

MARK O'CONNOR'S CAPRICES FOR UNACCOMPANIED VIOLIN:  
THEIR INSPIRATION, AMERICAN ROOTS, AND  
TECHNIQUES PRESENTED

by

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## ABSTRACT

Mark O'Connor's *Caprices for Unaccompanied Violin, nos. 1-6* not only mark a milestone in the history of American classical violin repertoire, as they exhibit a culmination of centuries of American music history, but the techniques presented in each Caprice encompass a wide range of technical difficulties whose mastery is essential for a complete command of the violin. In addition, these Caprices require techniques completely unique to this set of works, making them even more significant to the violin repertoire.

The following study provides a comprehensive discussion of O'Connor's compositional inspiration behind each Caprice through tracing their American roots and European classical influences. This study also presents an analysis of both the standard and unique technical skills exhibited in each Caprice, followed by a brief discussion of O'Connor's relatively new *American String Method*, illustrating how the foundational techniques established through the first, second, and third books of the violin portion of the *Method* will prepare students from the beginning stages of learning to the eventual mastery of these Caprices. The result of this research emphasizes the historical significance of O'Connor's *Caprices for Unaccompanied Violin, nos. 1-6* as a valuable addition to American classical violin repertoire, and provides a discussion of the technical skills that can be attained and enhanced through the study of these works.

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## Part One

### **Mark O'Connor: A Brief Biography of the Violin Virtuoso and American Composer**

Mark O'Connor has been described as “one of the most talented and imaginative reinventors working in music-any music-today.”<sup>1</sup> Through his exquisite violin playing and his creative output, O'Connor has made significant contributions to the development of American musical styles, always paying tribute to their strong American roots. From bluegrass, Texas fiddling, hot swing, and jazz, to symphonies and violin concertos, O'Connor's work has been described as “one of the most spectacular... journeys in recent American music.”<sup>2</sup>

Mark O'Connor was born on August 5, 1961 in Seattle, Washington. Mr. O'Connor's initial musical interests on the violin were of the fiddling genre. His first prominent mentor on the violin was Texas fiddler Benny Thomasson who taught O'Connor fiddling as a teenager. At the young age of thirteen, O'Connor won first prize in all age groups in the Grand Master Fiddling Championship in Nashville, TN. Also as a teenager, O'Connor toured with the French jazz violinist Stéphane Grappelli, who served as another prominent mentoring figure in O'Connor's early career. In addition to being a

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Swed, “A ‘Waltz’ Made for Three,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1996, [http://articles.latimes.com/1996-11-02/entertainment/ca-60256\\_1\\_appalachia-waltz](http://articles.latimes.com/1996-11-02/entertainment/ca-60256_1_appalachia-waltz) (accessed April 3, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Tony Scherman, “Fiddling While the Old Barriers Burn,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/02/arts/music-fiddling-while-the-old-barriers-burn.html?pagewanted=2>, (accessed March 21, 2012).

violinist and fiddler, O'Connor also succeeded as a mandolinist and guitarist. By age nineteen, he had won first place in many competitions on all three instruments; he was a three-time winner of the Grand Master Fiddling Championship (1975, 1980, 1982), a four-time winner of the Old-Time Fiddlers Contest (1979, 1980, 1981, 1984), a two-time winner of the National Flatpicking Guitar Championships (1975, 1977), and a winner of the World Mandolin Championship (1980).

From O'Connor's very successful early career as a session musician in Nashville, TN, through his recent recordings and performances, he has collaborated with numerous famous artists, including Dolly Parton, James Taylor, Paul Simon, The Judds, David Grisman, Bela Fleck, Sam Bush, Jerry Douglas, Edgar Meyer, Chris Thile, Yo Yo Ma, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Ida Kavafian, Paul Neubauer, Matt Haimovitz, Joel Smirnoff, and many, many more.

Through his numerous compositions, O'Connor has made a vast contribution to American classical music. Today, O'Connor's compositional output includes works written in nearly every genre of classical music: works for solo violin, piano trios, string quartets, symphonies, concertos, double concertos, and even a triple concerto. In 1993, O'Connor composed his first work for full orchestra, *Fiddle Concerto*, which was recorded on the Warner Brothers Record label in 1995. Since then, O'Connor has personally performed many of his other compositions for soloist and orchestra with professional ensembles including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Knights Chamber Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony.

The works that O'Connor composed for his disc "Appalachia Waltz" in 1996 (which he recorded in collaboration with Yo-Yo Ma and Edgar Meyer for Sony Classical

Records) brought him worldwide acknowledgment for his contribution to the development of a new idiom of American Music.<sup>3</sup> Today, O'Connor continues developing this new American style in which he makes comprehensive use of the classical tradition without abandoning his own American roots of folk and jazz styles. O'Connor continues the creative process of stretching the boundaries of European classical genres and American Music. Most recently, in March of 2011, O'Connor premiered his *Improvised Violin Concerto* with the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra at Boston Symphony Hall. This work is the very first concerto featuring a completely improvised solo part over an orchestral score, an example of O'Connor once again setting a new precedent for the classical concerto genre, and extending the possibilities of improvisation and the future of American classical music.

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<sup>3</sup> Mark O'Connor, "Mark O'Connor's Bio," *Mark O'Connor*, <http://markoconnor.com/index.php?page=bio&family=mark> (accessed January 26, 2012).

## **Introduction to O'Connor's *Caprices* and Emerging *American String Method*: An Evolution of American Music**

Between the years 1986 and 1994, O'Connor composed his six *Caprices for Unaccompanied Violin* as a means of furthering his own technical skills as a violinist, expanding violin technique, and developing various American styles of music, such as the hoedown and the hornpipe. These six works exhibit a culmination of centuries of American music and display a wide range of technical skills that require complete facility of the violin. In addition to traditional European classical techniques, this set of works presents many new techniques that are completely unique to this set of works, making O'Connor's *Caprices for Unaccompanied Violin* a monumental contribution to American classical violin repertoire. When asked if there was a plan for more unaccompanied caprices in the future, O'Connor replied:

My plan is to stay with the six caprices as a set that fulfilled what I had in mind for them. I had intended to compose more in the beginning, but my Caprices ended up being much longer than those by Paganini. To attempt composing 24 caprices at the longer length I had already established for each one of them would have been too daunting, as well as too much music for this genre, especially given the fact that it felt like a complete set. My composing interests took me in many directions and genres and ultimately I did not want to spend any more time on more caprices. In fact I was working on a 7th caprice about the time of the "Appalachian Journey" recording with Yo-Yo Ma and Edgar Meyer and we were short on material for the sessions, so I turned that 7th caprice into a string trio and named it *Caprice for Three*. That seemed to signal that the six Caprices were set... I increasingly wanted to spend more and more time devising new playing ideas and techniques in some of the concertos I was embarking on at that time.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011.

Currently, Mr. O'Connor continues the process of developing his *American String Method*, intended to guide students from the very beginning stages of learning to an advanced level of classical musicianship through emphasizing a variety of American styles and music based in the Americas. Within the violin portion of his *American String Method*, the first three out of a planned ten books have been published and are gaining popularity throughout the United States with teachers and students alike. In a recent interview with O'Connor, he revealed that his Caprices nos. 1-6 are to be included as part of the finale of his *Violin Method*, equipping students with the technical and interpretive skills needed to play virtually any piece in the standard classical violin repertoire. O'Connor states that his *Method* parallels how he was taught and explains that a large part of the classical portion of his *Method* will include original compositions such as his caprices, which he wrote as a means of developing certain areas of his own technique. Important foundational stylistic and technical material can be found in the initial three books of this *Method*, providing a well-rounded basis that will enable students to develop certain skills necessary to eventually play O'Connor's six caprices.

The foundational language of O'Connor's six caprices was inspired by two of the great European composers: Pietro Locatelli (1695-1764), and Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840). In an interview, O'Connor recalled the story behind his initial inspiration for these works:

When I first heard Locatelli, I about swerved off the highway! I was in my car listening to a music channel [National Public Radio (NPR)]... and it was when NPR really started playing a lot of baroque music, way back in the early 80's. I had heard baroque music like Bach and Vivaldi, but NPR got into this fad of playing baroque music, "NPR Baroque Music Radio." It was wall-to-wall baroque. They played all kinds of very remote artists that you would not normally hear ever on radio, but because it was baroque time/era in America, they played every baroque composer you could imagine. So I was driving down the



road and all of the sudden Locatelli came on, some of his caprices and a couple of his concertos, and I had to pull over! And this is one of the reasons I even started getting the idea of composing caprices, because the bridge, the fiddling, was so obvious through Locatelli. And so that gave me the idea that there was a stylistic bridge, and Paganini gave me the idea that there was virtuosic technical bridge. Those were the two bridges that I completely concentrated on to allow me to believe that I could do an American caprice and make it work.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mark O'Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011

## Part Two

### **The Historical Significance of O'Connor's *Caprices Nos. 1-6* and the Violin Techniques Developed Through This Set of Works**

#### ***Caprice no. 1: Development of the Hoedown***

In 1986, Mark O'Connor composed his *Caprice no. 1* in A Major as a means of developing the American hoedown style in a new way through experimenting with improvisational ideas.<sup>6</sup> This caprice also develops advanced bow control through the use of string crossings over three strings, a pattern of unequal slurs paired with rhythmic string crossings and accents, and fast spiccato passages that cross quickly over all four strings. One passage makes use of a finger-twisting left-hand finger pattern paired with rapid string crossings, requiring much coordination between both hands. Due to the many rapid string crossings, a necessary part of performing this inaugural caprice is the control of a loose bow arm, and most importantly, a flexible right wrist; both of these techniques are a natural part of the fiddling style. An improvisatory middle section, marked "freely," evokes O'Connor's beautiful tone and signature sound. Throughout this set of caprices, O'Connor notates many passages with the marking "freely." While there is no actual improvisation present within these works, this marking indicates that the performer is to play in an improvisatory manner through the use of rubato.

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<sup>6</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011.

The hoedown style originated as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> The term “hoedown” originally defined a spirited dance of African American slaves which had a particular rhythmic quality created by the stamping of feet. This dance was often accompanied by a fiddle or banjo. Today, the term “hoedown” is synonymously with “breakdown,” and is applied more generally to American folkdances and square dances in duple meter and to the actual gatherings where these dances occur.<sup>8</sup> The hoedown or breakdown style is a prominent part of fiddle contests, which have been taking place across America since the 1700s, as well as various music festivals and conventions.

For each caprice there is a corresponding formal and technical diagram seen in appendixes 1-6. The reader is encouraged to refer to these diagrams for further detail regarding the structure of these works. Each diagram has two parts; the top section illustrates O’Connor’s interpretation of the formal structure of each individual caprice, and the bottom section provides a detailed list of the techniques presented within each section of each caprice.<sup>9</sup> Many of the *Caprices* share similar techniques, however some techniques are completely unique to each individual work. Appendix 7 provides a “Technique Comparison Chart” for all six works illustrating the left-hand and right-hand techniques seen in each *Caprice*.

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<sup>7</sup> Mark O’Connor, *American String Method: Book I* (New York, NY: Mark O’Connor Musik International, 2009). 4.

<sup>8</sup> “Hoedown.” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, [http:// www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13126](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13126) (accessed November 26, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> O’Connor reads four out of six of these works as having sonata form, although some analysts may prefer interpreting these particular caprices as having the simpler ternary form (ABA). As ternary form, O’Connor’s “exposition” would then correspond to the A section, the “development” would be seen as the B section, and the “recapitulation” would be the return of the A section.

*Caprice no. 1* is written in a unique form that O’Connor refers to as “hybrid sonata form” (Appendix 1).<sup>10</sup> This work begins in 2/4 meter with an introduction section of improvisatory open fifths, a sound familiar in American music, that are arpeggiated across three strings. Following these arpeggiated fifths are improvisatory downward scales in 3/4 meter, that lead back in to the opening material of fifths (example 1.1). This section returns once more in this caprice as a transition.

**Example 1.1:**  
(O’Connor *Caprice no. 1*, mm. 1-15)



The majority of this work, the exposition and recapitulation, is composed of a pattern of unequal slurs that are paired with rhythmic string crossings and accents. The slur pattern consists of: one down-bow to five up-bows, then one down, one up, followed by one down to three up-bows, which is repeated to form the full pattern (example 1.2).

**Example 1.2:**  
(O’Connor *Caprice no. 1*, mm. 18-21: “unequal slur pattern”)



<sup>10</sup> Mark O’Connor, E-mail message to author, January 16, 2012.

Given the ratio of up-bow slurs in comparison to single down-bows, the tendency of this bowing pattern will be to gravitate toward the frog. This idea of bow distribution is a crucial aspect of violin technique in general. Allowing this tendency to overrule would eventually result in the player running out of bow. To prevent this, the player must use an equal amount of bow for the single down-bows as is needed for the multiple up-bows. O'Connor facilitates this process by placing accents on the down-bow notes, assisting the player to work against the gravitational tendency of this bowing and, traditional of the hoedown style, also creating a "foot-tapping" rhythm that recalls the rhythmic quality of this style's origins. Adding to the complexity of this bow pattern are quick string crossings that occur when going from the slurred up-bows to the single note down-bows and back to the slurred up-bows. To achieve this pattern at the quick tempo designated in the score (quarter note = 185), the player must allow the string crossing to occur from the wrist and elbow of the bow arm, rather than using the entire arm to cross strings. Eliminating as much unnecessary movement in the bow arm as possible will provide more coordination of the quick string crossings at a fast tempo.

This pattern of unequal slurs is disrupted briefly by a descending chromatic scale combined with spiccato on separate bows. This chromatic passage occurs twice within the exposition as a one-octave scale (example 1.3a) and is extended to a two-octave scale in the recapitulation (example 1.3b). Another passage disrupting the unequal slur pattern is a short, but quite difficult finger-twisting passage that O'Connor paired with fast spiccato string crossings across all four strings (example 1.4).

**Example 1.3a:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 1*, mm. 64-65, and 92-93: "1-octave chromatic passage")

**Example 1.3b:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 1*, mm. 212-214: "2-octave chromatic passage")

**Example 1.4:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 1*, mm. 81-85 and 199-205: "spiccato string crossings across 4 strings")



Next is a passage of flurrying sixteenth notes that is played entirely on the E string and appears in the form as the development I section. This passage uses a left-hand finger pattern of 1-3-1-3-4-3-1-3 in various extensions and contractions to create a series of different harmonies. The quick repetition of this finger-twisting pattern calls for much left hand coordination. Leaving as many fingers down on the string as possible will assist in a clear execution of this passage, given the quick tempo. The 1<sup>st</sup> finger can stay placed on the string throughout each individual pattern. The 3<sup>rd</sup> finger that precedes the 4<sup>th</sup> finger can also remain on the string. While all other fingers must be lifted within each pattern, keeping the lifted fingers close to the string also facilitates playing this passage quickly and cleanly. O'Connor marks one slur for the entire passage, implying a free bowing that generates a continuous effect (example 1.5).









## Foundational Techniques Seen in O'Connor's *Method*

O'Connor's *American String Method* begins with a traditional American hoedown known as *Boil 'em Cabbage Down*. Through introducing this tune in three rhythmic variations (example 1.9), O'Connor's *Method* starts out by ingraining a strong sense of rhythm, which is the basis of the hoedown style.

### Example 1.9:

(O'Connor's *American String Method* Book I, *Boil 'em Cabbage Down* "Rhythmic Variations 1-3")

Slow Tempo: Play the open "A" string.

Ex. 1                      Ex. 2                      Ex. 3

Possessing musical creativity and being able to achieve improvisatory qualities are an important part of successfully performing O'Connor's Caprices, in addition to many other works in the violin repertoire. Works such as Johann Sebastian Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, BWV 1001-1006*, all require a certain amount of rhythmic flexibility and musical creativity, all of which are a type of improvisational trait that must be accomplished by the performer. Also, there are many classical works that are meant to sound improvised. For instance, written-out cadenzas seen within certain concerti are an example of this. Maurice Ravel's *Tzigane* begins with a lengthy cadenza in the violin emulating the improvisational traits of Gypsy music. American blues and jazz styles, both of which are highly based on improvisation, inspired the second

movement of Ravel's *Violin Sonata no. 2*, "Blues." William Grant Still's *Suite for Violin and Piano* is also strongly influenced by American jazz and blues, requiring the performer to achieve a specific sound evoking an improvisational style of music.

In addition to presenting rhythmic variations from the start, the *Method* encourages students to create their own rhythmic variations on this tune, instigating musical creativity from the beginning stages. This particular idea of musical creativity prepares students for improvisation, a characteristic trait of American music, including various styles of fiddling, Jazz, and the blues. Presenting this idea to beginning students also prepares them for the notion of improvisational qualities, such as the various sections seen in the *Caprices* marked "Freely."

*Boil 'em Cabbage Down* reappears in numerous variations throughout this *Method*. Book I presents the initial seven variations. As previously shown, variations 1-3 are rhythmic variations. Variations 4 and 5 are melodic variations (examples 1.10a and 1.10b), and variations 6 and 7 are harmonic variations (examples 1.11a and 1.11b). Each variation introduces a new technical concept that is then used in repertoire that follows, generating a means of learning something new through something familiar. This concept of variation illustrates to students how one tune can be play in numerous ways, providing an excellent footing in the beginning stages of improvisational ideas. The hoedown style is further developed though other tunes in the *Method* as well; Book I: *Oh! Susanna*, *Old Joe Clark*; Book II: *Red Wing*, *Arkansas Traveler*, *Stepp Down Hoedown*; Book III: *Congress Hoedown*, and *Grey Eagle*.

**Example 1.10a:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I, Boil 'em Cabbage Down "Melodic Variation 4" mm. 1-4)

Musical notation for Example 1.10a, showing two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, and G5. Above the staff are chord markings: A (above G4), D (above D5), and D (above D5). Vertical lines labeled 'V' indicate bowing directions. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a bass line with notes G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, and G4. Above the staff are chord markings: A (above G3) and E7 (above D4).

**Example 1.10b:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I, Boil 'em Cabbage Down "Melodic Variation 5" mm. 1-4)

Musical notation for Example 1.10b, showing two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, and G5. Above the staff are chord markings: A (above G4), D (above D5), and D (above D5). Vertical lines labeled 'V' indicate bowing directions. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a bass line with notes G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, and G4. Above the staff are chord markings: A (above G3) and E7 (above D4). A triplet of three eighth notes (G3, A3, B3) is marked with a '3' above the first note.

**Example 1.11a:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I, Boil 'em Cabbage Down "Harmonic Variation 6" mm. 1-4)

Musical notation for Example 1.11a, showing two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, and G5. Above the staff are chord markings: A (above G4), D (above D5), and D (above D5). Vertical lines labeled 'V' indicate bowing directions. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a bass line with notes G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, and G4. Above the staff are chord markings: A (above G3), E7 (above D4), and V0 (above G4). A triplet of three eighth notes (G3, A3, B3) is marked with a '3' above the first note. The dynamic marking 'mf' is placed below the first staff.

**Example 1.11b:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I, Boil 'em Cabbage Down "Harmonic Variation 7" mm. 1-4)

Musical notation for Example 1.11b, showing two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, and G5. Above the staff are chord markings: A (above G4), D9 (above D5), and D9 (above D5). Vertical lines labeled 'V' indicate bowing directions. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a bass line with notes G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, and G4. Above the staff are chord markings: A (above G3) and E7 (above D4).

## ***Caprice no. 2: Development of the Hornpipe***

O'Connor's *Caprice no. 2* in G Minor was composed in 1990. This work embraces the dance language of the hornpipe, a folk music style from centuries ago. O'Connor states that the basis for this caprice is off-the-string arpeggios, which generate string-crossings that demand much bow control. Through the combination of this arpeggiated spiccato bow technique with accents, O'Connor creates what he refers to as an "aggressive rhythm."<sup>11</sup> In fact, "aggressive rhythm" is a strong characteristic of all six of the *Caprices*, as there are aggressive rhythmic elements to many sections throughout this set of works (appendix 7).<sup>12</sup> In defining this new idea, O'Connor states:

Spiccato is the basis of the technical idea, but while European classical spiccato has more to do with articulation as a musical effect, the kind of off-the-string playing required in this caprice is more about rhythmical drive and energy.<sup>13</sup>

The particular use of "aggressive rhythm" seen throughout *Caprice no. 2* is fashioned through O'Connor's unique twist on the traditional spiccato bow technique, and is made quite unpredictable through the use of alternating meters and rapid string crossings. Arpeggiated ricochet is also seen in this caprice. This advanced bow technique is quintessential of the European classical style through its use in pioneering works by composers such as Pietro Antonio Locatelli, Guiseppe Tartini, and Niccolò Paganini. Throughout centuries, arpeggiated ricochet continued to gain popularity

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<sup>11</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, February 9, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, December 31, 2011.

through its use by other composers such as Felix Mendelssohn, and more currently, O'Connor.

The hornpipe is thought to have originated in England, although this style has also long been a part of the Irish music tradition. Irish immigrants brought this style to America during the nineteenth century. Originally, the hornpipe was in 3/2 meter, but changed to its modern form of common time in the 1760s.<sup>14</sup> This folk music style is now traditionally written in 2/4 or 4/4 meter, as is the Irish reel. The hornpipe, however, is played more deliberately, with emphasis on the first and last beats of each bar, similar to the Irish jig, where the reel only emphasizes the first beat of each bar.<sup>15</sup> O'Connor puts a personal and unique twist on this traditional style through the use of alternating meters. The main alternation of meters occurs between 3/4 and 2/4, however O'Connor "fiddles" with the rhythm and flow of this style even further by throwing in the occasional use of odd meters such as 7/8 and 1/4. This alternation between meters plays an important role in the result of the "aggressive rhythm," which is generated through the use of spiccato and accents.

*Caprice no. 2* is written in sonata form (Appendix 2). The basis for the bulk of this caprice (the exposition, development, recapitulation and coda) is off-the-string arpeggios that generate what O'Connor refers to as an "aggressive rhythm" (example 2.1). Here, O'Connor takes the traditional European classical bow technique of arpeggiated spiccato, and applies it in a manner that serves a new and innovative purpose. The first four bars of the exposition, development, and recapitulation begin with a pattern

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<sup>14</sup> Breandan Breathnach, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1977) 61-63.

<sup>15</sup> J.G. O'Keeffe and Art O'Brein, *A Handbook of Irish Dances* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1964) 105-109.

of string crossings first on the D and A strings (string crossing pattern: D-D-A-D) followed by the same pattern on the A and E strings (string crossing pattern: A-A-E-A). Given the quick tempo (quarter note = 175), playing on the “inside” of each pair of strings will minimize size of the string crossings and allow for more clarity and speed. In conjunction, bouncing the bow as close to the string as possible will help with the coordination of rapid string crossings.

**Example 2.1:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 2*, mm.18-48: "aggressive rhythm")

16

21

25

29

A  $\text{♩} = 175$

similar

B

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Solo Violin

**Caprice No. 2 In G Minor**

Mark O'Connor

35

40

45

C *a little faster*

*f*

The codetta that occurs at the end of the exposition, and again at the end of the recapitulation, presents an unequal slurred bowing pattern, similar to that previously discussed in Caprice no. 1. This bow pattern is composed of down-bow for one note followed by up-bow for three notes, requiring much control over bow distribution in order to remain in the same part of the bow and prevent gravitating towards the frog (example 2.2). Again, O'Connor includes accents on the single down bows to prevent the tendency for the bow to gravitate to the frog.



**Example 2.2:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 2*, mm. 49-60: *unequal slurred bowing pattern*)

The image displays a musical score for a violin caprice. It consists of two staves of music. The top staff begins at measure 50 and features a series of slurred eighth notes with accents, moving in a chromatic-like fashion. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present. A tempo instruction "a little faster" is written above the staff. The bottom staff begins at measure 55 and continues the pattern with similar slurred eighth notes, including some triplets and fingerings (1, 2, 3) indicated above the notes. The key signature has one flat, and the time signature is common time.

The introduction of this caprice employs an arpeggiated ricochet bow technique. This technique can be traced all the way back to the eighteenth century, although, the initial use of this stroke was uncommon and often reserved for the most accomplished of violin virtuosi. Pioneers of this bow technique, as well as other virtuosic bow techniques of that time, include Pietro Antonio Locatelli, often considered the founding-father of modern violin technique.<sup>16</sup> One of Locatelli's most famous set of works is *L'arte Del Violin*, Op. 3 (1733), a set of twelve concerti written for solo violin, strings, and basso continuo. The two outer movements from each of the twelve concerti contain a *capriccio* (a cadenza-like section), each of which pioneer various advanced instrumental techniques, including arpeggiated ricochet. Following Locatelli's *24 Capricci* from *L'arte Del Violin*, Niccolò Paganini composes his *24 Caprices for Solo Violin, Op. 1* (1802-1817), also as a means of developing violin technique, not to mention his own

<sup>16</sup> Albert Dunning. "Locatelli, Pietro Antonio." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16840> (accessed March 25, 2012).

skills as a violinist. Also, Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770) solidified many advanced bow techniques through composing *The Art of Bowing* (1740's), a set of fifty variations for violin based on Corelli's Gavotte from his Violin Sonata No.10, Op. 5, through which each variation develops a different advanced bow technique. Throughout the years, arpeggiated ricochet has gained popularity through its use by other composers as well.

*Ricochet* bowing (also known as *saltato* or *saltando*) is executed when the bow bounces over several notes in the same bow. *Arpeggiated* ricochet occurs when the bow "ricochets" over more than one string with several notes in the same bow, forming an "arpeggio" of pitches. This technique is present in the introduction of O'Connor's Caprice no. 2, marked "Freely," which uses an arpeggiated ricochet pattern across three strings that alternates down-bow for three notes, then up-bow for three notes. In the opening four measures of the intro (mm. 1-4), the arpeggiated ricochet bowing pattern begins in a disjunct and diminutive form due to the placement of rests between each occurrence and the absence of the final two notes from each repetition of the pattern (example 2.3a). Separated by a fermata, the next four bars (mm. 5-8) present the arpeggiated pattern of notes in their entirety, but still in a disjunct fashion due to the rests in-between occurrences (example 2.3b). This completed pattern proceeds, finally, uninterrupted (mm. 9-15) creating a complete and continuous arpeggiated ricochet effect (example 2.3c)

**Examples 2.3a, 2.3b, and 2.3c:**  
(O'Connor *Caprice no. 2*, mm. 1-15: *arpeggiated ricochet*)

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The first staff, labeled 'Ex. 2.3a', is in 3/4 time, marked 'Freely' and 'p'. It contains measures 1 through 6, with arpeggiated ricochet patterns using triplets and sextuplets. The second staff, labeled 'Ex. 2.3b', is in 2/4 time, marked 'In Time' with a tempo of 140 and 'mf'. It contains measures 7 through 11, with sextuplet patterns. The third staff, labeled 'Ex. 2.3c', continues the sextuplet patterns in measures 12 through 15.

Early significance of the arpeggiated ricochet bow technique is illustrated in Locatelli's *Capriccio no. 7* (example 2.4a), which contains a ricochet pattern nearly identical to that which was later used in Paganini's *Caprice no. 1* (example 2.4b), both of which are in E major and contain nearly the same pitches. Both Locatelli's and Paganini's caprices employ a four-note ricochet pattern that is arpeggiated across all four strings by alternating down-bow for four notes then up-bow for four notes.

**Example 2.4a:**  
(Locatelli *Capriccio no. 7*, mm. 1-4: *arpeggiated ricochet across 4 strings*)

The image shows the first four measures of Locatelli's Capriccio no. 7. The title 'CAPRICCIO 7' is at the top. The first staff starts at measure 1 (69) and the second staff starts at measure 3 (71). Both staves show arpeggiated ricochet patterns across four strings, with fingerings indicated below the notes.

**Example 2.4b:**

(Paganini *Caprice no. 1*, mm. 1-4: *arpeggiated ricochet across 4 strings*)

Fr. = Am Frosch - *au talon* - at the nut.  
M. = Mitte - *au milieu* - in the middle.  
Sp. = An der Spitze - *à la pointe* - at the point.

I.

Paganini, Op. 1.



**Example 2.5:**

(Tartini *The Art of Bowing*, Variation 11: *arpeggiated ricochet across 3 strings*)

VAR. 11. Fingers must seek positions quickly and remain in place. Middle, bounding bow.

The musical score for Example 2.5 consists of six staves of music in G major, 3/4 time. The first staff begins with a 'V' marking and a 'p' dynamic. The second staff continues the pattern. The third staff includes a 'p' dynamic and a 'fz' dynamic. The fourth staff starts with a 'p' dynamic and includes fingerings (4 3, 4 3, 4 3). The fifth staff features a 'cresc.' marking and a 'f' dynamic, with fingerings (4 2, 3 2, 4 2, 4 3, 4 3, 4 3). The sixth staff begins with a 'p' dynamic and ends with a 'fz' dynamic. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

**Example 2.6:**

(Mendelssohn *Violin Concerto in E minor*, Op. 64: *arpeggiated ricochet across 4 strings*)

The musical score for Example 2.6 consists of six staves of music in E minor, 3/4 time. The first staff starts with a 'ff' dynamic and a 'poco a poco dim.' instruction. The second staff includes a 'pp' dynamic and a 'Piano' instruction. The third staff features a 'cresc.' marking. The fourth staff includes a 'f' dynamic and a 'IV<sup>a</sup>' marking. The fifth staff includes a 'ff legato' marking. The sixth staff includes a 'Tutti' marking and a 'ff' dynamic. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

In O'Connor's Caprice no. 2, the transition and the re-transition are both based entirely on material from the introduction, however these sections do not use ricochet technique. The transition, marked "*Freely*," as in the manner of the introduction, also begins with four bars of single notes that alternate from the D string to the E string using a "*deliberate*" on-the-string bow stroke (examples 2.7a). The next four bars of the transition add three-note slurs across three strings (example 2.7b), and the final eight bars of the transition are composed of continuous two-note slurs across three strings (example 2.7c).

**Examples 2.7a, 2.7b, 2.7c:**  
(O'Connor *Caprice no. 2*, "transition" mm. 64-78)

The image displays three examples of musical notation from O'Connor's Caprice no. 2, specifically the transition section (measures 64-78). Example 2.7a shows the first four measures, starting with a 'D' on the D string, marked 'Freely deliberate' and 'p'. Example 2.7b shows measures 68-71, featuring three-note slurs across three strings, marked 'mp'. Example 2.7c shows measures 72-78, featuring continuous two-note slurs across three strings, marked 'mf'. The notation includes various bowing techniques like slurs and accents, and dynamic markings.

The re-transition, also marked "*Freely*," begins with single notes on alternating strings, identical to the transition section. This time however, the notes are "*bounced*," rather than "*deliberate*" (example 2.8a). The rhythm is then double-timed in measure 128, creating eighth notes, and double-stops are added to make an interval pattern of fifth-sixth-fifth-sixth-sixth-fifth-fifth-sixth (example 2.8b). This double-stop pattern is then double-timed again, creating sixteenth notes, and is marked "*Suddenly slower*,"

continuing in 3/4 meter, accelerating “*little by little*” up to “*very fast*”, then continuing “*furiously*” in common time until ending with a C major chord that switches back into 2/4, preparing for the recapitulation (example 2.8c). Achieving accuracy with the large spiccato string crossings, in combination with this final accelerated tempo, requires a tremendous amount of bow control and much right-hand/left-hand coordination.

**Examples 2.8a, 2.8b, 2.8c:**

(O’Connor *Caprice no. 2*, “re-transition” mm. 124-136)

The image displays three examples of musical notation from O'Connor's *Caprice no. 2*, specifically the "re-transition" section (measures 124-136). Example 2.8a (measures 124-125) is in 3/4 time, marked *mf*, and features a "Freely bounced" instruction with a large 'F' and a 'V' above the notes. Example 2.8b (measures 126-129) is in 3/4 time and shows a sequence of chords and eighth notes. Example 2.8c (measures 130-136) is in 3/4 time, marked *ff*, and consists of a dense, rapid sixteenth-note pattern. The tempo markings for 2.8c are "Suddenly slower", "accel. little by little", "accel.", and "very fast". The piece concludes in common time (C) with a C major chord, which then switches to 2/4 time for the recapitulation.

### **Foundational Techniques Seen in O'Connor's *Method***

Relevant foundational material seen in O'Connor's *Method* include the various hornpipes that will solidify this musical style. The first hornpipe, *Herman's Hornpipe*, is presented in Book III of the *Method* (example 2.9). Through this tune, O'Connor establishes not only the hornpipe style, but also presents quick successive arpeggiated string crossings, thirty-second-note turns, as well as sixteenth-note turns, all of which are similarly displayed in Caprice no. 2. O'Connor states that there will be several more hornpipes in the upcoming Books IV and V. Included within these hornpipes will be *College Hornpipe*, a work that O'Connor recorded in 1996 with Yo-Yo Ma and Edgar Meyer in their album *Appalachia Waltz*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, December 31, 2011.



**Example 2.9:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book III: Herman's Hornpipe, mm. 1-12)

The musical score is written for a single string instrument in D major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of six staves of music, numbered 1 through 12. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 98. The piece begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The first section, labeled 'A', spans measures 1 through 8. The second section, labeled 'B', spans measures 9 through 12. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. Chord diagrams are provided above the staff for measures 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Measure 12 ends with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking.

Chord diagrams for Section A:

- Measure 1: D
- Measure 3: D, A, G, D
- Measure 5: D, A, D
- Measure 7: D, A, D

Chord diagrams for Section B:

- Measure 9: A, F#min, E, A, D, A, E, A
- Measure 11: A, F#min, E, A, D, A, E, A

### ***Caprice no. 3: A Request from Eugene Fodor***

O'Connor composed his *Caprice no. 3* in A Major in the year 1989 at the request of classical violin virtuoso Eugene Fodor. Fodor was the first American to win a top prize (silver) in the International Tchaikovsky Violin Competition of 1974 in Moscow, Russia. Fodor shared second place with two Soviets as no first prize was awarded that year. Nevertheless, this accomplishment gained him fame, especially due to the timing of this feat occurring during the Cold War. O'Connor's *Caprice no. 3* in particular is more Paganini-like in nature than the rest of the caprices, as Fodor used this name specifically in describing to O'Connor what he wished for this work to encompass.<sup>18</sup> Fodor also requested "virtuosity on the highest level," proving this work to be the most difficult of O'Connor's *Caprices*.<sup>19</sup> O'Connor used this caprice to push violin technique in a new direction and to practice new disciplines in his own playing.<sup>20</sup> In doing so, he invented a new technique that is unique to this work, known as the "3-finger pizzicato."

In the 1980's, O'Connor lived in Nashville, TN where he led a very successful career as a fiddler and studio session musician. He had recently placed second in the Grand Master Fiddler Championship of 1976, where the classical violin virtuoso

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<sup>18</sup> Mark O'Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011.

Eugene Fodor was one of five judges that year.<sup>21</sup> This occasion provided the first meeting between Mark O'Connor and Eugene Fodor. Several years later, in 1989, Fodor was in the process of signing a record deal with Warner Brothers Records Nashville (WBR). He and his manager were in search of a composer to write some music for Fodor to record on this particular album. Fodor was looking for a work that would challenge him technically and remembered O'Connor from having judged the Grand Master Fiddler Championship. Fodor then sought to commission a work from O'Connor for this WBR project. Following an initial phone conversation regarding the commission, O'Connor then met in person with Fodor and his manager to go over specific details of what the commissioned work would encompass. In a recent interview regarding the genesis of this work, O'Connor stated, "I assumed it was going to be, frankly, crossover." To further define the term, "crossover," O'Connor continued, "I thought he (Fodor) was going to be a classical artist that was going to record some... bluegrass music, or some even new age music or easy listening music; something that you would categorize as crossover for a classical artist. That's why I thought they were hiring me, to write something to help him (Fodor) cross over."<sup>22</sup>

Prior to this, O'Connor had recently been hired by Angel Records to write some material for classical flutist Ransom Wilson to record. The purpose of this particular commission was to help Wilson cross over into a genre outside classical music, which would help him appeal to a broader audience. Wilson and Angel Records specifically asked for the commission to encompass something slow along the lines of light jazz, new

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<sup>21</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, January 4, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Mark O'Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011.

age music, and perhaps a little “countryish.”<sup>23</sup> O’Connor naturally assumed that this was also the path that WBR and the manager were hoping to take with Fodor; to help him become a crossover recording artist. In the meeting with Fodor and his manager however, O’Connor was surprised to learn that they had something very different in mind. Recalling the meeting, O’Connor stated, “So I got into the meeting and I just assumed that they were [going to] want to get Eugene on radio... and then I looked at Eugene Fodor and said, “So, what are you looking for? Something sort of slow or easy to listen to... maybe a nice melody, a nice theme?”” Fodor looked right at O’Connor and replied, “I want virtuosity on the highest level!” O’Connor, taken aback, said, “Oh, so you want something fast and hard to play?” Fodor said, “I want it almost impossible. I want Paganini from you (O’Connor).” Fodor then concluded with, “Don’t make it impossible though... I still need to be able to play it, but I can play anything you write me!” O’Connor then simply replied, “Okay!” and from this conversation, O’Connor was then challenged to write his third caprice.<sup>24</sup> In creating this work, O’Connor recalled, “So I figured, to be fair, I couldn’t give him (Fodor) something so impossible that I (O’Connor) couldn’t play it, so I made sure I could play it, and that was my challenge. I wanted to be able to pull this off on stage, and then I was [going to] give it to him (Fodor) and say, “Here ya go!”<sup>25</sup>

This caprice is written as a type of theme and variations (Appendix 3). This theme makes use of the language of the hoedown.<sup>26</sup> Through this caprice, O’Connor strove to push violin technique to a new level. In doing so, he was inspired to invent a

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Mark O’Connor, E-mail message to author, February 9, 2012.

new technique, the 3-finger pizzicato, which is unique to this work. This technique, seen in variation 4, combines traditional left hand (LH) pizzicato with innovative two-fingered right hand (RH) pizzicato, resulting in a pizzicato pattern of LH-RH-RH that appears in various rhythms throughout this section (example 3.1). This technique is a two-handed rhythmic application played in cross-tuned fiddle tunes and was introduced to O'Connor as a student by his first mentor Benny Thomasson.<sup>27</sup> When learning this 3-finger pizzicato, it may be beneficial for the performer to practice each hand separately as a means of developing the new coordination necessary to this technique. For instance, the LH pizzicato notes (the melody) would be played alone in the correct rhythm, while simply eliminating the RH pizzicato notes. This will help to bring out the melody when in context. This exercise may then be reversed, leaving out the LH pizzicato melody and only playing the RH pizzicato notes, still using the accurate rhythms.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

### Example 3.1:

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 3*, mm. 58-68: *L.H./3-finger pizz*)

The musical score for Example 3.1 consists of four staves of music. The first staff (measures 58-61) begins with a 'freely' marking and a 'pizz.' instruction. It features a series of arpeggiated chords. The second staff (measures 62-64) is marked 'In Time' with a tempo of quarter note = 90. It includes a 'pizz.' marking and a 'mf' dynamic with a '2 1 (right hand finger)' instruction. The third staff (measures 65-66) has a 'f' dynamic. The fourth staff (measures 67-68) also has a 'f' dynamic and an 'arco' marking. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'mp', 'mf', 'f', 'rit.', 'similar', and 'lh rh'.

O'Connor also used this work to practice new disciplines in his own playing through including techniques that he felt the need to achieve in order to become a more virtuosic player. These techniques that were new to O'Connor's repertoire include: advanced arpeggios, runs, patterns, bowings, flying staccato, four-note broken chords, and rhythms.<sup>28</sup>

Advanced arpeggios appear in variation 1 (example 3.2), and again in the repeat of variation 1. A unique section of four-note broken chords is presented in variation 2. These broken chords are to be played "*across 4 strings*," forming an exercise in difficult finger patterns that occur in various positions on the violin. Also, the rapid arpeggiated spiccato string-crossings require much bow control (example 3.3).

<sup>28</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, January 5, 2012.

**Example 3.2:**  
(O'Connor *Caprice no. 3*, mm. 17-28: *advanced arpeggios*)

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Solo Violin

### Caprice No. 3 In A Major

Mark O'Connor

**Example 3.3:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 3*, mm. 32-42: 4-note broken chords)

Quick advanced runs are presented in variation 5 and in the codetta following the repeat of the theme. Variation 5 pairs the runs with slides up to the final note (example 3.4a). The codetta incorporates a meter changes for each sequence of scales, moving from 6/8, to 7/8, to 10/8 (example 3.4b). Variation 6 is composed of flying staccato paired with left hand pizzicato (example 3.5).

**Example 3.4a:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 3*, mm. 73-75: advanced runs)



### Example 3.4b:

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 3*, mm. 135-137: *advanced runs*)

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Example 3.4b. The top staff begins at measure 134 and the bottom staff at measure 136. Both staves are in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The music features rapid sixteenth-note runs, often grouped with slurs and marked with a 'V' (vibrato) or a '6' (sixteenth notes). A tempo marking of ♩ = 135 is placed above the first staff. The notation includes various fingerings and articulation marks.

### Example 3.5:

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 3*, mm. 80-84: *flying staccato*)

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Example 3.5. The top staff begins at measure 80 and the bottom staff at measure 82. Both staves are in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The music features rapid sixteenth-note runs, often grouped with slurs and marked with a 'V' (vibrato) or a '6' (sixteenth notes). A tempo marking of ♩ = 180 is placed above the first staff. The notation includes various fingerings and articulation marks, with the word 'Freely' written above the top staff in the latter part of the passage.

Due to the nature of Eugene Fodor's request for this work, many techniques in this caprice recall techniques used in Paganini's 24 Caprices. For example, flying staccato, found in O'Connor's Caprice no. 3, Variation 6, is also seen within a passage of Paganini's *Caprice no. 9* (example 3.6). The trills seen in Variation 3 of O'Connor's Caprice no. 3 (example 3.7a) recall the trills in Paganini's Caprice no. 9 (example 3.7b). Variations 4 and 6 of O'Connor's Caprice no. 3 contain left hand pizzicato, which is also present in Paganini's Caprice no. 24.

**Example 3.6:**  
(Paganini *Caprice no. 9: flying staccato*)

The image displays a musical score for Paganini's *Caprice no. 9*, specifically the section titled "flying staccato". The score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a measure marked "8" and includes the instruction "restes." below the staff. The music is characterized by rapid, staccato sixteenth-note passages, often grouped in beams. Various technical markings are present throughout, including fingerings (1-4), trills ("tr"), and dynamic markings such as "V" (forte) and "III<sup>a</sup>". The score concludes with a section labeled "ossia:" followed by the instruction "Sulla tastiera..." and "p dolce", indicating a softer, more legato playing style on the keyboard.



career as a musician and, eventually, resulted in his untimely death.<sup>29</sup> While O'Connor completed the composition of this caprice, Fodor did not end up signing the record deal with WBR. Fodor also never saw nor played the work that O'Connor had written for him; however, he can still be credited for inspiring what is by far the most difficult, and perhaps even the most innovative, of O'Connor's six caprices.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Margalit Fox, "Eugene Fodor, Violin Virtuoso, Dies at 60," *New York Times*, March 2, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/03/arts/music/03fodor.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/03/arts/music/03fodor.html?_r=1) (accessed March 29, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Mark O'Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011.

### **Foundational Techniques Seen in O'Connor's *Method***

Corresponding to Caprice no. 3, O'Connor's *Method* makes prevalent use of the key of A Major. Regarding correlations of this caprice with O'Connor's *Method*, Pamela Wiley, Director of Education and Teacher Training for the *O'Connor Method*, points out that the key of A Major is “established as a very violinistic key from the beginning” (the first seven tunes are in A Major) and that the continued use of this key throughout the *Method* creates a basis for progressively introducing more advanced techniques.<sup>31</sup>

O'Connor's *Method* also contains works written in the theme and variations structure. This particular formal structure is first encountered in the opening tune seen in Book III of the *Method*, *Rubber Dolly Rag*. This form is further established in the finale of Book III through O'Connor's arrangement of the famous Shaker song *Simple Gifts*. This song became well known through its use in Aaron Copland's ballet *Appalachian Spring* (1944), written at the request of dancer and choreographer Martha Graham. O'Connor's arrangement of *Simple Gifts* presents a theme with four variations. Becoming familiar with the formal structure of a work is a necessary part of learning and memorizing a piece. Through *Simple Gifts*, O'Connor sets up students to understand other works written in similar structures, such as Caprice no. 3.

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<sup>31</sup> Pamela Wiley, E-mail message to author, January 26, 2012.

Also, octaves (seen in Variation 5 of *Caprice no. 3*) first appear in the last two pieces in Book III of the *Method*. O'Connor introduces octaves in the gospel hymn *We Shall Overcome* (example 3. 8) and further develops this technique in *Simple Gifts* (example 3.9a, 3.9b, 3.9c).

**Example 3.8:**

(O'Connor's *American String Method Book III: We Shall Overcome*, mm. 33-44)

Musical score for "We Shall Overcome" (Example 3.8). The score is in C major, 3/4 time, and consists of three staves. The first staff starts at measure 33 with a C chord and a melody. The second staff starts at measure 37 with various chords including F, E7, A min, D sus4, D7, G, and D7. The third staff starts at measure 41 with chords including A min, G, F, C, A min, G, F, G, E7, A min, and A b aug. Red ovals highlight octave patterns in the first and third staves.

**Example 3.9a:**

(O'Connor's *American String Method Book III: Simple Gifts*, mm. 33-35)

Musical score for "Simple Gifts" (Example 3.9a). The score is in C major, 4/4 time, and consists of one staff. It starts with a C chord and a melody. Red ovals highlight octave patterns throughout the piece.

**Example 3.9b:**

(O'Connor's *American String Method Book III: Simple Gifts*, m. 57)

Musical score for "Simple Gifts" (Example 3.9b). The score is in D major, 4/4 time, and consists of one staff. It starts with a D1 chord and a melody. A red oval highlights an octave pattern.

**Example 3.9c:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book III: *Simple Gifts*, mm. 78-84)

The musical score consists of two staves. The first staff begins at measure 78 and ends at measure 84. The second staff begins at measure 81 and ends at measure 84. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score includes various musical notations such as fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4), dynamics (ff), and articulation marks (V, V<sup>4</sup>, V<sup>3</sup>, V<sup>2</sup>, V<sup>1</sup>, V<sup>2</sup>, V<sup>3</sup>, V<sup>4</sup>). Red circles highlight specific notes in measures 78, 81, and 82. The notes are: measure 78 (F#4), measure 81 (F#3), and measure 82 (F#3).

Measure 78:  $V^4$ , 1,  $V^3$ ,  $V^2$ , D, 1 1, 0 3,  $V$ , 2,  $V$ . Dynamics:  $ff$ . Chords: C, A min, G.

Measure 81: F,  $V^4$ , 4, D, *Rit.*,  $V$ , C, A min, G. Chords: F, D, C, A min, G.

### **Caprice no. 4: A Unique Take on Cross-Picking**

In 1992, O'Connor composed his *Caprice no. 4 in D Major*, for which he drew all of his inspiration from the mandolin. In fact, he even composed large portions of this caprice on the mandolin.<sup>32</sup> Similar to *Caprice no. 2*, this caprice also makes use of the Hornpipe language.<sup>33</sup> Through this work, O'Connor transferred a style of mandolin playing, known as "cross-picking," to the violin bow, creating a new style of bowing that stemmed from the American roots of bluegrass mandolin playing.<sup>34</sup>

Cross-picking is an arpeggiated, pattern-oriented style of playing the mandolin (or guitar) where only one note is picked at a time in various patterns of string crossings and picking directions (down or up). Individual styles of cross-picking have developed through musicians over the years, but the bluegrass mandolin player Jesse McReynolds is credited for inventing the primary technique.<sup>35</sup> McReynolds's cross-picking style was the initial, yet indirect, influence of O'Connor's *Caprice no. 4*, many years before this work was even conceived. Over the years, O'Connor developed his own cross-picking techniques as a mandolinist, which later served as the direct influence of this caprice. In differentiating his individual cross-picking techniques from McReynolds's, O'Connor states, "It was really just one

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<sup>32</sup> Mark O'Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, February 9, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Mark O'Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011.



cross-picking style, and I had learned it and perfected it on the mandolin as well as the guitar with a plectrum. However, McReynolds often would use two up strokes in a row, while I always alternated up and down with the pick.”<sup>36</sup>

Although O’Connor assumed every style of bowing arpeggiation had been fully vetted in violin literature of previous generations, he still aspired to reveal a new pattern of arpeggiation that had not yet been conceived. Recalling his quest to explore other bowing possibilities, which then lead to the inspiration behind this caprice, O’Connor states, “I thought, maybe there’s a secret of bluegrass cross-picking violin. The mandolin helped me figure this out... It helps to leave the violin for a moment and step outside of the familiar to reinvent something.”<sup>37</sup> Applying the technique of cross-picking to the violin bow resulted in what O’Connor refers to as, “a way to do something very unusual for the violin, but ends up being a natural development of violin bow technique.”<sup>38</sup>

This caprice is written in a textbook sonata form with a coda (Appendix 4). The majority of this work is derived from mandolin cross-picking technique, which O’Connor innovatively applied to the violin. O’Connor’s individual style of cross-picking translates to the violin as separate bow strokes alternating down and up, while the bow bounces between the strings (example 4.1)<sup>39</sup> This bow pattern creates what O’Connor refers to as a “rhythmic arpeggio,” through which the use of multiple time signatures makes the patterns and phrases sound even more interesting.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Mark O’Connor, E-mail message to author, January 5, 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Mark O’Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Mark O’Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Mark O’Connor, E-mail message to author, January 5, 2012

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Within the cross-picking portions of this work, O'Connor includes two different passages that contain double string crossings between the up and down bows. The first passage containing a double string crossing is presented within the Exposition in mm. 10-11 (example 4.2a). This passage appears four times in the Exposition and is seen twice in the Recapitulation. The next cross-picking passage containing a double string crossing occurs in the Development in mm. 84-87 (example 4.2b). This second passage appears twice within the Development and three times in the Coda.

**Example 4.1:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 4*, mm. 1-18: "cross-picking" bow technique)

The musical score for Example 4.1 consists of five staves of music in G major, 2/4 time. The first staff (measures 1-8) features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with double string crossings, marked with 'off the string' and 'f'. The second staff (measures 9-14) continues this pattern, with a 'similar' annotation above the fourth measure. The third staff (measures 15-16) is marked 'A' and shows a change in rhythm to a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The fourth staff (measures 17-18) is marked 'B' and returns to the eighth-note pattern. The fifth staff (measures 19-20) is marked 'Suddenly Much Slower' and 'Freely', with a dynamic marking of 'mp' and triplet markings.



### Foundational Techniques Seen in O'Connor's *Method*

The most important foundational material in O'Connor's *Method* that will prepare students to play *Caprice no. 4*, are the many arpeggiated string crossings. Quick arpeggiated string crossings in the key of D Major are first presented in Book I of the *Method* through the tune *Soldier's Joy*. This tune makes use of arpeggiations across two strings; the A part crosses primarily over the A-string and D-string (example 4.4a), and the B part crosses the E-string and A-string (example 4.4b). Another tune in the *Method* instigating rapid arpeggiations in the key of D Major is *Herman's Hornpipe*, previously discussed along with *Caprice no. 2* and seen in example 2.9 (above).

Pamela Wiley also states that this caprice (no. 4) reminds her the most of O'Connor's *Fiddle Concerto*, which will precede the *Caprices* in the *Method*. She states, "The key is the same so a lot of the arpeggiation is similar – both [in the] first and third movements."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Pamela Wiley, E-mail message to author, January 26, 2012.

**Example 4.4a:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I: *Soldier's Joy*, mm. 1-3)

Musical notation for Example 4.4a, measures 1-3 of "Soldier's Joy". The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 80$  and "Very Energetic". The first measure starts with a box labeled "A" and a chord diagram for A major (D4, E4, F#4, G4). The second measure has a chord diagram for G major (B3, D4, E4, G4). The third measure has a chord diagram for D major (F#3, A3, B3, D4). The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes, with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) at the beginning.

**Example 4.4b:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I: *Soldier's Joy*, mm. 10-12)

Musical notation for Example 4.4b, measures 10-12 of "Soldier's Joy". The piece is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first measure (measure 10) has a box labeled "B" and a chord diagram for B major (D4, F#4, G4). The second measure (measure 11) has a chord diagram for A major (C#3, E3, F#3, A3). The third measure (measure 12) has a chord diagram for D major (F#3, A3, B3, D4). The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes.

### ***Caprice no. 5: “Train Rhythm”***

*Caprice no. 5 in F Major* was composed in 1994 when O’Connor was inspired to create what he refers to as a “train rhythm,” which he developed through improvising with very difficult bow patterns to emulate the sound of the train on the track through a rhythmic groove.<sup>42</sup> This “train rhythm” also relates to the hoedown style.<sup>43</sup> Through this “train rhythm,” O’Connor creates a new bow technique devised from a unique bowing pattern. Also seen in this caprice are various passages of double-stops containing a solid “drone” note paired with a moving voice.

O’Connor defines this “train rhythm” as “a rhythmic bowing and forward momentum that is influenced by the sound of the train and the rhythm of the wheels on the track, almost like a locomotive inspiration. A moving rhythm that feels like you’re being propelled forward, even though you’re not speeding up in tempo.”<sup>44</sup> O’Connor goes on to discuss how the sound of a train on the tracks is a language of American culture. Similar to the musical inspirational qualities of birdcalls or wind song, the sound of the train on the tracks is also an idiom that inspires music to be created.<sup>45</sup> In creating this “train rhythm,” O’Connor invented an interesting new bow pattern composed of: down-up-down-up-up-down-down-up (example 5.1).

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<sup>42</sup> Mark O’Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Mark O’Connor, E-mail message to author, February 9, 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Mark O’Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

**Example 5.1a:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 5*, mm. 1-2 “train rhythm”)



This particular bow pattern is completely unique to *Caprice no. 5*; however imitating the train sound through music is no foreign concept. Trains and the railroad have influenced many works of previous American artists such as Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, and perhaps most pertinent to the fiddle, Ervin Rouse, who wrote one of the most well-known fiddle tunes of all time, *The Orange Blossom Special*. Rouse, a fiddler himself, was inspired to write *The Orange Blossom Special* in 1938 after seeing the luxury passenger train of the same name. This tune requires the fiddler to imitate certain train sounds, such as the train whistles and bells through double stops (mainly parallel fifths), bending of pitches, and left-hand pizzicato on the open E-string. The rhythm of the wheels on the track is imitated through a bow technique that is very common of the fiddle style known as the “double shuffle.” The “double shuffle” however, is quite different from the previously mentioned “train rhythm” that O’Connor created for his *Caprice no. 5*. “Double shuffle” bowing is accomplished by alternating between two different strings or two pairs of strings when using double-stops in a specific pattern using separate bows. This pattern typically occurs within a 4/4 meter, creating a hemiola feel (example 5.1b).

**Example 5.1b:**

(“double shuffle” from *The Orange Blossom Special*)



One of the biggest challenges in learning O'Connor's unique "train rhythm" may be accomplishing the double up-bows followed by the double down-bows occurring within this pattern, while maintaining the spiccato. The bow will tend to lose bounce and momentum on the double up-bows and down-bows. Bouncing the bow a bit higher off the string on the single-note spiccato portion may help to create the momentum necessary for the bow to continue bouncing through the double up-bows and down-bows. The more the bow bounces naturally from vertical momentum (rather than from moving the bow arm horizontally in order to manually create the bounce), the easier the double up-bows and down-bows will speak with the same spiccato articulation of the single-note spiccato. One helpful way to practice this technique initially is through repeating this bow pattern on an open string, prior to adding the actual notes. This provides an opportunity to solidify this new bow technique at the actual tempo during the early stages of learning this caprice.

Caprice no. 5 is written in a traditional sonata-form structure (refer to Appendix 5). The "train rhythm" which is initiated by the unique bowing pattern occurs throughout all sections (Exposition, Development, Recapitulation, and Coda) of this work. Within theme A of the Exposition and Development, this bow pattern first appears as a single-note theme as previously seen in example 5.1 (above). Following the single-note statements, this theme then appears in double-stops with a solid "drone" note (example 5.2).





**Examples 5.4a, 5.4b:**  
(O'Connor *Caprice no. 5*, mm. 44-49)

Examples 5.4a and 5.4b are musical excerpts from O'Connor's *Caprice no. 5*, measures 44-49. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Example 5.4a (measures 44-46) features a rapid sixteenth-note pattern with a dynamic marking of *f*. Example 5.4b (measures 47-49) continues the pattern with a dynamic marking of *ff*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 and 0 (open string).

**Example 5.5:**  
(O'Connor *Caprice no. 5*, mm. 52-56)

Example 5.5 is a musical excerpt from O'Connor's *Caprice no. 5*, measures 52-56. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and quintuplets. The dynamic marking is *ff*. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final notes.

**Example 5.6:**  
(O'Connor *Caprice no. 5*, mm. 114-117)

Example 5.6 is a musical excerpt from O'Connor's *Caprice no. 5*, measures 114-117. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and quintuplets. The dynamic marking is *ff*. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final notes. A *similar* marking is present above the notation.

### **Foundational Techniques Seen in O'Connor's *Method***

O'Connor's *Method* gradually sets up students for the unique “train rhythm” bowing pattern that is the basis for Caprice no. 5. Pamela Wiley states, “Groundwork for the bowing pattern is gradually instilled through fluid string crossings throughout the *Method*: Starting with *Soldier's Joy* (Book I), *Boil 'em Cabbage Variation 11*, *Fiddle Boy* (Book II), *Herman's Hornpipe*, *Jessie Polka* (Book III) etc. Fluid wrist motion developed through these pieces prepares for this advanced bowing pattern.”<sup>46</sup>

Another foundational aspect of the *Method* relevant to this caprice is the introduction and development of double-stops. Double-stops are first introduced in *Boil 'em Cabbage*, Variation 5 (example 5.7a). Consecutive double-stops are introduced through *Boil 'em Cabbage*, Variation 7 in Book I (example 5.7b), and are seen again in the opening of Book II in *Boil 'em Cabbage*, Variation 8 (example 5.7c). *Cabbage*, Variations 7 and 8 pair a moving “melody” note with a solid “drone” note, similar to the double-stops previously discussed in Caprice no. 5, seen in example 5.2 and 5.3 (above). Double-stops are further developed in the *Method* through *Cabbage Variations 12 and 13* in Book II, and *March of the Pharaohs* and *Simple Gifts* in Book III.

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<sup>46</sup> Pamela Wiley, E-mail message to author, January 26, 2012.

**Examples 5.7a:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I, Boil 'em Cabbage Down, Variation 5, mm. 1-4)

Two staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and common time. The first staff contains measures 1-4 with notes and stems, and chord markings A, D, and V. The second staff contains measures 3-4 with notes and stems, and chord markings A and E7. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated in measure 3 of the second staff.

**Examples 5.7b:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I, Boil 'em Cabbage Down Variation 7, mm. 1-4)

Two staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and common time. The first staff contains measures 1-4 with notes and stems, and chord markings A, D9, and V. The second staff contains measures 1-4 with notes and stems, and chord markings A and E7.

**Examples 5.7c:**

(O'Connor's American String Method Book I, Boil 'em Cabbage Down, Variation 8, mm. 1-4)

Two staves of musical notation in treble clef, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and common time. The first staff contains measures 1-4 with notes and stems, and chord markings A, D9, and mf. The second staff contains measures 1-4 with notes and stems, and chord markings A and E7. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated in measure 1 of the second staff.

### ***Caprice no. 6: Hunting Chase***

O'Connor's final caprice, no. 6 in G Major, was composed in the year 1994. This work is based on many double-stop trills that emulate hunting horns, and features an innovative ricochet arpeggio bowing idea that is unique to this caprice.<sup>47</sup> O'Connor states, "The music plays out like a chase, hunting dog and the raccoon and the tangles and fussing they both get into as the caprice unfolds."<sup>48</sup>

This work is composed with a formal structure that O'Connor calls a "variations hybrid." The form of this caprice appears to combine theme and variations with sonata form (Appendix 6). The introduction, mm. 1-73, could also be viewed as an exposition (as in sonata form structure) since this section presents thematic material that is restated in the recapitulation, mm. 186-230. Between the introduction and the recapitulation are four variations based on the chord progression of the introduction, so in addition to the introduction possibly dually serving as an exposition, it could also be seen as the theme on which the variations are based. However, referring back to sonata form structure, the four variations combined could also be seen as a sort of development section.

In this final caprice, the introduction and the recapitulation are composed of two themes. The first theme presents double-stop trills that imitate the sound of

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<sup>47</sup> Mark O'Connor, Personal interview with author, June 29, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011

hunting horns and is written in a recurring four-bar rhythmic pattern (example 6.1). Also, the double-stop trills in this section present intervals ranging from 3<sup>rds</sup> to 7<sup>ths</sup>. This passage is followed by theme two, which is a series of written out trills paired with a solid “drone” note. Adding to the left hand complexity of this section, the trilled note and solid note alternate in nearly every bar (example 6.2). Sometimes the trilled note appears on the top of the double-stop with the “drone” note held underneath, and vice versa. This passage requires much independent finger coordination of the left hand.

By the time violinists tackle *Caprice no. 6*, they will most likely have a solid foundation in playing double-stop trills. However, a beneficial way of solidifying this technique, relevant to this caprice, is through playing double-stop scales in thirds. This will simulate the independent finger action necessary of the trills seen in this particular caprice and will help to develop the coordination necessary of the left hand.

**Example 6.1:**

(O’Connor *Caprice no. 6*, mm. 1-14: Theme 1: double-stop trills)

Freely  
♩ = 100

1  
f

5

10

**Example 6.2:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 6*, mm. 17-28: Theme 2: double-stop trills with “drone” note)

The image displays a musical score for Example 6.2, consisting of three staves of music. The top staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a dynamic marking of *mf*. It features three measures of double-stop trills, each with a slur over the notes and a 'drone' note indicated by a vertical line. The middle staff is a single treble clef staff starting at measure 20, containing four measures of double-stop trills with fingerings (3 1, 2 1, 3 1, 2 0) and slurs. The bottom staff is a single treble clef staff starting at measure 25, containing four measures of double-stop trills with fingerings (0 1, 1 1, 0 3) and slurs.

A unique ricochet arpeggio bowing idea appears in variation 1 of this caprice. The arpeggiated ricochet bowing previously seen in the Introduction of Caprice no. 2, and in nearly all other instances of this technique, use one bow direction to go to the top of the arpeggio followed by another bow direction to go back down the arpeggio. This particular caprice, no. 6, presents a unique take on this technique through incorporating the ascent, descent, and re-ascent of the arpeggio all in one ricocheted bow (example 6.3).

### Example 6.3:

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 6*: mm.74-103: Variation 1 - “unique ricochet arpeggio bowing”)

The image shows a musical score for a violin piece, specifically Variation 1 of O'Connor's Caprice no. 6, measures 74-103. The score is written in G major and common time (C). It consists of five staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 74 and includes the marking 'A little slower'. The second staff starts at measure 80 and includes the marking 'In Time'. The third staff starts at measure 86 and includes the marking 'a little faster'. The fourth staff starts at measure 92. The fifth staff starts at measure 98 and ends with a double bar line and a fermata. The music features a unique ricochet arpeggio bowing pattern with alternating down-bows and up-bows. The score includes various performance markings such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'f'.

This pattern occurs through alternating down-bows and up-bows with each succession. Due to the space created by the eighth notes at the end of each cycle of this pattern, the player will have to “re-start” each succession of the ricochet on the new bow direction. This “space” is yet another aspect that makes O’Connor’s ricochet in this particular caprice quite different from the traditional classical ricochet previously seen in *Caprice no. 2*. In the traditional technique of successive arpeggiated ricochet, the bow never stops moving, therefore the bow never loses momentum. In the ricochet pattern seen in *Caprice no. 6*, the down-bow successions will probably tend to occur with more ease than the up-bow successions, due to the sheer pull of gravity. In order to achieve this bowing identically throughout both bow directions and maintain the ricochet bounce, the player must be aware of several details: 1) The player should only use the upper-half



of the bow at all times. 2) The down-bow succession should start no lower than the middle of the bow. 3) The up-bow succession should start at the tip of the bow and end no lower than the middle of the bow. 4) In order to maintain the bounce in the bow, the player must begin the ricochet from high above the string and allow the bow arm to follow the natural bounce of the bow. 5) The only necessary movement of the bow arm (other than following the bow's direction) is to facilitate the string crossings.

Next, variation 2 presents slurred triplet string crossings that are composed of the same pitches previously used in Variation 1 (example 6.4). This is then followed by variation 3, which presents a passage of wild spiccato scales and arpeggios that cross over all four strings (example 6.5). This variation also contains elements of the hoedown style.<sup>49</sup> Variation 4 is composed of broken double-stops with various slurrings (example 6.6).

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<sup>49</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, February 9, 2012.

**Example 6.4:**

(O'Connor *Caprice no. 6*, mm. 104-132: Variation 2 – “slurred triplet string crossings”)

**D**  $\text{♩} = 90$  *a little slower*

104

109

115

33

Solo Violin

**Caprice No. 6 In G Major**

Mark O'Connor

121

*accel.*

127

**ff** 7

**Example 6.5:**  
(O'Connor *Caprice no. 6*, mm. 133-153: Variation 3)

**Example 6.6:**  
(O'Connor *Caprice no. 6*, mm. 169-181: Variation 4)

This final caprice concludes with a Coda of spiccato double-stops composed of thirds and sixths that occur in varying meters and tempos. Interrupting these double-stops briefly are a few measure of single-note sextuplets that incorporate slides. The

double-stops resume in a “suddenly faster” tempo, leading to a “grand ritardando” that leads to the conclusion of this innovative set of works (example 6.7).

**Example 6.7:**

(O’Connor *Caprice no. 6*, mm. 231-247, “coda”)

The musical score for Example 6.7 consists of four staves of music. The first staff (measures 231-233) begins with a first ending bracket labeled 'I' and a tempo marking of 'Freely' with a quarter note equal to 120. The second staff (measures 234-237) features a dynamic marking of *mf* and includes sixteenth-note runs with sixteenth-note slurs. The third staff (measures 238-242) starts with a dynamic marking of *f*, includes a tempo change to 'suddenly faster' with a quarter note equal to 160, and ends with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The fourth staff (measures 243-247) begins with a dynamic marking of *ff*, includes a 'grand rit.' marking, and concludes with a double bar line at measure 247. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and articulation marks.

## Foundational Techniques Seen in O'Connor's *Method*

Foundational techniques in O'Connor's *Method* that are pertinent to Caprice no. 6, include the introduction of double-stops, previously discussed in the *Method* portion of Caprice no. 5, and seen in examples 5.7a, 5.7b, 5.7c (above). This progression uses a left-hand finger pattern and series of string crossings similar to that introduced in the tune *Rain Clouds*, seen in Book III of the *Method* (example 6.8).

### Example 6.8

(O'Connor's *American String Method* Book III, *Rain Clouds*, mm. 5-7)

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is in 4/4 time. The first measure starts with a square box containing the letter 'A' and a small 's' to its left. Above the staff, the chords E min, B min7, E min, D, E min9, and B min7 are indicated. Fingerings are shown with numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. The first measure has a double-stop on the first and second strings (F# and C#) with fingerings 1 and 1, and an open string (G) with a 0. The second measure has a double-stop on the first and second strings (F# and C#) with fingerings 1 and 1, and an open string (G) with a 0. The third measure has a double-stop on the first and second strings (F# and C#) with fingerings 1 and 1, and an open string (G) with a 0. The fourth measure has a double-stop on the first and second strings (F# and C#) with fingerings 1 and 1, and an open string (G) with a 0. The fifth measure has a double-stop on the first and second strings (F# and C#) with fingerings 1 and 1, and an open string (G) with a 0. The sixth measure has a double-stop on the first and second strings (F# and C#) with fingerings 1 and 1, and an open string (G) with a 0. The dynamic marking *mp* is placed below the first measure.

Pamela Wiley states, “Harmonic progression groundwork is being laid constantly throughout the fiddle tunes. By the time students reach Caprice No. 6 [in the *Method*], the chord progression at C [variation 1, example 6.3] and D [variation 2, example 6.4] will be practically automatic.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Pamela Wiley, E-mail message to author, January 26, 2012.

## CONCLUSION

Mark O'Connor's *Caprices nos. 1-6 for Unaccompanied Violin* are a monumental contribution to the development of American classical music and violin technique as these works pair an underlying basis of traditional American roots with expansions on European classical forms and techniques. Through this set of works, O'Connor preserves a part of American music through the classical idiom. The classical audience is provided with valuable pieces of history concerning the deep American roots embedded within these works, illustrating their clear development of American music. Throughout this set of works, O'Connor also expands the possibilities of traditional classical forms, such as sonata form and theme and variations, proving these *Caprices* to be a milestone in the development of traditional classical genres as well.

The wide range of advanced violin techniques presented in O'Connor's *Caprices* provide violinists with a means of furthering their technical skills to an extreme not commonly achieved. In addition, through incorporating revolutionary advanced techniques unique to this set of works, O'Connor enables violinists to step outside of the familiar and tackle unknown aspects of their instrument, a feat not commonly accomplished by classical musicians. Many of the *Caprices* share similar techniques, however some techniques are unique to each individual work (Appendix 7). Also, the majority of techniques developed through these six caprices

are geared towards the bow arm (right hand). This observation can be seen as a continuation of the American fiddle tradition.

The valuable foundational techniques presented throughout O'Connor's emerging *American String Method* serves as an important step for students who eventually hope to play O'Connor's *Caprices*, which are to be a culmination of the *Method*. Much relevant right hand bow technique is developed at an early stage in the *Method*, providing an important and solid footing for the more advanced bow techniques seen in the *Caprices*. While the remaining *Method* books are still being created, O'Connor intends to fill in the technical gaps between the foundational materials and the *Caprices* through a number of other American works. Regarding the remaining portion of his *Method*, O'Connor states:

There will be more O'Connor compositions, including whole concertos, and other long pieces; jazz, Texas Style fiddle tunes, some bluegrass, ragtime, improvisation ideas, and also American classical - Ives, Gershwin, Bernstein, Barber Violin concerto, Maud Powel, other contemporary contributions from Matt Glaser, Rachel Barton Pine, Daniel Bernard Roumain, Darol Anger, Kenji Bunch and more...<sup>51</sup>

Mark O'Connor's innovative *Caprices nos. 1-6* set a precedent for a whole new level of violin technique. Through studying these works, violinists will acquire technical skills not yet available through other repertoire. Through the numerous benefits to performers and audiences alike, O'Connor's *Caprices* serve as a valuable addition to American classical music.

The reprinting of excerpts from Mark O'Connor's music is used with express permission from Mark O'Connor Musik International BMI.

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<sup>51</sup> Mark O'Connor, E-mail message to author, April 7, 2011.

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APPENDIX 1:

Caprice no. 1 in A Major – Form/Technique Diagram

“Hybrid Sonata Form”:

<b>Form (O'Connor):</b>									
<u>Sections:</u>	Introduction	Exposition	Development I	“Authentic Cadence”	Transition (“Episodic”)	Transition (Intro material)	Development II	Recapitulation	Coda
<u>Measures:</u>	Mm. 1-17	Mm. 18-102 Th. A-18-33 Th. B-34-65 Th. C-66-102	Mm. 103-134	Mm. 135-141	Mm. 142-148	Mm. 149-157	Mm. 158-169	Mm. 170-214	Mm. 215-235
<b>Techniques and Commentary (Roberts):</b>									
<u>Techniques:</u>	2-note slurs across 3 strings played “ <i>Freely</i> ”	>Unequal slur pattern  >Downward chromatic scale using spiccato  >“Finger-twisting” passage: spiccato across all 4 strings	Flurrying sixteenth notes on E string with L.H finger pattern of: 1-3-4-3-4-3-1-3	Running notes and slides played “ <i>Freely</i> ”	Improvisatory section containing slides within triplet and sextuplet increments	2-note slurs across 3 strings played “ <i>Freely</i> ”	Sextuplet passage emphasizing beats 1 and 2 with 3-note slurs crossing over 2-3 strings	>Unequal slur pattern  >“Finger-twisting” passage: spiccato across all 4 strings  >Downward chromatic scale using spiccato	>Ascending spiccato arpeggiations followed by descending scales  >Hemiola passage

APPENDIX 2:

Caprice no. 2 in G Minor – Form/Technique Diagram

Sonata Form:

<b>Form (O'Connor):</b>							
<b>Sections:</b>	Introduction	Exposition	Transition	Development	Re-transition	Recapitulation (of Exposition)	Coda
<b>Measures:</b>	Mm. 1-17	Mm. 18-63: Theme A-18-28 Theme B-29-48 Codetta-49-63	Mm. 64-80 (Intro material)	Mm. 81-123 (Development of exposition)	Mm. 124-138 (Intro material)	Mm. 139-184: Theme A-139-149 Theme B-150-169 Codetta-170-184	Mm. 185-207
<b>Techniques and Commentary (Roberts):</b>							
<b>Techniques:</b>	Arpeggiated ricochet	>Th. A and B: “aggressive rhythm”  >Codetta: Unequal slurred bowing	> String crossings on single bows using string skips  > 3-note and 2- note slurs combined with strings crossing over 3 strings	“aggressive rhythm”	> String crossings on single bows using string skips	>Th. A and B: “aggressive rhythm”  >Codetta: Uneven slurred bowing	“aggressive rhythm”

APPENDIX 3:

Caprice no. 3 in A Major – Form/Technique Diagram

Theme and Variations:

<b>Form (O'Connor):</b>										
<b>Sections:</b>	Theme	Variation 1	Variation 2	Variation 3	Variation 4	Variation 5	Variation 6	Repeat of Variation 1 + Codetta	Repeat of Theme + Codetta	Coda (Variation 7)
<b>Measures:</b>	Mm. 1-16	Mm. 17-31	Mm. 32-42	Mm. 42-57	Mm. 58-68	Mm. 69-78	Mm. 79-100	Mm. 101-118 Var. 1: Mm. 101-111  Codetta: Mm. 112-118	Mm. 119-139 Theme: Mm. 119-134  Codetta: Mm. 135-139	Mm. 140-148
<b>Techniques and Commentary (Roberts):</b>										
<b>Techniques:</b>	>Triplet rhythms  >Scales/ runs	Advanced arpeggios	4-note broken chords	32 <sup>nd</sup> note "trills"	>L.H. pizz  >3-finger pizz	>Broken octaves  >Advanced runs  >Up-bow staccato	>Flying staccato  >2 and 3-note slurs with chromatic intervals  >2-note string crossings "slightly off the string"	>Var. 1: Advanced arpeggios  >Codetta: 3-note slurs	>Theme: -Triplet rhythms - Scales/ runs  >Codetta: Advanced runs	>Double stops in 7 <sup>th</sup> position with open E  >10 <sup>ths</sup>

APPENDIX 4:

Caprice no. 4 in D Major – Form/Technique Diagram

Sonata Form:

<b>Form (O'Connor):</b>				
<b>Sections:</b>	Exposition	Development	Recapitulation (Truncated)	Coda
<b>Measures:</b>	Mm. 1-46  Theme: Mm. 1-23  Restatement of Theme: Mm. 24-46	Mm. 47-127	Mm. 128-131	Mm. 132-156
<b>Techniques and Commentary (Roberts):</b>				
<b>Techniques:</b>	>Cross-picking technique  >Double string crossing passage no. 1 (4 times)	>Cross-picking technique  >4-note slurs across 2 strings  >Double string crossing passage no. 2 (2 times)	Cross-picking technique  > Double string crossing passage no. 1 (2 times)	Cross-picking technique  >Double string crossing passage no. 2 (3 times)

APPENDIX 5:

Caprice no. 5 in F Major – Form/Technique Diagram

Sonata Form:

<b>Form (O'Connor):</b>				
<b>Sections:</b>	Exposition	Development	Recapitulation	Coda
<b>Measures:</b>	Mm. 1-43  Theme A: 1-24  Theme B: 25-43	Mm. 44-82	Mm. 83-109  Theme A: 83-94  Theme B: 95-109	Mm. 110-120
<b>Techniques and Commentary (Roberts):</b>				
<b>Techniques:</b>	<p>Th. A: &gt;"Train rhythm" unique bow pattern:     ∩ V ∩ V V ∩ ∩ V</p> <p>&gt;Hyper extensions of L.H. 4<sup>th</sup> finger</p> <p>&gt;Double-stops with "drone note"</p> <p>Th. B: &gt; "Train rhythm" in separate bows with accents in place of repeated up/down bows</p> <p>&gt;Double-stops with "drone note"</p>	<p>Variations on the "train rhythm":</p> <p>&gt;Single-note spiccato</p> <p>&gt;2-note slurs over 3 strings</p> <p>&gt;Quintuplets/sixteenths slurred over 3 strings</p> <p>&gt;Double-stops with "drone note"</p> <p>-----</p> <p>&gt;"Train rhythm" unique bow pattern:     ∩ V ∩ V V ∩ ∩ V</p>	<p>Th. A: &gt;"Train rhythm" unique bowing:     ∩ V ∩ V V ∩ ∩ V</p> <p>&gt;Hyper extensions of L.H. 4<sup>th</sup> finger</p> <p>&gt;Double-stops with "drone note"</p> <p>Th. B: &gt; "Train rhythm" in separate bows with accents in place of repeated up/down bows</p> <p>&gt;Double-stops with "drone note"</p>	<p>&gt;"Train rhythm" unique bow pattern:     ∩ V ∩ V V ∩ ∩ V</p> <p>&gt;Spiccato double-stops</p>

APPENDIX 6:

Caprice no. 6 in G Major – Form/Technique Diagram

“Variations [Sonata] Hybrid”:

<b>Form (O’Connor):</b>							
<b>Sections:</b>							
As Theme and Variations:	Introduction/ Theme	Variation 1	Variation 2	Variation 3	Variation 4	Recapitulation (of Introduction/Theme)	Coda
<b>Measures:</b>	Mm. 1-73  Theme A: 1-14 & 24-37  Theme B: 15-23 & 38-46	Mm. 74-103	Mm. 104-133	Mm. 134-168	Mm. 169- 185	Mm. 186-230  Theme A: 186-199 & 214-230  Theme B: 200-213	Mm. 231- 247
<b>Techniques and Commentary (Roberts):</b>							
<b>Techniques:</b>	Double-stop trills emulating hunting horns (3 <sup>rds</sup> through 7 <sup>ths</sup> )	“New ricochet arpeggio bowing idea”	Slurred triplet string-crossings	Spiccato scales and arpeggios	Broken double-stops, slurred	Double-stop trills emulating hunting horns (3 <sup>rds</sup> through 7 <sup>ths</sup> )	Spiccato double-stops (3 <sup>rds</sup> and 6 <sup>ths</sup> )
<b>Sections:</b> As Sonata Form:	Exposition	Development				Recapitulation (of Exposition)	Coda



APPENDIX 7

Technique Comparison Chart for Caprices nos. 1-6

	Caprice no. 1	Caprice no. 2	Caprice no. 3	Caprice no. 4	Caprice no. 5	Caprice no. 6
String Crossings (over 2 strings)	X	X	X	X	X	X
String Crossings (over 3 strings)	X	X		X	X	X
String Crossings (over 4 strings)		X	X	X		X
Double String Crossings		X		X		X
Arpeggiated Ricochet		X				X
Flying Staccato			X			
Unequal slur patterns	X	X	X	X		
Meter Changes	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hoedown style elements	X		X		X	X
Hornpipe style elements		X		X		
L.H./R.H. pizz			X			
3-finger pizz			X			
“Aggressive rhythm”	X	X	X	X	X	X
Double-stops		X			X	X
Double-stops with “drone” note			X		X	X
Broken Double- stops		X	X	X		X
Broken Chords			X			
Arpeggios	X	X	X	X		X
Advanced Scales/Runs	X		X	X		X
Spiccato	X	X	X	X	X	X
“Train rhythm” bowing pattern					X	
Chromatic Passages	X		X			
Trills (single notes)			X			
Trills (double stops)						X