**4. Didactics vs Pedagogy and The Lesson**

By the word *teaching* we indicate the transmission of acquired knowledge to others. The aim of violin instruction is the training of new generations of violinists who may profit by the experiences of the generations present or past. The traditional rules, however, may only then be taken over by youthful students when it has been proven that they correspond to *contemporary* conceptions of what beauty is. Every trail-blazing, re-creative artist[[1]](#footnote-1) is part of the spirit of his age, *Corelli, Tartini, Viotti, Spohr, Paganini, Vieuxtemps, Wieniawski, Joachim, Sarasate, Ysaye, Kreisler* – each of them represented the interpretative ideal of beauty belonging to a definite period until taste changed. Thence it follows that the *teacher* must also march with his times. Only *Joachim’s* divine spirit, not, however, his type of technique, may claim a permanence illimitable. He who in *Viotti’s* day taught according to *Corelli’s* principles; who in the time of *Joachim’s* florescence was petrified in the *Spohrian* style; who, in the twentieth century, tried to withdraw himself from the influence of the great contemporary school of violin playing; in short, he who refuses to notice the signs of his own times, can become neither a good teacher nor the founder of a new violin school.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Carl Flesch, writing in 1923, touches on the complexities of teaching, and on the teacher’s role not merely as an instructor passing on codified knowledge and traditions of the past, but as part of a process of engagement that informs a continuously evolving musical language. Flesch thought at length about the role of the teacher in the broader musical world, and about the responsibility of the teacher to *recognise* musical and violinistic changes in taste and practice. According to Flesch, teachers must not only recognise such changes, they must incorporate new ideas into their own systems of teaching in order to transfer the most current and applicable knowledge to the next generation. As he writes above, ‘the traditional rules, however, may only then be taken over by youthful students when it has been proven that they correspond to *contemporary* conceptions of what beauty is’. In time, and through further exposure to a range of musical influences and practices, students will come to realise which of the traditional principles handed down from the teacher are still relevant and appropriate to their own generation. In this way, Flesch touches on ideas about both pre-lesson conditions (teachers must recognise changes in the musical world and attempt to reflect them in their teaching), and ideal post-lesson consequences (students must ultimately decide which traditions are still in keeping with their generation).

But Flesch does not explore the *interactions* that make up the nuanced and subtle encounter that is a lesson, as opposed to a set of simple actions and reactions. When he writes that teaching is ‘the transmission of acquired knowledge to others’, he is writing about a specific kind of didactic instruction, not the fluid, reflexive dynamics of a typical advanced lesson – what I have called elsewhere a mentoring session.[[3]](#footnote-3) Arguably, teaching is more than a *transmission* of information, and this is especially true at the advanced level.

The teacher and the student both bring to the lesson their own pre-conceived ideas. On a broad scale, they each have their own conceptions about what a lesson should achieve, about their own teaching and learning styles, and about the asymmetrical division of forces during a lesson. More immediately, they have ideas about the repertoire, about the existing dynamic of their relationship, and about the playing, musicianship, talent, credibility, and authority of the other. These factors all come into play during the lesson, where interactions can be subtle, and where even microgestures, picked up subconsciously, can resonate throughout a lesson and the relationship. The typical lesson is, thus, an exercise in fluid interpersonal dynamics.

The motivations of each participant, both before and during the lesson, are inevitably different. A student’s reasons to seek the advice of a particular teacher might include any of the following: the teacher’s familiarity with certain repertoire; an interest in or admiration for the teacher’s violinistic lineage or ‘school’; the teacher’s reputation; and the teacher’s ability to influence international juries or to make professional contacts for the student. Teachers, assuming that they have a large and talented pool of students from which to choose, might accept a particular student for a similar variety of reasons: a shared musical taste and taste in repertoire; the teacher finds the student to be personable; and the student is likely to become a successful musician, thereby enhancing the teacher’s pedagogical reputation. During the lesson, while the student’s primary aim is to craft a convincing, performance-worthy interpretation, the teacher does not have the pressure of having to present the work on stage at the end of the process. For this reason, the teacher can *provoke* a reaction that will in turn improve the student’s own performance. Thus, in advanced classes demonstrations during the lesson do not necessarily reflect the way that the *teachers themselves* would perform the music in question.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The idea of musical tradition is worth exploring further and defining more precisely. Flesch’s conception of teaching as the *transmission of acquired knowledge* implies that there exists a body of knowledge; it is the teacher’s role to make the student aware of this body of knowledge, introducing the student to established practices and musical ideas and thereby handing down a particular tradition. The relationship here between the teacher, the student, and the tradition is complex, and the teacher must balance one obligation to preserve the knowledge that constitutes the tradition and another obligation to foster the independence and individual talents of the student. As I note in chapter 1, T. S. Eliot explores this dynamic from the point of view of poetry in his essay ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’.[[5]](#footnote-5) What he says in that context is relevant to musical education. Eliot suggests that a tradition is more than codified knowledge, i.e., the sort of thing found in a textbook; therefore, teaching requires more than a handing down of the ways of a previous generation. With regard to the student’s point of view, he says that tradition ‘cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor.’[[6]](#footnote-6) He goes on to clarify that tradition ‘involves, in the first place, the historical sense… and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.’ And for Eliot, it is this historical sense that ‘makes [an artist] traditional. And it is at the same time what makes [an artist] most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.’[[7]](#footnote-7) Flesch’s remarks on the evolutionary nature of violin playing anticipate and are expanded by Eliot’s remark that art and mind ‘changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing en route.’[[8]](#footnote-8) Eliot then goes further than Flesch by suggesting that ‘the past [is] altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.’[[9]](#footnote-9) This suggestion of Eliot’s along with his emphasis on ‘the historical sense,’ is key to my approach to Bartók’s violin works that are at the centre of this study through the ‘Hungarian school’ (which qualifies as a tradition in Eliot’s sense of the word). The idea of musical tradition as a *fluid or dynamic entity*, much like a language that must be acquired with practice rather than rote study, elucidates part of my own approach to the teaching, learning, and experimentation documented here: to develop my own historical sense, cultivating a consciousness of the past through exposure to different elements that catalyze my development now and throughout my career.[[10]](#footnote-10)

As evidenced in Flesch’s *Memoirs*[[11]](#footnote-11) and by accounts of many of his former pupils, Flesch’s teaching skills were sophisticated and finely honed. He undoubtedly had a deep understanding of the complexities of both the conditions for learning and of the teacher-student relationship. As a writer, Flesch shows thoughtful consideration of a broad range of musical and violinistic issues, and his works are clearly very different from the primarily didactic violin manuals written during the nineteenth century. Flesch is perhaps the violinist-pedagogue-writer who comes closest to bridging the gap between written treatise material and practical pedagogy. Still, even in Flesch’s practices, there is a gap, which is telling.

Analysis of a lesson, or a fragment of a lesson, presents challenges in that many subtle and nuanced interactions need to be explored in depth in order to unpack the complex messages, signals, and underlying provocations that are inevitably present.[[12]](#footnote-12) One’s analytic tools must be flexible, as each lesson with each teacher presents novel circumstances. I chose to play the same work (Bartók’s First Sonata) for all three of the lessons documented for this study in order to pinpoint and cross-reference particular issues that arose in as clear a manner as possible.

Earlier, I casually described music and musical traditions in terms of language. Now I would like to dwell on the metaphor for a moment and unpack it as a framework for the analysis of these lessons. Languages are not fixed, and the transmission or learning of language is not simply a transfer of skill or codified information. Furthermore, learning to perform music is akin to learning a language. Learning a language, as Ludwig Wittgenstein insists, is to enter into and to participate in a form of life.[[13]](#footnote-13) Wittgenstein’s idea of language as a form of life reflects the same dynamic fluidity as the concept of artistic tradition described above. Mastery, whether in fluency or musicianship, is not reducible to acquiring codified knowledge or a fixed set of practices.

Mastery begins with the *integration* of a novice into a tradition or a form of life. It is worth reiterating Wittgenstein’s analogy of an ancient city:

Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The city Wittgenstein imagines here has a distant past that persists and remains central to its current life, and it has a more recent past that is connected to its oldest streets. The more recent additions to the city are more accessible to our current understanding, and they provide clues for making sense of older patterns. Similarly, in a musical tradition the recent past is evident in its established practitioners, and these practitioners are linked to those who came before them. The comparison between music and language is, in this way, crucially connected to the ‘historical sense’ that T. S. Eliot advocates and which is central to this study.

**i. Teacher Backgrounds**

György Pauk, Yair Kless, and András Keller are musical exponents of the so-called ‘Hungarian school’; they studied with pupils of Jenő Hubay, and all three feel an affinity for and a connection to twentieth century Central European music, and in particular the music of Bartók. While each of these artists has a direct link to the performance traditions associated with Bartók’s works, my primary motivation in playing for them was not simply in relation to the ‘historical performance’ details which have formed the basis of a number of comprehensive studies in recent years.[[15]](#footnote-15) Rather, I use the primary source material (the music) as a way to open up several larger subjects: broader questions about musical language; the complex and reciprocal relationship between ‘technique’ and ‘interpretation’; issues of teaching and learning. I engaged with these artists with a view not to *re-creating* the playing style associated with the first performances of Bartók’s violin works[[16]](#footnote-16) but with the aim of crafting my *own* informed andconvincing interpretations and gaining insight into the *processes* by which these interpretations are conceived and actualised.

For this study, a brief background of each teacher and a short account of my relationship with them, both before and during the lessons, sets a necessary context for the following analysis section.

**1) György Pauk**

György Pauk was born in Budapest in 1936. He is very much a product of the Franz Liszt Academy, where he studied in the violin class of Ede Zathureczky[[17]](#footnote-17) and with Zoltán Kodály for composition and musicianship. Pauk emigrated to the Netherlands in 1956, and in 1961, on the advice of Yehudi Menuhin, settled in London. After winning a number of important competitions, including First Prize at the Paganini Competition (1956) and Premier Grand Prix at the Marguerite Long – Jacques Thibaud Competition (1959), he had a long and distinguished career, performing the standard repertoire and also premiering works by Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Alfred Schnittke, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, and Sir Michael Tippett. He has recorded extensively, including the complete Bartók violin works, and he was awarded the Hungarian Order of the Republic in 1998 for his contribution to music-making throughout the world. His trio, with ‘cellist Ralph Kirshbaum and pianist Peter Frankl, also performed extensively. Pauk’s principal instrument is the ‘Massart’ Stradivarius of 1714, though since his retirement from the concert stage he now plays on a J. B. Vuillaume when he demonstrates during lessons.

I first met György Pauk in 2008 when I auditioned for him at the Royal Academy of Music, playing the Brahms Concerto and the Bach *Chaconne*. I was subsequently his pupil from 2009 to 2011. I still play for him occasionally. For example, I recently sought his advice before recording the complete Brahms Sonatas and while learning Bartók’s works for violin and piano and both his Concertos. I attended the International Bartók Festival in Szombathely, Hungary, with Pauk in 2011 where I performed the Second Violin Concerto with the Festival Orchestra, and I have represented his class at a number of the London Masterclasses’ ‘Star Alumni Concerts’. I now usually play for him at his home in North London, where he, his wife, and I enjoy nice social visits before the playing begins.

Because of his performances and highly acclaimed recordings,[[18]](#footnote-18) Pauk is closely associated with the works of Bartók. He has spoken about his training and about the Hungarian musical tradition, saying that he feels he is ‘the last representative of the Hubay tradition’.[[19]](#footnote-19) But Pauk’s feelings about Hungary and about the Hungarian musical tradition are mixed: after experiencing terrible living conditions and eventually being forced to flee, Pauk felt that he was not properly appreciated in his homeland and that he had many hostile rivals there. He did not make a return visit for many years.

Although he feels a strong connection to the traditions of the Liszt Academy (despite having witnessed only the tail end of its real heyday), Pauk believes that violin playing and teaching is always evolving in accordance with changing ideals and demands of the music world. While he feels that this change is inevitable and that it is positive in many ways, he has expressed concerns over some of the shifts he has witnessed in general music-making. These concerns extend to much of the *musical* teaching that his students receive before coming to his class.[[20]](#footnote-20) While he is enormously impressed by his students’ ever-rising *technical* training, he often laments to me that few of his students understand real music-making and that he often feels he has to spoon-feed them every musical idea. Pauk is strong willed and musically decisive, and he is as convinced about his interpretations of all serious repertoire (most notably perhaps about Beethoven and Schubert) as he is about his interpretations of Bartók.

**2) Yair Kless**

Yair Kless was born in Israel in 1940. He began playing the violin at a young age, and graduated from the Tel Aviv Music Academy, where he was a pupil of Israel Amidan.[[21]](#footnote-21) On the advice and recommendation of Nathan Milstein, Kless moved to Brussels to study at the Royal Conservatoire and the Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth with Andre Gertler,[[22]](#footnote-22) with whom he studied a wide repertoire, including Bartók’s complete violin works. Kless graduated with the highest distinction in both violin and chamber music, and began performing as a soloist and a chamber musician.

Kless founded a number of chamber ensembles and collaborated as a sonata duo partner with pianists including Nadia Reisenberg, Pnina Salzman, Shoshana Rudiakov, Arie Vardi, Victor Derevianko, and Frank Wibout. He began his teaching career at a young age, and since 1971 has been a professor of violin, violin pedagogy, and chamber music at the Buchman Mehta School of Music in Tel Aviv. Since 1995 he has been a professor at the Kunstuniversität Graz, Austria, and since 2005 has also held a professorial position at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. He also regularly conducts masterclasses at conservatoires and festivals around the world. He plays on a Nicolo Gagliano that he bought many years ago in Israel, and has a keen interest in experimenting with different fine bows.

I first met Yair Kless in 2005 while studying at the Royal Northern College of Music. After playing in a masterclass for him at the RNCM, I decided to switch to his class, and was his pupil from 2006 to 2009. I attended many masterclasses and courses with him during that time, including the Salzburg Mozarteum International Summer Academy, where I represented his class in a performance for visiting German heads of state. Kless frequently performed many of the works most closely associated with Gertler, including the Alban Berg concerto and the complete works of Bartók, and while his repertoire encompasses works from the baroque to the contemporary, he seems to feel a particular affinity with early twentieth century repertoire. I studied and performed many key works of this period during my time with him at the RNCM, including the Prokofiev sonatas and the Alban Berg Concerto.

When I met Kless again in Salzburg in the summer of 2013 to play Bartók for him, it was the first time I had seen him in four years. After finishing my studies at the RNCM, he was very keen for me to continue studying with him in Graz; however, as I had been accepted into Pauk’s class at the Royal Academy of Music with very generous financial backing, I decided to go to London. This decision caused some strain on my relationship with Kless, as he pushed quite insistently for me to at least combine my studies with Pauk with commuting to Graz to continue studying with him, which I did not feel was in my best interest.

A number of times during my lesson with him in Salzburg, I had the impression that Kless identified a quality or habit in my playing that he had not seen before and that he identified with Pauk’s style of playing, which he seems to think is often ‘punching and aggressive’. Remarks about these details (‘Have you played this for Pauk? I thought he was a Bartók expert!’) should be considered in the context of our relationship.

**3) András Keller**

András Keller is a prominent representative of a younger generation of Hungarian musicians. He studied at the Liszt Academy from the age of fourteen, where his teachers were Dénes Kovács,[[23]](#footnote-23) Ferenc Rados, and György Kurtág. He also studied with Sándor Végh in Salzburg, and he is an outspoken advocate of the musical approaches expounded by Rados, Kurtág, and Végh. Keller had some early competition success, and became leader of a number of Hungarian orchestras, including the National State Orchestra, the National Philharmonia, and the Budapest Festival Orchestra. He is perhaps most widely renowned as the leader of the Keller Quartet, established in 1987. The quartet won both the Evian and the Borciani competitions, performs extensively, and has recorded many works including the complete Bartók quartets. Keller is also active as a soloist and as a conductor, and in 2007 he was appointed Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Hungarian Symphony Orchestra. His awards include a Record Academy Award in Japan, the Grand Prix de l’Académie Charles Cros in France, the Caecilia Preis in Belgium, the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis, and a UK nomination for the Royal Philharmonic Society Award.

Though he does not maintain a regular teaching class, Keller gives chamber music and violin masterclasses around the world, and he has said that he feels it is his mission to ‘defend’ the music of Bartók and the Hungarian musical tradition passed down to him from Rados, Kurtág, and Végh. [[24]](#footnote-24) I first met Keller when I played the Bartók First Sonata for him at 22 Mansfield Street, London, that I recorded for this study. I had heard many stories about his teaching and about his changeable and sometimes difficult personality, especially while I was at Prussia Cove,[[25]](#footnote-25) and having studied with Ferenc Rados for a week, I expected Keller to take a similar approach.

I worked with Rados every day for a week on the Brahms D minor Sonata, and I was inspired by his uncompromising musicality. We had similar ideas about Brahms and about music in general, so the working relationship was incredibly productive. I found his simple, direct approach natural, although he is certainly an unusual character. Many students, however, have horror stories about Rados and, to an even greater extent, Kurtág. Their brutal honesty can be very demoralising, especially for students who are accustomed to feeling comfortable in their lessons and who have never experienced high-level, demanding teaching.[[26]](#footnote-26) Rados often sits in the audience with his head in his hands, looking genuinely pained,[[27]](#footnote-27) and Kurtág has been known to go backstage immediately after his students’ performances, greeting them with words such as ‘very much not good’. Nevertheless, along with Végh, they have something of a cult following amongst many musicians worldwide.

Keller’s teaching is clearly inspired by Rados and Kurtág, even though he is a violinist rather than a pianist. He is, perhaps understandably, often preoccupied by technical violinistic details and he encourages students to follow his bowings and fingerings. He is very much a product of the infamous Rados and Kurtág teaching style. The following anecdote illustrates my point. At the masterclass I attended in London, someone else performed the G major Brahms Sonata. This is how Keller recounted his own relationship to the work, which he clearly reveres and adores: He learned the piece when he was studying with Rados and Kurtág at the Liszt Academy, calling it possibly the greatest musical experience of his life. It was significant for him because of the level of detail in which they worked. He spent about three weeks (with two or three lessons each week) on the first three lines of the piece, and half a year on just the one work. He said that even the tiniest nuance was given the greatest thought and care because they all loved the piece so dearly. At the end of the process, Keller performed the work. Nevertheless, he has not played it again since, nor can he return to the work – one of his favourite sonatas – because his first experience with it was so profound.

Keller studied the Bartók First Sonata with Sándor Végh, and he clearly feels a deep connection to the work (although perhaps not one as profound as that recounted above). Many of the fingerings and bowing that he uses were handed down to him from Végh, and Keller has very definite ideas about how to interpret Bartók’s musical language. When he said during the lesson that he feels it is his mission to ‘defend’ Bartók’s music, I had the impression that Keller is often frustrated by how he hears these works performed. His insistence that Bartók was ‘extremely powerful but that [he] was very far from aggressivity’, and his repeated reference to the idea of ‘clarity’ underpins much of what Keller expressed during the lesson.

**ii. Interpreting the Transcripts**

The lesson material gathered for this study offers a wealth of information about Bartók’s First Sonata. Additionally, through the teachers’ direct links to the violinists with whom Bartók worked, I learned a great deal about the performance traditions associated with the piece. On a broader level, my interactions with György Pauk, Yair Kless, and András Keller provide a glimpse into their ideas about music and about their primary concerns or points of focus. During the lessons recorded for this study, they often present these points of focus in a way that makes clear the scope of their intended application, and many of these points go far beyond Bartók. In this way, the interactions documented here offer the opportunity to unpack not only detailed, technically-focused information, but also much broader concepts addressing violin playing, musicianship, and the language of music.

Each teacher’s unique approach to teaching means that a side-by-side comparison of the three lessons is complex. Not only do the teachers differ in how they express themselves verbally, but some rely to a great extent on non-verbal and sometimes very subtle expression. This makes it necessary to interpret not only what the teachers say, but also their gestures, their demonstrations (both on the violin and vocally), and the finer details of our nuanced interactions. In the lesson transcripts, the text I have added in an attempt to interpret or describe these gestures, demonstrations, and interactions appears in square brackets. Words or phrases to which the teachers give particular emphasis are italicized, as are foreign-language musical terms and descriptions of my actions during the lessons.[[28]](#footnote-28) In the instances where a teacher has become too unclear to understand or has lost his train of thought to the extent that the meaning is obscured, I have used ellipses (…).

The process of describing and interpreting gestures, demonstrations, and interactions is complex. My descriptions are informed by many years of musical experience, by my relationship with each teacher and the in-depth knowledge of their teaching patterns and styles that emerges only through extended study, and by countless other factors. Naturally, I felt less comfortable describing the intention of András Keller’s gestures, as I had not previously studied with him. Conversely, I realized when analyzing György Pauk’s lesson that the majority of what he communicates to me is transmitted by unspoken, often very subtle gestures with which I am immediately familiar. It may be worth reiterating here that while I strive to examine this material as transparently and completely as possible, the aim of this analysis is not to look objectively at the performance practice issues raised here, but to explore the fundamentally abstract areas of musical language and learning and to elucidate my *own* learning process.

I have included full lesson transcripts in the appendix, and the reader will see that selections of the material are highlighted. The highlighting was a tool that initially I used only for myself, to sort through and decipher the large amount of information in the transcripts. However, during this process I realized that making decisions about which material was interesting and relevant to this study was an important process in itself. By way of this necessary sorting and categorization of information, there is a danger of creating a somewhat artificial or overly-manipulated representation of the material. In order to minimize this risk and to make the process as transparent as possible, I have included the full highlighted transcripts, and a summary of the factors that played a role in my decision-making process.

**iii. Choices in Transcript Material**

When I began analyzing the transcript material it became clear that material of greater significance is interspersed with many incidental details. This is not at all surprising, and anyone who has studied an instrument at an advanced level will recognize in this a typical lesson situation. In analyzing the transcripts, I consider whether each piece of information contributes in some way to the development of either my understanding or playing of the work, my general playing, or my conception of this or any other musical language. The teachers were sometimes very direct in their emphasis of a specific concept; often, the interaction during the lesson revealed these concepts more indirectly. At other times, extended discussions and demonstrations concerning possible changes in fingerings and bowings were insignificant in terms of my approach or even of the audible result. Naturally, each teacher had a unique approach to the lesson, and perhaps because of differences in my relationships with them, some teachers spent much longer in ‘small talk’ or in the telling of funny anecdotes. I will expand on this further, and on the overall impressions and main points of focus of each lesson in the lesson summaries below.

**iv. Lesson Summaries and Main Points of Focus**

**1) György Pauk**

In many ways the lesson recorded for this study with György Pauk is typical of my experience of his teaching. In his life and his music he seems to take a very direct approach, and the energy and directness of his musical gestures reflect this. Pauk expects his students to present him with works that are already at an advanced stage of preparation, and although he often focuses on small details and is capable of teaching basic technical principles, he seems to prefer working on an entire piece during a lesson, or at least on a substantial movement.[[29]](#footnote-29) He is primarily focused on music making, and he dislikes teaching overly virtuosic works if he thinks they lack musical substance.

His frequent gesturing during the lesson conveys many subtle details of both his approach to violin playing and his broader ideas about musical language. Perhaps one of Pauk’s primary aims is that his students develop the qualities of their playing that will create greater impact on their audiences. I have watched him teach many different students, and different types of students. In my interactions with him, I get the impression that he is happy with my playing and musicianship on the whole, and we share many fundamental ideas about musical taste. His comments and gestures serve to pin-point small adjustments that will make my interpretations more ‘convincing’ and will somehow give my playing and my stage presence a grander and more authoritative cast. This concept of ‘presence’ is intangible and somewhat abstract, but by searching for the intangible in this way, Pauk seems to be engaging with broader questions of musical language and meaning. Interestingly, Pauk’s demonstrations are often very different from his own performance of this work.[[30]](#footnote-30) In demonstrating, he seems willing to explore greater nuance and greater extremes of beauty and ugliness. His accents and bow articulations take on a new intensity and sometimes brutality, and in more singing passages, such as in the opening of the second movement for example, he seems to search for more subtle nuances of colour and depths of feeling. This difference seems to reflect the motivation behind his demonstrations, not to serve as merely a *model*, but rather to *provoke* a response that encourages me to react and to develop my own spectrum of tonal possibilities.

Bow articulation is often his main point of focus: the beginnings of notes; the ends of notes; the separation of notes slurred under the same bow (sometimes referred to as *portato);* and the timing or space between separate notes. The insistence with which he repeats articulation demonstrations conveys the importance he attaches to this aspect of bow technique, which he clearly considers a fundamental tool in conveying the language of the music. ‘Articulation’ is a vague concept, and could encompass almost everything in music, but Pauk uses this word when he talks about the results of the actions of the bow as described above. For him, this articulation seems to be deeply connected to the process of translating music from the page to the listener. Just as we articulate in speech to separate different ideas and to give emphasis to particular words or sounds, articulation makes music understandable and meaningful. Pauk’s insistence on the importance of this type of bow articulation applies to some extent to the entire repertoire.[[31]](#footnote-31) For him, it is not a technical device, an effect, or even a ‘technique’ at all, but a semantic root in the basic language.

Pauk spoke about *vibrato* a number of times during the lesson. He often wanted a faster, narrower *vibrato*, and he is always bothered by a *vibrato* that he considers too slow or too wide.[[32]](#footnote-32) The quest for a fast *vibrato* is something of a Pauk signature, as almost all of his students will confirm. While he does not fully explain his preference for such a fast *vibrato*, other than to suggest that a slower action makes the sound ‘wobbly’ and perhaps unclear, there is clearly something about the results of a slower action that is not in harmony with his concept of sound. As mentioned above, Pauk’s energy is fast and direct. His sound, too, is direct, and he works to create an evenness in his bow pressure (and resulting sound) that speaks simply and avoids too many ups and downs. What some may consider a nuanced bow stroke, Pauk may often find uneven and perhaps ‘sea-sick’ sounding. His approach to *vibrato*, and to left hand technique in general, reflects these principles. This raises broader questions about the complex relationship between the bow arm and the left hand,[[33]](#footnote-33) and perhaps suggests that the fast *vibrato* is not simply an isolated technical trait or an end in itself, but that it is indicative of other underlying differences in sound production and use of the bow.

**2) Yair Kless**

Yair Kless is an experienced teacher whose methodical and studied approach to technique is evident during the lesson documented for this study. Students new to his class are required to ask a current student for a copy of his hand-written notebooks (one for the left hand and one for right) that form the basis of Kless’ technical teaching. The notebooks contain exercises, guides, and ‘The Ten Commandments’, or the ten most important exercises and principles for each hand. It is not unusual for new students to have to limit themselves to the study of open strings for the first few weeks or months, and Kless considers his finely-honed technical principles essential for optimizing the control and movements of both sides of the body and for creating the conditions necessary for good sound production.

Kless credits the influence of André Gertler’s methodical and patient approach. He also seems inclined in his own personality to avoid fast movements or unnecessarily high passions. His movements are usually quite deliberate, and he speaks slowly and clearly. As is clear in the lesson documented here, Kless gives equal attention to technical details and to broader questions of musical taste. Although not a Hungarian speaker himself, his studies with Gertler (including study of this work) seem to have informed his conception of the musical language, and he has well-developed ideas about the tonal and colouristic nuances of this sonata.

During our lesson, Kless spoke about ‘looking for the *rounds*’ in the bow and about freedom, variety, and personal expression. He said about the sonata as a whole:

It’s a question of approach, translation. It dictates. I think that, let’s say, in the first [movement], all the [typical Hungarian rhythms] are more *espressivo*, more, not cutting, and full of, uh, personal statement. More *mysterioso* in few places in the second [movement], in the third, for me, you are [too passionate]. You should make a little bit distant from it and make it like, like a game a little bit, with still the drama of course.[[34]](#footnote-34)

In many of the places where Pauk said ‘lift the bow!’ or ‘stop the bow!’, Kless said ‘don’t slice!’. This is indicative not only of their different approaches to the bow’s initial contact with the string and of the articulation between notes, but of a different fundamental concept of the musical language. While Pauk was often focused on creating the right space between notes, and on the initial contact or sound and its impact, Kless gave much more attention to the sound of the notes *after* the initial contact, and he seemed to prefer a more connected, *legato* line, with very few hard edges; he was searching for a sound that was ‘warm and round’, something he mentioned a number of times.

While Kless and Pauk clearly take very different views on how best to present this work, these differences reflect more fundamental differences in their approaches to musical language at a more general level. It was interesting playing for Kless again after studying with Pauk for three years. The lesson reveals not only Kless’ own ideas about technique and musical language but also his opinions about Pauk and about how my playing has changed since I left his class. While Kless’ ideal sound is round and warm, and while he strives, perhaps above all else, for beauty of sound, his comments during our lesson seemed to suggest that it was not only my own playing that motivated his comments but that, at times, his comments were directed more at Pauk’s playing and personality, as he understands it.

Though Kless spoke about many technical details and had many musical suggestions, especially in relation to the ‘*Tzigane’* or Gypsy character of the third movement, he seemed to place the greatest importance on what he called ‘personal expression’. He used this term as something of a joke because, tellingly, he had already told me repeatedly that it needed to be more personal and more expressive. He seemed to use these terms mostly in connection with my use of the bow, which he felt needed more depth and more sensitivity. Also in relation to my use of the bow, he talked about the language of the music and said that he ‘want[ed] it to speak more’. For him, this speaking is not hard-edged or aggressive, even when highly dramatic, but in every phrase he seems to look for opportunities to create roundness, many ups and downs, and as he said, ‘something inside’. Perhaps he meant ‘inside the phrase’ or ‘inside the sound’ or ‘inside the body’ but in any case, it was clear during the lesson that he was searching for something intangible and that it was this depth of feeling or ‘something inside’ that he considered the primary mode of expression.

**3) András Keller**

I met András Keller for the first time when I documented our lesson for this study. He is very much a product of the post-Kurtág ‘Hungarian school’, as described previously, and his teaching method seemed more intuitive than methodical or studied. I had the impression that he enjoyed our lesson, for he did not show the same frustrations he expressed during a number of the other lessons I watched him teach that day.[[35]](#footnote-35) He often focused on the minutiae of violin playing, and he is clearly fascinated by very subtle nuances of expression and tonal colour, and by experimentation with different fingerings and bowings. Because I share these fascinations, we were ‘on the same page’ from the outset. Keller regularly gives violin and chamber music masterclasses, but sometimes during our lesson I felt that his approach was largely based on *his own* experience rather than on his experiences with students and experiences of teaching. Many times during our lesson he displayed a surprising degree of inflexibility in his insistence on a particular fingering. He is built very differently from me, and his idiosyncratic fingerings involving large stretches in the lower positions[[36]](#footnote-36) were impractical for someone of my small stature. Nevertheless, I was especially struck by his ideas about sound and his approach to the musical language, which I found both interesting and insightful.

Analyzing and deciphering Keller’s lesson presented different challenges to the other two lessons. Firstly, he seems to feel somewhat inhibited by his English (though it is almost always understandable when interacting with him in person), and this produces many awkward, unfinished sentences, where new thoughts frequently interrupt him mid-sentence and his language seems unable to keep up with his thinking process. Secondly, Keller is very interested in the smallest details of violin playing and, much more than Pauk or Kless, relies on playing demonstrations (for which he usually grabbed my violin). For Pauk, the video clips are important as a means to capture his gestures; for Keller, the video clips are important to capture his emphasis on some of the material, which is difficult to convey in the transcription.

Keller’s principle aim, even when he was absorbed in the minutiae of violinistic detail, was to uncover the speaking quality of the music. He spoke about the idea of *parlando* as a principle that, in this Hungarian music at least, is unchanging and for which there are certain truths or fundamental building-blocks that the performer must recognize and aspire to portray. These include the idea that drama can co-exist with flexibility of sound and tonal colours, that the language demands a particular approach to the articulation at the beginnings and ends of notes, that rhythmic elements and motives must always be recognisable, and that perhaps above all, the performer should strive for openness and clarity.

Keller expounded at some length upon the idea of ‘clarity’. He spoke repeatedly about ‘a clear voice’, and ‘completely clear articulation’. For him, clarity is a fundamental element of the musical language:

He [Bartók] was extremely *powerful* but that was very far from him, aggressivity. So many people… misunderstood his music, and a little bit, it, it’s my *mission* to, to, *defend*, you know, because he was a *so clear* person and so clear is his music.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Keller’s ideas about clarity encompass both broad and more tangible elements. He was adamant that Bartók should not be played like contemporary music, that it is ‘absolutely classical’. It is this classicality, which he seems to equate to some extent with clarity, that he feels it is his mission to defend.

**v. Key Points of Focus**

In the course of analysing the three lessons according to the criteria cited above, a number of key ideas emerged. They emerged through examining the highlighted transcript material with an eye to both the principal points of focus for each teacher and the ideas that were touched upon in all three of the lessons. Naturally, these common ideas presented themselves in different ways in each situation, and were at times even contradictory. They encompass a range of issues, from the technical to the abstract, but recognising both the reasons and aims *behind* each idea and the properties of the ideas themselves, as expressed by each teacher, leads to reflections on Bartók, on my own playing, and on much broader concepts of musical language.

The key points of focus are examined below, starting from the more specific or technical and becoming increasingly broad. The short video clips on the website (on the page ‘Chapter 4 Video Material’) correspond to the seven categories below. The video clips are representative examples, chosen because they highlight a specific point or points. Usually, they touch on ideas from a number of the categories, and this is reflected in the names of the videos. The written section below, on the other hand, contains the *complete* highlighted transcript material (all the material from all three lessons that I felt was relevant or important). Rather than deciding on seven categories and simply inserting the lesson material, I began with the highlighted material (physically cut out from the transcripts), and sorted the pieces of paper into piles that had similar content. Thus, the seven categories below emerged.

I suggest that the reader read the text explaining each of the seven categories, watch the video clips, and finally, read the lesson material.

**1) Bow Articulation: Beginnings of notes; Ends of notes**

Articulation, both at the beginnings and ends of notes, was touched upon in each lesson. Articulation at the beginning of a note usually refers to the the bow’s initial contact with the string and the nature of that contact. Depending on the contact, which is dictated by a complex chain of technical actions and reactions, the performer can create a range of effects, from both a soft, almost undetectable start, to a strongly accented initial contact, with many variations in between. The start of a note is often crucial in creating the right atmosphere for the phrase, and the success of conveying the desired effect relies on the performer’s ability to translate their musical feeling to their bow in a way that best utilises the flexibility, strength, and suppleness of the right arm and hand.

Similarly, ends of notes are crucial in giving a note or a phrase the desired musical expression. While the beginnings of notes seem an obvious point of interest and are relatively easy to assess and unpack, ends of notes are sometimes overlooked. In analysing the lessons in this study, and especially Pauk’s lesson, it became clear only after watching and re-watching sections many times that the articulation he so often talks about is dependent on the *ends* of notes, and he often refers to this. Just as notes can begin in many ways, there is an enormous variety in the way that they can end. The bow can remain on the string or can come off the string entirely; the end of the note can fade to nothing or can be abruptly cut off; and the end of a note can be made to ‘ring’ or the sound can be stopped and immediately deadened. These elements, and countless other more subtle nuances, interact to create an endless variety of options.

Discussion or examination of the detailed technical processes that are involved with each type of initial contact and termination of a note are largely absent in the lessons documented here.[[38]](#footnote-38) Rather, in each case, the focus is musical, and addresses the desired *effect* of the articulation. It seems likely that the main reason for this is that during the lessons, it is clear to the teachers that my technical equipment is already highly developed. I studied these technical processes in great detail with a previous teacher[[39]](#footnote-39) and also during my first few months with Kless. Because I am able to respond to the *musical* suggestions easily and quickly, they did not feel the need to work on technical details.

The comments below, extracted from the lesson transcripts, express the teachers’ ideas about this type of bow articulation. Some comments are more technical and some are quite abstract. Each entry should be read as a verbatim transcription. I have omitted quotation marks as an unnecessary device in this context.

**György Pauk**

-but take time before [sings with a gap after the run, before a very accented first quaver] so phrase it [repeats demonstration of timing, with gap]

-Okay yeah, few things, about the coordination [ensemble]. *Very* good how it starts.. uh.. I think the tempo just before 2, *vivo, vivo*, [sings and gestures emphatically] It was a little too.. lazy [sings, with accents on the quavers, and very dramatic and impatient character]. Give a little more articulation on the eighth note [demonstrates, articulating quavers and also with a gap between each slur and very ‘hammered’]

-and Tadashi [my pianist] I need especially at *agitato* your eighth notes [sings with eighth notes very clearly articulated] because yes, she does this [sings accents in my part]

-Tadashi, I think it’s the *rest* [the rests are important. Sings with the sound ‘cut’ at the ends and very dry] the rest [sings with short, sharp vocal sound on the first beat rests in Tadashi’s part]

-Always the Gs, the Gs [plays them very accented, with corresponding downward body movement on each one] and a little accent on the F sharp [plays it with a gap before the note]

-[plays second bart of 27, much slower, and stops bow before the C, creating a gap before the next phrase. He has a new character on the C] Articulate.

-Lift!

-Yes [He seems to throw the bow onto the string with the whole arm, creating a very clear beginning, then he slows down the bow and the contact is intense throughout. The initial contact here is the primary element. The semiquaver at the end of the bar is articulated with the bow weight and speed, and he plays it very pointedly]

-[the three notes before 6 he does strong downward hitting gestures on the accents and he seems to want more emphasis]

-[wants more articulation in bar before 7]

-Okay, Tadashi, I need your bass note at 7 [the initial contact here seems important. Hammering gesture]

-and here, accent [16] and here [accent the top note of the broken *pizzicato* chords – he plays it very decisively]

-Lift the bow! [third bar of 13 – he plays it with a big gap between the notes, lifting the bow completely off the string so that he can drop it back down with force. He does the same ‘lifting’ movement with his left hand, bringing them both down together]

-Yes Tadashi more *staccato* [he sings his part from 17 with very short second notes of slurs. Very exciting and agitated]

-Very short

-You’re late [three before 21 – he plays it with shorter last notes so that the next one is not late]

-Attack. Yes! [he wants the initial contact on this note to be very dramatic]

-[gesturing, lots of beginnings of notes and big downwards movements]

-Together [he wants a gap from both Tadashi and me before this note]

-[two before 5 – plays it many times, very separated, with an accent on each note. He seems obsessed with this articulation]

-Accents!

-So can I lift my arm? [Tadashi asks] Yes! [Pauk sings it]

-[plays 4 – all accents are the same and very condensed and clear. Sounds quite menacing]

-Yes [at 4 – shows a very decisive action to Tadashi for his repeated notes. Wants a quicker gesture] Accent!

-Just *stop* the bow

-Lift!

**Yair Kless**

-I hear [plays with a big accent] but [plays with no accent, just immediate depth] and of course, *on* the beat [bar 4]. And all the [sings the shorter notes] more round [swooping motion of hand]

-[demonstrates the accents at 7, with bow speed and *vibrato*] Breathing.

-[he demonstrates: the first semiquaver is more melodic, with no accent]

-No, you worry about the accents, and it blocks your bow speed. No, I imagine some like, more *mysterioso* [demonstrates with very airy sound and very fast bow] Like [shows that it’s like gasping]

-I think this is not accents [at the *Allargando*] this is [shows expressive movement] it’s warm [sings] Now uh, [sings it] more *tragic*.

-[plays bar before 9 more smoothly; does not like accents] [plays an up-bow with a gentle first contact] not [plays an accent] [plays 9 without the added octaves and much more melancholically]

-[sings it with abrupt ending rather than diminuendo to second note. He wants the latter]

**András Keller**

-It needs a *deepness*, not, the goal is not the *accent* it’s the [sings it with much emotion] this is the goal, not to [sings it aggressively] So, avoid all aggressivity because Bartók was very much non aggressive.

-Is quite good but, I think it’s so important [to show the *sf* notes not just with an accent but something deeper] so is, how is the *breathing* of this

-But this, I think is good for the articulation [he plays it, with dramatic up-bow retakes, creating a feeling of urgency and drama]

-So really accents huh? [there should be accents, also on the up bows – he plays it] Here, when it just stays, it’s not necessary to use full bow [he demonstrates] so, it shouldn’t be anything the *same* [it all sounds too similar]

**2) Bow Articulation: Separation vs. Connection; Portato vs. Legato**

The connection between notes, or between groups of slurred notes, is related to the ideas noted above about beginnings and endings of notes. But while beginnings and endings of notes are considered above as entities in themselves, the separation and connection of notes has to do with the relation to each other, i.e., the *space between* notes or phrases. This encompasses both technical and musical considerations, which are often intertwined and reflexive.

Yair Kless is adamant that *portato* is the basis of all good *legato,*[[40]](#footnote-40) but all three teachers touch on the importance of *legato* bowing and on the necessary role of *portato* in crafting musical language. *Portato* is created by giving slight articulation or accentuation on notes that appear under a slur. Watching video footage of great violinists, including Jascha Heifetz, David Oistrakh, and Christian Ferras, clearly shows that *portato* was an important expressive tool for these players, adding to the clarity, directness, and ‘speaking’ quality of the sound. *Legato*, where the notes under a slur are played smoothly and are not articulated separately is an expressive tool that can create a singing, endless line. It is useful, though, not to think of *legato* and *portato* as opposites, but rather as two elements of bow articulation that interact and contribute in constantly varying degrees to creating expression and a speaking quality.

It has become somewhat unfashionable in string playing to be seen to employ excessive *portato*, and some teachers even demand that their students completely eschew *portato* or at least *portato* as they conceive of it, which is often quite limited.[[41]](#footnote-41) In reality, all top string players use some degree of *portato*, and it is far too simplistic to think of it as something that can either be ‘turned on’ or ‘turned off’. The subtlety of bow articulation, even when notes are grouped together under a slur, is perhaps more complex than our language can adequately express, but it is this subtlety that is the key element of ‘speaking’ through playing, or *parlando*. Broader ideas about the concept of *parlando* will be examined later in this chapter, but the comments below address the more specific or technical elements of slurred articulation.

**György Pauk**

-Yes [plays with separation between each D, showing the different tied note lengths, five before 11]

-Don’t spend too.. [don’t use too much bow] it’s too *legato* [plays my part two before 18, first smoothly, to show how not to do it, then again with very little bow, articulating every note with changes of bow speed and weight. He almost stops the bow before the short notes, making it sound very clear] It will help.

-[to Tadashi] Is it possible, sorry, that it’s not so *legato* [comes over to piano and plays bass line, with separation between notes]

-[he wants more articulation at 21 – plays the duplets, articulating each bow change]

-[he wants every note more separated and decisive in the syncopations after 13. He plays from the *calmandosi,* very decisive and with clear beginnings of notes and separation between all the notes. Slurred notes are articulated. Very grand and triumphant sounding]

-So, this is *so important* you know all this one [this articulation – he plays this and also the beginning of the First Rhapsody, showing the difference it makes when he does more articulation]

-For me, it’s a little too flowy [he demonstrates this ‘flowiness’ by using an even, flat bow, without any articulation or differentiation of notes. Then he plays it how he wants it, still with very even sound and an endless line, but with each note slightly articulated in the bow. It is barely *portato.* The articulation also seems to come from the *vibrato* and touch of the left hand, and the relationship between this and the bow] Needs articulation.

-Yup. Tempo! [he wants more articulation on my quavers by making more separation (*portato*) and accenting them]

-[gesture shows the ‘lift’ or separation between the Ds again as we play] Good.

-[wants more articulation, with an accent on every four notes] Yes!

-[he wants slight accents or pulses on each note change in my trills five after 23] Good.

-Yeah that’s it, lots of articulation [sings, every note separated]

-and *a lot* of articulation

-Yes, double dot [he wants the rhythm more pointed. He sings it and this rhythm seems to give it a proud sort of character]

-and *then* very *legato*.

**Yair Kless**

-Here [*Vivacissimo*], not really separated [he sings: wawawawa]

-Don’t slice it! It will slice by itself [shows difference between accenting every bow change and playing it more *legato*]

-It’s a little bit chopped.. hey [showing sensitivity of the fingers on the bow] more expressive!

-Try not to slice [after 18] [he wants it more on the string with fewer accents] No, you play classic [shows it much more ‘Gypsy’ style] Folkloric.

-Round, round, round, round

-You don’t need this cut [the accents on all the bow changes], it’s enough. If you cut like this then, you, you, swallow.

-Why? So many accents [in the *accelerando*] Just [more simple]

-So, *legato* all the time, not [emphasising every note]

-When you go to piano, not any more staccato [two before 5, more lyrical]

-[plays 6, very airy and without accents] [plays it accented on every bow change to show the opposite] You don’t need this.

-very *legato*.. you know that you do an accent there? [24, string crossings] There are no accents. More this kind of movement [horizontal]

-Yes, but not so many accents [at 1, sings it more *legato*]

-Try not to slice [wants more flexibility in the bow]

-Like Flesch said, every good *legato* goes from a *portato*, as we know..

-Too many accents and not enough *sostenuto*.

-Articulate with the bow speed

-Yes, like you are painting

-I wouldn’t slice

**András Keller**

-and you played so *even*.. yes?

-Also there is.. um.. waves.

-It was too loud. Uh, so, just try to, like, mourn [sings with many ‘waves’]

-Yes, here, *fix* the violin [don’t move].Yes, but *sing sing.* This, your elbow is a little bit too high.

**3) Left Hand Articulation: Touch; Vibrato; Shifting; Fingering**

While more time is spent on ideas that relate to the bow, all three teachers also address concepts that relate to left hand articulation. Left hand ‘touch’ involves both detailed technical elements and more abstract concepts. It is at the same time one of the most basic, primary tools of string playing (essential even at the most rudimentary level), and capable of transforming even the highest levels of learning and playing through the addition of nuance and abstract ideas. Left hand touch refers to the contact between the fingers and the string. While it seems simple in principle (a finger stops the string at a specific place to produce the desired pitch), the variety of tonal colours and the possibility to shape and enhance the sound of every note on every different instrument means that top performers are acutely aware of it and that much time is spent in the practise room experimenting to perfect it. The basic elements of left hand touch are finger pressure, angle of the finger in relation to the string, point of contact on the fingertip, the mechanism for lifting and dropping the finger, and the degree of finger independence or involvement of the other fingers. Though there are widely accepted principles concerning many of these elements, as was touched upon in chapter 3, there are countless variations according to one’s pedagogical ‘school’ or tradition, the music one is playing, and one’s physical stature (including length of arms and fingers) and flexibility.

Left hand touch and *vibrato* are closely connected. In many ways, an isolated study of touch is unrealistic because *vibrato*, and the nature of each particular *vibrato*, invariably affects all of the elements of touch noted above. Perhaps the most clearly audible and visible elements of *vibrato* are the speed and width of the action; however, more subtle actions, and application of the elements of touch, affect the sound in different ways. The sonic effects of touch and *vibrato* are perhaps as profound as the use of the bow. Though Keller mentions touch a number of times, especially finger pressure, and all three teachers talk about the basic elements of *vibrato*, the material that emerged from the lessons relating to left hand articulation is surprisingly sparse. Though I know from experience that many of the musical, expressive, and ‘speaking’ ideas that are examined below are intrinsically tied to how we use the left hand, it seems with all three teachers that most ideas about the left hand are addressed, and even thought about, in relation to more abstract concepts.

An exception to this might be shifting. Shifting, or the change from one position on the fingerboard to another, is a simpler subject to address because it is essentially a mechanical necessity. Of course, shifting is also a tool of expression, and the mechanism and timing of shifting *in relation to the bow* is quite complex. But most teachers, including the three in this study, have fairly concrete ideas about correct and incorrect ways of changing position. Choices of fingering necessitate different shifting frequency and hand patterns, and string players seem to have differing views both on fingerings and on the importance of fingering choices. Though largely dictated by personal preference[[42]](#footnote-42) and, to a lesser extent, by the properties of the instrument one is playing on,[[43]](#footnote-43) one’s choice of fingering is a significant factor in sound production. Fingerings are often ‘passed on’ from teacher to student, and there seems, amongst advanced players, to be a fascination with fingering experimentation. András Keller is clearly fascinated by the effects of different fingerings, and his quest for clarity and openness is reflected in his choices of fingering, where he often plays in lower positions in order for the strings to ring as clearly as possible. Pauk, on the other hand, always searches for fingerings that enable him to play a phrase on one string. A change in tonal colour is inevitable when moving from one string to another, and he avoids this whenever possible. This is clearly much more of a concern to him than it is to Keller, though, as I am already following this principle,[[44]](#footnote-44) the issue does not arise during the Pauk lesson documented here.

**György Pauk**

-[plays the *glissando* before 24 with finger that was already on the string rather than the ‘destination’ finger. He then gives the top note articulation in both hands. Sounds more decisive]

-Yes, Sadie, can you a little faster *vibrato*.

-Sadie, sorry, your *vibrato* is a little [too slow] wobbly.

-You keep your wrist [he thinks my left wrist is slightly too pulled back sometimes]

**Yair Kless**

-I mean, the timing of the shifting, what I suggest you to do is, the classical way, more bridge like, and also to do the.. Heifetz way, or as Flesch calls ‘B’, and then combine it, combine it.

-just concentrate on the contact with the string and don’t worry here [upper left arm] Yes, it changes the.. uh.. proportions [showing more sensitive fingertips]

-*Glissando*, but.. don’t show all the distance huh?

-You know, you’re all the time the *vibrato* [very fast and tight] in the short notes, too late, it’s [tight and every note too marked] Just, release here! [*vibrato* – shows it with much more flexibility]

-You could, connect better in the left hand. You stop the.. you go for rotation [*vibrato* need to be more continuous]

-*Here* if you want a little *glissando*, you don’t go to prison.

-No, this is like [plays it, stopping *vibrato* slightly on the change of note] A little practise you know, this.

-In my opinion, you have to do three things: the classical way, which you do, but [arching upwards] don’t go into the river, huh? This is one thing. Now, I would do uh [shows a shift using destination finger] this way.. but I promised three things – and also [does it by stretching] like a stretching. And finally [plays the phrase] it’s a combination, and.. very creative.

-But I hear a note that’s.. that’s not written!

**András Keller**

-You push up your hand, instead of to pull up [demonstrates] You put down the first finger, then you lose the possibility to relax.

-Left hand is *leggiero*, okay?

-Open, here [left hand – open from the knuckles to approach the next note while shifting up]

-It’s too [wide *vibrato* on the long E in fifth bar] Almost plain.

-Actually I learned from Vegh this, it’s a very wonderful fingering.

-Tell me, why are the other fingers are, pressing down? [why am I keeping my left hand fingers down] Just when each one is in use [lift the other fingers when not needed]

-You press, a little bit. So, if I start to vibrate at the beginning of [the long E, he does a very wide *vibrato*] I’m.. catched, a little bit.

-Too strong [left hand, on the fast notes]

-Each note takes a, resonance, and if I press in a very high position like this, then the reaction is uh..

-If you open with this, slow *vibrato*, then.. uh, you cannot change.

-Because if you take this [second finger off] the quality’s different.

**4) Physicality: Set-up; Use of bow; Relationship between speed and weight**

The comments in this section relate to physical aspects of violin playing. The ideas are in some ways technical, but the breadth of the ideas and the more general nature of these comments seem to warrant the inclusion of this admittedly vague categorization. The feeling of balance between the left and right sides of the body is an abstract but crucial concept: often, when changes are made to the bow arm or to the left hand, compensatory changes need to be made in other parts of the body. For example, the balance between bow arm weight at any given time necessitates a corresponding use of *vibrato* in order to achieve the best possible tonal results. The ‘best results’ are of course subjective and different sounds or ‘special effects’ can be produced by altering the balance between the two sides, but this subtle interaction is complex and reflexive.

Many of the comments below seem to address the physicality of optimising sound production. Sometimes, it seemed in the lessons that these questions were raised when there was a gap between what the teacher thought I wanted to express sonically and the result I was achieving. Though these comments could have been included in one of the categories below, such as Expression, a separate grouping where the expression was viewed from a more physical than abstract angle seemed more representative of my experience in the lessons.

**György Pauk**

-*Slower* your bow, it’s a little too [too fast. He plays it, showing difference that slower bow makes – the faster bow seems to make the sound too ‘easy’ and slowing it down seems to create more resistance in the sound and more intensity. The sound is incredibly sustained when he plays with slower bow] okay [as I play it he wants more *agitato* feeling and more moving forward. He makes many gestures here]

-Uh, Sadie, very little bow.

-[he makes movements as I play exaggerating the ‘pull and push’ of the bow and the upward movement of the entire arm on up-bows]

**Yair Kless**

-At the frog, you do this [shows a very stiff bow hold with fingers close together] instead of this [flexible fingers on bow].. not that I mind, but you should mind because it makes accents.

-Now, do the same thing up and down [shows bow movement, with same heaviness and upper arm weight for up and down bows] No. No, you do this [lifting from upper arm on the up bow] Look [holds out arm and each bow stroke (up and down) is made with the same ‘dipping’ motion, going into the string]

-and maybe more freedom in the bow

-Yes [pointing to upper arm] now you’re with the good weight.. It’s not what I see or [pointing to my arm] but it’s that the music.. it comes *alive* [shows stiff bow, then flexible one]

-No, but you try it not the right way. You try it this [plays with a *crescendo* and more movement towards the tip] but this [plays it and lowers upper arm at the change to up bow] like *leaning*. From the shoulder.

-Yes more [bouncing right wrist at the *a tempo*] translate it to the [wrist]

-All the down bows are.. [accented] More, more distribution of weight, with the *vibrato*, then.. [it will sound good]

-[wants more expression on the accented note and still more rounded bow arm movements] and if you think that you’re exaggerating, you don’t! [laughing]

-Oh, oh, oh, where is the freedom?

-I think that your down bows, you don’t release here [upper arm]

-[shows lighter and very flexible bowing]

**András Keller**

-Because it’s [plays, draws the sound out more in the A before 1, starting with lighter bow and no *vibrato*] sound quality, *speed* because you are too slow [plays with too much weight and too slow bow] and then you press [continues to play, less *vibrato*, almost all in lower positions, very clear sound and pointing out the ‘steps’]

-So, I try to show you that we must, we need to explore the notes, what they want. [he demonstrates on my violin, much more *diminuendo* on the first note] If I keep, so strong, and, and, I’m blocked, I cannot go further [plays first phrase, with many more colours and very *parlando*] Okay? Don’t press down too much [with the bow]

-So, use your arm [sweeping motion] because you are forcing too much. And then here [five before 3 – he plays it with more separation, more bow, and less vibrato] So, please play more horizontal [‘opening’ movement] not [closed] forced.

-And uh [more horizontal bowing] the others [less open].. This is too strong a piece, so we must be.. smart, to work out, because if I just press, then it’s hopeless. So, open your forearm.

**5) Clarity**

I did not anticipate that the idea of clarity would be the focus of so many of András Keller’s comments. Although this idea was not explored in Pauk’s lesson, and was touched on only very briefly by Kless, Keller’s emphasis on clarity and the particular importance he places on clarity in relation to Bartók and his music was striking. Keller’s concept of clarity seems to involve a number of facets. He often wants less *vibrato* and lighter bow pressure, as he seems to feel that this enables the body of the violin to resonate more freely. In relation to this, he stresses precision in both the bow and the left hand. For him, it seems that *power* (both in terms of sound and in terms of musical delivery) necessitates clarity, while aggressiveness and any rough edges or sounds detract from the power of the music. Even at the most passionate moments, he seems to want an element of objectivity, and he seems to link this objectivity to clarity, directness, and power.

When Keller talks about speaking and about *parlando*, which is perhaps the idea he stresses most during the lesson, he seems to equate this speaking quality with a need for clarity. He says that Bartók is ‘not a contemporary music, [it] is absolutely classical’, and strives for uncomplicated directness. When he declares that it is his *mission* to *defend* Bartók and his music, he intends to advocate this idea of playing Bartók not as ‘modern’ music, but with the clarity, directness, cleanliness, and precision that one would expect of music from the classical period.

**Yair Kless**

-Gertler used to do [shows a bowing, with some slurs separated in the thirds] but I don’t know why. Yes, it clarifies a little bit.

-The sound is not clear.. release here! [right shoulder] You ate cement in your cereal?

**András Keller**

-I think a *clear* voice is so important, always to open and very precise and we, we need to give a possibility to *resonate* the body [of the violin], if I just, all the time I’m pushing, [it doesn’t work] Okay, so?

-Okay, good, but you know, for me, what is little bit missing [takes violin] a little bit same as the beginning, it’s too much [passionate/tense] nervousness energy, and the clarity [is lost]

-The clarity, must be the first

-He [Bartók] was extremely *powerful* but that was very far from him, aggressivity. So many people are misunderstood his music, and a little bit, it, it’s my *mission* to, to, *defend*, you know, because he was a *so clear* person and so clear is his music

-So for me, the *appassionato* is existing in another.. place [slightly objective feeling] So, what to say.. uhh.. we have to play with the full heart, full emotion, but *here*, with a completely clear articulation. And now, because of these big emotions, it’s a little bit.. press you, and you are, you do everything here [too much *vibrato*, too passionate] It shouldn’t appear, the *appassionato*, under your fingers because they, it’s lots of dirt coming out [laughing] unfortunately.

-Okay keep away a little bit the *vibrato*, so something just to *speak them out*.

-Here is the centre [seventh and eighth bars] so should be wanted to recognise, as this message (…?) But for that, we need a very *simplice* sound.

-First you must find the [plays first note without *vibrato*] the notes, because if you cover [plays with far too much *vibrato*] then everything is covered

-this open A is much better

-It’s more open, yeah?

-Sometimes, difficult to define the notes [in my string crossings] so, can you, make it *clear* here [when the harmonies change]

-First, catch the note, then vibrate! Yes. [don’t vibrate from the beginning of the note on strong notes]

**6) Musical Expression**

Whereas the earlier categories are grounded in more technical and concrete elements, the present category and the next one (Language/*Parlando*) are less tangible. Still, as difficult as it is to pin either category down, they raise the most significant artistic issues. Under ‘musical expression’ I include the remarks made by Pauk, Kless, and Keller about artistry, and about the atmosphere of phrases and the work as a whole. These elements come into play over and above the technical details covered elsewhere. While the comments collected in this section are no longer than those collected elsewhere, the implications are often more far reaching. They concern not merely a single moment of the piece, but its underlying emotional impact.

**György Pauk**

-[he sings and plays my cadenza at 10, much faster and more wild. Much gesturing and showing the ‘waves’ in the line. He also wants a much bigger *glissando* in the cadenza – both the top and bottom notes are very decisive though]

-[he conducts with both arms, big sweeping movements for each beat, and with decisive quick upward gestures anticipating or provoking rhythmic gestures in the music]

-[just before 40 – plays it adding octaves and taking another bow]

-Octaves! [he wants me to add octaves in my part – they are not in the score]

-You don’t want to do it on the E string? [in the music it says to play it up the lower strings though. The E string is much brighter]

-*Ben markato* [sings again, very tense and exciting character] Yes, 17?

-I’m a little bit, not so happy about [sings from *tranquillo* after 4, exaggerating the swells in the line and the *vibrato*, sounding sea-sick] It’s a, a little bit cheap [demonstrates the more even sound that he wants] not [plays it with too much swell and too much *vibrato*] and the first time too [same problem the first time it happens]

-[beat before 10] Just go into it [he plays the upbeat notes much faster and lighter] *Leggiero*. Yeah.

-Why so slow? [he wants it faster from third bar of 27] *Piu mosso*, why is it so slow? [plays it while singing Tadashi’s figure. It has more lilt] I think the *ritenuto* is composed [thinks we shouldn’t slow down – he goes to get metronome]

-[he shows the same upward ‘provocation’ movement, and in the *crescendo* he seems to want even more excitement and more impatience]

-[he gestures and seems to want all my hairpins in the next passage to be bigger and more explosive]

-a bigger difference, you know, the *piano* and *piu piano*, so this means that you can give a little more [plays a little more before the drop in dynamic]

-and at least *mezzo piano*.

-And everything is clear [at sixth bar of 13 – the tension is gone]

-Tadashi we need.. don’t start the *diminuendo* too soon.. *calmandosi* [sings the piano part, keeping more tension for longer]

-You don’t want the octaves? [there are no octaves in the music but he adds them for more impact again]

-[sings it again with lilting, dancing movement]

-Marching [as we play – square ‘marching’ gestures also]

-More sound!

-More!

**Yair Kless**

-a question of approach, translation, it dictates. I think that, let’s say, in the first [movement], all the [typical Hungarian rhythm] are more *espressivo*, more, not cutting, and full of, uh.. personal statement. More *mysterioso* in few places in the second, in the third for me, you [too passionate], you should make a little bit distant from it and make it like, like a game a little bit, with still the drama of course.

-But I think it should be a little bit this [unclear sound], not too brilliant.

-Can you imagine me taking a violin from a *Tzigane* in a restaurant to play? [he wants it more like the café ‘gypsy’ style]

-I don’t think it needs [slicing at 40] [shows it longer] It’s much more in style! You do, you do Schubert. It must be really like folkloric, you know.

-and the beginning of the A [bar 5] with more secrets.

-[shaking head] No, first of all, it’s heavy, too heavy, a little bit I think that it is also [sings with emphasis on off-beat (first up-beat)] a little faster [gets metronome – it is a little faster] So, if faster, the technique should be changed.. you are this [demonstrates – I should be very relaxed in both arms] a little bit, Hungarian violinist

-You can be more free, you know, with the dynamics

-It’s a little bit too [shows very muscular, sharp bow movements].. square.

-No, no. You see, it’s the same approach, but this is even more poetic.

-Okay, for me it reminds me with the character of Pauk [punching motion].. you know, with paprika.

-Maybe, don’t vibrate immediately [at 3] [he plays it, very expressively] With colours.

-For me that [needs to] breathe. I like it more wave-like

-It’s wonderful, but [plays with big accents on all the bow changes, then smoother] rounder [circular movements]

-and the change of harmonies to the diminished [sings it] It’s *very emotional*

-Yes, don’t do the *crescendo* before it’s written because it’s.. atmosphere.

-I think the *crescendo* is not this [aggressive movement] but [opening up movement]

-[at 5] Much more round! Uhh.. it gives you the flexibility of.. colours.

-It sounds to me a little [too square and hard]

-If you punch all the time, then it really doesn’t affect..

**András Keller**

-and now play for me, this line [*allargando*] with more colours [sings] Enjoy the *rubato*.

-A little too aggressive. Yes, but *sing*

-I’m interested in some [sings it mysteriously and breathlessly] so that really must *clear*, the atmosphere

-[to pianist – the rhythm at 3 must be more strict] You see, you come from the downbeat, not from your own [downbeat is a rest, but still must be in time]

-I don’t feel the reason to play, up [to remain on the G string] *simple*. It was so very, huge movement, really very complicated, and at least at the end, be *peaceful*. You don’t want to [vibrate too much] fight with the world any more.

-it always has a little bit *crescendo* before the *sf*.

**7) Language/*Parlando***

As I noted under ‘musical expression’, this section concerns abstract elements of the material. Under ‘language/*parlando*’ I include remarks about the communicative dimensions of the music, and particular comments about its speaking qualities.

**György Pauk**

-In tempo [to Tadashi, sings two before 26. He doesn’t want the end of the phrase to slow down. Very direct]

-[to Tadashi] Short notes short, long notes long, haha..

-[the articulation is the same as when this rhythm was loud even though here it is quiet]

-*On* the beat

-*Very* free, it’s like in a Gypsy band, you know [pretends to play Gypsy clarinet]

-Yes I think agogic, you know, it’s important. You can’t take this too fast.

**Yair Kless**

-You do it like classical or early romantic. I mean Prokofiev is different, but this is.. you know, besides the big drama and the [virtuosity]. And also, some your *vibrato* should be more.. [relaxed] continuous, and *more free*, more variety.

-Also Gertler didn’t like to say it, but he started to do [very *Tzigane*/Gypsy style playing – Hungarians do not like to admit that any of Bartók’s music is ‘Gypsy’ inspired] [laughing] Okay.

-I want it to speak more.

-Sadie, you play horizontal, but you can’t play this horizontal.. I mean you can, but it becomes this [showing straight abrupt movements] macho style all the time. [sings and shows malleable, flexible lines] Look for the *rounds* here [bow] and look for this [supple left hand] Sometimes it’s [shows inflexible bowing].

-You are too classic. You play, how the Japanese say, you play Blahms [sic.]. [sings it much more free and not as serious] It’s absolutely *Tzigane*.

-I tell you immediately – you base your sound on the *vibrato*.. it’s more deep and sensitive from the bow, that’s what I am used to, from Gertler, and from well, this *school*. And also, your approach is very [triumphant fist in the air] macho. But it’s a *personal statement* [gently lilting movements of the hand]

-Yes, if you can relax the *vibrato* [shows more fluid movement], because you do *each one* [pointing out each note of the line in opening – not good]

-you base on left, but base on right *first*. Then.. it’s balanced.

-So, I don’t.. although *risoluto*, although everything, [sings it very expressively] very very.. well, I already used the words personal, *espressivo*.. so, personal expression, that’s a new one [laughing]

-*Yes*, now you speak the language. Okay? Yes.. very very.. ummm.. intensive, but with ups and downs and with.. personal expression.

-I like it also punchy but with.. with the spirit of.. uh [it is too punchy]

-Attention the down bows. Not only that you don’t lean [I should], you also go too fast. For me all this is [round movements] warm and round. Like [whole body flexible movement] something.. inside.

-All this, and breathe more, you know you didn’t really breathe once you know for the [shows a phrase or slur]

**András Keller**

-so this is a very passionate uhh, thing what in *our* language, you now, Hungarians, are accentuate the beginning of the word and not, you know the end [sings it with less swing, then again with more emphasis on beginning, with vocal sound ‘yaa’]

-you have to find a more flexible sound, because it’s too much force. And I think, this is, uh, not a contemporary music, this is absolutely classical, so if not it sounds that, something’s not right. So, I think you, we have to find the right way to play very speaking *parlando* okay? And not only just [dramatic movement] uh.. super (…) because this is, sometimes, is *colours* in the music. And the rhythm [to pianist, as at 3 in the piano] is, always exists, not [sings it with a less dotted rhythm]

-So try to be, as disciplined, as simple, as possible.

-So, what, as resumé, we, would like to be, which are the *main* notes. We have to [hand gesture] present them well, not cover with, uh.. *super vibrato.*

-because we are, Hungarians are so.. [direct hard gesture] straight, so when we finish the sentence, we finish it [sings with last note of phrase not too long] finito, okay? [last note more cut off]

**Conclusion**

For the most part, I found these sessions helpful on some technical matters, but mostly as a source of critical feedback on artistic matters. Because I was forced to justify many of my own decisions repeatedly, these sessions proved to be a valuable exercise of self-examination. For example, I became more aware of Pauk’s influence on my current playing style. Both Keller and Kless commented a number of times on my tendency to play aggressively, pointing out in particular many beginnings of notes and accents that they felt were too forceful. In many cases, I did not act on their judgement in subsequent performances, but my performances now contain more variegated nuance. In the same vein, both Keller and Kless found my sound to be overly intense in a number of ways – my *vibrato* was too fast for them, my bow contact was often too sustained in their opinions, and my dynamics were not sufficiently wide-ranging. Personally, I think that my playing is more ‘convincing’ since I began to study with Pauk. Nevertheless, the overlap between Keller and Kless’s comments is difficult to dismiss, so I have taken a number of their remarks into consideration.

As I will explore in the next chapter, evidence of influence of all three mentors can be found in the final recording.

**My Documented Recordings – Commentary**

I recorded Bartók’s First Sonata four times over the course of my doctoral research, each time with pianist Tadashi Imai. These are available on my research website, www.sadiefieldsresearch.com, on the page titled ‘Chapter 5 – Bartók First Sonata’, and can be accessed on a computer or mobile device. For clarity and consistency, I will refer to each of the four recordings by number, ordered chronologically:

1) Audio recording from in November 2012 – live performance at the *Jacqueline du Pre Hall*, Oxford.

2) Video recording from April 2013 – live performance at the Royal Academy of Music.

3) Video recording from June 2013 – live performance at the Royal Academy of Music.

4) Video recording from July 2014 – recorded at the Royal Academy of Music.

It may be interesting for the reader to note that recording 1 was made before I had played the piece for anyone, recordings 2 and 3 were made after having had one lesson with György Pauk, and recording 4 was made after consulting additionally with Yair Kless and András Keller. These three mentoring sessions are examined in detail in chapter 4. To see an example of my Bartók playing prior to recording 1, please watch the video recording of the second movement of the Bartók Violin Concerto, made in the summer of 2011 in Szombathely, Hungary, with the Savaria Symphony Orchestra. This recording is on my research website, on the page titled ‘Chapter 5 – Supplementary Video Material’.

**My Expectations**

Before returning to the four recordings to compare them, I expected to hear differences between them. This hypothesis was informed by many years of performing, and by observing what happens when I return to a work after a period of one year, two years, or many more – as I often do. I always look forward to returning to a work I have already performed; the ‘hard work’ of note-learning is behind me, and I can concentrate on both its subtle details and its overall structure (the architecture, as I like to think of it). The security that I already know the basics of the work[[45]](#footnote-45) gives me a sense of freedom. I therefore consider myself to have returned to the Bartόk Sonata three times over the course of this study, and accordingly this familiarity ought to be evident increasingly in the second, third, and fourth recordings. Even though I felt confident that my work over the past four years had changed my conception of Bartók’s musical language, I was unsure about whether these changes would be audible in the recordings.

**My Interpretation – General Evolution**

Even with this hypothesis in mind, listening to the four recordings together now, I am surprised by the extent to which they evolve, especially comparing the last recording with the first three.

**1) Interaction with Pianist**

In the first recording, and to some extent in recordings 2 and 3, I notice that many small details are lost because the conversational element of the work, especially in the first movement, is unclear. Often, the rhythmic underpinning the violin and piano parts (both of which are incredibly difficult) do not exactly match, and this causes minute disruptions in the hand-over from one part to the other. As a result of these disruptions the musical line is either stilted or it runs too quickly into the next phrase. In the final recording, these hand-overs sound much more well thought out, and the interaction between parts reflects Bartók’s notation much more precisely.

My own level of familiarity with Bartók’s complex rhythmic notation undoubtedly improved over the entire period of this study, and this affected my interaction with the pianist. Equally, I felt that when I prepared the work with another pianist, as I did prior to the Keller masterclass,[[46]](#footnote-46) I was forced to re-evaluate some of my own rhythmic inconsistencies. This pianist was not as familiar with the work, and we approached it with a more literal regard for the score. Several times she questioned the liberties I was taking, liberties that Tadashi and I had taken habitually by then, and I realised that quite often they were unnecessary and perhaps even detrimental to the musical and sonic effects. This reassessment of one element of my performance practice led to further reassessment of other technical and musical elements.

**2) Dynamic and Tonal Variegation**

The dynamic variegation is also much more precise in the final recording. In the first three recordings, and most notably in recordings 2 and 3, the dynamic level seems almost relentless. I find that my playing is often very strong and that, in sustaining the sound so strongly and evenly, the tonal nuance is diminished. In preparing for the final recording, I tried to eliminate some of my established habits and approach the work as if for the first time. I did not consciously follow the suggestions of any particular teacher. Nevertheless, the fact that both Kless and Keller commented a number of times on the need for more dynamic and tonal variegation is likely to have influenced how I approached the final recording. Both teachers thought that I played too strongly too much of the time, and that in so doing, the sound was sometimes ‘ironed out’, that my performance lacked tonal nuance. For them, Bartόk’s musical language calls for more nuance of colour and more personal expression (mostly through a more varied use of the bow).

Although I did not always agree with what Kless and Keller said on the subject, their comments, and especially the *similarity* of some of their comments, made me question my basic approach to sound in this music. In so doing, I was able to better analyse my own playing, and to give further consideration to the relation between how I was playing and what Bartók indicates in the score.

**3) Tempo Relationships**

In a similar vein, I notice that the tempo relationships in the first three recordings do not always reflect Bartók’s musical intentions, as depicted by his markings in the score. A number of times, the tempo changes in the first three recordings are exaggerated in order to reflect *my own* feelings about a particular phrase or section. Additionally, changes in tempo are sometimes too sudden in the early recordings. In the final recording, the tempo changes reflect Bartók’s markings much more closely. In some places, for example, at four bars before 22 in the first movement, following the tempo marking felt quite strange at first. In some cases, I had to re-evaluate my conception of the phrase or section. In this phrase, I had grown accustomed to playing it with a similar intensity to the phrase just before 16, but slower. But Bartók’s indications point to something very different – rather than a feeling of triumph (like at 16 – marked *f risoluto*), the phrase before 22 (marked *f espressivo*) is much more melancholic and inward-looking. Playing it like this gives the entire section an arch-like shape that is much more convincing.

In hindsight, I may have exaggerated the changes of tempo in order to project a heightened sense of drama and intensity. It is tempting, especially in music that one feels strongly about, to want to constantly *do more*, or even too much. To a great extent, I can trace both my relentlessly strong dynamic and my exaggeration of tempo changes to this impulse. To illustrate this development in a little more detail, the following section explores the development of my performance practices for the opening of the First Movement.

**Evolution of the opening of the First Movement**

To observe some of the differences described above, I invite the reader to listen to the opening of the first movement (from the opening to rehearsal number 1 in the score) of each recording, starting with the earliest one. I notice many differences between the first and second recordings. Compared to the first recording, which sounds somewhat deliberate and uncertain, the second sounds very confident. The initial contact on the first note is very decisive in recording #2, and from the first sound there is a sense of drive that sets it apart from the recording #1. The sound is more intense, and coupled with the driving, almost relentless pushing forward of the phrase, it sounds very exciting and dramatic (notwithstanding later misgivings I developed over this feature of the performance). In this regard and for this section, the second and third recordings are the most similar to each other. Recording #3 maintains the driving intensity of recording #2, though it is a little more rhythmical, and, in my opinion, the articulation is stronger in recording #3. The bow changes are so strong and decisive that they sound accented here.

The opening of recording #4 is quite different musically/tonally/sonically from the previous three. The initial contact on the first note is not articulated with as much decisive force. As a result, it has more depth and sounds less aggressive. In particular, there is a subtle sonic change evident during the first note, which recedes slightly after the initial contact rather than remaining fully sustained. The line has more ‘waves’, and the tone is far more nuanced. Each main note up to 1 has its own expressive voice, especially the longer notes. Additionally, the nuance in tone colour is related both to the qualities of the note itself and the function of the note within the larger phrase. Rather than there being one continuous line from the beginning to 1, in recording #4 the music seems to composed of small, subtle gestures, each with its own expressive function. Some of these gestures carry the energy forward, some are smaller ‘asides’, and each one is part of a complex musical line or journey).

**Conclusion**

As both a performer *and* listener, it is sometimes difficult to separate my recollections of the feelings that I had during the performances with the feelings evoked by the performances *themselves*. Bearing this in mind, I have tried to take an approach that is as objective as possible when listening to the four recordings. Listening back to the three earlier recordings, Tadashi and I are frequently ‘flying by the seats of our pants’. I imagine that, as the performer, this feeling of excitement seemed to be inherent in the work, which is incredibly complex and demanding; with the benefit of hindsight and reflection, I can appreciate how our liberties were based on ascriptions to the score that really originated in our own excitement about performing it. The final recording retains an element of this excitement, but it also feels stricter. The tempo relationships are more structured, and this sense of structure creates the impression of a slightly shorter, more compact work. The first movement of recording #4 is, in fact, notably shorter and more compact than any of the other three performances. This is evident in the table below.

**Recording Timings**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | First movement | Second movement | Third movement |
| November 2012 | 14’23 | 12’50 | 11’47 |
| April 2013 | 13’40 | 11’48 | 10’26 |
| June 2013 | 13’43 | 11’32 | 10’15 |
| July 2014 | 13’13 | 11’43 | 10’29 |

My overall impression is that as I became more familiar with the elements of Bartόk’s musical dialect, the sonic realisation of each one became more concise. In the final recording, many of the bowings that I had previously added became unnecessary (I had added more bows than was originally indicated in the score). As I became more self-aware of subconscious habits in my performance practice (e.g., slowing down at the ends of phrases), I gradually modified and eliminated them. The final performance more strictly observes the score, but at the same time, to me it sounds much freer and more expressive.

1. Flesch’s terminology may be problematic. This term, ‘re-creative artist’, may be similar to what he elsewhere calls a ‘reproductive artist’:

‘I differentiate among three kinds of musical human beings: there is the human being productive, who creates works; there is the human being receptive, who takes them into himself; and there is the human being reproductive, who transmits the creation of the one to the comprehension of the other. The reproductive artist, however, is not merely the middleman between the creative composer and the listener who enjoys. He also represents a synthesis of the natures of both, in so much as he combines the neo-creation of the note-symbols in tone, the transformation of the dead letter into living feeling, with his own acoustic perception.’

[Flesch, Carl. *The Art of Violin Playing,* ed. and trans. Frederick Martens(New York: Carl Fischer, 1930) [originally published in German as *Die Kunst des Violinspiels,* Berlin: Ries & Erler, 1923 (volume 1) and 1928 (volume 2)] p. 1] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Ibid,* p. 125 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. By ‘advanced’, I am referring to a lesson where the student is already an accomplished violinist and an experienced performer. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This dichotomy will be explored later in the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. T. S. Eliot. ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent*’, The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Fifth Edition, Volume 2* (New York: Norton & Company, 1986) [M. H. Abrams, General Editor] [first published in the *Egoist,* 1919] [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Ibid.,* p. 2207 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid*., p. 2207 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Ibid*., p. 2208 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Ibid*., p. 2208 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. ‘I, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.’ *Ibid*., p. 2209 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Carl Flesch. *The Memoirs of Carl Flesch*, trans. Hans Keller, in collaboration with C. F.

Flesch (London: Rockliff, 1957) [C. F. Flesch is the author’s son] [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The following is a list of recent publications on learning, both in one-to-one situations and in masterclasses:

Burwell, Kim. ‘A degree of independence: Teachers’ approaches to instrumental tuition in a university college’, *British Journal of Music Education,* 22/3 (2005) pp. 199-215

Creech, Andrea; Gaunt, Helena; Hallam, Susan; Linnhe Robertson. ‘Conservatoire students’ perceptions of master classes’, *British Journal of Music Education,* 26/3 (2009) pp. 315-331

Gaunt, Helena. ‘One-to-one tuition in a conservatoire: the perceptions of instrumental and vocal students’, *Psychology of Music,* 38/2 (2010) pp. 178-208

Goto, Midori. ‘Master class: I will be a learner for life’, *American String Teacher,* 54/1 (2004) pp. 37-38

Kennell, R. ‘Systematic research in studio instruction in music’, *The new handbook of research on music teaching and learning,* ed. Richard Colwell and Carol Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 243-256

Long, Marion; Gaunt, Helena; Hallam, Susan; Creech, Andrea; Robertson, Linnhe. ‘Do Prior Experience, Gender, or Level of Study Influence Music Students’ Perspectives on Master Classes?’, *Psychology of Music,* 40/6 (2012) pp. 683-699

McPherson, G. E.; Zimmerman, B. J. ‘Self-regulation on musical learning’, *The New Handbook of research on music teaching and learning: A project of the music educators national conference,* ed. Richard Colwell and Carol Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 327-347

Presland, Carol. ‘Conservatoire student and instrumental professor: The student perspective on a complex relationship’, *British Journal of Music Education,* 22/3 (2005) pp. 237-248

Zhukov, Katie. ‘Student learning styles in advanced instrumental lessons’, *Music Education Research,* 9/1 2007) pp. 111-127 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophical* Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe(Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1953) [originally written in German as *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, published posthumously in English translation] p. 8e No. 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Ibid*., p. 8e No. 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. These works include:

Clive Brown. *Classical & Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

David Milsom. Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance 1850-1900 (Ashgate Publishers Limited, 2003)

Robin Stowell. Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. For example, the playing of Joseph Szigeti, Zoltán Skékely, and Jelly d’Arányi. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Zathureczky was a pupil of Hubay before becoming his assistant in 1929, and was the director of the Academy from 1945 to 1957. He performed with Bartók and was a great admirer of his works. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Pauk’s Bartók recordings:

Rhapsodies Nos. 1 and 2 / Piano Quintet

with the Kodaly Quartet and Jenő Jandó, piano

Naxos 8.550886

Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2

with National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra

Antoni Wit, conductor

Naxos 8.554321

Violin Sonata, Sz. 117 (solo) / 44 Violin Duos

with Kazuki Sawa, violin

Naxos 8.550868

Violin Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2 / Contrasts

With Jenő Jandó, piano and Kálmán Berkes, clarinet

Naxos 8.550749 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. He talked about this during Lázló Somfai’s presentation at the Bartók Festival in Szombathely. A transcript is included in Appendix B. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *Ibid.,* Appendix B [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Israel Amidan (1921-1968) was a teacher at the Tel Aviv Music Academy. Kless was his most prominent student. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Gertler was a pupil of Hubay and Kodály, graduating with his Violin Diploma in 1925. He collaborated with Bartók between 1925 and 1938, and he recorded Bartók’s complete works to great critical acclaim. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Kovács was a pupil of Ede Zathureczky in the 1940s and later became the Director and then the Rector of the Liszt Academy. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See the transcript of my masterclass with him. Also, the following is an excerpt from an interview with Keller, connected to the Sándor Végh String Quartet Competition:

‘We refer to the oeuvre of Sándor Végh as a spiritual compass. His entire career is confirmation of something that the world today is lacking altogether. Joint music-making came naturally to him. The basis of every kind of musical activity is chamber music which, in effect, means communication. The only way to engage in music is the chamber-music way. It has many dimensions, but it is at the same time an attitude. The current-day way of seeing things, where the personality of the star musician is in the fore with the music in the background, is completely at odds with his viewpoint – and ours. Generally, play and articulating cannot eclipse the inner contents of the works. A performer, like a good actor, must impersonate the work. This, and only this, transubstantiation will convey the music to the listener, and nothing else. A musical work can only be born when the audience in the given space is involved in its genesis. I believe the lack of this approach constitutes a dire gap in current-day musical life.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove runs Easter Masterclasses and September Open Chamber Music sessions, to which artists from around the world are invited to play chamber music together for a week, culminating in performances around Cornwall. IMS Prussia Cove was started by Sándor Végh, and has many links to the Hungarian tradition. Rados, Kurtág, and Keller are frequent visitors. It is now directed by Stephen Isserlis, and I am regularly invited. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Many stories were recounted to me by colleagues during Prussia Cove ‘Open Chamber Music’ in September, 2013. I will not name the particular colleague in the case described here, as he still maintains quite a close relationship to Kurtág. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. I saw Rados do this during concerts when I was studying with him at Prussia Cove. My colleagues who were more familiar with him assured me that this was completely normal behaviour for him. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. For example, ‘*We play to figure 2*’ [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The high level of most of his students may also be a factor here. Perhaps he taught in more detail when he was younger and did not have the luxury of choosing his students from a pool of already outstanding violinists. Pauk maintains a small class of approximately eight students at the Royal Academy of Music. He auditions numerous applicants for each place that becomes available in his class, and the standards are very high. He generally expects students to bring new material to each lesson, and he can often cover a substantial amount of repertoire during one lesson (1.5 hours), such as an entire romantic concerto or one or more sonatas. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. I am referring to his recorded performance. Clearly, a live performance would again be very different, but the large discrepancies between the recording and the lesson demonstrations raises interesting questions nevertheless. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Of course I have not studied the entire repertoire with him, but I have studied a substantial number of representative works ranging from Bach to Lutoslawski. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. It should be added at this point that Pauk’s style of *vibrato* differs sometimes significantly from the styles employed and encouraged by many other violinists and teachers. Whilst studying with Pauk, I was told many times by other teachers that my *vibrato* was far too fast and that it lacked variety. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. This relationship is examined in greater detail in chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. From the lesson transcript in Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Some of the other violinists had more basic technical problems that were making them incapable of adopting his suggestions. He did not seem to alter his approach in these situations though, so both he and the students seemed frustrated and very little progress or improvement was made. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Stretching large intervals is more problematic in the lower positions because the notes are further apart on the fingerboard. Some of his fingerings were very unusual and reflected his taste for remaining in low positions when possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. From the transcript of the Keller lesson, Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Kless goes into the most detail about how, technically, to begin notes, but even these technical instructions are somewhat perfunctory, and refer to more complex processes that he knows I have learned previously. Pauk rarely going into technical detail, but much of what he says clearly implies specific types of beginnings and endings of notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Most notably, Prof. Atis Bankas, with whom I studied from the age of thirteen to eighteen at the Young Artists Performance Academy, Toronto. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Kless says here that he is quoting Carl Flesch, but I have unable to find a reference for this. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The association of *portato* with poor bow technique is something of a convention amongst many teachers, and especially amongst teachers whose students are not at the highest level. While a reliance on *portato* is undoubtedly something to be avoided, and is especially worrying if it is employed to hide bad shifting, at the highest levels of teaching and playing very little seems to be said about the subject. It seems that *portato* is frowned on during routine didactic study, but that everyone at the professional level considers the technique just one of many useful tools. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. At the professional level, fingering is dictated by personal preference. Some teachers, though, have strict ideas about the ‘best’ fingering for each musical work, and their students are forced to follow the same fingerings. In my experience, this practice is only adopted now by ‘old-fashioned’ teachers, and most of the best teachers recognise the personal element in fingering choice. Principles of fingering, though, such as staying on the same string during a phrase when possible, or playing in lower positions to achieve a more ‘open’ sound, are important pedagogical issues. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Different violins require the player to adapt their fingerings. For example, if a violin has a bright and resonant sound, it is possible to play in higher positions without the loss of clarity or projection that a darker or duller sounding violin might suffer. Even the choice of strings and the set-up of the violin can have an impact on choices of fingering, as is mentioned in chapter 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. I have always tried to avoid the colour changes associated with changes of string, unless they are musically called for. This often necessitates fingering that is ‘more difficult’ than other options, but I feel the expressive benefit is worth the ‘risk’ (usually, the risk of playing out of tune). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. By ‘knowing the basics’ I mean that I have mastered the work technically , that it is already in my muscle memory to some extent, that I know how my part fits with the piano or orchestral part, and that I have tested all of this on stage at least once. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. At the Keller master class I played with pianist Sophia Rahman. We had 4 rehearsals prior to the class. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)