

# Otakar Ševčík's Opus 1: The Basis of Modern Violin Pedagogy

Minori Nakaune

(Received on October 5, 2006)

*This paper is dedicated to the memory of my professor Marie Hlouňová, who died in Prague on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2006, aged 94.*

## 1. Introduction

The great Czech violin teacher Otakar Ševčík (1852–1934) remains one of the major influences on international violin pedagogy. Since his first publication (Op. 1, Prague: Hoffmann, 1881<sup>1</sup>) his works have been continuously in print up to the present day (e.g., Op. 1, London: Bosworth, 2000). Simon Fischer writes that Ševčík's works have “formed the basis of many schools of string playing around the world” (Op. 1, Introduction<sup>2</sup>). This international aspect of his pedagogy was apparent from the outset, when Bosworth decided to offer his 1901 work in an edition of five or six languages, with subsequent works (e.g. Op. 6) being available in nine. For a general review of his life and critical heritage the reader may wish to consult an earlier work by the present author (Nakaune, 2005<sup>3</sup>).

In this paper I would like to examine Ševčík's pedagogical technique

- 1 Ševčík, O. (1881). *Opus 1. Schule der Violintechnik (Škola houslové techniky)*, seš. 1–4. Prague: Hoffmann.
- 2 Fischer, S. (2000). Introduction. *Ševčík, Violin Studies, Op. 1*. London: Bosworth.
- 3 Nakaune, M. (2005). Otakar Ševčík: The Enduring Legacy. In *Studies in the Humanities and Sciences*, 46(1), pp. 109–129. Hiroshima, Japan: Hiroshima Shudo University.

as seen in Opus 1, and to present a listing of the headings under which he developed his method. In particular I would like to focus here on Op. 1, Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4. At a later date I shall look at Ops. 2 and 3, and subsequently at Ops. 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9. Opus 1 contains the core of Ševčík's teaching technique, and had considerable influence on later violin teachers, for example Carl Flesch (1873–1944) and Demetrius C. Dounis (1887?–1955). Professor Anton Mingotti produced, in 1957, a booklet which was largely devoted to the pedagogy of Opus 1, with the aim of rendering the vast amount of material more easily accessible. In particular, it aimed to

provide instructions how best to study in Ševčík's works the material itself, as well as the required sequence of movements, so as to achieve a sound and reliable technic in a comparatively short time.<sup>4</sup>

Those familiar with Ševčík will find in the present paper a detailed review of his method, while those who are unfamiliar with his work may find sections of interest that would lead them to examine his works for their pedagogic usefulness. One of Ševčík's principle values, after all, is that he appeals to both neophyte and expert practitioners alike, offering to all the pleasure of increased confidence.<sup>5</sup>

In 1902 the music magazine *Dalibor* invited Ševčík to describe the origin and development of his violin school.<sup>6</sup> He replied that in 1870, as soon as

---

4 Mingotti, A. (1957). *How to Practise Ševčík's Masterworks* (Trans. Dr. K. Rokos), p. 5. London: Bosworth.

Mingotti, who according to the publishers studied under Ševčík himself and indeed became his “deputy”, was a Munich violinist and outstanding teacher. In 1958 he wrote a book on Gershwin.

5 On a personal note, these works were the ones studied by the present author. I have passed them on to many grateful pupils.

6 *Dalibor*, Jan. 4, 1902.

he had graduated from Prague Music Conservatory, he had started as a concert violinist and concert master in Salzburg. These performances made him sharply aware that his technique was inadequate and in need of refinement. He returned to the materials he had studied in the Conservatory, revisiting all his earlier lessons, but without success. He sought for a new technique, again unsuccessfully. Finally, thrown back on his own resources, he began to develop the exercises for which he was later to become famous. Despite having no model to follow, he systematised the chromatic scale system, and what had been until then the rather nebulous concept of positions (e.g., “1<sup>st</sup> Position”, “2<sup>nd</sup> Position”, etc.). Initially this work was both by himself and for himself, with the result that Op. 1, for example, is not for beginners but for upper-level pupils.<sup>7</sup> Many of his later works were designed for pupils of various levels.

Opus 1 was written, he said, during his stay in Kiev (see Nakaune, 2005, pp. 118–119), but when he returned to Prague in 1892 he was disappointed to find that they were not in general use there.<sup>8</sup> The *Dalibor* interview also shows that Ševčík had, wittingly or unwittingly, changed from being a would-be concert violinist to being a teacher and systematiser of violin pedagogy. In general societal terms he had begun to do for violin teaching what countless other nineteenth-century figures had done or were busy doing for their selected professions: creating a thoroughgoing system that would cover all aspects of the subject. These “grand syntheses”<sup>9</sup> were being created at

---

7 It was only later—perhaps with the publication of Op. 6 in 1904—that he directed his ideas to a wider audience.

8 Ironically, the works so neglected in Prague have turned out to be the most influential and popular of his teaching materials.

9 Sheehan, J. J. (2000). Culture. In T. C. W. Blanning (Ed.), *The Nineteenth Century* (pp. 126–157). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

this time in every discipline, engaging the efforts of, for example, cartographers, grammarians, and medical scientists. The intellectual classes in every European country set about creating the great dictionaries, encyclopaedias, collections of myths and fairy tales that we now have, and setting up the equivalent institutions: libraries, botanical gardens, orchestras, theatre companies, and even zoos. In this sense Ševčík was a participant in the century's "urge to create systems", though in his case it may have been a default option. The standard Ševčík had set himself was that of Ferdinand Laub (1832–1875), the great Czech violinist, but difficulties forced him to opt for teaching rather than the concert hall.<sup>10</sup>

Op. 1 mainly contains Ševčík's treatment of the left hand, with just a few sections about the right. Here he offered comprehensive advice not only on the mechanical technique but also on the treatment of a work both musically and artistically. Proficiency with the left hand, he believed, is a basic and prerequisite skill that in due course allows the learner to play the whole musical repertoire (see Fig.1).

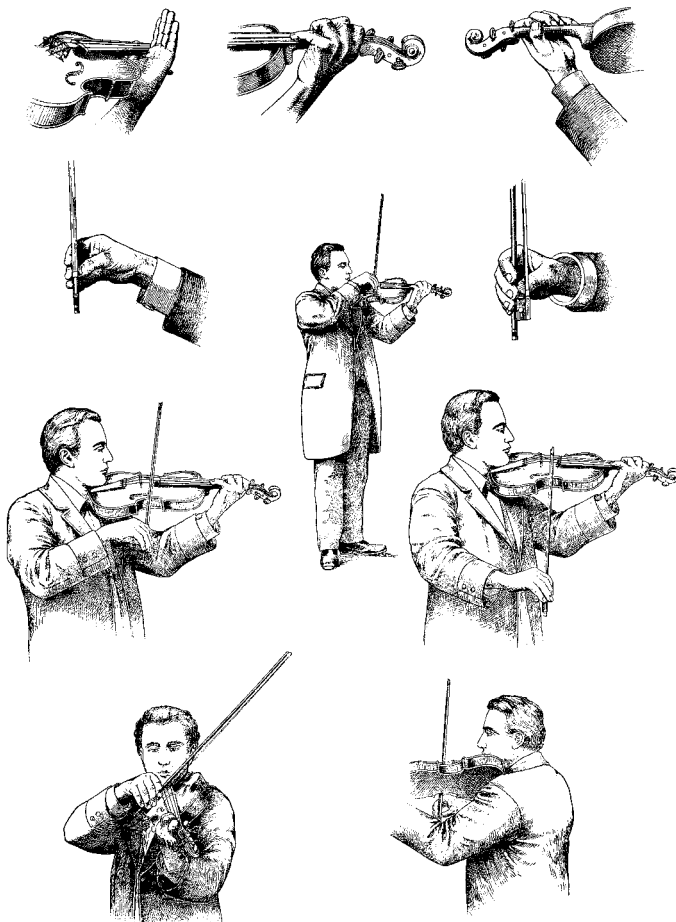
---

10 See Nakaune, 2005, pp. 118–119.

Minori Nakaune: Otakar Ševčík's Opus 1 Violin Pedagogy

Figure 1. Holding the violin and bow. From Op. 6, 1904.

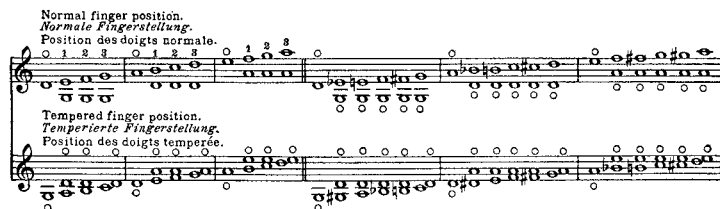
Concerning the illustration (Fig. 1), Mingotti writes that Ševčík's advice was as follows: "Forearm and back of the hand should form a straight line, and the left arm should be pulled in towards the middle of the body and turned inwards as far as this is possible without hypertension. Depending on its length, the thumb touches the neck of the violin with the first joint or in the bend of the knuckle" (p. 11)<sup>11</sup>.



11 Also, regarding the bow, Mingotti writes: "As to the bow, Ševčík demanded that it should be held more from above than from the side. The arrangement of the ↗

Since Op. 1 was aimed at advanced students, Ševčík made the assumption that the concept of tempering was already clear to the learner. In a later work, Op. 11, he set out the distinction between normal and tempered tones, and the relevant section is reproduced here for convenience.

Figure 2. Normal and Tempered Tones.



He emphasised that the two types of tones should be familiar to the learner early in his or her violin studies:

In order to distinguish with greater precision the difference in intonation of intervals relative to an upper or a lower open string, we shall designate the tones formed with a lower open string as “Normal Tones”; those formed with an upper open string as “Tempered Tones” (Normal and Tempered Finger-Position). In the tempered finger-position the distance of the first finger and the thumb from the nut is about  $1/8$  of an inch [3 mm.] greater than in the normal position.<sup>12</sup>

- ↳ fingers on the stick should then be as follows: the index finger lies on the middle of the second joint, the middle finger touching it at the bend between the first and second joints and the ring-finger with the middle of the first joint, while the little finger rests on the stick with its tip. The thumb stands opposite the middle finger and with this it forms a closed but elastic grasp. The position of the arm will always be ruled by the bowhold, and not vice versa. The upper arm should therefore not be lifted in such a way that, when playing at the frog, the elbow would be as high as, or even higher than the wrist” (pp. 11–12).

In the following sections we shall discuss and list the main features of Op. 1, starting with the first part. (In *all* the following examples, only the opening bars can be shown for reasons of space.)

## 2. Opus 1, Part 1

Opus 1, Part 1 (see Fig. 3) is made up of 29 sections consisting of exercises in the 1<sup>st</sup> Position. Nos. 1–9 (see Figs. 4 and 7) cover finger exercises on one string, and having mastered one string the pupil then repeats the same exercises on the next string, and so on. Ševčík's advice to the pupil was to “repeat the bar several times, slowly, then quickly and alternately legato (tied, connected) and staccato (detached, separated)”.<sup>13</sup> The exercises immediately introduce the pupil to the semitone, for example “1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> finger (on the A- or 2<sup>nd</sup> string)”.<sup>14</sup> After this, the pupil moves to “2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> finger (D-string)”.<sup>15</sup> Later, the pupil progresses to “0 to 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> fingers” (to be played on the E-string).<sup>16</sup>

Figure 3. The Heading of Ševčík's Opus 1, Part 1 (1901, p. 2).

<p>ERSTER THEIL. ERSTE LAGE. Fingerübungen auf einer Saite. Man wiederhole jeden Takt mehrere Male, langsam und schnell gebunden und gestossen.</p> <p>PARTE PRIMA. PRIMA POSIZIONE. <i>Esercizi sopra una corda.</i> <i>Ripetere ogni battuta molte volte, lento e presto, legato e staccato.</i> Traduzione italiana di M. PÉLISSIER.</p>	<p>FIRST PART. FIRST POSITION. Finger-exercises on one string. Repeat each bar several times, slowly, then quickly and alternately legato (tied, connected) and staccato (detached, separated).</p> <p>PREMIERE PARTIE. PREMIERE POSITION. <i>Exercices sur une corde.</i> <i>Il faut répéter chaque mesure plusieurs fois, lentement et vite, en lié et en détaché.</i></p> <p>Edited by H. Brett.</p>	<p>ПЕРВАЯ ЧАСТЬ. ПЕРВАЯ ПОЗИЦИЯ Упражнения на одной струне. Нужно повторить каждый такт по нескольку раз, в медленном и быстром темпе, связано и отрывисто.</p>
---	---	---

12 O. Ševčík, *School of Intonation* (Op. 11), p. viii. New York: Harms. 1922.





13 Ševčík (1901), p. 2.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.* p. 3.

16 *Ibid.* p. 4.

Figure 4. Op. 1, Part 1, Areas for Practice.

Section	Areas for Practice
1.	Semitones 1 <sup>st</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> finger, on the A-string. 
2.	Semitones 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> finger, on the D-string. 
3.	Semitones 0 to 1 <sup>st</sup> , and 3 <sup>rd</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> finger, on the E-string. 
4.	Semitones of each finger, on the G-string. 
5.	Semitones of each finger in triplets, on the A, D-, E-, and G-strings. 

The pupil should hold his fingers down on the string as long as possible. Basic exercises such as those described above gave the pupil, Ševčík believed, an exact semitone intonation. With intonation being the lifeblood of music, Ševčík was determined to start off his pupils – whether beginners or advanced – in the right direction.

He also wished to have his pupils understand the way rhythm works, for example having one, two, or four notes in a beat, as in Figure 5:



## Minori Nakaune: Otakar Ševčík's Opus 1 Violin Pedagogy

Figure 5. Ševčík's Teaching of Rhythm in Opus 1, Part 1 (1901, p. 2)

Half-ton: 1-2. Finger.  
Semitono: 1<sup>a</sup>-2<sup>a</sup> dito.

Played thus:  
Ausführung:  
Execution:  
Percussion:  
Execution:

Semitone (Half-tone) 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> finger (on the A- or 2<sup>nd</sup> string).  
Demi-ton: 1-2. doigt.

Подутоны: 1-2. палець.





After doing all the exercises in the first four sections, on semitones, the pupil focuses on playing three notes in a beat, as in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Ševčík's Teaching of Rhythm in Opus 1, Part 1 (1901, pp. 6-8)

In the above group, Exercise 5 is, according to Mingotti, especially important: it should be practised very slowly at first, *détaché*, in the middle of the bow, and *mezzo piano*. Finger attack should be light (string not to be pressed closely to the fingerboard). Then, at the same speed, each triplet should be played slurred, then two triplets to a bow, thereafter the whole bar. Then the whole bar with whole bow at the same speed, the first note of each triplet to be stressed. Accents are produced by a slight pressure of the right index finger. As soon as the intonation becomes faultless and the grasp is unimpeded, the exercise should be played at double speed, each bar slurred, without stresses.<sup>17</sup>







<sup>17</sup> Mingotti, *op. cit.*, p. 14.






Figure 7. Op. 1, Part 1. Further Areas for Practice.

Section	Areas for Practice
6.	Exercises of all intervals in 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> on each string. 
7.	Exercises of all intervals in 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup> on each string. 
8.	Shifting semitone intervals which are fingered with the same finger on each string. 
9.	Shifting semitone intervals in triplets. 







Regarding the above group, Mingotti suggests that No. 8 is “important”, because it develops the independence of the fingers.




Figure 8. Op. 1, Part 1. Further Areas for Practice.

Section	Areas for Practice
10.	<p>Crossing on two strings. Begin by repeating each single bar, then in groups of two bars.</p> 
11.	<p>Exercises for the right hand, wrist, arm and elbow, in 64 different bowing styles. The aim is to develop the round movement of the bow.</p> 
12.	<p>Diatonic scales: major and melodic minor scales, in 24 keys. Practise ascending on open string, and descending using the 4<sup>th</sup> finger.</p> 
13.	<p>The scales of broken thirds, major and melodic minor scales, in 24 keys. The sharps (#) shown in parenthesis are only applicable when practising the minor scales.</p> 
14.	<p>Broken intervals in sixths, in 24 keys, with double-stopping when possible.</p> 
15.	<p>Broken intervals in octaves, in 24 keys.</p> 

<p>16.</p>	<p>Broken intervals in ninths and tenths, etc., in 24 keys. Keep the fingers down on the strings as long as possible.</p> 
<p>17.</p>	<p>Double stopping with broken intervals, arranged as tonic triads, in 24 keys.</p> 
<p>18.</p>	<p>Broken chords arranged in triads, in 24 keys. Fifty styles of bowing.</p> 
<p>19.</p>	<p>The chromatic scale and the principle of semitone shifts.</p> 
<p>20.</p>	<p>Chords of the diminished seventh, with 52 different finger movements on G, 42 on G#, and 46 on A, crossing strings. Hold down the semibreves without sounding them.</p> 

Minori Nakaune: Otakar Ševčík's Opus 1 Violin Pedagogy

21.	<p>Diminished seventh; see No. 20 above. This is now applied to the fingering movements of 6 kinds of broken chords, on each tone.</p> 
22.	<p>Various arpeggiated chords (e.g., C major), in each of 12 keys, each with its 7 variants.</p> 
23.	<p>Double-stopping on A- and D-strings. Hold down the semibreve finger, and put the other fingers on the next string.</p> 
24.	<p>Double-stopping. As for No. 23 above, at first on A- and D-strings, like polyphony, then D- and G-strings, and then E- and A-strings.</p> 
25.	<p>Double-stopping in combinations of semibreves and semiquavers.</p> 
26.	<p>Double-stopping in 24 keys. Fifty-three examples like polyphony.</p> 

<p>27.</p>	<p>Exercises in chords of increasing difficulty with slurred staccato,<sup>18</sup> in 24 keys. In diatonic scales, the chords of triads and tetrachords are to be played.</p> 
<p>28.</p>	<p>The same exercises in chords of ever-increasing difficulty with slurred staccato, in 24 keys.</p> 
<p>29.</p>	<p>Bowing exercises, using 170 styles of bowing in détaché, slurred, martelé, spiccato, sautillé, and ricochet. Sometimes with the rhythms of Scotch Snap, triplets, etc.</p> 

The last of these exercises, No. 29 above, is also identified by Mingotti as being of great importance to the study of bowing. He suggests that it be done daily, and from memory as soon as possible. He says:

The first aim is to achieve a well sounding détaché. The bow is only moderately tightened. The intensity of the tone will depend upon the intensity of the bow hold. The muscular tension devoted to the bow hold must never be excessive, since this would block the mobility of the wrist.<sup>19</sup>

18 In 1830 Chopin was surprised that the Czech violinist J. Slavík (1806–1833) managed to perform 96 notes in slurred staccato with one stroke. This bowing, in 1688, was used with 32 notes in *Hortulus Chelicus* by Johann J. Walt(h)er (1650–1717). Marc Pincherle, *Le Violin*.

19 Mingotti, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

### 3. Opus 1, Part 2

Ševčík's Op. 1, Part 2 contains 41 sections, which offer pupils exercises from the 2<sup>nd</sup> position to the 7<sup>th</sup> position, each to be practised staccato and legato. The aim of Part 2, according to Mingotti, is to help the student to achieve mastery in position playing. He comments:







Already at a time when the odd positions were preferred to the even ones Ševčík emphasized the importance of developing a good technic in the even positions. Since modern violin technic recognises the great importance of smooth position work and avoids audible portamenti even in the cantilena wherever possible, the use of the even positions is important. Particularly the second position is essential not only for the smooth performance but also for the playing function. The middle position of the hand between the nut and the ribs of the violin is cogent for its balance.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding the large number of exercises mentioned in Figures 9, 10, and 11 below, Ševčík suggests that they be practised as three specific groups in order. The first group contains Nos. 1 – 5, and then 12 – 16. These should be followed by Nos. 21 – 25, 30 – 31, 35 – 36, and 39. These provide entry-level exercises on how to put the fingers in the correct position. The next group, which contains Nos. 6 – 8, 17 – 18, 26 – 27, 32 – 33, 37, and 40 is about arpeggiated chords on each position. Finally the Nos. 9 – 11, 19 – 20, 28 – 29, 34, 38, and 41 are about chromatics, double stoppings, chords, and so forth. In general these exercises progress from easy to difficult.

---







20 Mingotti, *op. cit.*, p. 21.









Figure 9. The First Group.

Section	Areas for Practice
1.	<p>Exercises in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position. To be played in the same manner as Part 1, No. 1.</p> 
2.	<p>Double stopping in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position: broken up chords arranged in tonic triads, in 24 keys, to be played as Part 1, No. 17.</p> 
3.	<p>Broken intervals in octaves in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position, in 24 keys. To be played as Part 1, No. 15.</p> 
4.	<p>Exercises in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> positions on the same string, and crossing on A- and E-strings.</p> 
5.	<p>Advanced exercises in No. 4 above.</p> 
12.	<p>Exercises in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position on A- and D-strings. At first when the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> fingers start, hold down the semibreves (whole notes) of the 4<sup>th</sup> finger on the next upper string without sounding them. Listen to the pure temperament intonation of double stopping made with the 4<sup>th</sup> finger. Follow that by practising at 4 times speed.</p> 








Minori Nakaune: Otakar Ševčík's Opus 1 Violin Pedagogy

13.	<p>Exercises in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position. Hold down the whole note of the 1<sup>st</sup> finger on the string. Then practise semitone shifts, occasionally with the same finger on E- and G-strings.</p> 
14.	<p>Double stopping. Broken up chords arranged in tonic triads in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position, in 24 keys. Similar practising as for No. 2 above.</p> 
15.	<p>Broken intervals (sixths, sevenths and octaves, etc.) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position, in 24 keys. Hold the fingers down on the strings as long as possible.</p> 
16.	<p>Exercises in changes of position from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>, and then from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>.</p> 
21.	<p>Exercises in the 4<sup>th</sup> position. Hold the whole notes down on the string, and spread the other fingers.</p> 
22.	<p>Exercises in the 4<sup>th</sup> position. These exercises contain the practising of double stopping arpeggios and crossing strings, in only the tonic triad in 24 keys.</p> 

23.	<p>The same chords as in No. 22 above, but now in arpeggios of triplets in the 4<sup>th</sup> position, in 24 keys.</p> 
24.	<p>Exercises in changes of position from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, at first on one string and later on 2 strings.</p> 
25.	<p>Changes of position from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> on D- and A-strings.</p> 
30.	<p>Exercises in the 5<sup>th</sup> position on each string.</p> 
31.	<p>Double stopping arpeggios in the 5<sup>th</sup> position, in 24 keys, as for No. 22.</p> 
35.	<p>Exercises in the 6<sup>th</sup> position on each string.</p> 
36.	<p>Broken intervals of thirds in the 6<sup>th</sup> position, in 24 keys</p> 
39.	<p>Exercises in the 7<sup>th</sup> position on each string.</p> 

Opus 1, Part 2 contains the following exercises:

Figure 10. The Second Group.

Section	Areas for Practice
6.	<p>Arpeggiated chords of the diminished seventh in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position, and hold down the whole notes without sounding them.</p> 
7.	<p>Exercises in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position, in 24 keys, crossing strings.<sup>21</sup></p> 
8.	<p>Seven kinds of arpeggiated chords in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position. Practise the same exercise in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> positions in each of 12 keys. See Part 1, No. 22 above, and Part 2, No. 33 below.</p> 
17.	<p>Exercises in arpeggiated chords of the diminished seventh, and crossing strings in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position. Hold down the whole notes without sounding them.</p> 
18.	<p>Semitone shifts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position, in 24 keys.<sup>22</sup></p> 




21 Mingotti (1957, p. 22) comments that this is an “important exercise”.

22 Mingotti (1957, p. 24) comments that this is also an “important exercise”.

<p>26.</p>	<p>Arpeggiated chords of the diminished seventh and crossing strings in the 4<sup>th</sup> position.</p>
<p>27.</p>	<p>Exercises in semitone shifts and crossing strings in the 4<sup>th</sup> position.</p>
<p>32.</p>	<p>Exercises in semitone shifts and crossing strings in the 5<sup>th</sup> position, in 24 keys, and stretching each finger.</p>
<p>33.</p>	<p>Seven kinds of arpeggiated chords in the 5<sup>th</sup> position in each of 12 keys. See Part 1, No. 22 and Part 2, No. 8 above.</p>
<p>37.</p>	<p>Exercises in double stopping (arpeggio) in the 6<sup>th</sup> position, and tonic triads, in 24 keys.</p>
<p>40.</p>	<p>Exercises in double stopping (arpeggio) in the 7<sup>th</sup> position, and tonic triads, in 24 keys.</p>







In the above list, Mingotti identifies Nos. 7 and 18 as being of particular importance. Regarding No. 7, he focuses on the “independence of the fingers,” advising that the music be played “First détaché in the middle of the bow. Tempo: andante, fingers placed lightly. Next, always at the same speed, 4 notes slurred (middle), then 8 notes (whole bow), and then 16 notes (whole bow).”<sup>23</sup> The same instructions are given for No. 18, with he added comment that “there should be no increase in tempo until the several bars of the exercise can be produced with pure intonation, and the shifting of semitone intervals can be fingered effortless[ly] and without strain”.<sup>24</sup> At that point the speed can be doubled, and fingers should glide closely over the strings.

Figure 11. The Third Group.

Section	Areas for Practice
9.	<p>Exercises in chromatic scales in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position.</p> 
10.	<p>Exercises in double stopping in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position, like polyphony, in 24 keys.</p> 
11.	<p>Exercises in chords in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position, in 24 keys. The smaller printed notes and the chords are for more advanced students. The slurred staccato is to be played in portato with the whole bow. See Part 1, Nos. 27 and 28 above.</p> 

<sup>23</sup> Mingotti, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Mingotti, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

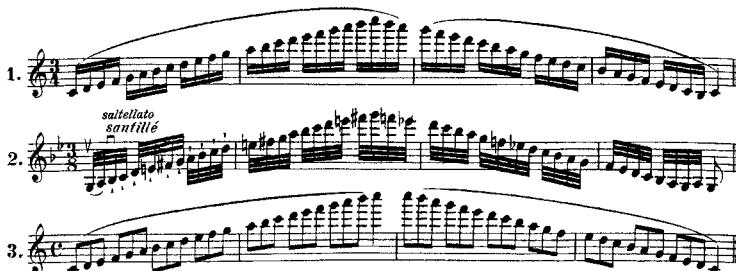
<p>19.</p>	<p>Double stopping in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position, like polyphony, in 24 keys.</p> 
<p>20.</p>	<p>In the 3<sup>rd</sup> position, in 24 keys. See Part 2, No. 11, and Part 1, Nos. 27 and 28 above.</p> 
<p>28.</p>	<p>Double stopping in the 4<sup>th</sup> position, like polyphony, in 24 keys.</p> 
<p>29.</p>	<p>In the 4<sup>th</sup> position, in 24 keys. See Part 1, Nos. 27 and 28, and Part 2, Nos. 11 and 20 above.</p> 
<p>34.</p>	<p>In the 5<sup>th</sup> position, in 24 keys. See Part 1, Nos. 27 and 28, and Part 2, Nos. 11, 20 and 29 above.</p> 
<p>38.</p>	<p>Exercises in the 6<sup>th</sup> position, in 24 keys. Simultaneous semitone shifts, crossing strings, and stretchings.</p> 
<p>41.</p>	<p>Exercises in the 7<sup>th</sup> position, in 24 keys. Simultaneous semitone shifts, crossing strings, and stretchings.</p> 

#### 4. Opus 1, Part 3

This Part consists of 14 sections involving changes in all positions, and practice for each exercise in both staccato (*détaché* and *martelé*) and legato. In No. 1 the pupil is referred back to the exercises in Part 2 (Nos. 4, 5, 16, 24, and 25 above), which were also about changes of position. Possibly Ševčík meant the pupil to review the earlier Part before attempting Part 3, but in any case the aim was to produce facility and pure intonation.

No. 1 covers scales on one string, including thirds, and broken intervals, in 24 keys. Two or three kinds of fingering are given. No. 2 takes the pupil to scales over three octaves, in 24 keys, with two kinds of fingerings, and the practice of scales in three styles.

Figure 12. Ševčík Op. 1, Part 3, Scales in Three Styles.



No. 3 covers arpeggios on the same strings with seven kinds of chords, in each of 12 keys. These chords are connected in such a way that the pupil must move up a semitone to play each new chord. Considerable repetition is a feature here, leading to mastery of each unit.




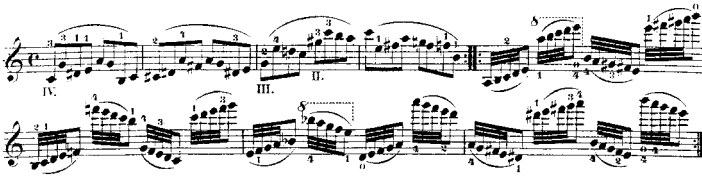
Nos. 4 – 6 are preparation for No. 7, which presents 7 kinds of arpeggios over three octaves, in each of 12 keys. The arpeggios of Nos. 4 and 5 are from the tonic triads, crossing strings, in 24 keys. No. 6 especially is

also an exercise in semitone shifts, crossing strings. Further, in No. 7 the arpeggio is brought to perfection, with the result that the successful pupil has achieved considerable dexterity in this area of playing.

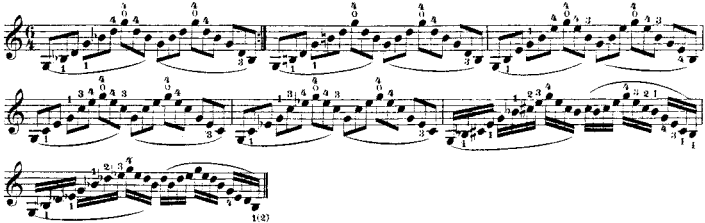
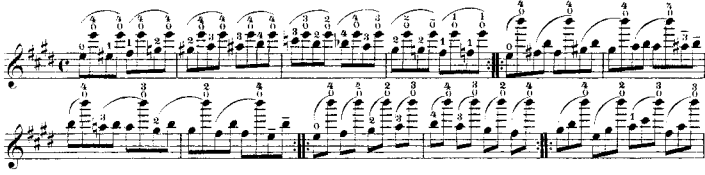
No. 8 covers the chromatic scale in two octaves. Again the exercises are neatly connected by semitones leading to smooth horizontal movement of the fingers.

Nos. 9 – 14 offer an abundant variety of exercises in changes of position, as seen below (Fig. 13).

Figure 13. Ševčík Op. 1, Part 3, Nos. 9 – 14. Changes of Position.

Section	Areas for Practice
9	Step-by-step changes of position on the same string, in 24 keys. Also trill exercises. 
10	Diminished sevenths on the same string, stretching fingers. 
11	Changes of position by sliding, on the same string, in 24 keys, also semitone shifts. 
12	Shifting semitones, often using the same finger, trills, and crossing strings, in 24 keys. 



<p>13</p>	<p>Seven kinds of arpeggios of 2 octaves on the G-string, in each of 5 keys. More practice should be done on the other strings as well.</p> 
<p>14</p>	<p>Natural harmonics with each finger, shifting smoothly on the E-string, in E major. This exercise must also be practised on the A-, D-, and G-strings.<sup>25</sup></p> 

## 5. Opus 1, Part 4

Opus 1, Part 4 consists of exercises in double-stopping, triple-stopping, quadruple-stopping, left hand pizzicato, and both natural and artificial harmonics (see Fig. 15). The exercises in double-stopping are related to those in Part 1, Nos. 23 – 26, and in Part 2, Nos. 10, 19, and 28 above. Mingotti comments that here “the uninterrupted gliding from the third into the first, and from the first into the third position is to be practised,” adding that “the fingers should glide rapidly and *lightly* to stop the higher or lower strings the moment they leave their position”.<sup>26</sup> He again repeats Ševčík’s

25 This follows the system developed by J-J.C.de Mondonville (1711–1772) in his Op.5.

26 Mingotti, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

injunction not to jam the violin between shoulder and jaw, and to play slowly and piano in all keys. Ševčík, in his personal teaching, recommended exercises for all double stoppings, for example, octaves:



Figure 14. How to Practise Octaves.









(from Mingotti, p. 32).







In the following sections, Nos. 1 – 4 deal with octaves, 5 – 9 with thirds, fourths and combinations of double stoppings, while 10 and 11 are for sixths, and 12 deals with tenths.

Figure 15. Ševčík Op. 1, Part 4, Nos. 1 – 23.




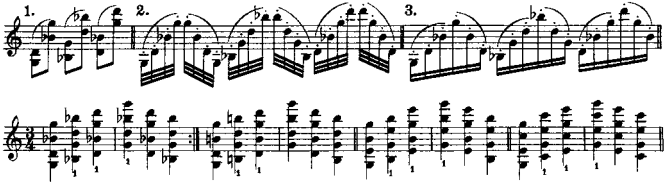

Section	Areas for Practice
1.	<p>Scales and arpeggios of octaves, in 2 octaves. It starts from G major and moves to D major, with 8 kinds of majors and 7 kinds of minors. The 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> positions are covered. Each major contains only one tonic arpeggio. The melodic minor scale contains not only the diminished seventh in each key, but the dominant seventh in each following key.</p> 
2.	<p>On the same strings from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> positions in octaves, with trills and ornaments, in 24 keys. Subsequently with crossing strings.</p> 

Minori Nakaune: Otakar Ševčík's Opus 1 Violin Pedagogy


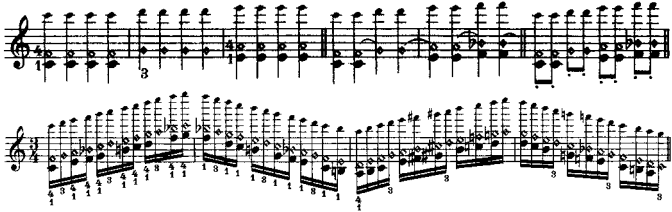


3.	<p>On the same strings from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> positions in octaves, with semitone shifts, trills and ornaments, in 24 keys. Subsequently with crossing strings.</p> 
4.	<p>Continuation of No. 3 above, with exercises in fingered octaves and trills, in 21 keys.</p> 
5.	<p>Scales of thirds in 2 octaves, in 24 keys. In minor key, when ascending, the upper voice is in the harmonic minor scale, and the lower main voice is in the melodic minor. However, when descending, both voices change to the natural minor scale.</p> 
6.	<p>Exercises in broken intervals in thirds in 12 major keys. These include changes of position on the same strings or on the other strings.</p> 
7.	<p>Exercises in trills and in firsts with 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fingers; then seconds, thirds, fourths, and so on, in 12 major keys.</p> 
8.	<p>Crossing strings in seconds, thirds, fourths, and so on, in 12 major keys.</p> 

9.	<p>Semitone shifts and the chromatic scale, in 2 octaves.</p> 
10.	<p>Scales of sixths in 2 octaves and in 24 keys. In minor key, when ascending, the upper main voice is the melodic minor, the lower is the harmonic minor. However, when descending, both voices change to the natural minor scale.</p> 
11.	<p>Crossing strings and broken intervals in sixths, in 12 major keys. These include changes of position on the same strings or on the other strings. Subsequently, shifting with the same fingers.</p> 
12.	<p>Scales of tenths in 2 octaves and broken intervals in tenths, together with crossing strings in 12 major keys. Occasionally on the same string the exercise of stretching the fingers from octave up to tenth by gliding the other fingers is shown. This section also covers thirds and sixths.</p> 
13.	<p>Arpeggios with 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and octave in 24 keys. The tonic triads of 2 octaves are broken.</p> 
14.	<p>Arpeggios with 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in 24 keys. The tonic triads of 2 octaves are broken.</p> 

Minori Nakaune: Otakar Ševčík's Opus 1 Violin Pedagogy

15.	<p>Arpeggios in 24 keys, using 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> intervals, starting from C minor, using relative keys and dominant sevenths of the next keys in succession up to C Major.</p> 
16.	<p>Changes of position in 3 kinds of the diminished seventh, on G#, A, and A#, including the fingered octaves and tenths.</p> 
17.	<p>Scales of chords of 3 notes, in 24 keys. Minor scales are harmonic minor scales using 3 kinds of bowing.</p> 
18.	<p>Arpeggios of chords of 4 notes, with 3 kinds of bowing. Seven kinds of chords are given, in each of 5 keys.</p> 
19.	<p>Exercises in pizzicato with the left hand, and play, alternately, staccato (spiccato) with the up bow in arco.<sup>27</sup></p> 

27 C. Monteverdi (1567–1643) in *Combittimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624) had already prefigured this pizzicato technique.

<p>20.</p>	<p>Here, the fingers with which the string must be plucked are given in Roman figures. At the beginning the scale in octaves, then tenths, sixths, and thirds, in G major; and then in double stopping, playing <i>arco</i> simultaneously, pluck with the left fingers. Ševčík provides 5 original small stanzas, of 16, 17, 4, 7, and 20 bars respectively.</p> 
<p>21.</p>	<p>Scales in artificial single harmonics in 24 keys.</p> 
<p>22.</p>	<p>Arpeggios of the tonic triads in natural and artificial single harmonics, in 24 keys.</p> 
<p>23.</p>	<p>Twelve major scales of natural and artificial double harmonics in thirds, sixths, in 4 keys, and octaves in D major. Also, mixed natural and harmonic tones; also mixed single and double stoppings, in 3 keys.</p> 

## 6. Conclusion

Working through the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth, in various locations and under a variety of governments, Ševčík created a body of work that is accurately regarded as the basis of modern violin pedagogy. That body of work itself rests primarily on Opus 1. In subsequent publications he expanded on many of the specific areas dealt with here, but with few technical changes. Opus 1, with its virtues of clarity, systematicity, and applicability, therefore forms the bedrock on which his entire method rests. The power of his method was apparent not only to his hundreds of students, but has continued to be significant for violin theorists up to the present day.

One such prominent practitioner and theorist was Carl Flesch. His method is now internationally popular, and in Japan his works are required study for several violin exams. In a 1926 publication he admitted a debt to Ševčík:

The succession of broken chords as introduced by Ševčík in his Violin Method has also been retained by me in the System of Scales as the most practical compilation.<sup>28</sup>

Flesch, in fact, presented almost the same materials that had originated with Ševčík, but with sometimes different fingerings. The result, despite his international popularity, is often mechanical, whereas Ševčík at times achieves artistry, particularly for the apt pupil.

D. C. Dounis was another influential theorist and practitioner whose debt to Ševčík is apparent.<sup>29</sup> With a background in neurology, however, Dounis offered a distinctly psychological treatment of learning:

---

28 C. Flesch, *Scale System* (Preface). New York: Carl Fischer, 1926.

29 Dounis studied under F. Ondříček (1857–1922) in Prague and Vienna.

What we call technique is nothing but a series of brain reflected movements. The secret lies in building up these movement pictures into a rational, logical whole – namely technique.<sup>30</sup>

This associationist approach was something that Ševčík did not advocate. Further, Dounis set out a new fingering for scales in “simple” [single] harmonics: “the fingering of fingered octaves”. He continued: “It has the enormous advantage of developing exceptional touch-sensitiveness of the fingers”. Also: “The technique of double harmonics is based on the technique of double stops, and especially of fingered octaves”.<sup>31</sup>

Anton Mingotti, in his short booklet on Ševčík, summarised a number of key practicalities that arise either from Ševčík’s *Opus 1*, or were directly experienced by Mingotti when he was Ševčík’s pupil and later “deputy”. For example there should be as little tension as possible during practice, and good practice will involve both patience and self criticism. The student should proceed at a slow speed initially, following the right sequence of exercises. He or she should visualise the aim of each exercise, looking for faultless and expressive playing and avoiding thoughtless and mechanical practice. Lastly, and importantly, the student’s own insights are more valuable than any advice given.<sup>32</sup>

Simon Fischer, in his recent edition of Ševčík’s *Opus 1*, draws attention to the following points: (a) the pressure of the left thumb and the fingers generally (it should be light); (b) the finger action (which should be from the base knuckle joint moving independently of the hand); (c) the fingertip (which should lean neither to the left nor to the right); (d) vibrato (keep

---

30 D. C. Dounis, *The Artist’s Technique of Violin Playing* (p. 4). New York: Carl Fischer, 1921.

31 Dounis, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

32 Mingotti, *op. cit.*, Conclusion, p. 47.



minimal and practise continuity); (e) dynamics and bowing (practise the dynamics from *piano* to *forte*, and maintain the best point of contact); (f) mind training (“practising Ševčík is as much a matter of training the mind as training the muscles” – see comments by Dounis above); (g) keeping track (i.e., be methodical in recording what you have practised – repetition is worthwhile).<sup>33</sup>

Ševčík's value lies both in his comprehensive approach to violin technic, and in certain unique characteristics of his method. His comprehensive approach has meant that subsequent generations have variously followed, adapted, or been strongly influenced by his work.<sup>34</sup> This is true up to the present time, as can be verified in any music bookshop. The unique features of his violin pedagogy have already been noted in the lists given above, but two will be mentioned here as examples. One is his separation (for minor scale double stopping in thirds and sixths) of the upper voice and the lower voice, as seen in Parts 4, Nos. 5 and 10. There, and elsewhere, he gives to each voice different minor styles. A second unique feature concerns the chromatic scale, in which he uses only one style of fingering – as against Flesch, for example, who uses two – as seen in Part 1, No. 19, and Part 3, No. 8. He thereby establishes a routine of 1<sup>st</sup> finger shifting for semitones, with continuation to 2<sup>nd</sup> finger shifting. Finally, in the case of particularly difficult pieces, Ševčík suggests playing them backwards, a technique still used by violin teachers. In fact, Ševčík's works are still being examined, and new discoveries are continually being made regarding the ideas that are

---

33 Fischer, *op. cit.*, Introduction.

34 Opus 1 was particularly helpful to me as a learner of the violin, both in Prague and in Japan. My debt to Ševčík can not easily be counted, but is significant to the extent that I advocate his method, and use it with my pupils, who represent the next generation of violinists.

contained in his works.

Ševčík and Dvořák were, of course, close to each other on account of their time together in the Prague Conservatory, from 1901 to 1904.<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note that in his famous *From the New World* Symphony (2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, final 5 bars), Dvořák uses the same tune that Ševčík had used in Opus 1, Part 4, No. 15, the 17<sup>th</sup> bar, which Ševčík required students to play so that they would acquire purity of intonation. This small point confirms the power of Opus 1 on the one hand, and on the other the stature of Ševčík as a violin teacher and theorist.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my mentor, Professor Josef Hála. Also, I owe thanks to the Librarians of the Prague Conservatory, and to numerous friends in the Czech Republic. My thanks also to Dr. M. J. Benson, who helped in the preparation of this paper.

---

35 See Nakaune, 2005, p. 119.