Brian Lewis teaches Ysaÿe Exercises

by Helen Hines

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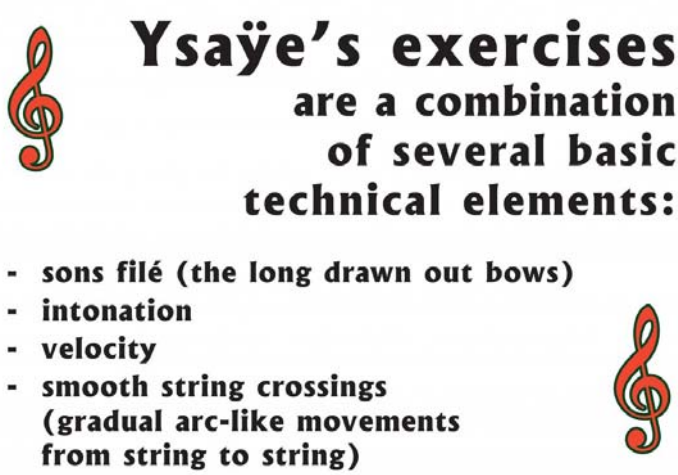
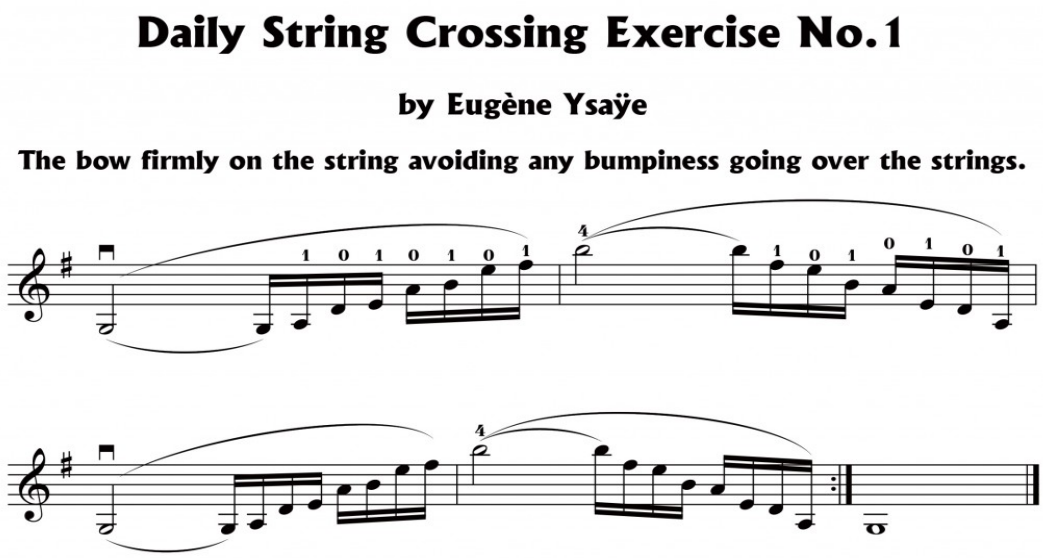
String Crossings:

During a particularly informative masterclass, Brian worked with a student to develop the depth of control over string crossings. Brian introduced the daily string crossing and scale exercise No. 2 by Eugène Ysaÿe, which aims to develop the difference in arm levels when crossing strings.



Whereas Suzuki asked his students to practise Tonalization every day, DeLay asked her students to study shifting exercises every day, and Ysaÿe required his students to work on the string crossing exercise. When working on the exercise, the student needs to bare in mind that each string has three potential angles or elbow positions:

1. To the right of the string
2. Centered
3. To the left of the string

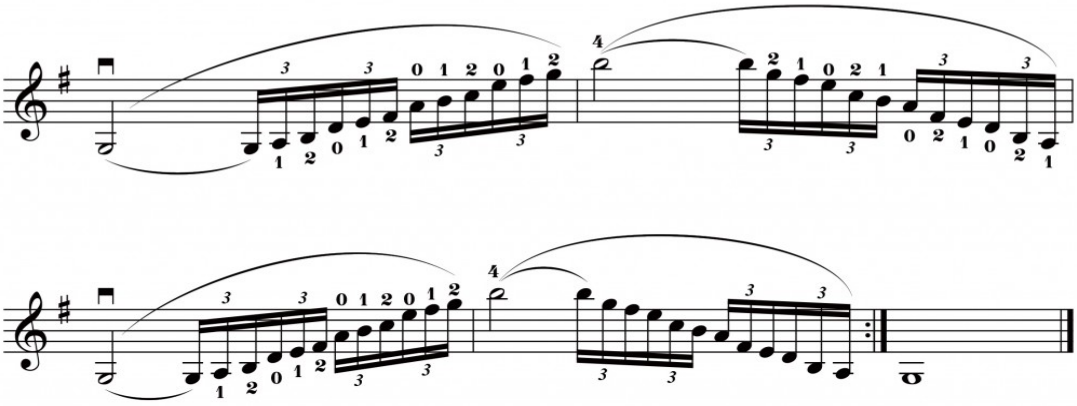


Daily String Crossing and Scale Exercise No.2

Every day Eugène Ysaÿe had his students do these string crossings and scale exercises.

Students learn to do enough differences between the string levels.

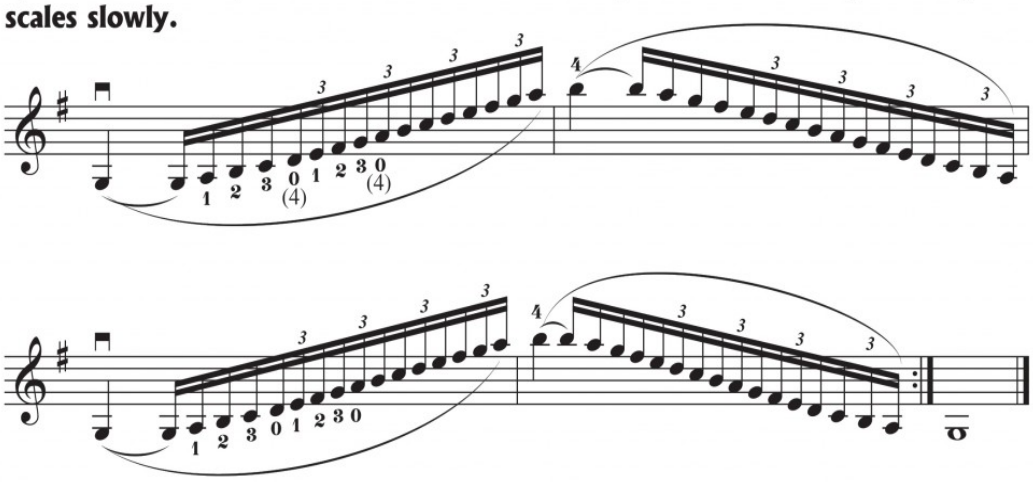
Each string has three potential angles or elbow positions:
(1) to the right of the string
(2) centered
(3) to the left of the string



Daily String Crossing and Scale Exercise No.3

Preparatory exercise for scale practice

All of the above exercises should first be practiced slowly, allowing the ear to develop along with the fingers towards attaining faultless intonation. Speed will develop in a much more satisfactory manner AFTER practicing the scales slowly.



Ysaÿe's exercise lends itself to being learned in chunks, and being added to when the current stage is mastered. All of the exercises should first be practiced slowly, allowing the ear to develop along with the fingers towards attaining faultless intonation. Speed will develop in a much more satisfactory manner AFTER practising the scales slowly.

Brian also reminded us that the exercises should not only be instructive but also inspire the student to create a beautiful musical result. It is interesting in how similar Ysaÿe's fully developed exercise is to the Lark Ascending by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

To learn more about Ysaÿe's exercises, watch Brian teaching the exercise to a young student in a masterclass:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gb0wkZUb1w&feature=youtu.be