

Otakar Ševčík: The Enduring Legacy

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Introduction

A recent exhibition at the National Museum in Prague celebrated the remarkable life of one of the greatest violin teachers of recent times — Otakar Ševčík. The exhibition lasted almost three months, from 10th December, 2004 to 27th February, 2005, and was attended by thousands who directly or indirectly received from this unique man instruction in the art of violin playing. Some even came who remembered his funeral 70 years earlier, as the exhibition was in honour of the 70th Anniversary of his death in 1934.

Ševčík's place in the history of the violin is assured. The standard history of the violin, Margaret Campbell's *The Great Violinists*, traces the development and playing of the violin from the sixteenth century to almost the end of the twentieth, and features Ševčík in a number of places.¹⁾ She is generous to Ševčík, classifying him with Auer (1845–1930), Wilhelmj (1845–1908), Hubay (1858–1937) and Flesch (1873–1944) in the great pedagogic tradition that established the strength of violin playing in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

His method has endured because it is based on scientific principles. 'Let us consider the universe which is ruled by the eternal laws. Symmetry, number and logic prevail everywhere and each phenom-

1) Campbell, M. (2004). *The Great Violinists*. London: Robson Books.

enon is subject to the universal rhythm'.²⁾ He maintained that the same cause and effect logic could be applied to learning the technique of a musical instrument. 'Whoever carries within himself an ideal that he wishes to express, must have as his prerequisite, absolute mastery of his means of expression. Art must not tolerate any mediocrity and that is why technical perfection plays a prime role in matters of musical aesthetics'.³⁾

Ševčík, she says, "produced a generation of virtuosos who were living proof of the brilliance of his teaching" (p. 73). In her description of his life and teaching, Ševčík emerges as a kindly person but a hard master. While on the one hand he would give free lessons to some poorer pupils, and even treat them to meals, on the other he "could not tolerate laziness in his pupils, nor the slightest lapse in intonation" (p. 74). Many other writers (see below) offered similar generous assessments of the man and his works.

Otakar Ševčík was in the illustrious line of European violin performers and teachers. A major figure in that line was the Italian Giovanni Battista Viotti (1753–1824), who himself was following in the steps of Vivaldi and Corelli. In 1782 Viotti travelled to Paris at the invitation of Marie Antoinette. As a court musician there he established the basics of modern playing, and raised the level of baroque performance to an art form. His original style was, naturally, Italian, but his move to Paris meant that he established there a modern "French" school. In doing this he incorporated into his work contemporary developments in technical and artistic presentation. By 1792 however, becoming aware of the dangerous situation in revolutionary Paris, he travelled to London. His fame soon spread

2) Andree Alvin, *Monde Musical*, 28th February, 1934. Quoted in Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

3) *Ibid.*

back to Europe, where he received great adulation. He inspired, and was emulated by, a series of great violinists, for example Bedřich Vilém Pixis (1786–1842), then Mořic Mildner (1812–1865), then Antonín Bennewitz (1833–1926), and finally Otakar Ševčík (1852–1934).⁴⁾

In the nineteenth century the freedom of thought that originated in the French Revolution transformed Europe in many ways. One of these transformations was that absolute monarchy no longer suppressed the people as it had in the previous century. The result was that the tremendous energy contained in the folk character of the people was sublimated into various cultural ethnicities. One such ethnic area was what is now known as Czechoslovakia, which had been under Habsburg rule for three centuries. The historian František Palacký (1798–1876) and others revived the country and, among other changes, the art of music returned. An English musical scholar of the time, Charles Burney (1726–1814), commented that Czechoslovakia was the “conservatoire of Europe in the baroque era”.

Just as in the seventeenth century, when all those interested in the violin had made their way to Italy to study the art of making and playing the violin under men such as Stradivarius, Corelli and Vivaldi, so too at the beginning of the twentieth century people flocked to Czechoslovakia on account of all the talent that existed there. It was into this world that Otakar Ševčík was born in 1852, in the south part of Czechoslovakia, which was then part of the Habsburg Empire. The area was then in political turmoil, and in the musical world also a revolution was in progress. Ševčík may be considered part of that revolution, because he reacted strongly to the existing baroque tradition. What occurred was that local virtuosi produced their

4) Campbell, *op. cit.*

own “traditional” ways of playing — an Italian style, a French style, and so forth. These local virtuosi concentrated on polishing their style, focusing on the sensitivity and artistry of the basic technique. This polishing produced a fine tonal “brew” which advanced the history of violin performance physically, logically, and aesthetically. One of these styles was the “modern Soviet School”, which now in the twenty-first century looks like becoming universal.⁵⁾ To some extent Ševčík’s playing and teaching contained elements of this new style. His significant achievements allow us to capture from his works both the concrete realisation of his teaching, and the spirit which inspired his creativity.

Since then Ševčík has become fairly well known in Europe, though even books originating there give just a brief mention of his name and work. In Japan he is still not popular despite the fact that one Japanese, Ryusaku Hayashi (1887–1960), studied under him in Czechoslovakia from 1920 to 1923.⁶⁾ Unfortunately, Hayashi’s comments on Ševčík do not reveal much,⁷⁾ and indeed some other sources are unreliable regarding the facts of his life. Some of this confusion is understandable, given the circumstances in which data was accumulated. One example is the recording of Ševčík’s pupils: From the records kept by his younger sister Anna we learn the names of some 1,199 pupils who studied directly under him, but this list

5) Campbell, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 77, 165, 279. My mentor Marie Hlouňová, when visiting Japan in 1967, called this the “new Russian style”.

6) Hayashi, Ryusaku (1932). “Violon ensouhou” [Performing on the Violin]. In *Gengaku: Ongaku kouza*, 9 [String Music, Music Lectures No. 9], pp. 67–146. Tokyo: Bungeishunjuusha.

7) Hayashi, Ryusaku (1939). “Ševčík no Renshu” [The Practising of Ševčík’s Method]. In Kitahara (Ed.) *Gengakki no Jitsugi* [The Technique of String Instruments], pp. 103–122. Tokyo: ARS.

was further added to by Vladimír Šefl in his 1953 text on Ševčík.⁸⁾ The final number may never now be known.

From Ševčík's many works we can get a hint of how he taught his pupils. Two sides of his personality are evident in this process: His early virtuoso experiences and his subsequent teaching experiences. His intellect and his knowledge were used to create a system in which the pupil repeatedly practised a limited number of combinations of notes in different rhythms. For example, one note can be played in multiple rhythms, as many as can be made mathematically, though of course limited by human abilities. This "true" method was something that the youthful Ševčík originated, and is the hallmark of the consistency for which Ševčík is well known. From this starting point he contributed enormously to violin education in Czechoslovakia, already admired for its string playing.

In this paper, therefore, I would like to convey to the next generation a clear and correct version of the system which existed in that area, and which may be called the "current of the times". I shall give an account of Otakar Ševčík's life, works, teaching, and thinking. His thinking, in fact, contains many elements of Confucianism, and this undercurrent may be seen throughout all the 82 years of his virtuous life. I myself was fortunate enough to have been taught under his historical legacy, and am convinced of its value to the modern generation. To that end, this paper is addressed to all those who wish to research sincerely about Otakar Ševčík.

8) Šefl, Vladimír (1953). *Otakar Ševčík: Sborník Statí a Vzpomínek* [Memorial Volume of Essays and Memoirs on Otakar Ševčík]. Praha: Státní Nakladatelství Krásné Literatúry, Hudby a Umění.

Ševčík's Life: Talents and Efforts

(a) Childhood and Youth

Otakar Ševčík was born on the 22nd March, 1852 in a small hamlet called Horažďovice, as the second child but first boy to Josef and Josefa Ševčík. Josefa (1829–1903), Otakar's mother, was from the well-off German family Pflanzner, though her family disapproved of her marriage to someone they considered of lower status. She was a patient, devoted, courageous, and religious woman. She was always determined to maintain her understanding feelings for those around her. Otakar's father Josef (1816–1866) was Dean of the local Church of St. Peter and Pavel, and combined his religious duties with those of schoolteacher. He was a strict man and a convinced nationalist.

When Otakar Ševčík was five years old he began to be tutored systematically in music by his father. At first he learned thoroughly to sing, and this was followed by intonation and rhythms, which are the soul of music, and lastly came an understanding of harmony. At six his father taught him the basis of piano playing. The young Ševčík already had sufficient experience to sing as a soloist in the church choir. When he was seven he began to learn the violin, and two years later he was able to play in public.

At the age of 10 Ševčík went to Prague to the Academic Gymnasium, and there continued to work on his violin skills under Vilém Bauer. As an alto soloist he also performed in the Church of the Crucifixion and Monastery under its musical director Josef Krejčí. At the Gymnasium he also displayed talent at languages, which were to prove useful to him later in his career when he travelled to countries such as Russia, England and America. From his parents, of course, he was already bilingual in German and Czech. By the age of 13 his violin playing was recognized in the

national press.⁹⁾ The music critic wrote that the performance of the 13-year-old was wonderful and skilful, and with deep expression. The music played was the *Variations* by Jan Václav Kalivoda (1801–1866). The audience gave the performance rapturous applause.

In March, 1866 Otakar Ševčík entered the second year of the Prague Conservatory but in the following month his father died of TB. Ševčík would have been unable to continue his studies, but luckily the patronage of Count Albert Nostitz, the president of the Conservatory, averted disaster. The Count contacted a wealthy individual, Ferdinand Flammiger, who was prepared to finance Ševčík's studies.

Prior to his father's death, Ševčík had written a 46-page letter of thanks to his father expressing his happiness on entering the Prague Conservatory. "I again thank you for your agreement to allow me to enter the Conservatory... Due to you... I am devoting myself to the violin... and I shall not separate myself from it... and the violin and I are now one...".¹⁰⁾ From this letter we can feel the deep sensitivity and thankfulness of the 14-year-old boy in regard to violin playing, and his purity of heart in attempting to achieve his main objective. From his expression we can also note that he had already developed a mature intelligence.

Otakar Ševčík spent his first six months at the Conservatory under Antonín Sitt (1847–1929), and later entered a more advanced class taught by Antonín Bennewitz. This latter class was of a high standard, going well beyond technical aspects and laying more stress on expression. In Ševčík's second year he achieved distinction by playing N. Paganini's *Caprice No. 24*. By this point Ševčík was an admirer of Ferdinand Laub (1832–1875), a professor at the Moscow Conservatory and a well known fig-

9) *Národní Listy* [National Lists], 15th September, 1865.

10) Šeřl, *op. cit.*, illustration No. 31.

ure in the violin world. On both July 21st and 22nd 1870 Ševčík played Beethoven's *Violin Concerto* (with Cadenza by Joachim) in public, and thereby graduated as the outstanding player in his group of 14. His technique was regarded as perfect and to this was added his true artistry, which originated from his determined spiritual excitement.

(b) Ševčík as Virtuoso

In October 1870 Ševčík was appointed as both concert master and professor at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, a position that included giving solo performances from time to time. His playing of Paganini, Ernst, and Vieuxtemps, for example, was apparently technically excellent, as was the interpretation. His own reaction was more modest, spurring him on to perfect his technique. In addition, the preparation for and the giving of these performances had psychological benefits in helping him to cope with the tensions that a virtuoso experiences. By this time he had perfected the physical side of playing the violin, though from his written works we learn the extent of the effort that this cost him. He made constant use of the teaching system of his mentor Bennewitz, which emphasised the repeat system of practising. Subsequently, this systematic approach laid the foundation for the Ševčík method, and in retrospect we can see that these formative experiences contributed enormously to the position he subsequently took regarding violin teaching and practising.

In March 1872 Ševčík gave his first recital in Prague. The music critic of *Bohemia* compared his performance with that of the great Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi (1830–1898), and went on to say that the playing sounded as if he himself had composed the pieces.¹¹⁾ In September of the

11) *Bohemia*, March 15, 1872.

same year a performance in Salzburg of Paganini's *Violin Concerto No. 1* was acclaimed by a local critic as “brilliant”, “pure”, and “beautiful”. The writer went on to say that he had never heard such a fascinating tone before, and that the difficult phrases had all been perfectly executed as a result of the player's training and attention to detail.

Later that autumn Ševčík played the same programme, but with his own cadenza to the Paganini piece. The well known Czech music aesthete, Dr. Hostinský (1847–1910) praised the performance's perfection and the clarity of the technique. He emphasised Ševčík's sensitivity which expressed his deep thinking, and admired the thoroughness of the player's musical education and cultured artistic sensibility. All the critics agreed that Ševčík's left fingering was faultless, and then he created the passage beautifully by his double stopping and harmonics. Concerning the right hand, his bowing was assured, especially the flageolet and *mezza voce* techniques.

In the spring of 1873 Ševčík worked as concert master under Smetana (1824–1884) in Prague, and in the autumn in Vienna as concert master in the Comic Opera. He stayed just six months in the latter post because his reception in Vienna was not particularly good. This may have been due to the aggressive Czech pride which he often displayed, and which he may have inherited from his father. In any case, in the following year there was a financial crisis in Vienna which left him poor. However, his friend Hynek Vojáček wrote to him from Russia, asking him to come to be a concert master of the Opera in Charkov, Ukraine. Ševčík went, but to his surprise found that in Charkov there was neither an Opera, nor a building, nor even a plan for one. He moved on to Moscow. There he played the violin, conducted, and even sang songs in order to make some money. This *ad hoc* display of his musical talents luckily led to his appointment on 1st September, 1875, to be a professor of the violin section in the Imperial School of

Music in Kiev.

(c) Ševčík as Professor

(i) Kiev

Ševčík stayed in Kiev for 17 years. At first he was very active as a soloist, but gradually he experienced increasingly troublesome aching in the eyes. It became necessary for him to reduce the number of his performances. This setback forced him into creative work, for example his composition of seven Czech dances based on nostalgia for his homeland. Occasionally he actually returned to Czechoslovakia to perform, one such occasion being in 1881 when he played to raise money for the Prague National Theatre, which had burned down. However, his eyes continued to give trouble, and in Vienna in 1883 he had a second operation on his left eye. His work now consisted of constant attempts to improve his teaching, and to continue writing. His true value as a pedagogue began to emerge at this time, and he exhibited a single-minded devotion to his work. He came to be regarded as almost an ascetic by those close to him.

This was not strictly true. Prior to his arrival in Moscow he had had a love affair with his cousin Marie. She was devoted to him – even until her death in 1915 – but he did not return her love and the affair was unsuccessful. Similarly, in 1886 he wrote to his mother about another woman, Alexandra, and her son Victor, with whom he was living at the time. But these matters remained a secret from most people, who continued to believe in his solitary lifestyle.

In 1887 he was still working in the Imperial School of Music in Kiev, where by now he had formed a chamber ensemble as well as an orchestra. These efforts led to an invitation to become president of the School. However, he did not accept the presidency because the post-

holder was expected to be a Russian Orthodox, while he was a member of the St. Stanislav sect. Consequently, he continued in the same position in Kiev until 1892.

(ii) Prague

In 1892 Ševčík was appointed professor in the Prague Conservatory. He arrived there with Victor – but not Alexandra – as an adopted son. The following year he successfully played Vieuxtemps' *Violin Concerto* and continued to perform occasionally, though he was now busy composing manuals for violin technique. He cultivated, among other virtuoso violinists, Jan Kubelík (1880–1940) and Jaroslav Kocian (1883–1950), whose international performances were to spread Ševčík's name all over the world. His writings also started to be published worldwide at about this time, gaining him considerable fame.

By 1894 his eye problem was again causing him great discomfort. He was operated on again in Vienna, to deal with a *sarcoma orbitae* in the left eyeball. This operation, by Dr. Villroth, resulted in the ending of about 20 years of suffering.

In 1901 Ševčík's mentor Bennewitz retired and Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) became president of the Conservatory. Ševčík was appointed Dean of the violin section and during their time together there was an easy understanding between the two men. Ševčík's method became official throughout the Conservatory, and from this point onwards talented players from many countries arrived to learn under him. They came to be called "Ševčík's colony", one member of which was Mary Hall (1884–1956) from England, who graduated and helped to spread his name in Britain and elsewhere. Ševčík also established a scholarship for poor students in order to reform the educational policy regarding the violin. In 1903, in Prachatice in south Czechoslovakia, Ševčík also inaugurated a summer

course which attracted young virtuosi from all over the world. Every summer until 1906, the town was filled with the sound of violins — much to the annoyance of the locals!

(iii) Písek

After the death of Dvořák in 1904 Ševčík departed from the Prague Conservatory. He moved to Písek and became active in his teaching. His colony became bigger and bigger. Unfortunately, perhaps because of his earlier heavy smoking in Kiev, he often had difficulty breathing. By 1907 an operation was required on his goiter, and this was done under Professor Dr. Kocher in Berne. After a little while he got back his voice and he now started a life of individual teaching, which was to last 25 more years, in fact until his death. At first he lived and gave lessons on the second floor of the Hotel Dvořáček in Písek, while his pupils stayed in the town. This resulted in the elevation of Písek into a town of cultured music.

In 1909 he was invited by the Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph I to be professor and dean in the Master's Course in the Vienna Music Academy. He went there once a week by train from Písek. By this point, at the age of 57, his fame was increasing daily.

His lifetime habit was to lead a simple life. He got up early every morning and ate a frugal breakfast. After that he drank some *kumiss* (an alcohol and milk drink) and went to the forest for a walk. At 8:00 he returned home and taught until past noon. In the afternoon he used to enjoy his favourite coffee and *bábovka* (high scallop-shaped cake) while doing some writing beside the Otava river. The small shelter where he worked came to be called the Ševčík Pavilion in his honour. In the late afternoon he returned home and taught until about 10:00.

Many pupils sought him out in Písek, for example Efrem Zimbalist (1889–1985) from St. Petersburg, who had graduated from Auer's class

there. He came with a recommendation from the composer Glazunov (1865–1936) and a scholarship from the Russian Emperor Nicholas II. When the scholarship ran out, Ševčík, recognising his pupil's poor agricultural background taught him for free.¹²⁾ Another distinguished violinist to contact Ševčík was the famous French virtuoso Jacques Thibaud (1880–1953), who had used Ševčík's method of practice.¹³⁾ However, Thibaud wanted Ševčík to come to France – secretly, his wife insisted – but Ševčík finally was not able to go.

Despite this success, there were setbacks in Ševčík's life. One such was the criticism of the historian and journalist Dr. Richard Batka (1868–1922), who also taught at the Prague Conservatory. Another critic was the French violinist Henri Marteau (1874–1934). They disliked his Czech nationalism, which they thought was close to fascism. They also did not sympathise with his method. Ironically, at the very end of his life Marteau appears to have relented in his view of Ševčík, and came to appreciate his work and method. However, Carl Flesch, who was a professor at the Bucharest Conservatory, had such respect for Ševčík that he thought of himself as Ševčík's pupil.

In 1911 Ševčík took six pupils from the Vienna Academy on a concert tour to London. The tour went very well, and thus began the international side of his life, when Ševčík made regular visits outside Czechoslovakia. Paul Stoeving, for example, visited Ševčík in Písek in 1913, and also met him in London at a gala night some years later when Ševčík presented eight of his best pupils from the Vienna Master's Course at a concert at the

12) Stewart, R. (1933). "Otokar Ševčík". *The Strad* (Supplement to No. 518), 58. However, Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 114, indicates that his father was a conductor.

13) Kitahara (Ed.). (1939). *Gengakki no Jitsugi* [The Technique of String Instruments]. Tokyo: ARS.

Queen's Hall.¹⁴⁾ Following a personal memoir of Ševčík, Stoeving deals with the "Meaning and Scope of [Ševčík's] Teaching Method". This account shows Ševčík living a life of his own choosing, "a Czech among Czechs, a life free of conventionality, free to indulge his little fads and hobbies". The picture given is one of rural happiness, enlivened by the visits of his aspiring pupils, and by his visits overseas.

During the first World War his teaching inevitably became less, but on the other hand his writing side once again became active. At the end of the War he was appointed as an emeritus professor at the Prague Conservatory, and a year later he was invited to teach in the Prague Master's Course, where he stayed for six years. From 1921 to 1922 he taught in the Ithaca Conservatory in New York State. He stayed there almost one year, as shown in a postcard¹⁵⁾ written from Ithaca. In *The Musical Observer* of August 1920, when Ševčík had just arrived to teach at the Ithaca Conservatory of Music, there appeared four short celebratory articles on the man and his working methods:¹⁶⁾ Paul Stoeving gave an elegant personal recollection of Ševčík and an analysis of his method; Sasha Culbertson ("one of the ablest of the younger solo violinists" as the Editor commented) wrote a welcoming piece as a pupil; Olive Myler's laudatory article was reprinted from 1916; and Edmund Severn contributed a critical assessment of Ševčík's *Opus 1*. Severn's short article begins by calling Ševčík's system "the only complete technical system we have from any one author", and he later calls

14) Stoeving, P. (1920). "Otokar Ševčík: A Great Man and His Method". *The Musical Observer*, 19 (8), pp. 9–10.

15) Postcard dated 15th July, 1921, in the author's possession. It says that he will be returning to Europe in the following February.

16) All four of these articles can be found in *The Musical Observer*, 19(8), pp. 9–14.

it “invaluable”.¹⁷⁾ However, he has reservations too, for example in finding Ševčík’s works “of little interest” and “tedious beyond expression”. He finally advises that Ševčík be used “in small doses” and mixed with the approaches of other masters. However, generally the tone of *The Musical Observer* was bland rather than critical, and the articles are mostly full of praise rather than deeply analytical. Further, because all four contributors were able to give personal assessments of Ševčík while he was in his prime, their comments are of considerable interest.

In 1923 Ševčík made short visits to Chicago and New York, which were financially beneficial due to his fame there. In 1925 his time at the Prague Conservatory came to an end. Now 73, he turned to teaching privately once again. In the summers of 1929 and 1930 he gave university courses in Mondsee, Salzburg. From October 1931 to May 1932 he taught in Boston and New York, staying in each city one week. After coming back to Písek, however, he began to feel the effects of old age. In January of the next year he became friendly again with his former pupil Kubelík, whose conceit he had earlier disliked. That year too he visited England, against his doctor’s advice, and taught at the Guildhall School of Music in London. His visit there had been due to the invitation of Sir Landon Ronald, the School’s Director. The event is commemorated in the school magazine for Autumn, 1933, which gives a biography of Ševčík.¹⁸⁾

An article by Reid Stewart (1933) giving an account of Ševčík and his work also appeared in *The Strad* in the same year.¹⁹⁾ It begins with an

17) Edmund Severn (1920). “Ševčík’s Opus 1 — Its Value and Best Use”. *The Musical Observer*, 19 (8), p. 14.

18) (No author) (1933, Autumn). “M. Otakar Ševčík”. *The Guildhall Music Student*, pp. 6–8.

19) Stewart, R. (1933). “Otkakar Ševčík”. *The Strad* (Supplement to No. 518), pp. 57–59.

implicit comparison between the great Arcangelo Corelli and Otakar Ševčík. Violinists, says Stewart, are flocking to Písek to learn from Ševčík, in the same way as they once flocked to Italy to learn from Corelli. Stewart's largely biographical article recounts many of the stories about Ševčík that have now become legendary: his humble background as the son of a schoolmaster (but one who was also a gifted violinist who constantly encouraged his son), his early attempts to be accepted into the Prague Conservatory, the various stages of his career, his "inconquerable" shyness leading to his eventual withdrawal from concert performances, his work routines, his generosity, and so forth.²⁰⁾

Stewart also focuses on Ševčík's development as a teacher. From 1873, when Ševčík was appointed conductor of the Opera Comique in Vienna, he had apparently begun to see his life's work as "inventing a system of teaching that would produce a Paganini-like technique with mathematical certainty" (p. 57). A few years later, in Kiev, he "evolved the colossal method of systematic violin technique which was later to revolutionise the study of the violin" (p. 57). In his method he enshrined practice as the single most effective way to success: "His guiding maxim is that *slow practice is the basis of technical perfection*" (p. 58). The success of his system, Stewart shows, is to be measured by the names of his illustrious pupils.²¹⁾

At the end of his life, because of his accumulated property, a Ševčík Fund

20) Ševčík's shyness may well be something of a myth, systematically repeated by writer after writer. However, it seems more likely that there were medical reasons which gave the appearance of shyness whenever Ševčík had to perform.

21) Stewart mentions Kubelík, Kocian, Shostaky, Mary Hall, Zimbalist, Zacharevitch, Ondříček, Culbertson, Ludlow, Marjorie Hayward, Feuermann, plus a later group consisting of Bratza, Erica Morini and Wolfi (p. 57). There were also, says Stewart, "hundreds of other brilliant virtuosi" and a "stream of dazzling stars" (p. 57).

was established, called the *Ševčík Kolej* as its unique name. The committee members of the Fund were Josef Suk (1874–1935), the Czech composer, and Jaroslav Kocian. The Fund had huge holdings and its purpose was to support poor students who were studying in the Prague Conservatory, and artists who had become old and indigent. However, after 16 years the Fund was appropriated by the Nazis, and nothing more has been heard of it. With the help of his sister Anna, who had once acted as his secretary, he was able to continue working until he died in early 1934, in the peaceful surroundings of his beloved Písek.

Conclusion

In Op. 16 (below) Ševčík listed the “Ten Commandments” which recur throughout his works:

1. To play beautifully, as well as practising diligently, pay constant attention to the dynamic signs (i.e., sounding levels) of the music.
2. To achieve exact intonation (i.e., the musical intonation), practise slowly and know the name of the note you are playing. Also, keep your fingers on the string as long as you can.
3. To acquire skill in bowing, practise all the principle examples of bowing.
4. To achieve a strong tone, practise at the point of the bow *forte* with a lot of different kinds of exercises.
5. When you practise bowing, play every note *piano* and produce a soft flute-like tone. When performing, keep the edge of the hair near to the finger-board.
6. To play rhythmically, count aloud the eighths and quarters and do not beat time with your foot. When playing a piece that you know, pace to and fro in time with the music.

7. When playing up the diatonic scale, don't take off the fourth finger before you put the second finger on the next string.
8. When playing octave and tenth double stoppings, put the middle finger on the higher string.
9. Without active practice on the strings, the sound of the perfect fifth will not be pure.
10. The notes between two double bar lines should be repeated several times for practice.

These ten points now seem a bit old fashioned and over exact. For example, regarding No. 2, instead of keeping on the string, as Ševčík advised, it is better to play with a sliding half tone, and *pizzicato* with the left finger; afterwards play the same piece with a full tone. In No. 4, when one plays *forte*, the middle of the bow is now used rather than the point. Similarly, Nos. 7 and 8 may not require to be done in the precise way that Ševčík has recommended. However, Nos. 1, 5, and 6 remain excellent advice, and Nos. 9 and 10 remain useful.

In Otakar Ševčík, therefore, we find a remarkable man of the violin, whose guiding principle was, as Campbell states, somewhat paradoxical. She writes that his “genius lay in the fact that he despised pure technique, and yet devoted his life to the perfection of it”.²²⁾ Many violinists in the modern world have good reasons to be thankful to him for perfecting that pure technique. Dr. Šefl also wrote that the Ševčík method was a major revolution in the pedagogy of violin playing, because he raised it to the level of an intellectual study.²³⁾ This comment reflects my own experience of 40 years of violin teaching and playing in public.

22) Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

23) Šefl, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1 — Ševčík's Writings, with Glossary

- Op. 1 *School of Violin Technique*, 1881. Prague: Hoffmann Committee.
Dedicated to his Mentor, Prof. Bennewitz.
Practising with the left finger not only on the scale as in the past but also on the half tone scale.
1. Exercises in the 1st position.
 2. Exercises in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th positions.
 3. Exercises on the shift combining the various positions.
 4. Exercises in double, triple, and quadruple stoppings, pizzicato, and harmonics.
- Op. 2 *School of Bowing Technique*, 1892. Leipzig: Hug Committee.
Set out under six heads, and practising of the right hand with 4,000 bowings.
- Op. 3 *Forty Variations*, 1892. Leipzig: Hug Committee.
Supplement for Op. 2, and exercises for bowing in an easy style.
Hanuš Trneček's Accompanied Piano, 1898. Leipzig: Bosworth.
Max Kaempfert's Accompanied Violin Part, 1910. Leipzig: Bosworth.
L. R. Feuillard's Transcription for the Violoncello, 1904. Leipzig: Bosworth.
- Op. 4 *Expansion of the Fingers*, 1999. (This work remained in manuscript until compiled and introduced by Prof. J. Foltýn of the Prague Conservatoire in 1999). Prague: ARCO IRIS.
41 examples, and the stretching of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th fingers.
- Op. 5 *Preparation for 24 Caprices by Dont, Op. 35* (1912) (This work also remained in manuscript until it was later revised by J. Kocian.)
- Op. 6 *Violin School for Beginners*, 1904. Leipzig: Bosworth.
Seven books of exercises based on the half tone system, including the *Little Ševčík*, and the melodic notes as the supplement for Op. 6, 1909.
1 – 5: Exercises in the 1st position.

- 6: Exercises preparatory to the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th positions.
7: 5th position, combining the various positions.
- Op. 7 *Preparation for Trill Exercises and Development in Double Stopping*, 1898. Leipzig: Bosworth.
1. Exercises in the 1st position.
 2. Exercises in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th positions.
- Op. 8 *Changes of Position and Preparations for Scale Practising in 3 Octaves*, 1892. Leipzig: Hug Committee.
Haider and Helen Boyd's transcription for the violoncello, 1930. Leipzig: Bosworth.
- Op. 9 *Preparations for Practising Double Stopping*, 1898. Leipzig: Bosworth.
Exercises in seconds, thirds, fourths, sixths, octaves, tenths, and harmonics.
L. R. Feuillard's Transcription for the Violoncello, 1909. Leipzig: Bosworth.
- Op. 10 *Six Czech Dances (accompanied piano)*, 1898–1903. Leipzig: Bosworth.
1. The girl with blue eyes (dedicated to J. Kubelík).
 2. When I used to come to you (dedicated to J. Kubelík).
 3. Untitled (dedicated to J. Kubelík).
 4. Fantasy
 5. Břetislav
 6. Furiant (dedicated to J. Kubelík)
- Op. 10a *Czech Dance No. 7 (accompanied piano)*, 1928. Brno: Kisch-Trojan, N. Benátky, J. Stožický.
Dedicated to J. Kocian. Op. 10 and 10a were based on national songs and popular social songs in Czechoslovakia.
- Op. 11 *School of Intonation*, 1922. New York: Harms.
On a Harmonic Basis for Violin, in 14 parts.
- Op. 12 *School of Double Stopping* (manuscript).
- Op. 13 *School of Arpeggios and Modulations* (manuscript).
- Op. 14 *School of Chords* (manuscript).
- Op. 15 *School of Flageolets (Harmonics) and Pizzicatos* (manuscript).
Op. 12 — Op. 15 together *School for Virtuosos*.²⁴⁾
- Op. 16 *School of Performing on a Melodical Basis*, 1929–1932. Brno: Oldřich Pazdírek.

24) The Ms. for this book was submitted in 1921 to the publishing firm of Harms in New York, but in fact was never published, even though Ševčík was paid for it.

Minori Nakaune: Otakar Ševčík: The Enduring Legacy

1–30: Introduction to solo playing.

31–50: Introduction to virtuoso playing.

- Op. 17 *Analytical Studies for Concerto in d, Op. 22 by H. Wieniawski*, 1929. Brno: Oldřich Pazdírek.
- Op. 18 *Analytical Studies for Concerto in D, Op. 77 by J. Brahms*, 1931. Brno: Oldřich Pazdírek.
- Op. 19 *Analytical Studies for Concerto in D, Op. 35 by P. I. Tchaikovsky*, 1931. Brno: Oldřich Pazdírek.²⁵⁾
- Op. 20 *Analytical Studies for Concerto in D, Op. 6 by N. Paganini*, 1932. Brno: Oldřich Pazdírek.
- Op. 21 *Analytical Studies for Concerto in e, Op. 64 by F. Mendelssohn*, 1931. Brno: Oldřich Pazdírek.
- Op. 16 — Op. 21 cover two violin parts and the piano score.
- Op. 22 *Change of Positions in Single and Double Stoppings* (manuscript).
- Op. 23 *Chromatics in all Positions* (manuscript).
- Op. 24 *Left Hand Pizzicato with Simultaneous Right Hand Arco Technique* (manuscript).
- Op. 25 *Studies on the Cadenza for Brahms' Concerto by Joachim*, 1929. Berlin: Simrock.
- Op. 26 *Analytical Studies for Etudes-Caprices by R. Kreutzer*, 1932-1933. Brno: Oldřich Pazdírek.
- Four books of exercises.
- Unnumbered: *Analytical Studies for Concerto in a, Op. 53 by A. Dvořák* (manuscript).²⁶⁾

25) About Op. 19, the famous violinist David Oistrach (1908–1974) said: “Otakar Ševčík is proposing studies not only for managing technical difficulties of the Concerto but also for mastering the rhythmical harmony of the performance. This is especially important while performing the Concerto with orchestral accompaniment. A lot of attention is paid to these studies, and also to the exactness and logic of dynamic nuances of performance”. (1947)

26) The copyright of this Ms. is owned by Simrock, Berlin.