, he paid special attention to the finger-stretching method consisting of putting aside the first finger and using the highest positions (up to the seventeenth position). He also used the “ricochet” stroke across the strings. Locatelli’s “Capricci” gave an impetus to Paganini’s creative imagination. He saw the huge artistic potential in these seemingly dry technical formulas.”

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22 Neill, Eward, general introduction of his *Urtext* edition of the Caprices, Milan: Ricordi, 1988, p. VII.

23 Yampolski is probably alluding to Caprice 22, bar 32, the highest point of the collection, culminating in the 17th position if played on the E string. If two strings are played in alternation, the passage requires to ascend to 18th or even to 19th position, depending on the fingering.

24 Kortchnoi
Caprice or Étude?

Invoking the authority of Tartini, and inferring from his use of the term "capriccio" in the *Regole per ben suonar il Violino*, Maria Stolba refers to Locatelli's caprices as "concert études", that is compositions whose prime purpose is public performance, but which also have some relevance as studies. An Étude, be it only an exercise, or a composition with both pedagogical and musical intent, or even a concert piece (Étude de concert), is as a rule, distinguished from other musical forms by the fact that it features at least one consistently recurring problem of a physiological, mechanical or musical nature designed to improve the performer's technical and interpretative skills. From Rousseau's statement in the *Dictionnaire de Musique*, it clearly appears that violin Caprices such as those of Locatelli, for example, were used as study material ("Les Caprices de Locatelli donnent de l'exercice à nos Violons"). During the post-Locatellian era, the concept of "Étude-Caprice" emerged: Franz Benda (1750), Pietro Nardini (1760), Nicolò Mestrino (1781), Antonio Bartolomeo Bruni (1787), Auguste Frédéric Durand (c.1790), Federico Fiorillo (1793), Pierre Caviniès (1794), Rodolphe Kreutzer (1796), Wenzeslaus Pichl (1801), Pierre Baillot (1803), Jacques Pierre Rode (1819), Antoine Bohrer (c.1819), and, indeed, Paganini (1820), all wrote collection of violin Caprices with a more or less pronounced didactic purpose. In the titles the term Étude increasingly appeared in conjunction with that of Caprice: Étude de Violon ou Caprices (Benda), Caprices ou étude du violon (Mestrino), Caprices et airs variés en forme d'études (Bruni), Étude pour le violon formant 36 Caprices (Fiorillo), 40 Études ou Caprices (Kreutzer), 24 Caprices en forme d'Études (Rode), Caprices ou 18 études (Bohrer). It must be observed that even Paganini referred to his 24 Caprices as "studies":

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26 The Étude (like the Caprice) does not have a definite, established structure. Depending on the case, it will lend its design to three different types: A-B-A structure of the pre-classical sonata, A-B-A' structure of the "lied" and sometimes the Rondo form.
"Prof. Franzoni told me that the Caprices were not originally intended for concert performance and that Paganini considered them as studies. However, to dispel rumours that he was not capable of executing them, he soon decided to play them in concert, in groups of six at a time."

Frescobaldi's early observation that "only through practice will the manner of performance reveal itself" carried a warning. Mastery of the difficulties contained in a Caprice requires long hours of study. Spontaneous, free musical expression and serious study are distinctive - and contrasting - aspects of the particular genre. The finer the balance between these seemingly antinomic aspects, the greater the artistic achievement. In the preface of his transcription of six Paganini Caprices (op.3), Robert Schumann wrote that:

"To no other type of musical compositions are poetic liberties as beautifully suited as to the Caprice. But if, beyond the lightness and the humour which should characterise it, profundity and depth of study also appear, then this is really the true mastery."

Schumann's observation was also a token of admiration for a fellow composer who had raised a comparatively minor musical genre to his own extremely high artistic ideals. Never had the term Caprice been so apt, so precise, as it was for Paganini's 24 brief, etching-like pieces. Furthermore, the didactic purpose had never been so ambitious. One could say that Paganini re-elaborated on two contrasting levels the original features of the works of earlier masters. On the one hand, he took virtuosity to an extreme; on the other, he gave his work a formal finish and an artistic distinction which were quite new to the genre of the Etude.

27 "Il prof. Franzoni mi diceva che Paganini non suonava i suoi Capricci in pubblico perché li considerava studi e non pezzi adatti per concerto. Ma quando gli venne riferito che lo si credeva incapace d'eseguirli, li avrebbe tosto suonati in concerto a gruppi di sei per volta."


During his stay in Paris, Paganini noted with pleasure that the pupils of the Conservatoire "played Beethoven's works much better after they had studied the Caprices he had written for the violin".29 In later years, he repeatedly expressed his intention of writing a book of instruction for string players.30 Unfortunately, poor health prevented him from carrying out his plan. If he did not found a school of his own, he became a teacher indirectly as his Caprices constituted - and still constitute - the indispensable study material for the advanced student as well as for the professional player - in the words of Yehudi Menuhin, "a violinist's vade mecum".31 The greatest performing artists, beginning in the early days with Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, Camillo Sivori and Joseph Joachim, have adopted them as concert pieces as well as material for daily studies:

"My repaired violin encourages me to the study of the Paganini Caprices [wrote Joachim]. Their grand poetic content and originality of composition appear increasingly evident to me."32

![Caprice 7 (Barcarolle)](image)

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30 See: PE 229 (letter to F. Zaffarini); PE 149; Gazette Musicale, Paris (issue of 23 Janvier, 1840).
The violin Caprice after Paganini

The topic is a very vast one, and since it has already received some attention elsewhere, notably in Federico Mompellio's "La lezione di Paganini", I shall limit myself to one particular, significant aspect. For various reasons, Paganini chose, in his op.1, to keep within the strict compass of what could be defined as serious, "legitimate" violin playing. With the single exception of a sparkling left-hand pizzicato in Caprice 24 (var.9), he refrained from using such effects as artificial and mixed harmonics, scordaturas, sostenuto playing on four strings, plucked accompaniment to a melody, right-hand pizzicato etc. One of the major points of interest of the post-Paganinian Caprices lies precisely in the frequent use of such special procedures. One could say that, while virtually all the collections of Caprices and Etudes written after Paganini betray to a greater or lesser extent his influence, they were inspired not so much by the 24 Caprices themselves as by works in mezzo carattere style such as the Nel cor più non mi sento, the God save the King, or even by virtuoso procedures which Paganini frequently used in performance, but never wrote down. This is particularly true of the technique of "mixed harmonics", described at length by Carl Guhr, and which Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, owing to his patient, careful observation of Paganini's playing, thoroughly assimilated.

According to the tradition passed on by St. Augustine, the sound of the open string, as well as that of its respective natural harmonics, has a "matutinal" quality or character; a note stopped in the ordinary way, on the other hand, is "vesperal", whereas the artificial harmonic belongs to the "magic world". The technique of mixed harmonics, i.e. the combination of stopped notes, natural and artificial harmonics, far from being a mere technical "trick", may, in certain cases, carry serious symbolic overtones. A

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34 Guhr, Karl. Über Paganinis Kunst, die Violine zu spielen... Mainz: B. Schott's Söhnen, 1829, p. 39.
35 See: Breton, Luc. L'Instrument à Cordes dans l'Occident Chrétien, Limoges: Journal de L'Ensemble Baroque de Limoges, 1995, p.7. (Copy of article kindly given by Prof. Breton)
fascinating example is found in Ernst's sixth Etude, applied to Thomas Moore's *Last Rose of Summer*:

In 1854, the same Ernst, with brilliant artistic intuition, took the genre of the Caprice to heights hitherto unsurpassed. Profoundly moved by Schubert's song *Der Erlkönig* (he himself had suffered a cruel loss), he committed himself to the task of adapting the piece for his instrument. The transcription makes abundant use of techniques such as left-hand pizzicato, mixed harmonics and left-hand tremolo. But its secret signature is of deeper philosophical import: Ernst's *Grand Caprice* after Schubert's *Der Erlkönig* is an example of the *suonare parlante*, often alluded to by Paganini. Here, the violin literally speaks Goethe's poem, each string representing in turn the
reader, the father, the ailing child, the King of the Elves (in artificial harmonics), while the dramatic ride is suggested throughout by a frantic, tarantella-like staccato:
In a different register, Casimir-Ney's 24 Preludes of 1847 constituted a breakthrough in the literature for viola. Casimir-Ney (nom-de-plume of Louis Casimir Escoffier) was listed as "composer and professor" in the *Annuaire des Artistes Français* of 1833. A very popular and active figure in Parisian musical circles from about 1841 to 1865, he was, along with Chrétien Urban, one of the most sought-after viola players of his time. In 1841, Casimir-Ney was admitted to the *Société Académique des Enfants d'Apollon*, of which he became the President in 1853. Several of his works were performed there, including his Études for viola. A member of the Alard-Chevillard Quartet Society from 1845 to 1847 and subsequently of the Alard-Franchomme Society from 1847 to 1866, Casimir-Ney also joined the *Nouvelle Société de Musique de Chambre*, with Camillo Sivori as violinist. Henri Blanchard, the music critic of the *Revue et Gazette Musicale*, welcomed the publication of the 24 Preludes, giving a short and accurate description:

"This work is a collection of studies, virtuoso passages and even melodies, written with excellent musical feeling, which will certainly make an important contribution to viola playing. Nothing has been omitted from this treatise: rational and exceptional fingerings, double-stopping, trills, all possible varieties of bowing, harmonics, the dramatic genre, and even imitative music... Mr Casimir-Ney has written a work which was needed but which was lacking for teaching purposes." [trl. R. Charnock]

The first numbers are comparatively short, justifying the denomination of "Preludes". However, as one proceeds through the collection, the pieces acquire the dimensions and character of true "Études de concert". This applies particularly to Prelude 20, where Casimir-Ney introduces a most interesting passage in right-hand pizzicato followed by an episode in harmonics. The fingering indicated for the pizzicato passage was suggested by Paganini to Berlioz, who included it in his *Traité de l'instrumentation et d'orchestration moderne* of 1843. The manner of execution closely

36 The manuscripts of n° 1 and 3 are in the possession of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. A reprint edition of the work has been published in New-York by the Editions Musicus in 1961, with notes by Quinto Maganini.


38 [Engl. transl as *A treatise on modern instrumentation*, London, 1858, p.21.]
resembles guitar technique, which involves laying down the bow and holding the violin against the chest. In so doing, the thumb, index, middle and ring fingers are left free to pluck the strings, thus allowing great speed of execution, especially in arpeggio figurations:

François Hubert Prume (1816-1849) was born at Stavelot near Liège. Showing a considerable talent for the violin at an early age, he was sent to Paris in 1830 to study with François Habeneck at the Conservatoire de Musique. Habeneck, who conducted most of Paganini's Paris concerts during 1831-32, gave his young student the opportunity to attend several rehearsals. Prume thus acquired a unique insight into Paganini's style of playing. This was the basis for the fabulous technique he subsequently developed and which is reflected in his Etudes and Caprices, as well as in his at one time popular piece La Mélancolie (a premonitory title). Having developed an eye condition during a concert tour in Germany, Prume became completely blind. Overcome by melancholy, he fell into a state of deep depression which led to his early death in 1849, at the age of 33. The second of his Six Grandes Études op.2, subtitled "Duetto pour un seul violon" gives a idea of his phenomenal left-hand dexterity:
The 20th century Caprice

George Rochberg (b.1919) (>Scalero) completed his Caprice Variations for unaccompanied violin in 1970. As stated in the afterword, "the stylistic spread is a fundamental premise of the work".39 The final variation, a statement of the theme of Paganini's 24th Caprice, provides a key to the composition. Quotations of Beethoven, Brahms, Mahler, Webern, and others, which appear in the fifty preceding variations, all seem to spring, as it were, from the brief, quixotic melody of Paganini. An unmistakable reference to a figure in Stravinski's L'Oiseau de Feu ushers in the concluding bars:

Salvatore Sciarrino's 6 Capricci for solo violin are dated Rome, 22 April 1976. Consisting almost exclusively of natural and artificial harmonics, they present on paper a striking resemblance to Paganini's original, similar to a photographic negative. The challenge presented to the performer is considerable:

Alfred Schnittke (b.1919) received his early training in Vienna. He subsequently studied at the Moscow Conservatoire under Yevgeni Golubev (composition) and Nicolai Rakov (instrumentation). A prefatory note to his work presents him as a "Hauptvertreter moderner Polystylistik." A Paganini, written in 1983, is a "collage" employing classic and modern techniques. The Russian composer's frequent and masterful use of quotations contributes to an examination of the 24 Caprices through a kind of musical kaleidoscope. In the following example, the G-Ab-G "lament" of Paganini's Caprice 4 lies in the middle of fragments of 10, 13, and 17:

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I. Collections of violin Caprices from Locatelli to Paganini

date of publication

1733 Locatelli, Pietro (>Corelli). L'Arte del Violino, 12 Concerti con 24 Capricci ad Libitum dedicati all' Ill.mo, et Ecc.mo Sig.re Girolamo Michel Lini. Patrizio Veneto. Amsterdam: Le Cène, 1733.

1753 (c.) Nardini, Pietro (>Tartini). 30 Capricci.¹
1760 (c.) Benda, Franz. Étude de Violon ou Caprices
1760 (c.) Lolli, Antonio (>?). 36 Capricci [location unknown]
1762 Guillermain, Gabriel (>?). 12 Caprices ou Amusements pour violon seul
1780 (c.) Mestrino, Nicolò. Caprices ou étude du violon dédiés aux Amateurs²
1787 Bruni, Bartolomeo (>Pugnani). Caprices et airs variés en forme d'études
1793 (c.) Fiorillo, Federigo (>I.Fiorillo). Étude pour le violon formant 36 Caprices
1794 Gaviniès, Pierre. (>?) 24 Matinées
1796 Kreutzer, Rodolphe (>Stamitz). 40 Études ou Caprices
1796 Pichl, Wenzeslaus (> Nardini). 12 Caprices op.19
1801 Pichl, Wenzeslaus. 12 Caprices op.46
1803 Baillot, Pierre Marie (>Pollani). 12 Caprices, op.2
1810 (c.) Durand, Auguste Frédéric (>Viotti). 6 Caprices ou Études, op.15
1805 (c.) Campagnoli, Bartolomeo (>Nardini). 7 Divertissements, op.18³
1813 Rode, Jacques Pierre (>Viotti). 24 Caprices en forme d'Études
1815 (c.) Libon, Felipe (>Viotti). 30 Caprices, op. 15, (dedicated to G.B.Viotti)
1819 Bohrer, Antoine (>Kreutzer). Caprices ou 18 Études, op.59
1820 (c.) Rovelli, Pietro (>Kreutzer). 12 Capricci
1820 Paganini, Niccolò. 24 Capricci, op.1 (dedicated to the Artists)

¹Ed. by A. Moser and published by Max Hesses, Berlin, 1925.
²mentioned in PE 189.
³mentioned in PE 313 and 314.
II. Post-Paganinian collections

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<td>1850 (c.)</td>
<td>Giorgetti, Ferdinando</td>
<td>Sei Studi per violino per servire di esercizio, preliminare a quelli di Paganini, op.28</td>
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<td>Dancla, Charles</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Villa-Lobos, Heitor</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>Sciarrino, Salvatore</td>
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</table>

Collections of Caprices for instruments other than the violin appear in italics.
Miscellaneous Caprices

date of publication
1624 Frescobaldi, Girolamo (>Luzzaschi). *Il primo libro di Capricci* (keyboard)
1626 Marini, Biagio. *Capriccio per sonar due violini a quattro parti*
1627 Farina, Carlo. *Capriccio stravagante* (violin with string accompaniment)
1704 Bach, J. S. *Capriccio sopra la lontananza del fratello dilettissimo* (keyboard)
1705 Rébel, Jean-Féry (>Lully). *Le Caprice* (violin and basso ostinato)
1828 Paganini, Niccolò. *Capriccio a quattro corde* (solo violin)
1832 (c.) Schumann, Clara. *Caprices en forme de valse*, op.2 (piano)
1835 Mendelssohn, Felix. *Three Caprices*, op.33 (piano)
1839 Berlioz, *Rêverie et Caprice* (Romance), op.8 (violin & orchestra)
1854 Ernst, H. W. *Grand Caprice* op.26 nach Schubert's Erlkönig(solo violin)
1870 Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich. *Capriccio in G flat major* (piano)
1870 (c.) Vieuxtemps, Henri. *Capriccio pour alto seul*, op.posth.
1879 Brahms, Johannes, *Caprices* op.76, n° 1-2-5-8, and op.116, n° 1-3-7 (piano)
1880 Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich. *Italian Capriccio* (orchestra)
1887 Rimsky-Korsakov, Nicolai. *Spanish Capriccio* (orchestra)
1909 Busoni, Ferruccio. *Introduzione e Capriccio* (piano)
1911 Kreisler, Fritz (>Massart). *Recitativo und Scherzo-Caprice*, op.6 (solo violin)
1929 Stravinsky, Igor. *Capriccio* (piano& orchestra)
1935 Castelnuovo-Tedesco, *Capriccio diabolico* (Omaggio a Paganini)
1942 Strauss, Richard. *Capriccio*, op. 85 (one act opera)
1979 Gaudibert, Éric. (>Dutilleux) *Capriccio* (solo violin)
1982 Václav Kucera, *Capriccia pro housle a kytraru* (hommage à Paganini) (violin and guitar)
1983 Schnittke, Alfred. *A Paganini* (solo violin)

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5From the opera *Ulysses*.
6Based on a projected "Fantasy on Spanish themes" for violin & orchestra. In his memoirs, Rimsky defined his *Spanish Capriccio* as "a work of virtuosity in orchestral colours and timbres".