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A Pedagogical Analysis of Select Etudes from Jakob Dont’s 24 Etudes and Caprices, Op. 35

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Honors Research Project
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Introduction

The study of etudes is essential for all musicians to learn and practice the technical challenges of their instrument in a practical way. There is a large selection of etudes for the violin, created and collected by numerous composers targeted for all levels of playing. This document will focus on a select number of etudes from the first half of “24 Etudes and Caprices, Opus 35,” by Jakob Dont. These etudes were studied and analyzed during a research period with the violin professor at the University of Akron, and will be discussed in a pedagogical manner based upon discussions with the professor, and personal research and experience.

Jakob Dont (1815-1888) was an Austrian violinist, composer, and teacher. He studied violin at the Vienna Conservatory and became influenced by the works of Pierre Rode and Giovanni Battista Viotti, notable composers of violin repertoire and etudes. Dont began taking professional positions in 1831, but despite his success as a performing violinist, his shyness and stage fright led him to the decision to withdraw from performing and dedicate himself to pedagogy.

Dont wrote about fifty compositions, the majority of which are pedagogical works. In addition to writing his own collections of etudes for all levels of violin playing, he also wrote collections of etudes to prepare the student for other works by Rode and Kreutzer. His most famous works are his Opus 37, “Preparatory Studies,” and Opus 35, “24 Etudes and Caprices,” which will be discussed in this document.

According to Mimi Zweig’s “Sequence of Etudes,” these are for the advanced student, and should only be approached after the student has had experience with etudes such as
Wolfhart, Schradieck, Sevcik, Kreutzer, and Fiorillo. Since the etudes are at such an advanced level, it is assumed that the teacher or student reading these discussions has experience with violin playing and technique, and understands the terminology that will be used.

The body of the document can be broken into two sections. The first section consists of advanced exercises that should be looked at before beginning the etudes, or that can be referenced while practicing the etudes. The second section contains the analysis of etudes 1, 5, 6, 8, and 11 from the Dont etude book. The following aspects are included in the discussion of each etude:

- Overview of etude
- Left hand challenges
- Right hand challenges
- How to approach the etude, or practice sequence
- General notes (if applicable)
- Practice variations (if applicable)

An appendix at the end of the document will contain samples of the exercises and etudes discussed. The copies of the etudes provided will be from the Carl Fischer Music Library publication.
Schradieck Exercises and Variations

Henry Schradieck (1846-1918) was a German violinist, pedagogue, and composer, and was recognized as one of the foremost violin professors of his day. He taught at renowned institutions such as the Leipzig Conservatory, College of Music of Cincinnati, and Hamburg conservatory. Schradieck also composed pedagogic material based on scales, finger studies, and etudes. “The School of Violin Technics, Book 1” is a collection of exercises to help the student increase the dexterity of the left hand in all positions. Each section focuses on a different technical aspect - Section I contains tonal exercises on one string, Section II has chromatic exercises on one string, Section III exercises begin spanning two strings, and they progressively become more and more complicated.

While the exercises of Section I are the most basic, they are also the most important - they set up the standard left hand frame, with no extensions from the outer fingers (first and fourth). The student can use these basic exercises to create a relaxed left hand and begin setting up finger independence in a variety of patterns that can often be found in music. These exercises are based around the most basic pattern of fingers - first finger, high second, third finger, and then fourth finger (1 2 3 4); the only half step is found between the second and third fingers. This is often the first finger pattern taught to beginner students, and once the student is confident practicing these exercises with this first finger pattern, changes can be made to give the student more variation and give the student a higher awareness of how the fingers come in contact with the string.
For the exercises in Section I, four variations of finger patterns can be created that maintain the same basic frame between the first and fourth fingers, but change the positioning of the second and third fingers. Finger Pattern 1 is the pattern discussed in the last paragraph - playing the exercises as written with a high second finger (1 23 4). Finger Pattern 2 modifies the second finger to be a low second finger (12 34), changing the written C# to a C♮. Finger Pattern 3 returns second finger to its original “high” position, but also moves third finger up a half step to a D# (12 34). The last variation, Finger Pattern 4, contains both modifications - low second on a C♮ and high 3 on a D#, creating a much wider space (essentially a minor third) between the two fingers (12 34). The example below shows how these finger patterns change the first exercise of Section I.

When practicing these variations, it is important for the student to be aware of how the change in the modified finger position affects how the finger comes in contact with the string. For example, the differences between Finger Pattern 1 and Finger Pattern 2, the high second finger verses the low second finger. When playing the high second finger on C# in Finger Pattern 1, the student should feel as if the finger contacts the string on the corner of the fingertip closest to the index finger. However, when playing the low second finger on C♮ in Finger Pattern, it should feel as if the contact point is more centralized. The same can be said for the differences in the third finger between Finger Pattern 1 and 3 - the high 3 on D# in Finger
Pattern 3 should contact on the corner closest to the second finger, while the “regular” 3 of Finger Pattern 1 will feel more centralized.

If the student has difficulty finding these contacts through lifting and placing, have them practice sliding the fingers between positions. When learning the differences in contact between low and high 2, the student should place all fingers on the string in the pattern of Finger Pattern 2 (12 34). Starting in this position, the second finger should naturally contact the string in the center of the finger tip. From here, the student should leave all fingers down, but slide the second up to a C#, creating the high 2 found in Finger Pattern 2 (1 23 4). By making this change while maintaining contact with the string, the fingertip should naturally change angles during the slide. Once the student has practiced sliding the second finger back and forth between these positions, they can then practice lifting and placing the second finger in both patterns while keeping the other fingers down. The same exercises should be done with the third finger.

After the student has mastered the changes of contact points in these variations, they can begin adding the Finger Pattern variations to the Schradieck exercises found in Section I of Book 1. These repetitive exercises will build dexterity, accuracy of finger placements with the changes of contact, and a heightened sense of awareness of how minute differences in contact of the fingertip affect intonation. This specialized work will be extremely useful in the Dont etudes where the student is often challenged by extreme hand frames and intonation.

**Dounis**

In addition to the Schradieck exercises and variations, the student can build greater left hand awareness and independence through Demetrius Constantine Dounis’s “The Absolute Independence of the Fingers.” Dounis (1886-1954) was a talented string player, conductor, and medical doctor, and developed some of the innovative exercises and methods of violin playing
in the 20th century. He observed many of the great violinists of the time, and worked with many professional musicians of the major symphonies. His keen sense of observation and background in medical knowledge helped form the basis of his exercises. In addition to “The Absolute Independence of the Fingers,” he wrote works focused on specific left hand techniques such as trills, thirds, and octaves, as well as exercises for the right hand and bow.

In the foreword of “The Absolute Independence of the Fingers,” he specifies the difference between “elementary independence” and “absolute independence” - in essence, elementary independence is the ability to move one finger at a time while the whole hand remains relaxed and unmoving, but absolute independence is the ability to move multiple fingers in different directions without interference. Dounis states that there are four possible directions for the fingers to move in: vertical/falling (as one would use in a trill), horizontal/side (stretches or chromatic notes), left to right (movement of the finger with a pull towards the palm of the hand, used for left hand pizzicato), and right to left or vice-versa (without a pull, used for chord playing).

In this particular book, “Book 1: The Absolute Independence of Three Fingers,” he has a collection of numerous exercises to build the ability of having each finger do one of these motions independent of the movements of the other fingers. The collection is separated into sections he calls “Fundamental Exercises,” and each is based upon an exercise where each finger does a different motion. For example, in the first section, “First Fundamental Exercise,” the student is required to move the first finger left to right with a left hand pizzicato, the second finger moves horizontally, and the third finger moves vertically; the fourth finger is passive and remains on the string. Each new section of “Fundamental Exercises” changes the finger that remains passive - in the “First Fundamental Exercise,” it is the fourth finger; the next section keeps the third finger passive, and subsequently the second and fourth fingers.
After the primary motions of the fingers for each section of fundamental exercises has been learned, the student practices numerous modifications based upon the primary exercise. These modifications include the placement of the fingers on different strings, or changes in rhythm. It is important that the student masters the movements of the primary exercise before moving on to the modifications, and Dounis lists very specific instructions on how to approach and learn his exercises. However, the student should practice moving each finger in the four motions independently before attempting these exercises - the Schradieck exercises of the precious section will aid in learning the horizontal motions, and should be practiced first.

**Finger Yoga**

If stretching is an issue for the student, they can add “finger yoga” exercises into their warm-up routine. Place the hand up against the body of the violin (around third position), and begin by placing the fourth finger on the A-string, as if the student were to play a note. With a relaxed hand, bring the first finger up to meet the fourth, as if they were a half-step apart, and keep the second and third fingers above the fingerboard. From here, slowly slide the first finger along the same string back while keeping the fourth finger down, maintaining control and contact. The student should slide the first finger back until first position, or until the student feels that they cannot stretch any further back. At this point, slowly slide the first finger back up to meet the fourth finger, and repeat the process a couple of times. With the fourth finger down, do the same with the second and third fingers sliding down along the fingerboard. This exercise can also be done with the third or second finger planted, and sliding the lower fingers back. This should only be done a couple of minute a day, and great care must be taken not to over-use the hand.
**General Overview**

These exercises will be extremely beneficial to the student in their approach to learning and mastering the Dont etudes, and will be referenced in the following discussions. For best results, the student should aim to practice these exercises daily, and should choose the finger patterns or modifications that are found most often in the etude they are studying or are the most challenging.
Section II

No. 1 - Prelude

Overview

One of the more difficult etudes in the book, the ability to master the practice skills and techniques required in this etude will aid the student in learning the rest of the works. This etude challenges all aspects of playing, and can be practiced in ways that add an extra layer of difficulty and understanding of the music. Since many of the practice techniques of this etude are applicable to the remaining Dont etudes, many of the practice techniques discussed in the prelude will be referenced in later discussions of etudes.

Left Hand

As this etude is a sequence of mostly three-note chords, the student must always have control and a deep understanding of the movements of the left hand. Above all else, the left hand must stay relaxed - tension is always something that must be avoided in playing not only to prevent injury, but also to aid ease of movement and ability to play. While practicing, the student should constantly check in with the tension with the left hand, and be aware of any squeezing of the neck of the violin that may occur. If squeezing is a problem, the student may pause while playing to release their thumb and lightly tap it against the neck. For example, if the student is practicing the etude as written, they may pause between each chord to release the tension in their thumb - from there, they can move on to stopping every two chords, or every three chords, until they are able to get through a sequence without heavy tension.
While practicing, the student should always aim to move their fingers in as slowly and in a legato fashion as possible. Not only does this help prevent tension, but it helps the student have complete control over the movements of their left hand and be able to map exactly where their fingers need to move between each chord. As the student speeds up the tempo of the etude, they should still move as slowly as they can to keep that control, and not just throw their fingers where they think they should go. This slow finger movement is extremely applicable to the two most challenging aspects of this etude for the left hand - chords, and shifting.

As stated earlier, this etude is six lines of mostly three-note chords. Many of these do not lie comfortably in the hand, and it is important for the student to be aware of the balance of the left hand and angle of the fingers necessary for each chord, and how they need to move the hand between each chord. Much of this awareness and control can be built through the exercises by Dounis and Schradieck discussed in the first section of this paper. When dealing with chords, it is important to balance towards the weaker fingers of the hand, which are the third and fourth. The fourth finger is especially important to balance towards during chords which require long stretches between the fourth finger and the rest of the hand, such as the chords in m.18 and m.42. It is far easier to balance the hand and keep more weight on the fourth finger and stretch the first and second fingers back, than to try and stretch the fourth finger up. Not only can this improve intonation, but it can also alleviate and prevent tension in the hand. If the student feels as if they are having issues stretching the fingers back far enough, they can work on the “finger yoga” exercises discussed in the first section of this paper. The forward and backward movement and angling of the left elbow can also aid with the angling and balance of the hand, especially to reach the lower G and D strings.

While the larger balance movements of the hand and arm are necessary to position the fingers within the chord, the angling and balance of the fingers themselves are essential to
perfecting the intonation of each chord. For example, many of the chords in this etude contain parallel fifths, which are played using the same finger across two strings. To improve intonation on these chords, it is recommended that more weight is placed on the upper note of the fifth. The Schradieck exercises discussed in the first are extremely beneficial to building awareness of the different angles the fingertips can be placed on, while the Dounis exercises will build horizontal and vertical independence between the fingers. These can help with moving between chords, adjusting contact for intonation, and shifting.

When shifting, it’s extremely important to be aware of the distance that needs to be traveled. For some of these chords, the shifts are only a half or whole step away from the previous chord, such as between the first two chords of m.25. Some “shifts” may just require the shifting of certain fingers within a half or whole step, such as the chords in m.27 - in these situations, the student should find an “anchor” finger, or a finger that can remain stationary while the others move around it. For shifts that cover a longer distance, set a guide finger from the old chord to the new, and be sure to practice the shift between those notes.

Right Hand/Arm

As with the left hand, the student must always be aware of the motions connected to the bow movements, and should always aim to be relaxed and tension-free. In an etude like this where there are numerous chords, it is especially important to maintain a relaxed bow hold and ensure that the shoulder joint does not lock up. The bow hold should be just firm enough to have security for strong, chordal strokes, but the thumb must be relaxed. A thumb that is gripping too hard will make smooth approaches to the string or bow changes difficult, and makes it much more likely to have a “crunchy” sound at the frog. The chords in this etude require a full range of motion across all the strings, and will eventually have to be done quickly -
a loose shoulder joint will make the playing of chords across the strings much smoother, and will allow the student to anticipate bow changes and string crossing with greater ease. To achieve this looseness, the student should release the arm in the shoulder joint, rather than maintain tension and feel as if they are holding the arm stiffly within the joint.

Within the practice sequence for this etude, there will be numerous variations of bowing styles used to approach the notes and chords, and each one will have specific things to focus on. However, to best prepare for each exercise, the student should practice each bowing style on open strings - this separation from left-hand work makes it less likely to have tension, and the student can master a relaxed stroke for each style. On open strings, the student can also aim for a smooth, full sound and have an idea of the type of resonance each stroke will have when notes are added. While open-string work may seem “boring” for some students, the ability to master the coordination of the bow before adding in the coordination of the left-hand will make learning the etude much easier.

**General Notes - Intonation**

In addition to left and right hand coordination, intonation is another challenge of this etude. The section on left-hand challenges discussed how control, angling, and weight of the fingers and hand could aid the student in achieving the notes and shifts, but there are other practice methods and things to keep in mind that can help as well. When working with intonation, check each fingered pitch against open strings as often as possible - if open strings are not an option, using a drone would be beneficial as well. A student could take a number of chords or a phrase and use one droned pitch to work through all of them. For example, in measures 1-4, the student could set the drone to F, the tonic of the etude, or C, the dominant. While both pitches have importance to the key of the piece, they are also present in almost
every chord of those measures. The student should be aware of the overtones when playing two pitches simultaneously, and aim to hear them when working with an open string, drone, or tuning two pitches against each other.

The student should also always know the intervals being played, and be aware of the tendency of those intervals or what they should physically feel like. For example, when playing a Major 3rd, the fingers will feel closer together than when playing a Minor 3rd. However, to help achieve perfect intonation within those intervals, the intervals within the Major 3rd should be slightly wider, while the Minor 3rd should be narrower.

Practice Sequence

As stated earlier, the student should practice each of the following bowing variations on open strings first, in order to ensure independent mastery from the right hand. Additionally, the student should be confident in all the notes and transitions between each chord, although the following exercises will aid in learning the movements for the left hand. It is recommended that the student practices this etude (and all others) in smaller sections, instead of trying to learn the whole piece at once. For example, with this etude, the student could focus on the first five measures in the beginning, especially because the phrase repeats in m. 5-9. In the second half of the piece, the student should work on smaller sections at a time because of the increased difficulty in chords and transitions. Measures 28-36 are the same as the opening, but later becomes more chromatic and requires more extensions in the left hand. Working on smaller sections there will put less strain and tension on the left hand, and give the student a higher chance of more complete mastery.

Once the student is aware of the hand position necessary for each chord and has an idea of some of the transitions, the first bowing variation to use to practice this piece is broken
chords, as suggested by Carl Flesch in his published edition of the Don't etudes. Each chord will be split into two slurred pairings - for three-note chords, the student will play the bottom and middle note, then the middle and top (see Figure 1.1); for four-note chords, the split will be the notes on the G and D strings, and then the notes on the A and E strings (see Figure 2.2. While Flesch suggests playing each chord once this way in an ascending pattern (starting from the bottom note and breaking to the top), it is recommended that the student plays both the ascending and descending broken chords. This allows the left hand more time to relax and settle into the feel of the hand position of the chord, and the student gains a greater awareness of the movement necessary for the bow. When first doing broken chords, the student can insert rests between each chord change to allow time for smooth transitions in the left hand - the rests can gradually be shortened until they are no longer necessary.

The broken chord should be very smooth, with evenness of sound on each double-stop and weight place on the pivot note(s) - this creates more of a “rolled” sound, rather than a sharp break in the sound. The elbow of the right arm should maintain a rounded quality to aid in the smoothness of the string crossing, and as mentioned earlier, the student should aim for a full sound on all strings. To aid with the elbow and minimize movements, the student should keep
the arm around the level of the middle strings and practice holding the pivot notes at first. Once the student is confident on the ascending and descending broken chords, they can switch to only ascending chords. However, the movement to return to the lower strings should be as rounded as when the bow had contact with the strings. The student should also use a metronome to ensure even-ness on all notes.

After broken chords have been mastered and the student is more confident in transitions between each chord and the weighted feeling required in the bow arm, they can begin playing the chords “as written,” in a non-broken style. In order to have less of an audible break for each chord, the sounding point of the bow should be closer to the fingerboard, where the strings are closer in height level. This is where it is especially important to have a relaxed thumb in the bow-hold, and the student can use a pivot feeling between the index and pinky fingers in addition to the elbow movement to help “break” the chord. The shoulder should be loose and the student should feel movement primarily from the larger muscles in the shoulder and back - this helps create a fuller, rounder sound. For each chord, the student should anticipate the following bowing with the direction of the elbow - for example, if the student is ending a down-bow and is preparing for an up-bow chord, the elbow should begin moving upwards during the last portion of the down-bow stroke, and vice versa for ending up-bows. With each chord, the student should aim to play the lower notes of the chord within the first couple of inches of each bow with a slower speed, and the remaining upper notes should be played with a faster speed. This distribution can be prepared in the broken chord variation of the practice sequence.

At first, the student should double each chord to maintain slow left-hand movements, and do each chord with down-bow retakes. The retake motion back to the frog should be fast, but once there, the student can take time to move the left hand to the next position. The re-take
motion should also be led with the elbow, and should be placed on the string before initiating the next bow stroke. With all down-bows, the lower notes of each chord played within the first inches of the bow should be kept slow and light to avoid a “crunchy” sound at the frog - once the student has reached the upper notes, the stroke can be faster and a little more weighted. Eventually, the student can do retakes without doubling each chord, and then the alternating bow strokes can be added in.

In addition to the practice methods already discussed, the student can add other variations to this etude. The chords can also be practiced with all up-bow retakes, or do a variation with voicing. Usually with chords, the upper two notes are brought out, but, the student can practice bringing out the middle or bottom note(s), as they could potentially encounter in a Bach fugue for solo violin. To achieve this, the student can adjust the level of their bow arm and change which strings gets the most weight, or change which note they end on. This can be accomplished by holding a single string at the end, rather than two strings, or they can begin the chord from the upper notes and end on the lower note.

As stated earlier, many of the practice tips and technical skills of this etude can be applied to the remaining Dont etudes. However, etudes that also contain a high amount of chord work and could benefit from the skills learned in the Prelude are No. 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 18, 21, 23, and 24.

**No. 5 - Allegro Appassionato**

**Overview**

This etude has a very different style from No. 1 - it still challenges the students ability to maintain a strong left hand frame and control between movements while having an energetic bow arm, but also requires the student’s ability to have clean string crossings at a fast tempo.
While there is a melodic line, this etude is very rhythmic, consisting of straight sixteenth notes for two pages. All notes are separate and detaché, but there are practice variations that will challenge the student’s ability to play the string crossings slurred.

**Left Hand**

Even though this etude is written without any double stops, the student should treat every two-notes as if they were being played together, at least in the left hand. In this way, much of the work required to establish a thought-out and controlled left hand can be taken from the chord work accomplished in Etude No. 1. The student should determine the finger position of each “double stop,” and be aware of the hand frame required and if there are any half-steps or whole-steps between the fingers being played. The student should also be aware of the double-stop following the one they work on, and if it is possible to hand the left-hand frame anticipate that frame. For example, in M. 11, the student plays Eb-Bb-G-Bb-Eb-Bb, essentially alternating between the Eb-Bb double-stop and the G-Bb double-stop. When the student is on the G-Bb double-stop, the first finger Eb can still remain on the D-string in preparation for the return to that double-stop, thus eliminating an extra and unnecessary movement.

Similarly to some of the chords found in Etude No. 1, many of the intervals in this etude require a stretch in the left hand - for example, the 9th interval found in the last beat of M. 1. When playing intervals like those, remember to balance towards the weaker finger (in the case of the 9th found in M. 1, the fourth finger), and stretch the lower finger down (the first finger). Allow the elbow to swing towards in the direction of the E-string to help achieve the weight required on the weaker finger and the stretch down, and keep the left hand relaxed. If there is any tension or if the thumb is gripping the neck of the violin too tightly, the stretch is much harder to achieve and the student will tire quickly.
This etude also has many shifts between “double-stops,” and it is important to remember to shift with the old finger. The student should also be aware of what position they need to shift to, what the interval is between the departure and arrival notes, and if the hand frame requires any change while shifting. In beats 3 and 4 of M. 3, there is a descending chromatic line that may seem challenging, but does not require much movement in the left hand. Beginning on beat 3, the initial “double-stop” is F to D, which only requires a whole-step space between the second and third fingers across the G and D strings. From there, the whole-step frame between those two fingers is maintained as the entire left hand frame shifts downwards by a half-step for each subsequent “double-stop.” Many of the seemingly challenging sequences in the etude can be broken down in a similar manner, thus simplifying those passages and creating a clear plan in the student’s mind.

Right Hand

The challenge for the right hand in this etude is string crossings. With few exceptions, this etude consists of constant alternation between two neighboring strings. To accomplish this while maintaining a clear, solid sound, the student should focus primarily on the movements of the elbow - finger movements can be used to fine-tune the string crossings, but without the aid of the larger muscles used for the bow arm, the sound lacks fullness and depth. For each pair of strings (G-D, D-A, and A-E), the student should find the level of the elbow required to play both string simultaneously with a full, clear sound. From there, the student should practice a stroke of moderate speed while playing both open strings, and gradually begin moving the arm in a way the allows the bow to alternate between the two strings. The elbow should basically remain at the same level, but the student should feel as if the bow hand is moving in circles to create the
alternating movement. Contact should be maintained for each bow change to ensure a smooth sound, without any “clicking” for each new note.

Practice Sequence

Similarly to the student treating the left-hand as if this etude was composed of all double-stops, the initial step in the practice sequence is on double-stops as well. At first, each “double-stop” pairing will be played in a semi-broken manner. The lower note will be played first, to establish intonation and correct hand frame, and then both notes of the pairing will be played together (see the first measure of Figure 2.1). The upper note should be tuned to the lower note, which is why it is important to establish the lower note first. Since much of the student’s focus is placed on the lower note of each interval, they can also work on the shifts between each pairing and focus on keeping the movements as smooth and in a legato fashion as possible. The string crossing between the broken “double-stop” should be smooth, and the mixture of single and double-note playing provides the student the opportunity to practice a full sound and the required elbow movement in a smoother manner than the written alternating stroke.

Once the student is confident in transitioning from each pair smoothly and with good intonation, they should play each pairing repeated as double-stops, first repeating each pair four times (Figure 2.2), and then only repeating each twice (Figure 2.3). While this begins training the bow arm to move at a faster pace, the left arm can still move slowly and smoothly, and firmly establish the frame required for each pairing.
After the student can play each pairing as a double-stop twice with consistency and at a moderately fast tempo, they can begin playing the etude as written. They should still aim to have as deep and full a sound on each individual string as they had with double-stops, and the left hand should maintain the double-stop frame to keep it organized. With this etude, the student also needs to plan out bow distribution in terms of dynamics and shaping of the musical phrase.

Practice Variations

There are a number of practice variations that can be done with this etude. The student can change the contact point of the bow (upper part, middle, lower part), and in addition to playing each note separately, they can also create slurred groupings. The student can group every six notes, twelve notes, or even a whole measure together in a slur. This truly challenges their ability to maintain a smooth sound and string crossings in all parts of the bow. Carl Flesch also recommends a drone-like practice variation. This is similar to the the double-stop practice method, except each beat is slurred together (see Figure 2.4). For example, if a student was to practice the first measure in this fashion, the open string D would be held in one bow while the student played the open G, second finger Bb, and open G again underneath it. This manner of practice would continue for the following beats of the etude.
No. 6 - Allegretto scherzoso

Overview

This is one of the few etudes in the book that clearly focuses on one specific aspect of technique - fourth finger strength and speed through turns and trills. There are the occasional third finger turns/trills in this etude, but the purpose is to build strength and speed in the fourth finger while also building accurate shifting technique. This etude is also primarily rhythmic - the melodic line is extremely disjunct, and notes were chosen more for the purpose of challenging the left hand, rather than creating a melody.

Left Hand

As has been stated in prior etude discussions, it is extremely important for the student to learn and practice these etudes without excessive tension. This particular etude challenges an aspect of technique for what is usually the weakest finger in the left hand, and the student can easily overestimate the strength and stamina of the fourth finger at first. With this in mind, it is important for the student to slowly build strength in the fourth finger and not attempt to play through the etude with all turns right away. The suggested practice sequence that will be discussed later will help with this, but it will still be important for the student to divide the etude into sections at first, and maintain a relaxed hand. There should be no squeezing, and the raising and lowering of the fourth finger should be done in a relaxed fashion from the base knuckle joint.

The adjustment of the left arm and hand will also aid the fourth finger, especially on the lower strings or in high positions. In the discussion of etude No. 1, it was suggested that the student should balance towards the fourth finger in chords and adjust the elbow to support that balance - the same should be done for these turns so the fourth finger has more freedom of
motion and strength behind it. In most cases, the fourth finger turns accompany a third finger to first finger pairing, and the first finger can stretch back if necessary.

Since the majority of this etude deals with fourth finger turns, shifting is also an essential practice point for the left hand. This subject will be dealt with more in the practice sequence, but when isolating shifts, the student should practice shifting between the last note of the first pairing (usually first finger) to the highest note of the next turn (fourth finger). For example, if the student were to practice shifting between the last pair of measure 13 and the first pair of measure 14, they would practice shifting between the A on first finger and the fourth finger F#. In the next measure.

Right Hand

The right hand technique in this etude is much less taxing in comparison to the prior etudes, but the main goal for the student is to maintain good sound, as always. Since there are almost no cases of string crossing within one bow stroke, the student can focus on creating a solid sound on one string and keeping the sound even on all strings. A good way to practice this is with ponticello - playing on the bridge. To create a solid, strong sound while playing ponticello, the student is required to have a relaxed sound and put a lot of weight into the string. The student should also feel as if they are constantly pulling the bow towards their body and working against tension. If they can master this, when they return to a more regular contact point and maintain the feeling of weight and resistance, they will have a much stronger sound.

Practice Sequence

At first, the student should just practice the three notes of each grouping (the upper and lower note of the turn, and the lowest note of the grouping) in a three-note slur (see Figure 3.1).
The student can play all notes at an even rhythm at first, and later move to playing the two notes of the turn as double the rhythm as the third note (see Figure 3.2). This slow, relaxed practice method allows the student to practice shifting as mentioned before, and figure out the intervals between all each note. It is important for the student to know the hand frame between the upper note of the turn and the lowest note of each grouping, and if the interval of the turn is a half or whole step. The student should practice in this manner slowly at first, and slowly accelerate the tempo. This should only be done when the student feels they have mastered the hand frame, shifting, and intonation at the previous tempo.

Figure 3.1
*Practice Step 1 - All Notes Even*

Figure 3.2
*Practice Step 2 - First Two Notes Faster*

The next step is to practice the etude as written, but slowly at first. As stated earlier, it is important for each turn to be executed loosely and without tension, especially at a slow tempo - this sets the precedent for faster tempos and sets the left hand up to continue in a relaxed manner. From here, the student should aim to get this etude in as fast a tempo as possible, as long as the left hand remains relaxed.

**Practice Variations**

There are a couple of practice variations the student can do with this etude that will also aid in the strengthening of the fourth finger (or the third, depending on the turn). Each turn can be practiced as a trill, in an even faster manner. This should be done at a slower tempo at first simply doing each turn more than twice. Another variation is practicing each turn as left hand pizzicato. The top finger of the turn is that finger that is used to pluck the string, and the lowest
note of each grouping is bowed. This is an excellent exercise to build strength in the upper fingers, and the student should also do this while working on building up the tempo while playing the etude as written.

Since this etude is so repetitive in terms of rhythmic variety, the student should aim for especially high levels of musicality with this etude. The only dynamic markings in this etude are fortés and pianos, with some crescendos or decrescendos leading to them - the student should add in additional dynamic markings to add more variety and as much phrasing as possible to this etude.

**No. 8 - Allegro**

**Overview**

Similarly to the previously discussed etude, this piece focuses on a specific aspect of technique - thirds. With the exception of the ending, the whole etude is a sequence of ascending and descending thirds, modulating through a few different keys. Many of the principles and suggestions for the first Dönt etude can especially be applied here, although there are third-specific techniques that will be discussed. Before beginning this etude, it would be beneficial for the student to study some of the thirds from the Carl Flesch Scale System. Many of the ascending and descending third passages follow similar patterns to the third exercises in the Flesch system, especially the thirds from the key of C Major and F Major.
**Left Hand**

Since this etude has the concentration on thirds, the left hand faces the most technical difficulties. If it hasn’t already been emphasized enough, the student must always aim to be relaxed and have as little tension as possible. The position of the hand frame, balance, and angle of the fingers needs to be planned out for each pairing of thirds, and should be practiced extremely slowly at first. The student should continue to balance the hand towards the third and fourth fingers during third pairings, and needs to also consider the angle of the wrist - if it should be held closer to the violin, or further away. The angle of the fingertips will also affect this, and those smaller details should be figured out first - the student can review the Schradieck exercises to learn what works best for their hand.

The position of the left hand needs to be considered during shifts as well. To prepare for this, the student should isolate two pairs of thirds separated by a shift - for example, the first four notes in measure 1. The student should isolate the C/E-D/F pairing and practice the coordination and positioning for that pair, and then practice the same for the E/G-F/A pair separately. Once the student feels confident in playing each pair in isolation, they can begin practicing the shift between the two pairs. The student must always have reference fingers when shifting - they can either shift with the old pair (in this case, 2nd and 4th fingers on D/F up to F/A; see Figure 4.1), or shift with the new pair (returning to 1st and 3rd fingers on C/E and shift up to E/G; see Figure 4.2). Both are good, but the student should use the same shifting method for all ascending shifts on the same string, and all descending shifts on the same string. Whichever is chosen, the student needs to isolate the shift and be aware of all the details - is the shift between two major thirds, two minor thirds, or two different types of thirds? In the case of the latter, will the fingers need to widen or decrease the space during the shift? With all shifts between thirds, the student should use the lower note as the reference finger alone, and can
practice shifting only on that finger (either the 1st or 2nd). The student should also isolate the shift for the upper finger, but it is imperative that they measure the distance of the shift with the lower finger and adjust the upper finger accordingly.

![Figure 4.1](image)

Figure 4.1

**m. 1 - shift with old pair**

![Figure 4.2](image)

Figure 4.2

**m. 1 - shift with new pair**

There are also many situations where the student will need to shift across the string, like in the first half of measure 2 - the student needs to shift from first position on the D and A strings to third position on the G and D strings to play the E/G-F/A third pairing. In this case, even though the thirds are descending, the *hand* is ascending, and the student should use the same shifting method they chose for ascending thirds like in the first half of measure 1. Since there are string crossings involved in these shifts as well, the student needs to plan out additional left hand coordination. When planning out the ascending (or descending) shifts across strings, the student should never think that they are moving diagonally. Instead, the hand should always move up or down on the same strings - this requires moving the fingers to the new strings and then shifting, or doing the opposite where the hand shifts on the old strings and then transfers to the new strings. In cases where the hand is ascending across strings (for descending thirds), the student should transfer the fingers to the new strings, and then shift up. In the example of the first half of measure 2, the student would transfer their desired reference fingers (either 1st/3rd or 2nd/4th) to the G and D strings from the D and A strings, and then shift up to the E/G-F/A pairing.

With all the coordination required from the fingers for these shifts, the student should also consider the elbow. The arm should initiate the movement for any shifts, not the hand, but
the angle of the elbow can affect the ease of shifts as well, especially with thirds. If the student is shifting to high positions, or if the student chooses to shift on 2nd and 4th fingers, swinging the elbow and arm towards the torso can aid the movement and help balance the hand more comfortably. Repositioning the elbow for any shifts can also aid in releasing tension and cause less squeezing in the left hand.

Right Hand

The bow arm faces far less difficulty in this etude than the left hand, and the goal for this etude is to continue much of the work done previously. The student should always maintain a strong, solid sound throughout the etude, which can be more challenging with double strings and higher positions. It is important the difficulty of the left hand does not affect the sound produced, and that the student doesn’t subconsciously push too hard into the strings if the right hand begins matching the exertion of the left. The student should always think horizontally with the bow, not vertically.

A good practice technique would be to simply practice on open strings - this works out the coordination of the bow arm, and can give the left hand a break when necessary. When practicing the string crossings, the student needs to maintain contact with the pivot string. If practicing a string crossing to an open string, the student needs to be careful to not use too much weight on the downward motion and create a “crunch” sound - the motion should still be controlled, and should only feel as if it is accomplished through a dropping of the elbow, not with any additional force. On the opposite end, when crossing to a lower string, the upward motion still needs to be initiated with the elbow and upper arm, but should feel held to the string with the purpose of creating good contact.
Practice Sequence

Once the student has isolated each pairing and practiced the shifts between each one, they can begin putting it all together. It would not be recommended for the student to try slurring eight thirds together at once, as is printed in the etude. Instead, they should play each third separate at a slow pace, and only practice a few measures at a time at first. Later, they can begin enlarging their practice sections to playing through a few lines at a time. Once they feel confident playing through large sections with all thirds separate, they can begin by slurring two notes per bow, and later moving on to four notes and finally eight notes per bow. When beginning to slur notes together, it should be done slowly and with a metronome to ensure even-ness. The student should then increase the tempo before increasing the amount of notes per bow.

This etude is marked “forte sempre,” and the student should aim to achieve this to ensure that they are maintaining good sound. Once they are able to play eighth notes per bow accurately, they can also begin adding vibrato to the notes to add another layer of musicality. However, when adding vibrato, the student needs to make sure they are vibrating every note, so that thirds without vibrato don’t stand out, and that the vibrato doesn’t overly affect the pitch or hand frame.

No. 11 - Allegretto

Overview

This is the first of the collection of Dont etudes that is more like an actual piece of music, rather than just a study of technique. While very similar to the prelude, this etude has more of a melodic line and could be compared to a work from the Bach Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin. This etude is a series of straight eighth notes either as single notes, double stops, or
three-note chords (with the occasional four-note chord), and while the student has already handled the technique challenges of this etude in previous studies, they must now also be able to create and carry the melody within the chords.

Left Hand

Since this etude is so similar to the prelude, the student can refer back to the first discussion of this collection. However, since this etude contains a mixture of single, double, and triple notes, in comparison to the constant three-note chords of the prelude, the student must decide for every chord whether they will keep all fingers of the chord down, or remove certain ones after they have sounded. This will vary from chord to chord, and depends on variable such as if the chord is before a shift, if some of the notes remain constant for the following chord, or if some of the fingers can be used as references for the next chord. For example, the first measure contains alternating three-note chords with a single note G and E#. Both chords are the same, consisting of B/D/F#, and even though none of those notes are used for the single notes, it would be recommended that the student leaves the B and D on the string while they play the single note on the E-string. By leaving those fingers down, the student does not have to concern themselves with finding those notes again, especially because the B on the D-string is a stretch for the fourth finger. There are many other examples where the student has the same situation of alternating chords with single notes, but the chords remain the same. This is the case for measures 4, 6, 11, and 14, to name a few, and it would be recommend for the student to keep as many fingers of the chords as possible down on the strings while they play the single note. There are other cases, like measure 4, where the alternating chords change and it would still be recommended for the student to leave the fingers of the first chord down as references to find the notes of the second chord.
Right Hand

Similarly to the left hand technique of this etude, much of the right hand technique discussion from the prelude can be applied here. The addition of the melodic line does add another layer of technique though, and the student must take this into consideration when deciding where to put the majority of the weight and emphasis of the bow.

The majority of the three-note chords of this etude fall on a down-bow and have the melody in the upper voice, which makes it easier for the student to achieve a good sound and voicing. These chords should be broken close to the frog in the lower half of the bow, and the execution should be playing the lower two notes simultaneously, and then breaking the chord to the upper note played by itself. Even though it is an asymmetrical break, the student should still feel the pivot of the middle string, even if the sound will not carry over after the break. In the cases of the four-note chords, those should broken as two-pairings, and then the note of the melodic line should be sustained by itself. For multiple-note chords that fall on an up-bow, the student should aim to break the chord in an opposite fashion - close to the tip in the upper fast, but still with a slow speed. After playing the first two notes of the chord, the bow should speed up for the upper notes to carry the sound.

To create voicing where the bottom note of the chord is part of the melodic line, the student can do two things to emphasize the melody - add more weight to the bottom of the chord, play the bottom note by itself, and begin the chord on the beat. In most cases, chords are begun before the beat, with the first notes played almost as grace notes. By reversing this and placing the first notes on the beat, it naturally creates more emphasis on the ear. If the student also isolates the bottom note, and breaking the chord into one-note to two-notes, the bottom note will stand out.
**Practice Sequence**

When first approaching this etude, the student should begin by isolating all the chords and double stops - basically playing everything except the single notes. The first step should be the same as the prelude - playing all multiple-note chords as broken double stops (ie two and two from bottom to top, and then top to bottom; see Figure 5.1). After this student has practiced in this manner, they should continue the same progression of exercises used in the prelude. There are some instances where there should be an exception to adding in single notes between chords - if they occur on shifts. For example, between measures 7 and 8 - the last chord of measure 7 is in first position and the first chord of measure 8 but the shift occurs before the last single note of measure 7, not before the first chord of measure 8. In situations like these, rather than just practicing shifting between chords, the student should add in the single note so they can practice the correct shift and be aware of how the hand frame needs to be adjusted before or after the single note (see Figure 5.2). Before the student can progress to adding in the single notes, they should also be able to practice all the chords with the bowing they would fall on if all notes were being played. In the first line, if the student was only practicing chords without taking bowings into consideration, the chords would land on alternate bowings - however, within the first line, all the three-note chords fall on a down bow, which affects the technical maneuvering of each chord.
For measures where there are many chords in a row rather than alternating chords and single notes, such as in measures 28-29 and 37, the student should aim to figure out patterns within the chords. For example, in measure 28-29, each of the four chords has a third at the bottom, and it is helpful to know the order of major or minor thirds. In this case, measure 28 has two minor thirds, a major third, and then ends with a minor third at the bottom. The student can practice this sequence by just practicing the thirds at first - the shifting techniques from etude No. 8 will be useful here (see Figure 5.3). Once they are comfortable moving between the thirds, they can also “shadow finger” the top of the chord - basically practice the thirds with the top note fingered, but not bowed. With the top note, the student needs to figure out the interval between that note and the middle note. In the case of measure 28, it is always a fourth (except the ending third), but the student needs to be aware of if it feels like a half step or a whole step away from the fingered middle note. The student can also isolate the top two notes and just practice shifting between those notes of the chords, later adding in the shadow fingered bottom note (see Figure 5.4).

While much of the focus so far has been on the chords, a good practice technique would be to isolate the melodic line of the etude. The student can play the single notes of the melodic outline without worrying about the technical challenges of playing the chords to truly hear the shaping of the line and figure out where the high and low parts fall (see Figure 5.5). Practicing this way will also give the student a higher sense of awareness of if the melodic line falls in the
top, middle, or bottom voice of a chord, and in what sections of the etude they need to change the voicing of their chords.

Figure 5.5

Once the student has gained a mastery of the chords and has an idea of how they want to shape the melodic line, they can begin practicing the etude as written. Even though the etude is marked “ben marcato,” they should practice in a smooth, sustained manner at first - this ensures that the left and right arm technique they have practiced thus far isn’t affected by the tension of having to add in a shorter and more separated playing style. Practicing in a sustained manner also allows them to hear the notes better and make sure that intonation isn’t sacrificed in the big picture. As with all other etudes, the student should begin by only practicing short sections slowly, and then combining those small sections to create larger and larger sections. Once they feel comfortable playing through large sections or the whole etude, they can begin adding in the marcato style. The metronome should be used during this to ensure evenness of tempo, and the student should eventually aim to play this etude at a tempo of quarter note at 60 BPM.

Ending Remarks

Even though not all the etudes in Jakob Don’t’s “24 Etudes and Caprices, Opus 35” were discussed, the practice techniques and pedagogical approach discussed in this document can be applied not only to the rest of his etudes, but to any works a student may encounter. This, essentially, covers the purpose of the etude - providing the opportunity to practice and solve
technical challenges that will later be found in repertoire. In these select etudes, the student is exposed to a variety of technical challenges, and even though much of the discussions may have seemed basic, it is important to break down every aspect of playing so that the student gains a higher understanding of the movements and sounds they are executing. It is the hope of the author that this work aids in the building of technical foundations and higher thinking that will be useful when approaching challenges in repertoire and achieving a higher level of playing.
Bibliography


Kim, Minju. Personal interviews. Fall 2017.


Appendix A

Schradieck Section I

Schradieck
The School of Violin Technics
Book1: Exercises for Promoting Dexterity in the various Positions

I.
Exercises On One String

The pupil should be careful in all the exercises to keep the hand perfectly quiet, letting the fingers fall strongly, and raising them with elasticity.
The tempo must be lessened or accelerated, according to the ability of the pupil, but is generally moderate.
Dounis First Fundamental Exercise

FIRST FUNDAMENTAL EXERCISE

1st, 2nd and 3rd fingers: ACTIVE. 4th finger: PASSIVE.

NINETEEN MODIFICATIONS.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9
Appendix B

Etude No. 1

Prélude. segue.

J. Don't
Etude No. 5

Allegro appassionato.

5. \[\text{Musical notation image}\]
Etude No. 6

Allegretto scherzoso.
Etude No. 8

Allegro.
Etude No. 11

Allegretto.

espress.

f ben marcato.

in tempo.

riten.