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**FUNCTIONALITY OF ALFREDO PIATTI'S TWELVE CAPRICES, OP. 25  
IN TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CELLO PLAYING. HISTORICAL  
AND MODERN ASPECTS**

Study Program: Music Performance (Cello)

Master's Thesis

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# LIETUVOS MUZIKOS IR TEATRO AKADEMIJA

## BAIGIAMOJO DARBO SAŽININGUMO DEKLARACIJA

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## **FUNCTIONALITY OF ALFREDO PIATTI'S TWELVE CAPRICES, OP. 25 IN TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CELLO PLAYING. HISTORICAL AND MODERN ASPECTS**

The focus of this study is set on the technical difficulties of Alfredo Piatti's Twelve Caprices Op. 25 in development of cello playing.

This Thesis is divided onto two chapters. The first chapter contains the overview of the biography, compositions and teaching method of Piatti as one of the most influential cellists of the nineteenth century.

Chapter two focuses on the analysis and technical difficulties of the Twelve Caprices Op. 25

The analysis of the Twelve Caprices Op. 25 proves to contain the main technical difficulties of 19<sup>th</sup> century cello repertoire. Due to this fact the caprices are still widely in use today both in concert and pedagogical use.

### **A. PIATTI KAPRIČŲ OP. 25 FUNKCIONALUMAS VYSTANT GRIEŽIMO VIOLONČELE TECHNIKĄ. ISTORINIS IR ŠIUOLAIKINIS ASPEKTAI**

Šiame tyrime daugiausia dėmesio skiriama Alfredo Piatti dvylikai Capricų op. 25 violončelei, padėti pagerinti atlikėjo techniką. Šis darbas suskirstytas į du skyrius. Pirmame skyriuje apžvelgiama Piatti biografija, kompozicijos ir mokymo metodai, kaip vieno iš įtakingiausių XIX a. kompozitoriaus ir atlikėjo. Antrajame skyriuje daugiausia dėmesio skiriama dvylikai Capricų Op. 25. Dvylikoje Caprisų op. 25 yra pagrindiniai techniniai 19-ojo amžiaus violončelės repertuaro sunkumai. Dėl šios priežasties Capricai šiandien vis dar plačiai naudojami tiek koncertinėje, tiek pedagoginėje srityje.

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## INTRODUCTION

The object of this Thesis is functionality of Alfredo Piatti's Twelve Caprices Op. 25 in technical development of cello playing.

Research aim is to reveal importance of the Twelve Caprices Op.25 in development of advanced cello students.

Research objective is to explore the technical difficulties of Twelve Caprices Op. 25

Research methods: Historical descriptive, analysis of methodical literature, analysis of sources and documents.

Literature on the subject: The Twelve Caprices were first published in 1874 by Piatti's student W. E. Whitehouse. Later many reprints have been issued, most popular of them being Simrock (1874), C. F. Peters (1932) and G. Henle Verlag (2003). A Research Paper for the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts by Matthew A. Ryan-Kelzenberg titled "A Guide to Pedagogy and Technique in Alfredo Piatti's Twelve Caprices, Op 25 (1865), 2009" is currently the most detailed analysis of Piatti's caprices available for public today.

Morton Latham's "Alfredo Piatti. A Sketch", although written over hundred years ago, is still regarded as one of the most thorough biographies of Piatti.

Structure of the Thesis consists of an introduction, two main chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter takes a brief look at the life, compositions and teaching method of Alfredo Piatti as one of the most influential cellists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second chapter focuses on the technical challenges as well as musical value of Piatti's "Twelve Caprices Op. 25".

# 1. CHAPTER I: ALFREDO PIATTI'S LEGACY

## 1.1: Historical Overview

In order to fully understand the technical development of cello playing we must briefly take a look at the history of the violoncello itself. As Stephen Bonta states in his *From Violone to Violoncello: a Question of Strings?* (2001), in the 1560's and 1570's instrument makers like Gasparo da Salo and Andrea Amati Produced instrument referred to in the nowadays as a violoncello although the term *violoncello* did not appear until the 17th century. The instruments built before the 1660's known as *violoncelli* were actually many different versions of the bass violin. The most common predecessor of the cello was viola da gamba. Up to the fourth decade of the 18th century viola da gamba along with the violin were dominating in the Italian string school. Viola da gamba was preferred to the violoncello by artists and audience. However, the growing demand for a tenor/bass instrument for opera orchestras and chamber ensembles forced to viola da gamba to be replaced by the violoncello, producing more precision in pitch, volume in sound and matching sonority with other string instruments. (*Walden, Valerie: One Hundred Years of Violoncello – A History of Technique and Performance Practice, 1740 – 1840, 1998*).

As performers showed more interest in the violoncello, the performance techniques started to develop. Newly established music institutions and easier mobility between counties for artists begun a debate between cellists on the subjects of playing techniques, instruments and bow construction. One of the earliest method books for cellist was Michel Corrette's *Méthode* (1740). (*Walden, Valerie: One Hundred Years of Violoncello – A History of Technique and Performance Practice, 1740 – 1840, 1998*). During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the playing style developed to longer-phrased lines, bigger variety in dynamic and short, springing strokes. Cellists experimented with different techniques to achieving these effects. At the time the bows were available in several forms. The early outward-curved bow, with the less tension although having gentle but rich sound suitable for Baroque music was soon replaced by inward-curved bows. The modern bow cellists use today was developed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by Francois Tourte (1747 – 1835). The bow's opposite curve to the bridge and greater tension of the hair allowed to achieve better quality in sound and to implement greater power demanded by classical composers. (*Campbell, Margaret: The Great Cellists, 1988*).

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century many great cellists like developed their own methods of teaching. They created a variety of study books including études and caprices all with a singular purpose of developing a specific technique in playing. Cellists like Jean-Loius Duport (1749 – 1819), Sebastian Lee (1805 – 1887), Adrian-Francois Servais (1807 – 1866), Friedrich Grützmacher (1832 – 1903) and David Popper (1843 – 1913) have all created compilations of études still in use today. Perhaps most outstanding of them all is Carlo Alfredo Piatti's Twelve Caprices Op. 25. "Through now nearly 150 years old, the Caprices are still available to cellists because they focus on developing the most virtuosic and difficult techniques for the left and right hands within a simple and beautiful melodic framework." (*Ryan-Kelzenberg, Matthew A.: A Guide to Pedagogy and Technique in Alfredo Piatti's Twelve Caprices (1865), 2009*).

## 1.2: Biography

As one of the most influential cellists of his time, Piatti's life was as extraordinary as his contribution to music. As Morton Latham illustrates in his book *Alfredo Piatti, A Sketch* (1901), Carlo Alfredo Piatti was born on January 8 1822 in Bergamo into the family of violinist Antonio Piatti and Marianna Marchetti. His first teacher was his great uncle Gaetano Zanetti, a principal cellist in the Bergamo city orchestra. As a student Piatti was remarkably talented, coping with technical difficulties of the instrument with ease. Piatti's interest in music was keen. As well as gaining his first experience in a string quartet at the age of six, he was also playing in a local opera theatre.

At the age of ten, Piatti was admitted to the Milan Conservatory where he remained for five years as a student of Professor Vincenzo Merighi. He made his concert debut on 21 September 1837 at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan when he performed a "Concertino" of his own composition.

Returning to his hometown after five years in Milan, Piatti actively performed in the villages in the Province of Bergamo while maintaining a position in the orchestra of the city. He also played a season in the city orchestra of Turin. The first foreign city where he had an opportunity to perform as a soloist was Vienna. On this occasion he was to play between acts of a play at the Kärnthertor Theatre for which he chose a concerto by Bernhard Romberg.

Piatti's contract with the Bergamo city orchestra ended when he accepted a place in an orchestra in Milan although he kept performing in cities in and out of Italy. While visiting the Hungarian city of Pest he fell ill. His financial situation was so bad he was forced to sell his cello. The only help he received was from a friend from Bergamo who came to Pest to bring him home.

On their way back from Pest they passed through Munich where they met Franz Liszt. After gaining knowledge of Piatti's difficult financial situation he offered him an opportunity to play in a concert that Liszt was organizing. For that situation a cello was lent to Piatti from the principal cellist of Munich's orchestra.

The encounter in Munich resulted in Liszt inviting Piatti to Paris. Piatti arrived in 1844 although still in deep financial problems. He performed on a borrowed amateur cello. Although the two were supposed to perform together, Liszt's schedule was not simply flexible enough as he was performing with so many other artists. Instead the famed pianist gave Piatti a cello by Amati.



That year in Paris he wrote his “Chant religieux”, a composition for cello and piano from Op. 4. In the year 1844 Piatti also went to Germany. Among many places he visited was Bad Ems, where he composed “Romance (Souvenir d’Ems)” for cello and piano, Op. 4. Piatti’s first public performance in London was at the Annual Grand Morning Concert at Her Majesty’s Theatre on 31 May 1844. Onwards he performed on three occasions in afternoon concerts in Hanover Square Rooms. He also played with a singer Signor Brizzi on a concert at 21 June of the same year.

Piatti’s debut with the Philharmonic Society of London was on 24 June 1844. He performed “Fantasia” by Friedrich August Kummer. On the same concert Felix Mendelssohn performed the Beethoven’s Piano Concerto no. 4 in G Major. Piatti’s performance left a great impression upon both the audience and Mendelssohn, who offered Piatti an opportunity to perform with him. They met in a private house of pianist Ignaz Moscheles where they played from a manuscript of Mendelssohn’s Cello Sonata in D Major. Soon after that Mendelssohn began composing a concerto for cello and orchestra, he dedicated it to Piatti and completed the first movement. Unfortunately the manuscript was lost and has not yet been recovered.

In 1845 Piatti spent twelve months in Russia. There are two compositions which belong to his Russian period: “Mazurka Sentimentale” Op. 6 for cello and piano and “Air Baskys” Op. 8 for cello and piano.

In the upcoming years Piatti spent most of his time in London. The most important concert of the 1846 season was the Benefit Concert of the Director of the Musical Union at Almack’s Assembly Rooms. This was his first public performance in a string quartet. He was also engaged to play at the orchestra of the Opera and performed with Louis-Antoin Jullien’s orchestra at concerts at the Covent Garden Theatre. On 5 December 1851, the Sacred Harmonic Society, lead by conductor Michael Costa, performed “Die Jahreszeiten” (The Seasons), an oratorio by Joseph Haydn. The concert was praised by critics in reviews for Piatti’s performance as the principal cellist of the orchestra.

In addition to his concerts as a soloist, he also performed chamber music concerts with great artists like Joseph Joachim, Henri Vieuxtemps, Camillo Sivori, Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst and others.

In 1858 a concert series called “Popular Concert” was made available in London for a larger public rather than a small group of aristocrats. At the opening concert Henryk Wieniawski played the first violin, Louis Ries the second, C. W. Doyle the viola, Piatti the cello and Charles Hall the piano.

For the events of the “Popular Concerts”, Piatti composed sonatas for cello and piano. The Cello Sonata no. 1 C Major Op. 28 was premiered 5 January 1885. The second sonata, Sonata in D Major Op. 29 was written the following year and was performed for the first time with pianist Agnes Zimmermann on 4 April 1886. Cello Sonata no. 3 F Major Op. 30 was composed in 1889. The fourth, “Sonata Idillica” G Major Op. 31 he wrote in 1893. The fifth A Minor Op. 32 and sixth E Minor Op. 33 in 1896.

In 1898 Piatti retired from active concert life and moved back to Italy. He died in a town near Bergamo on 18 July 1901.

### 1.3: Compositions

Piatti’s goal was to widen the cello repertoire with artistic and virtuosic pieces. He was the first to publish old 18th century works, including sonatas by Locatelli, Porpora, Valentini, Veracini, Ariosti, Marcello and Boccherini. Additionally, he compiled an edition for violoncello and piano of the First Suite for Cello Solo by Johann Sebastian Bach and also the Violin Sonata no. 3 by Joseph Haydn. Among those he arranged works by romantic composers for cello and piano, among them Felix Mendelssohn’s “Song Without Words” and “Hungarian Dances” by Johannes Brahms. Reediting 17th and 18th century music, Piatti was very keen on preserving the original text. He was extremely correct and had a remarkable sense of style when composing the piano part, based on the deciphered figured bass, for example, in Boccherini’s sonatas (*Latham, Morton, Alfredo Piatti. A Sketch” London, 1901*).

As for his own compositions Piatti was influenced greatly by time spent in several opera orchestras. He wrote several variations on operatic themes from Bellini “Somnambula”, “Puritani”, Donizetti “Lucia di Lammermoor”, “Linda di Chamounix” and Piccini “Niobe”. Among those he wrote a Concertino for Cello and Orchestra Op. 18, Cello Concerto no. 1 in b Major Op. 24 and Cello Concerto no. 2 in d Minor Op. 26. In addition he composed an Italian

serenade, nocturne, bergamasca, siciliano and tarantella. None of these works have retained their value, though at the beginning of the century they were used by teachers such as Hugo Becker. In teaching, however, both concertos might have been used.

The virtuoso cello techniques found in Piatti's works are of special historical interest, as they provide further evidence of his great performing mastery. In the fantasia genre popular at the time, his technique was much like that of Adrien – Francois Servais.

Piatti represents the virtuoso romantic trend in his compositions by using rich passage technique in legato and staccato, wide and various double stops including tenths, chords and arpeggios, developed stroke technique, spiccato, flying spiccato in arpeggios, different kinds of harmonic techniques, passages of trills, brilliant chromatic passages, and self-accompaniment. In the second period of his creative activity, marked by his composition of concertos and sonatas, the technique of the instrument didn't stand out so much, though virtuoso character was also featured. This is seen in examples from the Cello Concerto no. 2 D minor with double stops and self-accompaniment (Latham, Morton, <http://www.cello.org/heaven/bios/piatti/lgpiatti.htm>).

## 1.4: Teaching Method

In his “*Méthode de Violoncelle (1878)*”, Piatti focuses on the primary objectives of training a student to find the most sufficient solutions to technical problems concerning the cello playing. Piatti begins with the posture of seating, first pointing out that the student should sit on the front part of the chair, placing their legs in such a way as to bring their feet on the same level and apart. The position of the instrument should be so that the lower part of the front edge would support against the right calf muscle and the lower part of the back edge on the left calf muscle of the player (upto the early 20th century the use of the end pin spike was uncommon). The sides of the edges should not be too much covered by the calf muscles of the legs as that might hinder the vibration of the instrument. The player should hold themselves in a natural and easy position and keep a strict posture. The upper part of the back of the violoncello should rest lightly against the chest. The absence of the end pin holds a danger of the bow accidentally touching the left knee or the right thigh. Because of this Piatti points out the need to hold the instrument high enough for the bow to work with no interruptions.

Piatti writes about the importance of the agility of the fingers of the left hand. The left hand should be rounded on the fingerboard and the thumb placed at the back of the neck almost opposite the second finger. The fingers should also be rounded as much as possible so that the upper joint could fall without interruption onto the string. The elbow of the left hand should not point to the ground or be raised too high. An adjustable position of the left elbow allows for a flexible position change.

The right hand should hold the bow between the thumb and fingers. The first finger should be placed on the stick of the bow and slightly bend round one half of it. The second finger falls on the hairs of the bow near the nut, the third is naturally placed beside the second and the fourth in lightly touching the stick edges to balance the bow. The thumb is placed opposite the second and third fingers. On the whole, the bow should be held naturally without tension, and with the fingers not too close together, nor too far apart.

The placement of the bow on the instrument should be two inches from the bridge. It is brought out that the point of the upbow as well as the down-bow should never be raised towards the finger-board nor lowered towards the bridge. The change from one string to another should be made by the movement of the wrist. The position of the wrist differs on each string. On the A string the wrist should be slightly curved onward and on the C string inwards. If the whole length of the bow has to be used, it is important to keep the elbow of the right arm well open, without holding it too much backwards or forwards. The upper part of the arm should always be close to the body and the fore-arm must execute all the movements of the bow. The upper part of the arm and the shoulder should remain almost immovable. The bow must not be drawn across the strings roughly but, in order to ensure a good tone, it must be used in its length with facility and lightness. To obtain good execution, there must always be a perfect ensemble between the movements of the bow and the fingers of the left hand (*Piatti, Alfredo: Méthode de Violoncelle, 1901*).

## 2. CHAPTER II: ANALYSIS OF TECHNICAL ASPECTS IN ALFREDO PIATTI'S TWELVE CAPRICES OP. 25

### 2.1: Overview

Alfredo Piatti's "Twelve Caprices Op. 25" was first published in 1874. Dedicated to his friend Bernhard Cossmann, it consists of twelve caprices written for cello solo. Today the caprices are widely in use by professors and teachers around the world. They are accomplished pieces which harmoniously combine both good musical qualities and technical challenges. Mathew Ryan-Kelzenberg points out in his "*A Guide to Pedagogy and Technique in Alfredo Piatti's Twelve Caprices, Op 25 (1865)*" that the study of the twelve caprices is useful for a student already familiar with David Popper's *Hohe Schule des Violoncello-Spiels*, Op. 73, for Piatti's caprices demand the highest level of technique and virtuosity.

#### 2.1.1: Caprice No. 1 – Allegro quasi Presto

The last decades of the 19th century brought many changes for the cello. As the instrument started to take on a more solistic roll, developments took place in not only the repertoire but also in the construction of the instrument. One of the most significant new elements introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the end pin. Although it gained popularity fast many cellists, including Piatti, didn't accept this major development. Performing a technically demanding repertoire without the support of an end pin seems abnormal for the generation of cellists today. If to consider that the high-volume metal strings were introduced in the beginning of the 20th century and the structure of the cello had not yet developed to a form approved by everybody, we must conclude that the pieces such as the Twelve Caprices for cello by Piatti sounded immensely different in the time they were written than they do today. Despite that we approach the Twelve Caprices today by limits of our instruments abilities not by our imagination of how music would have sounded in the era it was written.

The character of the caprice No. 1 in G-minor is light. This is achieved by the *Sulla punta d'arco* (Alfredo Piatti, *Dodici Capricci Op. 25*, Leipzig: N. Simrock [1874]) string crossing in the right hand. The left hand features broken double notes. The theme consists of eight measures. The counterstatement (measure 9) changes direction and modulates into the opening theme in B-flat Major (measure 19). After achieving forte in measure 29, the opening theme returns in measure

39. The second part of the caprice follows the structural pattern of the first and is concluded with a coda in the end (measure 62).

The opening theme consists of a fingered melody on the G string and an open D string in the left hand. The strength of the left hand is challenged from measure 13 when the open re string is replaced with a fingered note. The fingered broken double notes that continue throughout the caprice are also challenging for the intonation. In order to achieve good intonation and left-hand technique Mathew Ryan-Kelzenberg suggests in his “*A Guide to Pedagogy and Technique in Alfredo Piatti’s Twelve Caprices, Op 25 (1865)*”:

“Slow practice (tempo = 48) will aid in the establishment of good left-hand technique, and will also quickly reveal any intonation issues. Finger pressure must be released from the string after each note has been played, and transferred to the note that follows. While constant tension and release at a slow tempo may seem tedious, it is necessary for training the movements of the fingers, and as the tempo gradually quickens, it will allow the cellist to play through the entirety of the Caprice without excess strain. Once this technique has been mastered, vibrato should be added to each note. The performance tempo will not allow for a great amount of vibrato to be heard, but practice with vibrato increases flexibility and decreases tension in the hand.”

The caprice is challenging for the right hand as well. The term *Sulla punta d’arco* mean “at the tip” and it requires the piece to be played at the tip of the bow while constantly changing the string. This movement is particularly exhausting for the upper right arm and the shoulder. To avoid tension in the arm Kelzenberg suggests:

“To practice, play the Caprice with two-note slurs set in the middle of the bow, using small circular movements with the wrist and fingers to execute the string-crossings [...]. For this exercise to be effective the shoulder must remain relaxed, and the stick of the bow must remain in a fixed position relative to the strings. To slowly strengthen the muscles of the upper-arm and shoulder, set the bow closer and closer to the tip with each repetition of the exercise. As the 27 player gains strength and begins to master the wrist and finger motion of the slurred string-crossings, the exercise should be repeated without the slurs (as the Caprice is written), again starting in the middle of the bow and gradually moving toward the tip with each repetition.”

### 2.1.2: Caprice No. 2 – Andante religioso

The caprice No. 2 in E-flat Major begins with a choral melody in double notes (measure 1 – 26). The melody develops from E-flat Major to C minor (measure 1 – 4) and from E-flat Major to G minor (measure 16 - 21) and ends in B-flat minor. The middle section (measure 27 – 49) begins in B-flat Major. The section is marked *espressivo* and features a new character. Instead of double notes, the middle section is in *arpeggio* style and melody is accompanied by thirty-two notes. The middle section is followed by a return to the choral section in measure 50. A short twelve bar *espressivo* section follows in measure 68 and the piece ends with a double note section in *pianissimo*.

Similar to caprice No. 1, the left hand technique should be practiced in a slow tempo, with “[...] release of tension between fingers” (Kelzenberg). Regarding the practice method of the middle section, Kelzenberg notes:

“[...] begin practice by simplifying the note values into straight sixteenth notes, being careful to release the tension in each finger before moving to the next note. This type of exercise can be played both with separate bows and by slurring two, four, or eight notes in one bow [...]. In addition, an exercise that combines the notes from each quarter note into one chord will slowly train the fingers of the left hand to navigate the complex chord patterns in this section [...]. Although agility and strength are developed in all fingers, Piatti assigns the highest level of difficulty to the fourth finger, requiring the small, weak finger to play the most *espressivo* portions of the melody. Practice must be patient and slow (especially in measure 33-34), allowing the muscles in the fourth finger to gain strength without excess strain, and enabling the flexibility and beauty of vibrato in the melodic line.”

To achieve flexibility in the right arm, the practice of the bow technique in the *espressivo* section should also begin in a slow tempo. A short stop after the eight-note helps prepare the hand for the three-note legato of the thirty-two notes on the next string.

### 2.1.3: Caprice No. 3 – Moderato

Caprice No. 3 focuses on developing the left hand technique in the thumb position. The eight bar melody consists of octaves and thirds in a *moderato* tempo.

Kelzenberg explains the process of practicing as starting from octaves. Since the octave position is constantly moving throughout the caprice it is important to master the fluency of the octaves and then adding the thirds. He adds that “ Popper's Etudes No. 9 and 38 (for thirds and octaves, respectively) are excellent preparatory studies for the left-hand techniques in Caprice 3. Practice and mastery of caprice No. 3 will help with the preparation of excerpts from a variety of musical periods including Barber's Cello Concerto, Beethoven's Cello Sonata in F Major, Op. 5 No. 1, Haydn's Concerto in D Major, Schumann's Five Pieces in Folk Style, and Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations [...]”.

The right hand technique consists of *accents* on the octaves and *legatos* on the thirds. The four-bar phrase is determined by the pressure of the bow. Coherency of the melodic line can be achieved by releasing the pressure of the bow after the accent on the octave and increasing the pressure on the up-bow legato.

#### 2.1.4: Caprice No. 4 – Allegretto

Caprice No. 4 begins with an *allegretto* section in D-minor (measure 1 – 30). The character of this section is lively with the phrase consisting of four measures. The *poco meno* section (measure 31 – 61) is in F-Major. The character of this section is more calm in contrast to the *allegretto* section. The slower tempo allows the melodic line to be brought out. The caprice ends with a *allegretto* section in D-minor, returning to the character of the beginning.

Kelzenberg point out that the purpose of the caprice No. 4 is the development of independence in the movement of the left hand fingers. The tension in the left hand is increased comparing to caprices No. 1 and No. 2. In addition to double notes, caprice No. 4 includes triple- and quadruple-note chords and contrapuntal double note melodies. The releasing of tension in the left hand fingers when shifting between positions is critical in this caprice. It is also important to add vibrato to the top note of a chord to release excess strain in the left hand. Kelzenberg suggest to practice the caprice by separating the chords from the rest of the notes. This method creates a simple harmonic exercise which gives a clear line of harmonics, melodic structure and phrasing. The F-Major section, where the tension of the left hand fingers increase, should be practiced with breaks after each eight notes. This method allows for the use of vibrato without adding extra tension to the left hand but more importantly gives the hand time to rest between double notes. Practice for the bow hand involves focusing on the clarity of the *staccato* motion. The movement



must begin from the string with an upward direction following the return of the bow to the string before the next note is played.

### 2.1.5: Caprice No. 5 – Allegro comodo

Caprice No. 5 focuses mainly on the right-hand technique. The caprice begins in F-Major and modulates into D-minor in measure 17. The second part, beginning from measure 24 is in B-flat Major. The third section, starting from measure 50 returns to the original key of F-Major. This indicates to a structural form of ABA. The term *allegro comodo* goes for all three parts of the caprice. It is important to maintain a comfortable tempo throughout the caprice due to the complications concerning the right-hand technique like arpeggiated *staccato* and *ricochet* techniques. As in previous caprices, the left-hand faces challenges regarding flexibility in position changing.

The left-hand technique consists of arpeggiated chords where pressure is moved from one finger to the next. The most complex segment of the caprice for the left hand is the third part (A), where the arpeggiated chord moves to the thumb position and to the height of the fingerboard.

The right hand faces many technical difficulties mainly to do with different strokes. The caprice includes varieties between *legatos* and *staccatos* or *ricochets* while changing the string.

Kelzenberg states the importance of the right-hand elbow. In order to achieve a clear changing of the string the movement of the right-hand elbow must be anticipated. The importance of the elbow anticipation is seen in the first bar of the caprice between the first and the third beat, where change in the *legato* stroke takes place in the direction of the bow as well as the string crossing. The anticipation off the elbow produces an unnoticeable change between strings close to each other and also prepares the hand for the position of a distant string.

In order to achieve fluent movement in the right hand Kelzenberg suggests:

“Good practice of the string-crossings in section A begins with slurred legato bowings on all notes. The staccato string-crossings can be re-inserted when the anticipatory motion of the elbow becomes smooth and fluid. [...] Mastery of slurred staccato (up-bow staccato) is an extremely demanding task, and a challenge that many cellists choose never to undertake. [...] The practice methods suggested here require utmost patience and perseverance, as they will not likely produce

immediate results. For a true slurred staccato, the weight of the arm moves horizontally to the string and must not manufacture any vertical (bouncing) motion of the bow. Each note of the slur must include both the starting and the stopping of the bow created by the horizontal motion of the arm, and not by any type of vertical motion in an attempt to manufacture a bounce in the bow. Practice begins with an open-string exercise that can be gradually adapted to incorporate the notes and bowings of caprice No. 5. Similar to the exercise, Piatti prepares each extended slurred staccato with a slurred legato arpeggio on a down-bow (measure 2), ensuring that the full weight of the arm is in the string and allowing the bow to travel well past its balance point in order to execute the descending up-bow staccato scale.”

### 2.1.6: Caprice No. 6 – Adagio, largamente

Caprice No. 6 focuses on developing intonation and achieving agility in the left-hand fingers. The caprice begins in A-flat Major. The first part consists of arpeggios in the opening key and develops into the dominant at measure 15. The second section begins in A-flat minor and “wanders back and forth between major and minor modes before returning to the gentle arpeggios of the opening (measure 44 - 54)” (Kelzenberg p. 54).

Because the caprice is written in A-flat Major and A-flat minor, the challenges Regarding information are immense. In order to achieve clear intonation Kelzenberg suggests to practice by turning the arpeggios into double notes. This method trains the ear and builds strength in the fingers. In the second section (A-flat minor) the training focus is set on the development of the thumb.

### 2.1.7: Caprice No. 7 – Maestoso

Caprice No. 7 features a *marcato* bass line melody accompanied with arpeggiated string-crossing chords. The caprice begins in C Major and after modulation the bass theme is repeated in A minor and F Major. A chromatic climb of the melody is followed by a counterpoint on the G string before returning to the primary key of C Major. The caprice consists of large phrases that are developed by accident on the third beat of each bar.

In the left hand the primary objective of the caprice is development of strength and flexibility. Similar to caprices No. 5 enhance pressure is placed upon the fourth finger. To avoid excessive

tension in the left hand Kelzenberg suggests to practice by lengthening each note of sextuplets. This allows for the hand time to vibrate and prepare for the next note. The uncommonly large extensions in the thumb position towards the end of the caprice should be approached with extreme care.

Comparing to previous caprices the caprice No. 7 has similarities to caprice No. 1 regarding the bow technique. Kelzenberg writes:

“Although not as readily apparent as in the punta d'arco bowing of Caprice No. 1, the bowing in Caprice No. 7 has a similar effect on the strength of the upper arm and shoulder. Each down-bow must include a slight crescendo to bring out the *marcato* melody in the bass; this technique slowly improves the player's ability to increase volume and intensity towards the tip of the bow. In addition, repetitive multiple string-crossings on each beat develop flexibility and elbow anticipation.”

#### 2.1.8: Caprice No. 8 – Moderato ma energico

The character of caprice No. 8 is similar to caprice No. 4. It features double stop accords with the addition of trills in the melody which tests the accuracy of left hand fingers. The first part on the caprice is in A minor. It is marked *modrato ma energico* and follows a *forte* dynamic throughout the first twelve bars. In the second section, after a one-bar pause the original melody begins in *piano* dynamic and features the theme being played in the thumb position. The caprice then modulates into C Major and pianississimo in dynamic before returning to the original key and character .

For the method of practice, Kelzenberg suggests to begin practice without the trill. The Purpose of this is to focus the weight of the left hand to the main note of the trill. Afterwards a measured trill should slowly be added, finally ending up with a quintuplet on the sixteenth note. In the right hand the focus should be on the bow distribution – starting the sixteenth-note from the frog and returning for the next sixteenth after a slight retake of the bow.

#### 2.1.9: Caprice No. 9 – Allegro

Caprice No. 9 introduces *bene spiccato*, a “bowing most likely originated by Piatti” (Kelzenberg). This bow technique features a down-bow *spiccato* combined with slurred up-bow

*staccatos*. Like in previous caprices, No. 9 includes double notes in the left hand as well as multiple dynamic markings which guide the melodic phrasing.

The technical aspect of the left hand remain the same as in many previous caprices. Focus is on the releasing of tension in fingers between shifts and developing strenght in the left hand. The unique *bene spiccato* of the right hand however requires a more specific exploration: Kelzenberg explains *bene spiccato* as a combination of two separate techniques – an up-bow slurred *staccato* from the string and a down-bow *spiccato* beginning off the string. To combine these two motions the slurred up-bow must be released from the string in order to prepare for the bouncing motion of the down-bow *spiccato*. After bouncing from the string the bow must move back to the original starting position of the up-bow *staccato* on the string.

### 2.1.10: Caprice No. 10 – Allegro deciso

Caprice No. 10 in B minor is a study focusing on the development of the thumb position. The caprice explores the thumb position in various places on the fingerboard and tests the strength of all the fingers of the left hand. The right-hand technique that features the altering two-note slurred *legatos* with two-note slurred *staccatos* remains the same throughout the caprice.

The most fascinating aspect of the caprice No. 10 is the structure of the piece. Kelzenberg describes the form of the caprice as such:

“Caprice No. 10 can be interpreted as a variant of sonata form. The primary key area (measure 1-19) states the theme in two separate octaves and modulates to D Major for the secondary key area (measure 20-27). A condensed development (measure 28-35) full of stepwise chromatic motion is followed by a new melodic idea in F-sharp minor, which begins the retransition (measure 36-44) to the recapitulation (measure 45-66) in the primary key. The new melodic idea from the retransition reappears in the recapitulation (measure 58), unexpectedly drawing the harmonic motion towards E minor for a lengthy and mysterious coda (measure 67-84) that includes a short Adagio section (measure 79-81) before a quick and decisive cadential flourish in B minor. A brisk tempo (tempo 92-96) adds excitement to the repetitious articulation, and a gradual *accelerando* in measure 75-78, while not notated, can have a dramatic effect just before the *ritardando* into the Adagio”.

### 2.1.11: Caprice No. 11 – Adagio – Allegro (Adagio)

The Caprice No. 11 begins with a short declaration of Adagio in G Major ending in dominant. The introduction features long double notes in the left hand and wide lines of legato string-crossing in the right hand. The Allegro section continues to develop long lines of legato in the right hand although now in a slightly livelier character. The Allegro section can be divided into two parts. In the first one, the theme is followed by “a series of modulations leading to a dominant pedal (measure 48-61) that signals the return of the theme (measure 62), now at pianissimo dynamic” (Kelzenberg). The second section concludes with the left hand rising to the height of the thumb position before returning to the original Adagio section.

For the method of practice, Kelzenberg suggests to practice the long string-crossing *legato* slurs on open strings. These slurs are a challenge for the upper-right arm and demand separate attention.

### 2.1.12: Caprice No. 12 – Allegretto capriccioso

Caprice No. 12 includes many elements from previous caprices. It consists of three main parts. The first part begins in E minor and “concludes with a dramatic slurred staccato arpeggio that travels to the heights of the fingerboard” (Kelzenberg). The second section includes elements like false-harmonics and virtuosic *staccatos* arpeggios which make it, as Kelzenberg has described “certainly the most ostentatious showcase of virtuosity in all of Piatti's caprices”. The third section begins in the original key of E minor before concluding the caprice in a coda.

The main difficulties in caprice No. 12 for the left hand are false-harmonic figures. Although elements of false-harmonics can be found in cello repertoire “it is quite rare to find them employed so copiously and so quickly” (Kelzenberg). Regarding the practice method of the right hand, Kelzenberg points out the extreme difficulty of combining extensive slurred staccato passages with the multiple-note chords. The first step in practicing would be to remove the chords and execute the slurred staccato passages in a slow and controlled tempo.

## CONCLUSION

Alfredo Piatti's contribution to the cello repertoire is unquestionably one of the highest of any composers. The nineteenth century featured many cellists who produced study-based concert-études with great musical value but few of them achieved with their work what did Piatti with his "Twelve Caprices Op. 25". The caprices are performed constantly all over the world by professional musicians because of their immense musical value. The caprices are a part of the

standard repertuar of almost all of the greatest cello competitions taking place today and because of their demand of technical perfection this is unlikely to change in the coming century.

As studies for technical development the “Twelve Caprices Op. 25” have proven to be an integral part of the process of high level cello studies. Each caprice focuses on one or multiple technical challenges while revising the problems from the previous caprices. Throughout the twelve caprices all of the most important bow techniques are being explored including, some that are developed by Piatti himself like long-running false-harmonic figures from Caprice No. 12 or *bene spiccato* from Caprice No. 9. The caprices reveal the importance of consistency in the continuous focus on strengthening the left-hand technique caprice after caprice, each one adding another challenging element to the studies.

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