



**Universidade de Évora - Instituto de Investigação e Formação Avançada**

Programa de Doutoramento em Música e Musicologia

Área de especialização | Interpretação

Tese de Doutoramento

**Léon Souroujon: Complete works for violin solo**

Eliot Alexander Lawson Walton

Orientador(es) | Benoît Gibson

Évora 2020

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*The more talented a violinist is, the more practice is needed to serve the cause.*

**Leon Souroujon**

## Abstract

Leon Souroujon (1913–2007) was a well-known Bulgarian violinist and pedagogue, however, his importance as a composer is yet to be recognised. One of the objectives of this dissertation is to present Souroujon as a composer who has a unique style and whose contribution to the unaccompanied solo violin genre is noteworthy. Another objective is to introduce and categorize his collection of published and unpublished compositions and to create a new complete edition of all his compositions. Adopting a qualitative approach, extensive research has been conducted in order to comprehend the historical setting of Souroujon's life and career. The study highlights important compositions in the development of unaccompanied solo violin genre that extends from the Baroque through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and references the composers that influenced Souroujon. Some related information about societal shifts in Europe (in particular about the Second World War) that was linked to the historical development of the unaccompanied solo violin genre was gathered from a rich source of academic literature, online archives, audio recordings, and a varied bibliography. Leon Souroujon's library of manuscripts reveals his compositional process and is evidence of his being a self-realized composer with a cohesive oeuvre. The dissertation includes the performance of three recitals in which Souroujon's compositions are performed and juxtaposed to other pieces, including the seminal works of Bach, Paganini and Ysaÿe. Souroujon's compositions display his own musical language, articulated both by his way of composing and his preferences for certain musical textures and expressions stemming from his influences: Sephardic Jewish folk music, Romantic Music, Classical Music, and violin playing traditions. His compositions, the first complete edition of his work, certificates, diplomas, documents, and photographs are catalogued in the appendices.

**Keywords:** Leon Souroujon, composer, violinist, violin pedagogy, solo violin.

## LEON SOUROUJON: OBRAS COMPLETAS PARA VIOLINO SOLO

### Resumo

Leon Souroujon (1913–2007) foi um famoso violinista e pedagogo búlgaro; no entanto, a sua importância como compositor está ainda por reconhecer. Um dos objectivos desta dissertação é apresentar Souroujon como compositor com um estilo único, cuja contribuição para o género de Violino Solo Sem Acompanhamento é digna de menção; é, igualmente, catalogar e dar a conhecer a totalidade da sua colecção de obras, publicadas e por publicar, e criar uma nova edição completa de todas as suas composições. Adoptando uma abordagem qualitativa, foi conduzida uma extensa pesquisa por forma a compreender o contexto histórico da vida e carreira de Leon Souroujon. O estudo evidencia importantes composições no desenvolvimento do género de Violino Solo Sem Acompanhamento, que se estende da era barroca e através do séc. XX, fazendo referência aos compositores que influenciaram Souroujon. A partir de uma vasta fonte de literatura académica, arquivos on-line, gravações de áudio e bibliografia variada, foi possível obter alguma informação sobre transformações sociais na Europa (em particular sobre a II Guerra Mundial) relacionada com o desenvolvimento histórico deste género musical. A biblioteca de obras manuscritas por Leon Souroujon permitiu a revelação do seu processo de criação, e prova como ele foi um compositor auto-realizado com uma obra coesa. A dissertação inclui a apresentação de três recitais em que as suas composições são executadas e justapostas a outras peças, incluindo obras de referência de Bach, Paganini e Ysaÿe. As composições de Souroujon exibem a sua própria linguagem musical, articulada tanto pela sua forma de compor como pela sua preferência por certas texturas e expressões musicais que derivam das suas influências: música folclórica judaica sefardita, música romântica, música clássica e música tradicional para violino. As suas composições, a primeira edição completa das suas obras, certificados, diplomas, documentos e fotografias estão catalogados nos apêndices.

**Palavras-chave:** Leon Souroujon, compositor, violinista, pedagogia do violino, violin solo.

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## Preface

I have always had the innate desire to bring to light the brilliance of Leon Souroujon, to take him out of the shadows and into the foreground, and to reveal his genius as a composer to others. The revelation of how significant Leon Souroujon was as a violinist, teacher, and foremost, as a composer, was gradual, and became evident during the course of my studies with him. As a young student, I recall observing first-hand his tremendous capacity to play the violin, seeing glimpses of how eloquent and commanding a performer he must have been on the concert stages of Europe. It was unfathomable to me to discover that, despite Souroujon's renown, not much had been written about him, and very little was known of his artistry as a composer.

I met him in the city of Antwerp, Belgium, in the summer of 1990. Souroujon was already past his prime, yet still creative, independent, resilient, free, and, in many ways, alone. I was a brash 12-year-old adolescent, already immersed in the world of music yet unaware of the implications of being a true violinist. I recall not having any sense of nervousness, emboldened by just having played for the world-famous Yehudi Menuhin<sup>1</sup>.

I would soon discover how much will, determination, and hard work it required to master the violin. The first lesson took place at Souroujon's home, ten minutes away from where I lived, in the quaint residences around Prince Albert Park. His apartment was filled with paintings that I would later learn were the works of his sister, Sultana Souroujon,<sup>2</sup> who was an artist of some distinction.

He was an aged man, small in stature, always immaculately dressed, with something special about him. One of those characters you read about in a turn-of-the-century book, with a piercing gaze that could see directly into you. We began, as any introductory lesson would, with my playing some pieces I knew. From what I could garner from his expressions,

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<sup>1</sup> American and English conductor and violinist Yehudi Menuhin was born on April 22, 1916 and died on March 12, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Bulgarian painter Sultana Souroujon was born on May 12, 1900 and died on January 18, 1962.

he enjoyed my playing, but did not share his impressions with me – not directly anyway. The only feedback was by way of pronouncements about what he did not like. At the end of my first lesson, he asked me to prepare several pieces for the next time, one of which was a Vivaldi concerto, which I lucidly remember being a new piece for me. The following week I went back prepared. I could tell that he was surprised that I had done his bidding. I discovered only later, from a student of his, that Souroujon had admitted that he had been impressed with my playing.

The second lesson was one of the most exhausting that I have ever had, even to this day. That lesson felt like an eternity, lasting as it did more than three hours, going scrupulously over every single note of the Vivaldi concerto. By the end, I was completely drained. Having already won competitions, and having been invited to perform in front of the press, in big halls and in London, I already felt a sense of pride and accomplishment in my playing, as one would expect. But at that lesson, in an instant, even as a child, I grasped that I knew nothing.

I returned home quite wretchedly sad at the enormity and weightiness of the task before me, after realizing how exhausting and demanding it would be to become a real violinist! By the next day, I had made up my mind to take up the challenge. Souroujon, too, had to make a decision whether to take me on as his pupil and, thankfully, he did. In a sense, it was a turning point for both of us. We both took it seriously, a heavy gauntlet having been thrown down.

He taught me as if I were an adult, a professional, handing out laser-sharp instructions, straight to the point, just the plain facts. Can you imagine someone in his 70s, teaching a young boy with some capacity, but little know-how, over a sustained period of practice? His patience was boundless. But I know he felt that the time and effort was worth it.

Souroujon lived his life with stark, clear convictions, often forming strong, unyielding and dogmatic opinions, very black and white. It was intrinsic to his personality to do only

what was of worth with profound concentration, and to thrust aside what was not. As a pupil under his wing, he seemed to me to be a profoundly dedicated and committed teacher who was unwaveringly attentive. I cannot adequately express in words the special importance of Leon Souroujon to me as a person and as a violinist.

I continued to receive instruction from him until the end of his life. When I was 16, although he had sent me to study under recognized teachers such as Herman Krebbers<sup>3</sup> and Igor Oistrakh,<sup>4</sup> I retained Souroujon as my principal teacher. Even later in my career, when I travelled across the United States, Holland, and Italy to further my studies, I would attend his lessons. And even as he moved towards the end of his life, suffering hearing loss, I still played for him. Beyond his capacity as teacher, I trusted him implicitly, and drove myself against the tides of competition and hardship to make him proud. In doing so, I progressed further than I could have imagined.

I first knew of his compositions during the course of my studies when he was teaching me difficult techniques. He would give me études that he had composed to play. I have often played his pieces in concert to rave reviews, and still do so, not because he wanted me to, but because I found them to be astounding compositions. In his honour, I sought to give him back the same happiness and joy that I received from his teachings. And, certainly, he experienced no greater pleasure than to hear someone play his compositions.

Souroujon was quite reticent about his private life. Those first two lessons I described took place in his home; after that, my lessons with him were always held at my grandmother's. It was wonderful that he and my grandmother, who was a charismatic character, got along famously. One of my fondest recollections is of waiting for Souroujon to arrive for my lesson. He would come twice a week, always on foot. I often stood by the window in anticipation of his arrival, seeing him in the distance, a prominent but slight figure

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<sup>3</sup> Dutch violinist Herman Krebbers was born on June 18, 1923 and died on May 2, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Ukrainian violinist Igor Oistrakh was born on April 27, 1931.

walking steadily with his arms held behind his back. As I got older, he often related anecdotes from important episodes of his life that had shaped him.

I do feel privileged that he played the violin during the course of the lessons, since he had long retired from performance. Yet, he remained youthful in spirit, mentally adroit and fit, continuing to write and to play the violin until his last breath. Although he did not have grand international fame, to my mind he was one of the greats. His recordings are evidence of his capacity. Over the years of my intensive study, I came to appreciate the wealth of his knowledge and to have respect for his contribution, despite all the trials he faced in his life.

Leon Souroujon undoubtedly developed his own sense of style from his cultured background in Sofia, and furthered it through his musical and cultural education in Prague and Paris. He had a profound antenna for beauty anywhere. I vividly remember walking with him and he would point out something beautiful and tell me why it was so. As a connoisseur of life, the way he lived inspired me. Souroujon was a pivotal mentor to me, passing on the heritage of discipline, the importance of beauty, perseverance, focus and intuition, an appreciation of violin playing traditions, and a love of the violin.

## Introduction

The aims of this dissertation are to document the scope of Leon Souroujon's life as a violinist, teacher, and composer, to record his musical accomplishments in the context of the unaccompanied solo violin repertoire, to shed light on his compositions and share them with the world. The research reveals Souroujon to be a typical 20<sup>th</sup> century virtuoso violinist, performer and composer, who was shaped in the cultural context of the classical music system of Western and Eastern Europe. He was impacted by the atrocities of the Second World War, and experienced the shift to the modern age, where musical cross-pollination occurred swiftly, thanks to the strides then being made in mass communication and transportation.

Since Souroujon's compositions are not yet accessible or known to most violinists and are not part of the general violin repertoire, it is the aspiration to expose his work to violinists. Especially as compositions within the unaccompanied solo violin genre are limited in number, there is space for special additions to the genre, not only because violinists naturally seek to broaden their repertoire but also because listeners aspire to discover new music. Concretely, along with a biographical narrative, a catalogue of his work has been compiled; three recitals featuring his compositions and other pieces from composers that influenced him have been performed; and a new edition of his complete work has been created to disseminate his work (See Appendix B).

A question that guides this study is the merit of Souroujon's compositions and his ability as a composer. From reviewing his music in detail, his unique compositions can be described as liltingly lyrical and nostalgic, romantic in character, and having a singing style with some threads of Jewish Sephardic folk music. Some of his pieces, particularly his études, are inherently suited to the study of the violin playing, but the remainder are masterworks worthy of performance on grand stages. The few that have had opportunity to hear his compositions such as his students and a few established musicians have attested to

the merit of his music, including Violinist Igor Oistrakh,<sup>1</sup> Cellist Mischa Maisky,<sup>2</sup> and Pianist Heidi Hendrickx<sup>3</sup> (I. Oistrakh, personal communication, 1999; M. Maisky, personal communication, 2003; and H. Hendrickx, personal communication, 1994). It is evident that he had a distinctive and personal approach to music.

Another related question seeks to understand why his work was not appreciated in his lifetime. There are countless reasons why a composer might not have received their due recognition in their lifetime: perhaps because of a lack of patronage, of connections, of opportunity, or of promotion. Since time immemorial, many stories have been logged of famous composers whose compositions have lain forgotten in vaults for decades or longer until revived by luck or circumstance. Acclaim comes years after they have died.

In Souroujon's case, although he was celebrated as a consummate performer, interpreter, and violin professor in his native Bulgaria and to some extent in Belgium, not much had been documented of his performance career, and, more significantly, very little was known of his artistry as a composer prior to this research. A key discovery in this study is the fact that Souroujon did not promote himself as a composer until the final episode of his life, after he had amassed his lifetime collection of compositions. Those compositions only began to attract interest after his passing in 2007.

Essentially, the dissertation tasks are threefold: the first is a written biography of Leon Souroujon's life, music career, and contributions to the unaccompanied solo violin genre set; the second is a performance portion comprising of three recitals of his compositions and other related compositions; and the third is a new edition of all his compositions (See Appendix B).

The written portion comes in two volumes. Volume I contains the main content and Volume II contains the appendices. The first chapter of Volume I highlights the most

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<sup>1</sup> Ukrainian violinist Igor Oistrakh was born on April 27, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Soviet-born Israeli cellist Mischa Maisky was born on January 10, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Belgian pianist Heidi Hendrickx was born on April 8, 1952.

important episodes of Souroujon's life interspersed with compositions integral to each period. The sections detail his heritage, his upbringing, his education, his performance years, his time as a professor, his capacity as a composer, and the impact of the Second World War and Communism. The second chapter provides a simple overview of the unaccompanied solo violin genre, from the Baroque period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, detailing primarily a few composers that influenced Leon Souroujon as a violinist and composer, especially Bach, Paganini, and Ysaÿe.

The last chapter explores Souroujon's composition and musical style. In order to recognize Souroujon as a composer and to postulate on the merits of his compositions, a basic understanding of what the unaccompanied solo violin genre is crucial. It is essential to note that the intention is not to provide an in-depth study of unaccompanied solo violin genre, but to provide enough instruction and context to categorize Souroujon's compositions within the genre. In support of his credibility as a composer, his painstakingly organised library of music sheets and manuscripts shed light on his compositional process and provide evidence that Souroujon was a self-realized composer with a cohesive collection of music.

In Volume II, a number of appendices cataloguing his compositions, a new edition of his complete works, manuscripts, and personal documents can be found and are referred to throughout Volume I of the dissertation.

## **Theoretical Framework**

In order to understand the perspectives and social world of Souroujon as a violinist and composer in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the interpretative framework underpins the research and allows for reflection. The interpretative framework is founded on Clifford Geertz's (1973) concepts of understanding culture through interpretation and through applying meaning or as he termed it 'thick description' to the various aspects of a culture or individual such as traditions, rituals, practices, language, possessions, and relationships:



The concept of culture I espouse, and whose utility the essays below attempt to demonstrate, is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical. (pp. 5-11)

Sarah J. Tracy (2020) states:

From an interpretive point of view—which is also termed social construction, constructivist or constructionist—reality is not something “out there,” which a researcher can clearly explain, describe, or translate into a research report. Rather, both reality and knowledge are constructed and reproduced through communication, interaction, and practice. (p. 51)

The interpretative framework can be understood by looking at a structural table of the evolving paradigms that are possible in qualitative research, which is currently one of the agreed-upon models in academia (Lincoln et al, 2018, pp. 213-229).

The interpretative framework is quite often utilised in the humanities and social sciences to observe reality and gain knowledge through an empathetic construction and collaborative engagement with the subject, as proposed by German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey’s idea of ‘verstehen’ (to ‘understand’ in English) and further developed by German sociologist, Max Weber (Tracy, 2020, p. 51).

In a general sense, the dissertation falls under the discipline of musicology including music theory and music analysis, as it looks at a composer within the history of classical music along with his violin playing style. In order to document Souroujon’s life story and his identity as a Bulgarian Jewish violinist, certain aspects of ethnomusicology, ethnography, and autoethnography are applicable (Tracy, 2020, pp. 63-71).

## Methodology

This research utilizes qualitative research methods to describe the characteristics, personality, and musical talents of Leon Souroujon. Specifically, the primary sources of data were interviews with family members, friends, associates, colleagues, his published music, unpublished manuscripts, studio and live recordings, his personal letters, his diplomas, his documents, drawings and paintings, and his photographs.<sup>4</sup> Numerous one-to-one discussions in person and over the telephone with people who knew Souroujon were undertaken. Smartphone recordings as well as handwritten notes were utilised to collect information relating to the Leon Souroujon's life and his abilities as a performer, pedagogue, and composer. "In qualitative methods, we often speak of emic understandings of the scene, which means that behaviour is described from the actors point of view and is context-specific" (Tracy, 2020, p. 26). After reviewing the information collected, the facts were analysed, fact-checked and cross-referenced against relevant academic books and historical archives, in order to relate a credible, valuable, and authentic study.

## Literature Review

The secondary sources include academic books, university press music history books, dissertations, historical books, online archives, autobiographies of violinists and biographies, newspaper clippings, and magazine articles. Several music scholars of renown (David Boyden, Stanley Sadie, Robin Stowell, Peter Holman and others) and a number of seminal and standard books on the history of the music and the history of the violin (listed in the bibliography) provided important context. The reference books (*Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, Oxford University's *Grove Music Online* and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*

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<sup>4</sup> Digital copies of all archival materials are included in the Appendices in Volume II of the dissertation of Leon Souroujon: Complete Work for Violin Solo. Souroujon's compositions are listed in Volume I. All archival materials referenced in the Appendices are in the possession of Eliot Lawson at the following address: Quinta de Aires, Av. Antoine Velge, 2950-011 Palmela, Portugal. Leon Souroujon's nephew, Albert Souroujon, as the universal legatee of Leon Souroujon, has given permission to use, to collect, to publish the personal archives and belongings of Leon Souroujon.

and Musicians) proved to be excellent entry points and useful for this research. *Mark Katz's The Violin: A Research and Information Guide* was reviewed and not utilized for this study, however it is an excellent reference for violin research. The Conservatory of Antwerp's extensive music library, a variety of online databases, including Google Books, Google Scholar, and JSTOR were particularly useful. The following books proved pertinent to Souroujon's biography as it relates to the history of the Bulgarian Jewish community: *The Fragility of Goodness: Why the Bulgarian Jews Survived the Holocaust* (Todorov, 1999); *The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire* (Levy, 1993); *Paris at War: 1939–1944* (Drake, 2015); *The Fate of the Bulgarian Jews during the Holocaust* (Marinova-Christidi, 2016).

The following academic papers and essays related to “unaccompanied solo violin”, “solo violin repertoire” were relevant. *A Survey of the Unaccompanied Violin Repertoire, Centering on Works by Bach and Eugene Ysaÿe* outlined the inception of unaccompanied solo violin repertoire quite succinctly (Wang, 2005). Musicologist Robin Stowell's essays as well as Musicologist John Dilworth, Simon McVeigh, and Eric Wen within the *Cambridge Companion to the Violin* about historical violinists, violin music traditions, violin music categories, and unaccompanied solo violin genre aided in framing the topic (Stowell, 1992).

In terms of other noteworthy studies dedicated to Leon Souroujon, only two dissertations referenced Leon Souroujon, and then only in the context of a broader study of Bulgarian violin or viola music: *Bulgarian Viola Repertoire: A Historical Perspective and Pedagogical Analysis* (Nelson, 2013); *Pieces for Solo Violin by Bulgarian Composers: A World Premiere Recording of Works by Souroujon, Goleminov, Zaimov and Goshev* (Draguieva, 2015).

Although these dissertations are quite comprehensive and significant, they provided only surface information about Souroujon within their fascinating research of Bulgarian violinists and violists and only featured some of his works. Both of these dissertations showcase the importance of Leon Souroujon as a composer.

Some of Souroujon's compositions forming his pedagogical compositions are archived at the National Academy of Music in Sofia. Violionist and Professor Yossif Radionov<sup>5</sup>, a former student of Souroujon's from 1968 to 1969, along with Composer and Organist Sabin Levi,<sup>6</sup> compiled in 2013 around half of Souroujon's compositions as a tribute to Souroujon's legacy. Notwithstanding the existence of dissertations in the Bulgarian language unknown to the National Academy of Music, this dissertation is likely to be the first comprehensive study of Leon Souroujon that catalogues all of his work in one collection, subdivided into four sections.

### **Challenges, Issues and Recommendations**

1. Only a limited number of articles have been written about Souroujon; and they are difficult to acquire, print publications being only available either in Bulgaria or websites being in Bulgarian language (See Appendix J). When materials were available, translation tools proved useful. Fundamentally, he was unquestionably recognized as an outstanding violinist and teacher and yet was not known for his standing as a composer. For instance, Souroujon is referenced on the National Academy of Music website<sup>7</sup> as a former professor and performer:

During the period between the two world wars a name that became prominent was that of the favourite pupil of Otakar Ševčík – Prof. Hans Koch<sup>8</sup> from Prague who had worked in Sofia and taught some of the most distinguished violin pedagogues in the country – the professors Vladimir Avramov and Leon Suruzhon. Major Bulgarian performers who later became professors at the Academy studied under the biggest world authorities of the period: Sasha Popov

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<sup>5</sup> Bulgarian violinist Yossif Radionov was born on April 3, 1951.

<sup>6</sup> Bulgarian organist Sabin Levi was born on January 20, 1970.

<sup>7</sup> For more information: <http://www.nma.bg/en/lpage/882071/7/20/22>

<sup>8</sup> The birth and death date of Czech violinist and pedagogue Hans and is unknown. He was Leon Souroujon's first violin teacher.

– under Ševčík and Prill in Vienna, Nikola Abadzhiev and Todor Vazharov – under Henri Marteau, Kamen Popdimitrov – under Lucien Capet, Hristo Obreshkov – under Georg Kulenkampff, Nedyalka Simeonov – under Leopold Auer, Petar Hristoskov – under Gustav Havemann, Leon Suruzhon – under George Enescu and Yvonne Astrug [sic] and others. (National Academy of Music, 2001)

2. Part of the process involved sourcing information through interview with his family, colleagues, students, and friends. Over time, articles, compositions, recordings, and historical documents were accumulated to form the basis of this study. It was an arduous process, as many of the people who have knowledge about him are abroad and spread across different countries.
3. Information written about Souroujon is often rife with incorrect facts. For example, on page 43 in the Radionov/Levi Edition (2013) of Souroujon's compositions, the étude that is catalogued as *Étude VI* is wrongly dated 1970. The right year is 1990 as written by Souroujon on his manuscript (See Appendix E). Another example is the article titled, *100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Prof. Leon Souroujon* on the Bulgarian National Radio website, which states wrongly that Souroujon in 1947 won the George Enescu contest in Paris.<sup>9</sup> In 1947, he graduated from *École Normale de Musique* in Paris, his teacher being Enescu. Part of the analysis undertaken necessitated fact checking. Thus, only material that could be authenticated and cross-referenced with or against historical records was used.
4. Regarding his scores, Souroujon often rewrote them or edited them several times, as part of his composing process, which is described in chapter III.2: Souroujon's Creative Process. Some of the activities involved collecting all his manuscripts and comparing them and discerning differences between the various published and

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<sup>9</sup> For more information: <https://www.bnr.bg/en/post/100191565/100th-anniversary-of-the-birth-of-prof-leon-souroujon>

unpublished version that are circulating.<sup>10</sup>

5. Like some composers before him, Souroujon did not keep drafts or extraneous materials of his compositions and methods, saving only final drafts or completed works. Cataloguing his scores proved to be an enormous task, particularly in isolating their whereabouts and dates, since Souroujon did not date his manuscripts. Through further investigation of his archives, cross-referencing several documents, the date of recordings, his geographical whereabouts, and information collected from interviews, some of his compositions could be pinpointed to a year in which he could have composed the work. Only a few compositions could be dated precisely.
6. In examining his music education, it was difficult to obtain concrete historical details about teaching methods and activities from École Normale de Musique in Paris and other schools he attended, as related archival materials no longer exist (École Normale de Musique in Paris, personal communication, September 10, 2018).
7. Another element that proved challenging was the fact that Leon Souroujon moved several times in the last two decades of his life. He shifted back and forth between Bulgaria and Belgium, with a short stint in Canada. Some of his personal records have been misplaced or lost in the process. Fortunately, some material provided by his family proved valuable.
8. An underlying issue that was pervasive in the research was a repercussion of the Second World War: many documents and records were deliberately destroyed and damaged. The impact was widespread, from individuals to institutions. However, a number of Leon Souroujon's personal documents, including his school diplomas to reference, survived the turmoil.
9. From the outset, the violin itself was considered a central theme of his story, a vital part of him. Initially, the general history of the inception of the violin and violin

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<sup>10</sup> All manuscripts published and unpublished as well as a new edition are included. See Appendices B, E and F in Volume II of the dissertation.

pedagogy was considered material to the dissertation in order to augment the narrative; however, it turned out not to be relevant to the scope of this study. It became evident that focusing on understanding the unaccompanied solo violin genre would be a key component. Furthermore, detailing the variety and the success of all composers in the unaccompanied solo violin genre was not necessary to highlight Souroujon's credibility as a composer.

10. Unaccompanied solo violin genre has not received much attention as a research topic. Much research exists on the Bravura tradition, however the studies only reflect on the topic of unaccompanied solo violin indirectly. An in-depth study of the development of unaccompanied solo violin genre to date would therefore be of benefit to violinists, especially one that includes a well-researched global database in order to diversify and expand violin repertoire. Although discovered during the final stage of this paper, the dissertation *Tracing the Evolution of Style and Technique in Unaccompanied Violin Works Spanning the Seventeenth through Twentieth Centuries* is an excellent example of an overview of compositions in unaccompanied solo violin repertoire, albeit limited in its scopes, particularly with its examples out of the Romantic period and into the 20th Century (Wright, 2019).
11. Lastly, it would be valuable to have even more studies conducted of violin playing traditions of countries outside the known classical music epicentres as in the case of Bulgaria. Retrieving information and knowledge out of cross border databases continues to be complicated and could be further improved upon.

Following the journey of Souroujon's life and career, contact was established with people of interest in Canada, Bulgaria, Belgium, France, and Israel. Bulgarian-language literature and newspaper have some reference to Souroujon as a performer and is more extensive and varied, but there remains no comprehensive biographical study worthy of a musician of his standing.

The research into the unaccompanied solo violin repertoire and violin history has proven to be a rewarding and fruitful endeavour. In the process, only a narrow selection of composers that inspired or informed Souroujon has been reviewed. An aspect of the dissertation looks at highlights how unaccompanied solo violin repertoire is quite startlingly limited, some of which can be found listed in the various violin reference books, music catalogues and database. Out of the established violin repertoire, only a limited number of unaccompanied solo violin compositions are actually favoured for performance, with violinists replaying the milestone pieces (Bach, Paganini, Ysaÿe) or other treasures (Biber, Telemann, Bartók). Furthermore, in violin pedagogy and in prestigious music competitions such as the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Belgium and the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Russia, these standard violin compositions (Bach, Paganini, Ysaÿe) are commonly called for as measures of excellence in violin practice. Therefore, a key objective of this enterprise is to categorize all of Souroujon's works effectively within this unaccompanied solo violin genre, to propose an edition of all his works, and to create opportunities for his work to be appreciated and to be performed (See Appendix B).

### **Performance Component: Recitals as Artistic Research**

In preparing and reviewing the selection of Souroujon's music for performance, it became apparent that his music contains a specific flow and rhythm that is distinctly his. His compositions explore the sounds, the techniques and the intricacies of the violin, and employ original structures that include arpeggios, chromatic scale, whole tones, double-stops, and multiple stops into the highest positions and diatonic runs in thirds, fourths, sixths.

The focus here is to feature Souroujon as a composer, specifically to impart to the audience his particular melancholic singing quality and his signature trademark music vocabulary. As a romantic and expressive violinist, he often stated that techniques should propel the beauty of the music and capture its meaning or emotional resonance. His record



album and his radio performances on Bulgarian Radio further illuminate his characteristic style and manner of playing (See Appendix C).

Souroujon composed music for unaccompanied solo violin genre and, in parallel, transcribed several for the viola and cello. Corresponding with the body of the dissertation, several unaccompanied solo violin compositions, composers that influenced him are featured in the recitals. The recitals include a selection of Souroujon's compositions including his transcriptions for violin and piano, his short genre pieces, his suite and cadenzas.

In the first recital, the unaccompanied solo violin compositions of Bach, Paganini, and Ysaÿe form pillars of Souroujon's oeuvre. In the second recital, a concert accompanied by orchestra featured eloquent works that were integral to him as a composer, particularly his cadenza to the Brahms Violin Concerto. In the last and third recital, a performance along with the accompaniment of Jill Lawson<sup>11</sup> on the piano places the focus on a collection of Souroujon's compositions showcasing the romantic and nostalgic spirit of his music.

The performance component of the three Recitals was defined by pieces in the unaccompanied solo violin genre that informed Leon Souroujon as a composer:

I. The first performance:

Solo recital, 2 July 2014, University of Évora, Évora, Portugal

Pieces by Bach, Paganini, Ysaÿe, and Souroujon

II. The second performance:

Orchestral concert, 26 June 2015, Medieval Hall of the Reitoria, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

Brahms' Violin Concerto, including Souroujon's cadenza, with the Academic Orchestra of Minho University

(Support provided by the Minho University)

III. The third performance:

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<sup>11</sup> Luso-American pianist Jill Lawson was born on October 4, 1974.

Chamber music concert with pianist Jill Lawson, scheduled for Fall 2020.

The dissertation is at the core, a documentation of Leon Souroujon as a composer, touching on his style and aesthetics and understanding his place in violin history and the importance of his compositions in the unaccompanied solo violin genre. The aspiration is that violinists, composers, historians, and violin music devotees will find affiliation with Leon Souroujon as a composer, be intrigued enough to learn more about him and his compositions, and discover his artistry.

## I Souroujon's Life History

For Leon Souroujon, the violin was the pinnacle of every day and music was a form of lyrical expressionism that intertwined not only his professional career but also his life (See Appendix L). From childhood to adulthood, playing violin music enriched his life. And in his later years, composing was his joy and often a solace in sorrow, a shield from oppression, and a fulfilling act. Souroujon was single-mindedly focused on his aspiration to excel in the music world. Defiantly ambitious, Souroujon composed a collection of music for unaccompanied solo violin, including original pieces, études, transcriptions, and cadenzas that would form his legacy. In a music career spanning several decades, he would reach personal heights and inspire generations of violinists to achieve great accomplishments.

Examining his music career starting with his active performance life in his mid-30s to his life as a professor in his middle years and through to his years as a composer and mentor to aspiring musicians at the end of life, it becomes clear that he was an exceptional artist who surmounted personal and societal challenges with determination.

On a personal level, he felt culturally connected to Bulgaria, having spent his formative years there, yet he was a borderless and timeless figure who made his mark in violin history. Like many of his contemporaries, he studied at important music academies, pursuing a stage career across Europe and in Communist countries, and then continued his activities as a pedagogue. During his lifetime, he gained recognition as a performer amongst his peers and audiences in Bulgaria, Europe, and further afield in China and Cuba. He performed regularly with pianist Katya Kazandjiewa,<sup>12</sup> his wife and music partner, actively touring in the 1950s. He was certainly respected and celebrated as a violinist and an important pedagogue at the National Academy of Music of Bulgaria, where he was Dean of the Stringed Department for a period.

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<sup>12</sup> Bulgarian pianist and pedagogue Katya Kazandjiewa was born on June 23, 1915 and died on June 7, 1978.

What follows here is an overview of the most important episodes from his heritage, his upbringing, his education, his performance years, his time as a professor, and the impact of the Second World War and Communism, his capacity as a composer, key figures in his life, and his influences.

### **I.1 Souroujon's Family Ancestry, Beginnings and Early Violin History**

Before delving into Souroujon's life story, it is valuable to relate violin history as it pertains to his ancestry and his identity as a descendent of Sephardic Jewry. Precisely how the violin itself came into being is difficult to pinpoint, as it requires incredible tenacity to piece together a cohesive story out of the myriad shards of historical documents and artefacts that remain. Scholar David Boyden described the study perfectly as being like "quagmires of history and terminology" (Boyden, 1965, p. 6).

However, amongst music historians it is generally agreed that the early violin was a composite of the *vielle*, the *rebec*, and the *rabab* and an extension of the *lira de braccio* that formed during the Renaissance period. Depicted in numerous paintings, frescos, and illustrations, musicians could choose from a mixture of stringed instruments, such as the fiddle, the viol and the *vielle*, available to them to entertain anywhere from taverns to courts with song and dance (Woodfield, 2001, pp. 38-39).

Some scholarly studies conclude that viol and other stringed instruments that came by way of Spain at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century aided and nurtured the inception of the violin in Brescia and Cremona in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century (Dilworth, 1992, pp. 5-6). The violin came into lore through the labours of skilled Italian luthiers, who produced lutes, lyres, harps, *vielles*, *viola da braccio* and also took on a whirlpool of requests to adapt, adopt, and reshape known instruments with the influx of instruments from Spain.

The year 1492 marked a volatile and seismic moment in Spain, with its incalculable impact on the lives of Sephardic Jews. In his book, *A Social History of the Violin*, historian

David Schoenbaum (2012) detailed how bowed-stringed instruments spread across Europe to form the violin:

Others, like the lute and rebec, surfaced in Moorish Spain, where they coexisted with the vihuela, another imported product, possibly from France or Flanders. In Spain, all three found their way to Sephardic Jews, who took them along when they decamped to Lombardy and the Veneto, southern Germany, the Netherlands, and Britain after their expulsion from Spain in 1492 (p. 11).

After dislodging the Arab conquerors, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain directed their attention to commerce, hiring the explorer Christopher Columbus to find a trade route to India, which led to his discovery of a passage to the Americas and the Caribbean. Upon commencing his voyage to the Americas, Columbus described the plight of Sephardic Jews on the first page of his diary: “Thus after having turned out all of the Jews from your kingdoms and lordships, in the same month of January, your Highnesses gave orders to me that with a sufficient fleet I should go to the other said regions of India...” (Bourne, 2003, p. 2).

As part of their endeavour to take back control of Spain, the monarchs devised the Alhambra Edict, a law demanding the expulsion of Jews who would not convert to Christianity. The impact of Alhambra Edict remains until present times. Recently, in 2013, the Spanish government passed a conciliatory law to help the ancestors of these expelled Sephardic Jews to obtain Spanish citizenship.

Many Sephardic Jews sought refuge across Europe, taking with them their culture, their beliefs, their instruments and their musical abilities (Holman, 1995, p. 15). Groups dispersed in all directions, migrating to Greece, Turkey, Italy, and Bulgaria, while others went to Portugal, Netherlands, North Africa in Magreb, and the Mediterranean Basin (Levy, 1993, pp. 4-5). The Ottoman Empire, which controlled many parts of Europe from the 14<sup>th</sup> into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was sympathetic to the Sephardic Jews plight and offered them safe

haven in their territories (Levy, 1993, pp. 4-5). Jewish families and other affected groups dispersed to other parts of the region, with the Souroujon family, who were part of this exodus, landing in Bulgaria.

According to Souroujon's niece, Ruth Souroujon, their family lineage on the maternal side can be traced back to the Sephardic Jewry, with possible affiliation to the tribe of Romaniots of Greek origin (R. Souroujon, personal communication, May 14, 2020).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Anna Pluta,<sup>14</sup> Souroujon's stepdaughter, related that the Bulgarian branch of the Souroujons arrived in the country after the great 1835 fire in Edirne (Odrine), which is near today's border with Bulgaria (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). At first, his family settled in the city of Shumen and then moved to Varna, Ruschuk, and Sofia. According to Moses Souroujon, the name Souroujon itself is of Spanish Jewish origin (Souroujon, n.d.). Also, the name might refer to a town of Surujon in the Iberian Peninsula.

Souroujon grew up in a cultured, working-class household, where he lived with his parents, brother, sisters and grandparents, and later with his niece and twin nephews (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Shatail Souroujon, his father, was a businessman, selling textiles at the local market in Sofia, and was an active member of his community. Although he played a less important role in Souroujon's life compared to his mother, Souroujon's father was described as a kind-hearted person. His mother, Esther, despite being unschooled, was described as being refined and intelligent, and the head of the family. Souroujon hardly spoke of his father but he was devoted to his mother. His early days were filled with familial love in a disciplined and artistic atmosphere.

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<sup>13</sup> Email contact with Souroujon's great niece, Ruth Souroujon, occurred May 14, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Anna Pluta, Souroujon's stepdaughter, conducted on March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016 in Montreal. Audio recording available:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/AnaPlutaInterviewPart1.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/AnaPlutaInterviewPart2.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/AnaPlutaInterviewPart3.mp3>

Souroujon had a real bond with his elder sister, Sultana Souroujon,<sup>15</sup> who had a talent for drawing (A. Souroujon, personal communication, August 11, 2017). His second sister, Sofia, married and moved to Spain in 1939 and settled there. His outgoing brother, Isak, who also for a time was a stage actor (with roles in Joseph Stein's *Fiddler on the Roof* and Anton Chekhov's *The Three Daughters*), supported his brother financially over the years. Souroujon's nephew, Albert Souroujon,<sup>16</sup> detailed in an interview that his father (Leon's brother, Isak), an extremely capable and clever character and "a master of many trades" played a variety of instruments, including the flute and violin. It was Isak who initiated his younger brother into the first steps of learning the violin.

During the initial period of integration into Bulgaria, after their expulsion from Spain, the Jewish settlers spoke Ladino (a distinct language that is a mixture of Spanish and Hebrew) amongst themselves, and Bulgarian and Turkish for trade. Leon Souroujon along with his siblings spoke Ladino at home to his grandparents and parents and in the community (A. Souroujon, personal communication, August 11, 2017). Souroujon often spoke of his grandmother, who told him folktales at bedtime and sang him Ladino lullabies.

After the liberation from Ottoman rule in 1878, Bulgarian culture flourished and education improved. French-driven Alliance Israélite Universelle schools were formed, enabling the migrant population to learn French as well as Bulgarian (Haskell, 1995, p. 94). It is notable that even in 1919, publications in the Ladino language could be still found, after 1924, publications were available only in the Bulgarian language.

Prior to the Second World War, three systems of education were introduced (Haskell, 1995, p. 94). One generation was taught under the traditional Sephardic Medlar system in which Ladino was the language of instruction; another generation was taught under the Alliance Israélite Universelle in which French first, then Bulgarian, were the preferred

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<sup>15</sup> Bulgarian painter Sultana Souroujon was born on May 12, 1900 and died on January 18, 1962.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Souroujon's nephew, Albert Souroujon, occurred on August 11, 2017.

languages. Lastly, another generation under the Hebrew schools was taught Hebrew and spoke Bulgarian and some Ladino (Haskell, 1995, pp. 90-95). Souroujon and those of his generation learned Hebrew and Bulgarian at school.

## **I.2 Souroujon's Formative Years at Music School**

Souroujon took swiftly to the violin that was given to him at the age of eight. Nurturing his natural raw talent, his parents enrolled him at the National Academy of Music in Sofia.<sup>17</sup> Notably, as part of Bulgaria's development, Czar Boris III had only a few years earlier signed an official decree in 1921 to inaugurate the National Academy of Music (National Academy of Music, 2001).

To establish a historical context, Souroujon's education and musical life should be set against a backdrop of war and political machinations in Eastern and Western Europe. Bulgaria had declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1908, and later on tried to remain neutral in both world wars, but it would choose to align itself with Communism after the end of the Second World War. A cultural renaissance took place in Bulgaria immediately after 1908, with music academies and institutions being formed, establishing the various music traditions and violin playing methods being applied around Europe. In Bulgaria, aspiring musicians could select from German, Franco-Belgian, or Russian violin playing methods. However, post-war Communism would stifle or control creativity with rigid rules and restrictions in the state-chosen music styles.

Souroujon's first true violin teacher was Hans Koch, a figure of distinction in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. Interestingly, Koch was a student of Otakar Ševčík,<sup>18</sup> who was a renowned Czech violin pedagogue and an ensemble partner of Eugene Ysaÿe. Koch was central in fostering the careers of numerous Bulgarian musicians, including Leon Souroujon

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<sup>17</sup> The National Academy of Music is also referred to as State Academy of Music, Bulgarian State Conservatory. <http://nma.bg/en>

<sup>18</sup> Czech violinist and pedagogue Otakar Ševčík was born on March 22, 1852 and died on January 18, 1934.



and Vladimir Avramov<sup>19</sup> (National Academy of Music, 2001). For a period, Koch taught at the National Academy of Music in Sofia, where Souroujon had been enrolled to study the violin. Professor Koch would nurture Souroujon's development in his formative years in Sofia. When Koch decided to return to his home in Prague to take up a post at the German Academy of Music and Fine Arts (*Deutsche Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst*), Souroujon's parents decided to have their son continue his studies with him. Souroujon, along with his mother, lived in Prague for the stretch of his schooling from September 1, 1928 to June 30, 1933.

As an interesting aside, the German Academy came into existence for political reasons, the result of a row between the Czech majority and the German minority in 1919. In 1920, the Academy was under the direction of modernist Alexander Zemlinsky (Gorrell, 2002, p. 46). The academy did change its name to the Higher Institute of Music (*Hochschulinstitut für Musik*) during conflicts between the German and Czech citizens. When Souroujon attended the academy, Fidelio Friedrich Finke,<sup>20</sup> who was considered a Nazi sympathizer, perhaps for self-preservation, was the director of the academy from 1927 until 1945 (Reittererova, 2006, pp. 15-16). Along with Hans Koch and other music professors, Finke's signature is on Souroujon's diploma (See Appendix H).

Souroujon studied music in the familiar academic framework of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the institution of music, being either academies or conservatories. Previously, musicians within the confines of the court or the clergy were expected to be a composer, performer, and teacher all in one. And violinists were taught through an apprentice system or through mentorship, one-on-one. Composers learned their art by copying the compositions of their peers. Several music theorists such as Johann Joseph Fux,<sup>21</sup> who wrote the instruction

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19 Bulgarian violinist and pedagogue Vladimir Avramov was born on 9 December 1909 and died 22 March 2007.

20 Bohemian German composer Fidelio Friedrich Finke was born on October 22, 1891 and died on June 12, 1968.

21 Austrian composer, music theorist, and pedagogue Johann Joseph Fux was born circa 1660 and died on February 13, 1741.

book *Gradus ad Parnassus*, and Jean-Philippe Rameau<sup>22</sup> focused on advanced concepts in composition based on counterpoint and harmony respectively (Williams, 2010, pp. 26-30).

In sharp contrast, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development of the music academies took place, allowing violinists to choose from a variety of courses to obtain a diploma. It is in part due to the inception of music conservatories that the tasks of musicians and composers became more compartmentalized in comparison to the more holistic study founded on an apprenticeship system. Moreover, composers were seen to have special qualities or were attributed with artistic genius:

This time period would also see the founding and development of the music conservatory or other such institutions of higher education, most notably beginning with the Conservatoire de Paris. At the same time as the curricula were being codified by the professors at conservatories, colleges and universities, the practical working method of composers became increasingly mystified as the product of genius. The division of Music Theory and Composition that had been brewing since the conceptualization of the *res facta* was to manifest itself in the creation of two separate departments granting two separate degrees. (Williams, 2010, p. 46)

Over time, this type of curriculum was adopted in other countries and was divided into separate modules: music theory, music technique, and performance. The schools taught with more focus on performance than ever before.

Souroujon graduated from the German Academy of Music and Fine Arts in Prague in 1933, displaying incredible discipline and character – he finished the seven-year programme in five (See Appendix H). Notably, on his diploma he received a perfect score in violin studies from Hans Koch and a perfect score for viola from conductor and composer Kurt Alder,<sup>23</sup> as well as high marks for form and analysis from Theodor Veidl.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> French composer and music theorist Jean-Philippe Rameau was born on September 25, 1683 and died on September 12, 1764.

<sup>23</sup> German conductor and composer Kurt Alder was born on March 1, 1907 and died on September 21, 1977.

By the age of 20, Souroujon had already gained a broad and in-depth knowledge of violin practice, learned a variety of violin playing styles, was aware of a vast repertoire of virtuoso violinists, and, in particular, had conceptualized himself as a violinist. Not wavering from his dream of becoming a world-class performer, he would embark on a career that would take him not only to the heights of the Bulgarian music scene but also to numerous countries and continents, and up the ranks of the National Academy of Music in Bulgaria. With his life clearly defined in violin practice, he pursued every angle of his craft.

After his days in Prague, Souroujon returned to Sofia, where he immediately applied to the Sofia Opera Orchestra to begin his performance career (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Having an amiable personality with a healthy dose of ambition and talent, he mingled with the city's music elite. Afterwards, he was appointed as a concertmaster of the Sofia Opera Orchestra from 1935 to 1937, with one of the highlights being a solo performance of the seven violin concertos of Mozart.

### **I.3 Huberman**

At some point between 1933 and 1936, Souroujon encountered the Polish violinist and humanitarian, Bronislaw Huberman<sup>25</sup> (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Huberman founded the illustrious Palestine Symphony Orchestra (later renamed the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in 1936) as a protest to Hitler's ideology (Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, 2001). Huberman advised Souroujon to go to Paris to further his musical development under George Enescu, who at the time was one of the key virtuoso violinists and one of the most distinguished pedagogues in Paris. Heeding this advice, Souroujon's music journey would immerse him in the mercurial environment of Paris in the late 1930s, studying in an important music institution under Enescu's tutelage.

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<sup>24</sup> German Bohemian composer and musicologist Theodor Veidl was born on February 28, 1885 and died on February 18, 1946.

<sup>25</sup> Polish Jewish violinist Bronislaw Huberman was born on December 19, 1862 and died on June 16, 1947.

#### I.4 The Rise of the Music Academies

Souroujon lived in the time when music academies were rising in prominence and popularity, particularly those in Paris. One of the most important schools was the Paris Conservatory (where Enescu attended in 1895) that had been founded in 1795 and had immediately resonated with musicians all over Europe (Malcolm, 1990, p. 46-48). Numerous other music academies cropped up afterwards (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2017). For instance, The Brussels Conservatory (where Ysaÿe went to school) opened in 1813, and Charles Auguste de Bériot<sup>26</sup> joined the faculty in 1843 as violin professor (Stowell, 1992, pp. 61-65). The music academy in St Petersburg was founded in 1862; later, key violin professors Henryk Wieniawski<sup>27</sup> and Leopold Auer<sup>28</sup> joined the faculty and also played a significant role in violin pedagogy (Stowell, 1992, p. 75). Alfred Cortot<sup>29</sup> founded École Normale de Musique in Paris in 1919 (Brooks, 2013, p. 24). Souroujon studied there in 1937–1939 and 1946–1947 and would become a product of its romantic philosophy (See Appendix H).

Each academy would develop its particular roster of stellar musicians and composers. Perhaps driven by the demand from sophisticated audiences who clamoured to be awed by virtuoso performances, individual violinists logically focused their time on their technique – bowing, fingering – as well as on their interpretative skills, in order to perform on the world’s great stages rather than compose. Performers were assigned to one department and composers to another. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, musicians understood that the vehicle to enter the world of music was through formal study at an established music academy. As part of the zeitgeist of his time, Souroujon, too, would travel far and wide, performing in Europe, parts of Asia, and Cuba to learn and develop professionally.

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<sup>26</sup> Belgian composer and violinist Charles Auguste de Bériot was born on February 20, 1802 and died on April 8, 1870.

<sup>27</sup> Polish composer and violinist Henryk Wieniawski was born on July 10, 1835 and died on March 31, 1880.

<sup>28</sup> Hungarian violinist, teacher and composer Leopold Auer was born on June 17, 1845 and died on July 15, 1930.

<sup>29</sup> French conductor, pedagogue and pianist Alfred Cortot was born on September 26, 1877 and died on June 15, 1962.

## I.5 George Enescu: École Normale de Musique in Paris, 1937

Souroujon often related that it was fortuitous that he had met Huberman and taken his advice to study with Enescu in Paris (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). In 1937, the school was teeming with celebrated musicians in a creative environment, with key music figures on the premises. Besides its founder, Alfred Cortot, there was violinist George Enescu, musicians Yvonne Astruc<sup>30</sup> and Nadia Boulanger<sup>31</sup> (Brooks, 2013, p. 77). Most notably, his education would introduce him to the rigours of performance and virtuosity on an international scale.

Persevering through the interruption caused by the Second World War, Souroujon attended the École Normale de Musique in Paris for a total of four years, although split between 1937–1939 and then 1946–1947. Despite the suspension of Souroujon’s studies in Paris being one of many examples of the innumerable tragedies of war, he was not dissuaded from his ultimate goals. He moved ahead on his own trajectory, returning to Paris to complete his studies and obtain his diploma from this illustrious Academy. In a quote in Souroujon’s promotional brochure in the German language, George Enescu in Paris, on 19 July 1947, described him as:

A virtuoso of the highest class. His technique serves his extraordinary musical sensitivity. It is characterized by his magnificent musical disposition and his precise understanding of the musical structure of music (See Appendix I).

From a historical standpoint, Enescu was an unconventional teacher by all accounts, preferring to play along with his students on the piano or to listen and share his knowledge rather than giving formal instruction. Ivry Gitlis, in an interview in *The Strad* magazine, described the artistry of Enescu’s teaching style quite eloquently:

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30 French violinist and pedagogue Yvonne Astruc was born on 27 April 1889 and died on 17 October 1980.

31 French composer, conductor, and pedagogue Nadia Boulanger was born on 16 September 1887 and died on 22 October 1979.

What Enescu taught me is not to take things as they are, or as they seem to be, but to go into them and look inside yourself. What is your response to the notes you're seeing? Otherwise it's just notes on a piece of paper, like little flies – it doesn't mean a thing. I love the story about the conductor Otto Klemperer: someone comes to him and said, "Maestro, to me you are like God, but why do you use the music when you conduct, when most people don't?" Klemperer said, "I use the music because I know how to read it! Maybe Enescu taught me a little how to read the music". (Todes, 2013)

Enescu's students over the span of his career included Yehudi Menuhin,<sup>32</sup> Arthur Grumiaux,<sup>33</sup> Serge Blanc,<sup>34</sup> Ivry Gitlis, Christian Ferras,<sup>35</sup> and Leon Souroujon, who played his music and who have all attested to his methods being inspiring and thought-provoking (Blanc, 2017; C. Walton, personal communication, 1995).

Engineer and Enescu aficionado Tito Bajenescu submitted that the earliest record of what Enescu taught was in 1928: five classes in interpretation of the concertos of Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms at the *École Normale de Musique de Paris* (as cited in Kim, 2016, pp. 20-21). Furthermore, in the 1930s, he gave master classes on the interpretation of the works of Schumann, Bach, Brahms, Fauré, and Ravel. Other records show him in 1933, 1935, 1937, and 1939 teaching a series on important classical and modern works for violin at the *Institute Instrumental de Paris* (Kim, 2016, p. 21). We can assume that Souroujon would have received similar instruction from Enescu whilst attending his masterclasses.

Enescu was considered a maverick virtuoso violinist, particularly amongst his peers. One should not overlook the fact that Eugene Ysaÿe dedicated one of the six sonatas in his seminal solo violin work to George Enescu. Despite his propensity to virtuosity and

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32 American and English conductor and violinist Yehudi Menuhin was born on April 22, 1916 and died on March 12, 1999.

33 Belgian violinist Arthur Grumiaux was born on 21 March 1921 and 16 October 1986.

34 French violinist Serge Blanc was born on 31 December 1929 and died on 29 June 2013.

35 French violinist Christian Ferras was born 17 June 1933 and died on 14 September 1982.

pedagogy, Enescu wanted to be remembered as a composer more than as a violinist. In his 1955 book, *Les souvenirs de Georges Enescu*, Bernard Gavoty referred to a quote that expressed Enescu's compulsion to compose:

However, even then, I wasn't thinking too much about violin. I was drunk with music and not with giving performance on an instrument. I dreamt only about composing, composing, and again composing. (...) As I remember those happy times, I smile to myself. Sure, to master my quill and exercise my spirit, I wrote a lot – it is true – but I dare say that everything came from the bottom of my heart! (as cited in George Enescu National Museum, 2017)

Leon Souroujon often remarked about his fondness and admiration for his seminal teacher, violinist and composer George Enescu, who had a profound effect on him personally and musically. Souroujon often played the violin sonatas of Enescu, being particularly drawn to Enescu's composition the Romanian Violin Sonata. As one of Enescu's exceptional students, Souroujon was drawn to his teacher's music philosophy and felt in him a kindred spirit. Notably, Souroujon had in his collection an autographed photograph of George Enescu dedicated to Souroujon (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). He even picked up some Romanian during his time in Paris; and after that he always said goodbye in Romanian, 'la revedere' (C. Walton, personal communication, 1995).

## **I.6 Souroujon's Paris**

In the 20s and 30s, Paris was the undisputed cultural centre of the western world, a hotbed of innovation in art, science, and technology. In music, the ideologies of Romanticism still proliferated and percolated at the edges, and Neoclassicism and Modernism bloomed. At the age of 24, Souroujon enrolled at Alfred Cortot's École Normale de Musique, which was founded to meet the high demand of musicians in other parts of Europe yearning to study in Paris and to absorb the rich artistic ambience of creativity and innovation the city offered.

The school is located in the 17<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, at 114 bis Boulevard Malesherbes in a belle époque mansion. In 1937, Souroujon found himself in the centre of the musical world, arriving in Paris on the cusp of war. At some point in 1938, his sister, Sultana, joined him in order to pursue her artistic ambitions. Whilst there, she was involved in a group exhibition at the Grand Palais (Marinski, 1986). The atmosphere in the city was tense. The newspapers were filled with stories of the political turmoil and fear of pending war (Drake, 2015, pp.8-20). Numerous prominent artists, philosophers, writers, and musicians, busy pursuing artistic activities in the city, were affected (Rosbottom, 2014, p. 21). The village of Guernica was destroyed in the Spanish Civil War, prompting the Pablo Picasso's iconic painting of the atrocities of war, *Guernica*, which was later displayed at the politically riddled Paris International Fair (Rosbottom, 2014, pp. 5,132).

Historically, the 1937 Pavilion of the International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life held in Paris showcased the power of Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, with propaganda films being shown, foreshadowing the power struggle that instigated the Second World War (Overy, 2004, p. 6-8). With signs of trouble in the air in 1938, the Louvre emptied its vaults of important artworks to safeguard them (Rosbottom, 2014, pp. 5,132). On August 23, 1939 the Soviets and Nazis signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, an agreement not to fight each other but rather to split certain territories between them. Germany then invaded Poland. David Drake (2015), in his book *Paris at War*, described eloquently the drama of the mass exodus from Paris by car and by train on the day that Germany broke the Munich Agreement with Paris and invaded Poland (pp. 18-19). On September 1, 1939, with the invasion of Poland, the United Kingdom and France were prompted to declare war against Germany; thousands of Parisians facing inevitable invasion prepared to exit the city.

Souroujon left Paris in 1939, abandoning his studies and returned with Sultana to his family in Sofia. He would attend the École Normale de Musique for two years and only finish his studies ten years later. Despite this interval, with Europe in the midst of war and the



Holocaust atrocities being committed, Souroujon returned to Sofia as a totally formed musician and more determined than ever to thrive in the music world.

### **I.7 The War Years**

The impact of the Second World War and the stringent post-war era on Bulgaria and on Souroujon's life would prove to be immeasurable and disruptive, yet it would highlight his resilience to adversity and challenges. In studying the circumstances of Souroujon against the backdrop of war, one discovers how fearless and determined he was. After his exodus from Paris, having to take leave of his studies with George Enescu, Leon Souroujon entered a Bulgaria under the control of the Fascist regime and in an atmosphere of intolerance.

In Sofia, the rising anti-Semitic sentiments could be felt through the formation of two right-wing political groups in the 30s – the Union of Bulgarian National Legion and the Supporters of the Advance Bulgarian Spirit (Marinova-Christidi, 2016, p. 1). Despite Bulgaria's being a generally tolerant society, these strong Fascist minority groups facilitated government complicity and Germany gained control of the country. The outcome would be the erosion and deterioration of the rights of Bulgarian Jews.

Several Fascist groups had cropped up and gained some power through taking up key positions in government. The population of Bulgarian Jews in Bulgaria totalled 48,400 – less than 1% of the population. Half of them lived in Sofia, according to the census taken in 1934, and most of them were workers and artisans (Todorov, 1999, p. 4). The Fascist party, although in the minority, would prove instrumental in propagating the mayhem on its Jewish population, beginning with a less destructive version of the Nazi's "Crystal Night" on September 20, 1939, where the windows of Jewish establishments were smashed and buildings damaged (Marinova-Christidi, 2016, p. 1).

By this time, Leon Souroujon had returned to the Sofia Opera orchestra (which during this period included the Jewish Choir of Sofia) as one of their principal violinists. He would

witness and endure the step-by-step, painful demoralization of his family, friends, and colleagues and the destruction of his community simply because they were Jewish (A. Souroujon, personal communication, August 11, 2017). But despite all the unbearable hardships, Bulgaria would safeguard its Jewish citizens.

The government of Bulgaria's engagement with Adolf Hitler was complex, starting off with their declaration of neutrality. How the Bulgarian government operated is now seen in a positive light, being a country that somehow countered Hitler's impact by saving its Jewish population from annihilation. Todorov pointed out that, under the German-Soviet Pact, Bulgaria initially chose to remain neutral and made agreements with Germany to keep out of the way (Todorov, 1999, p. 4). The Czar of Bulgaria (King Boris III) was extremely strategic and an accomplished negotiator who somehow placated the Germans. Through complex negotiations, he prevented active participation of Bulgaria in the war and managed to gain back the territory of Dobroudja (Todorov, 1999, p. 4).

In October 1940, however, Alexander Belev, a member of the Ratnik, a Fascist group, drafted an anti-Semitic law in the face of intense protest across the spectrum of Bulgarian society. The law was debated for the next several months in the National Assembly and passed in January, 1941 (Todorov, 1999, p. 5). Essentially, the Fascist elements in the Bulgarian government conspired, in collusion with Hitler, to put in place the Law for the Protection of the Nation (LPN) legitimizing anti-Semitic sentiment. Souroujon's life would be shredded. Despite the new law, though, the Bulgarians took liberties in applying the rules (Todorov, 1999, p. 6).

In retrospect, many commendations have to be given to those who protested the Jewish Predicament and the Final Solution in Bulgaria, including the Union of Writers, doctors, lawyers, the Church, government officials, and many others. In the years of 1941 and 1942, a curfew was imposed on the Jewish population, some Jews being sent to ghettos or concentration camps.

In the meantime, the Bulgarian government had imposed curfew on the Jews, curtailed their freedoms, evicted from their homes, or forcibly conscripted them into special work gangs. They were also required to wear the yellow Star of David.

(Todorov, 1999, p. 6)

The moment the LPN law was implemented, the Jews in Bulgaria were stripped of their rights and freedom. They were evicted from their homes and corralled into a confined neighbourhood. All able-bodied men were forced into labour groups. Albert's recollections evoked the still painful memories of a demoralizing and dehumanizing experience many suffered.

During the war, you did not talk to the children about politics in the family. It was taboo because the children might say something. When the police come and ask questions, the child might reveal their heritage or affiliations. Our parents were very conscious not to talk in front of us about politics. It was not a safe time. They took my Uncle Leon to the lager to build roads for the Germans. We were not allowed to live in Sofia because we were Jewish. We were evacuated and transferred to the province of Shumen by order of the government. No choice; this was an order. You had to leave your home. Take your suitcases and move. We all moved to Shumen – my grandmother, grandfather, Leon, my father (Isak), my siblings, and my mother. It was war. It was a shock—the Germans were advancing and burning Jewish people in Poland. It was atrocious. We were very fortunate that we were not sent to the German concentration camp in Poland and spared extermination. (A. Souroujon, personal communication, August 11, 2017)

Todorov (1999) further detailed that, despite protests from the majority of Bulgarian citizens, Bulgaria joined the Axis of Power (Germany, Italy, Japan) on March 1, 1941, and soon other neighbouring countries such as Romania and Hungary would join too (p.5). The move would facilitate the expansion of the Nazi occupation further into Yugoslavia and Greece.

Caught in a convoluted political situation, Bulgaria could not protect the Jewish population of Yugoslavia and Greece, since they were outside their jurisdiction, which ultimately condemned them to death. When the trains transporting caged Macedonian and Aegean Thracian Jews to their certain doom in the death camps passed through Bulgaria, mass protests took place against this injustice and stood in solidarity with these Jews. The doomed were crammed into trains heading to their end in Treblinka, Auschwitz, or Buchenwald (Todorov, 1999, p. 9). The Souroujon family found themselves playing out their parts as the Bulgarian Jews community under the protection of key politicians in those shocking and nerve-racking circumstances (Todorov, 1999, p. 11). Rarely speaking about the atrocities that occurred, Souroujon did mention that he was forced to wear the yellow star during the Second World War (A. Souroujon, personal communication, August 11, 2017).

### **I.8 Shuman and Beli Izvor Labour Camps: Prequel to Composing**

The atmosphere of pre-war Europe was tense and austere, and particularly acute for Jewish citizens, who would be stripped of all their human rights. Many Jewish men all over Europe were forced to work in labour camps to facilitate the Nazi war machine (Beyer & Schneider, 2015). As mentioned, Souroujon and his family were relocated to Shuman to live in cramped quarters with minimal provisions. Albert, Souroujon's nephew, related how the authorities split up their family:

Isak (Albert's father) was not selected for the labour camps. Uncle Leon was ordered to go to the labour camps to build roads in order for the German soldiers to be able to go from one end of the country to the other. Isak, my father, as the eldest in charge of the family, remained behind and took care of the family in Shuman. My Aunt Sultana, she was married to a Christian man, so she was somewhat spared as she was considered Christian and stayed in Sofia. My Aunt Sophie married a Spaniard and left

at the start of the war for Barcelona. Uncle Leon never spoke about his time in the labour camps. (A. Souroujon, personal communication, August 11, 2017)

Leon Souroujon, considered an able-bodied male, was sent to a labour camp in the Transka gorge to build roads, where he and others were regularly beaten. Souroujon's stepdaughter related stories she had heard at home that it was "a gruelling job building roads" (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Souroujon was forced to work in these labour camps in Beli Izvor and Klisura village from 1942 to 1944. In the evening, because of his musical abilities, he was spared some of the hard labour and, instead, commanded to entertain the guards, who often requested the music of Antonin Dvořák<sup>36</sup>. He once mentioned in passing to me that he was allowed some time to practice for this and so had moments of solitude in the woods surrounding the camps.

Leon Kolaora, a resistance fighter who was for a period in the same labour camp as Souroujon, shared detailed recollections of the experiences in the camps there and even of Souroujon's part in the resistance:

Everyone in the camp worked very hard and the food was complete rubbish. I remember the hunger. We were hungry all the time. The food was always bean soup with hardly any beans in it. So, we, the prisoners, made jokes over our plates, calling, "Hey, show up!" to the little bean at the bottom of our plates ... It was very miserable. The first three months we wore clothes given to us by the state, but then they made us work with our own clothes, which turned to shreds right away. Forty-two people lived in one tent. It was raining often. And when it stopped raining outside, it rained for another hour inside our tent. Despite all that, there were some nice people among the commanders, who were all Bulgarians. For example, the commander of our labour group in the second camp was a great lover of music. Unfortunately, I do not remember his name. Thanks to him, we managed to arrange for the great violinist,

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<sup>36</sup> Czech composer Antonin Dvořák was born September 8, 1841 and died May 1, 1904.

pedagogue and future professor Leon Surojon [sic] to be exempt from work. We wanted to spare his hands. He, in turn, became our courier. He went to the village of Klisura, Tran region, to get the mail and learned the political and military news there, which he informed us about. We passed them on to the other groups. Moreover, Surojon [sic] was the first to know if the commanders of the camp groups had received an order dangerous for us, he warned us and we were more careful. In the evenings one could often see the following scene in the camp: the silhouette of Leon Surojon [sic] playing the violin on a hill bathed in moonlight. His favourite piece, which also became my favourite later, was “Funny Story” [Humoresque] by Dvořák. The commander of our labour group sat among us and listened to him. (Nikolova, 2004)

Souroujon rarely spoke about this period, only relating an idealized memory. He often recounted an anecdote of how birds and wild creatures would gather closer and listen to him play (C. Walton, personal communication, 1990s). Engrossing himself in music, he survived the war and the labour camps by uplifting the spirits of the others suffering around him with his music, escaping the inhumanity of imprisonment in these reprieves. Even under these excruciating conditions, for self-preservation and a form of resistance, he continued to practise the violin intensely at every opportunity, demonstrating his self-will, discipline, and fortitude. Without sheet music and in isolation in the woods, he began to improvise passages and to create his own melodies in these moments of oasis.

The Second World War was a brutal period for Souroujon, filled with deep sorrow and anguish, separated from his family, with many of his friends and music associates dying off in concentration camps, losing their civil rights and their homes, their belongings taken from them. Souroujon on occasion spoke of the indignity he felt of not being allowed to purchase the sheet music for Joachim’s cadenza to the Brahms’ Violin Concerto in D major from a shop in Sofia (C. Walton, personal communication, 1995). This experience remained with him, and inspired him to create his own cadenza. With the war machine criss-crossing

Europe, ironically, Bulgaria would prove one the safest places in Europe for Jewish people. At long last, the Soviets liberated Bulgaria from the Germans in 1944. In protest at the oppression he had lived through, in 1954, Souroujon's cadenza was published – his first composition. He vanquished Fascism by becoming a composer.

### **I.9 Post-war Years: Performance, Pedagogy, and Communism**

In the remaining chapters of his life, Leon plunged himself headlong into the music career and pedagogical activities that would define him. With an insatiable and clear-sighted desire to be part of music history, he transitioned back to normal life after the war quite quickly. At this time, Bulgaria was under the control of the Soviet Union, and therefore the Communist cultural system. Starting immediately after the war ended, he joined the State Symphony Orchestra, just as the Communist party took control of the country.

Soon after, he returned to Paris to continue his studies at the École Normale de Musique. After obtaining his diploma from the École Normale de Musique, he resumed his post in the orchestra back in Sofia in 1947. He would become a prominent figure in the Bulgarian music scene. Dimitar Sagaev,<sup>37</sup> a composer and pedagogue, in his book *Sasha Popov and the Bulgarian Symphony*, described a performance that occurred on November 17, 1949 in Sofia. Leon Souroujon was the featured soloist in Eduardo Lalo's<sup>38</sup> *Symphonie Espagnole*, conducted by Bulgarian conductor Sasha Popov<sup>39</sup>, and the performance showcased the moving singing quality of Souroujon's violin playing:

On 17.11.1949 in Sofia, the conductor Professor Sasha Popov broadly unfolded his hands and the Beethoven's Fifth Symphony extended powerfully with the call of fate and the victory of the spirit. The exceptional violinist-virtuoso Leon Souroujon performed the famous *Symphonie Espagnoles* of Eduardo Lalo. With the softness of

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<sup>37</sup> Bulgarian composer and pedagogue Dimitar Sagaev was born on February 27, 1915 and died on October 28, 2003.

<sup>38</sup> French composer Eduardo Lalo was born on January 27, 1823 and died on April 22, 1892.

<sup>39</sup> Bulgarian composer Sasha Popov was born on January 27, 1823 and died on April 22, 1892. He established the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra and served as its conductor starting in 1928.

tone, with his dynamic range and his precision, he conquered the audience. The conductor Sasha Popov, perceptibly observed the high skill of Souroujon, took a moment to allow the audience to show their appreciation of his performance. Finally, the concert ended with one of Souroujon's favourites, *Paintings from an Exhibition* by Mussorgsky-Ravel. (Sagaev, 1997, as cited in Zografova, 2018, p. 1)

As noted in the historical dictionary of Bulgaria, Communism prevailed after the war and therefore social realism was the philosophy governing art and would prevail until the mid-1980s (Detrez, 2015, p. 51). National and cultural ideals took prevalence in that art had to be relevant to the working class. Through the late 1940s and until the 1960s, Souroujon performed steadily, in part through the directives of the Communist Party. Following the Russian system, state administrators selected the best representative musicians and arranged for them to play, not only in Bulgaria, but also in other Communist countries, keeping to the standardised practices established in the Soviet Union. The members of the Communist Party would promote the musicians they liked and Souroujon was on good terms with the officials in the cultural department.

Eventually, Souroujon stopped playing in the orchestra as he had gained more prominence at the Academy, taking on more responsibilities and teaching, but still able to perform regularly (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Looking at his educational path and where he applied himself, Souroujon understood early on that working in a music academy was the right place for him, even if it was within the rigid, regulated cultural framework of Stalin's directives. In being a professor of the National Academy of Music in its early days, he was part of the core faculty members who built its musical foundations and whose pedagogical contributions laid the framework, starting out in 1946.

Leon Souroujon held, from 1959 to 1962, the position of Dean of the Instrumental Faculty. Considered one of the exemplary violin professors at the National Academy of



Music, he spoke of the importance of the school and often related stories of his other students with fondness and pride. During his time teaching there, he designed an all-encompassing programme for violin and viola; and his influence is still felt today, with some of his compositions still in use as part of the students' creative and theoretical studies, and some of his recordings still available in their archive.

### **I.10 Katya Kazandjiewa, Pianist, Professor, and Souroujon's Wife**

Souroujon's marriage to Katya Kazandjiewa, his soul mate and music partner, would be a highpoint in his life. Their families had known of each other since they were children, having lived in the same neighbourhood. After the war, he re-connected with Kazandjiewa in the Sofia music circles. She had also followed a life of music, studying the piano despite her father's caution that she was too cerebral to be a musician.

Pluta, being Kazandjiewa's daughter and Souroujon's adopted daughter, provided much insight into the events and lifestyle of Leon Souroujon between the 1950s and the 1970s (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Kazandjiewa came from a family of intellectuals who also emigrated through circumstances greater than themselves. Her descendants came from Russia rather than Spain during the time when Russia liberated Bulgaria from Ottoman rule.

After the 1878 Treaty of San Stefano, Kazandjiewa's grandparents read a newspaper advertisement calling for able-bodied workers to move to Bulgaria to rebuild the country. Grabbing the opportunity, they moved to Bulgaria, landing in Dobroudja, a town between the Black Sea and the Danube where the ground was very fertile, to be the first farmers in this region, tilling the land using new metal machinery to inordinate success. Kazandjiewa's grandfather, Peter Gabe, became a deputy minister in the national assembly of Bulgaria. Unfortunately, the land between Bulgaria and Romania was in dispute and Romania took the land by force. So, the family moved to Sofia and rented an apartment,

where Katya, her parents, grandparents, and sister lived together.

Kazandjiewa's father was a philosopher and professor at the Academy of Science in Sofia. Notably, he was involved in the building design of residences for professors, which, although identical in structure, were aesthetically beautiful. Souroujon, Kazandjiewa, and her daughter Anna would later live there for a short period. When Kazandjiewa had returned from Prague to Sofia, she had had a short-lived marriage with her first husband, a lawyer with whom she had her only daughter, Anna. Afterwards, Souroujon entered her life because of their involvement in music. Each seeking a partner to play chamber music with, they were a perfect match of piano and violin. Souroujon developed a real friendship with Kazandjiewa, entering her world. The next two decades would prove to be a period rich in musical explorations for the duet: Souroujon and Kazandjiewa's life was musically intense and culturally rich. Both of them passionate and deeply entrenched in their work, they performed together—Kazandjiewa on the piano and he on the violin—a range of works selected from the Baroque to the Romantic period.

All of their concerts were organised within a Communist framework that controlled all cultural endeavours as a matter of the state (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). During this period in Soviet-controlled Bulgaria it was difficult for Kazandjiewa to find work because her father favoured Nietzsche over Marx. Consequently, from 1949 to 1950, Kazandjiewa went to Warsaw to study under Armand Georg Raoul (von) Koczalski,<sup>40</sup> an acknowledged Chopin expert. After completing her piano studies, Kazandjiewa returned home to live with Pluta, whom she had left in care of her mother. Soon after Kazandjiewa's father died, Souroujon and Kazandjiewa married in 1951, and he formally adopted the seven-year-old Pluta.

Souroujon moved in with his wife and daughter at the residences of the professors (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). By any measure, the

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<sup>40</sup> Polish pianist and composer Armand Georg Raoul von Koczalski was born on January 3, 1884 and died on November 24, 1948.

house provided a high level of comfort and luxury. In 1961, because it was difficult for them as musicians to work at the house due to its open Modernist design, they moved out.

Fortuitously, they swapped it for a larger apartment that was owned by someone who needed a humid basement in which to cultivate mushrooms. Pluta related that her mother, Kazandjiewa, who was not religious at all and an atheist, said, “Which God do I have to thank for our luck?” Kazandjiewa’s aunt, Dora Gabe,<sup>41</sup> gave them the extra money they needed to facilitate the swap. Gabe was a renowned Bulgarian poet and one of the founding members of the Bulgarian PEN Club (1927), an association that supported writers and promoted humanistic ideals.

### **I.11 Personal Life: 1950s and 1960s**

Between 1953 and 1962, Pluta— still living at home with her mother and Souroujon—was observant of their routines. Souroujon was an exceptionally disciplined musician, practising with rigour every day (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Although it was a simpler time, they had everything they desired. Kazandjiewa’s mother took care of all of them, supporting them in their pursuits. If Leon had to teach, Kazandjiewa’s mother would prepare his meal according to his timetable. They often did not lunch together owing to their teaching and performance schedules.

The evenings were spent in a familial atmosphere since there were no lessons; they would eat together then play cards after dinner, such as canasta. In the summers or at the weekends, they would regularly take breaks at their villa in the countryside, a charming place near the hot springs of Sofia. It was a place of music with special lessons often given during the holiday period. Sometimes their students, other musicians, friends of the poet Dora Gabe, and their colleagues from the Academy would visit. Kazandjiewa drove the social activities as Souroujon himself rarely invited people to their home since he found entertaining trying.

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41 Bulgarian poet Dora Gabe was born on August 28, 1888 and died on November 18, 1983.

He was often invited out, however, he preferred to be at home and deeply valued his privacy. Pluta recalled those early days as idyllic moments and stimulating times for them, even with the political upheaval of Communism taking place around them.

Music was her parents' life (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). When they had a performance, the couple rehearsed with incredible intensity, with Kazandjiewa pushing for perfection. Most of the time, they rehearsed in the morning and taught in the afternoon. Souroujon practised constantly, not too many scale exercises, rather reviewing different passages. He was very systematic and motivated. Kazandjiewa was less motivated to perform, but very passionate about teaching. Although she was a successful pianist who understood the nuances of sonority, particularly the music of Chopin, Kazandjiewa was not a virtuoso like Souroujon, who was an exceptional violinist with "a romantic soul".

As mentioned earlier, Souroujon deeply cherished his elder sister, Sultana Souroujon, who was a significant Bulgarian portrait artist (See Appendix K). The importance of her portrait paintings has only recently begun to be appreciated in Bulgaria as well as in Israel (A. Souroujon, personal communication, August 11, 2017). Nonetheless, Sultana struggled to get recognition as artist and faced numerous personal challenges. Miserable about her circumstances in post-war Sofia, on top of a difficult marriage ending in divorce, she felt compelled to move to Israel in 1953 to join their brother, Isak, who had migrated there when the country was established in 1948. She lived and worked there for nearly a decade until her death in 1962. On her way back home from Tel Aviv, walking along the highway to get home, Sultana suffered a fatal accident. Souroujon, who had travelled to Israel to see his family, learned of the sad news just before going on stage for a scheduled performance. It was a tremendous loss for him. Through Souroujon's efforts, her paintings today hang in the Plovdiv City Art Gallery in Bulgaria in its permanent collection and through her own effort's in the Tel Aviv Museum (Souroujon, n.d.). Her painting of the 30-year-old Souroujon with

his violin is regal and poignant.

### **I.12 Performance Life with Partner Kazandjiewa: 1950s and 1960s**

After the Second World War, Souroujon was absorbed in performance life, which involved exploring his capacity in interpretation. At the peak of his career as a violinist, he would not only compose several cadenzas, but also go on numerous performance tours with Pianist Katya Kazandjiewa (See Appendix I and Appendix L). In 1954, he published his first composition, his cadenza to the Brahms Violin Concerto in D Major. Moreover, he would write the Mozart cadenzas and began editing music in this period. Leon Souroujon's life experience echoed the zeitgeist of the times, as he and other musicians travelling the world would, playing concert performances. Their performance activities took them all over Bulgaria, former Yugoslavia, former Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, the D.D.R., Cuba, Korea, China, Vietnam, and Israel, playing in the wondrous cities of Paris, Sofia, Zagreb, Havana, and Tel Aviv.

Souroujon performed frequently as the principal soloist. As a chamber musician, he, along with his music partner, Kazandjiewa, performed in countless concerts, playing together the music of notable composers such as Leoš Janáček,<sup>42</sup> Edvard Grieg,<sup>43</sup> Schubert, Mozart, and Felix Mendelssohn<sup>44</sup> (T. Peeva, personal communication, May 6, 2014).<sup>45</sup> Souroujon and Kazandjiewa were invited on a Communist cultural exchange to China, Vietnam, and Korea lasting six months in 1957. Souroujon was deeply affected by his experience in the East, perhaps because he was innately curious about the world, and nomadic in nature. Their first major excursion was successful for the duo.

In 1957, after their return from Asia, along with his pedagogical activities at the

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<sup>42</sup> Czech composer and music folklorist Leoš Janáček was born on July 3, 1854 and died on August 12, 1928.

<sup>43</sup> Norwegian composer and pianist Edvard Grieg was born on June 15, 1843 and died on November 18, 1928.

<sup>44</sup> German composer, conductor, and pianist Felix Mendelssohn was born on February 3, 1809 and died on November 4, 1847.

<sup>45</sup> Tony Peeva was a good friend of Leon Souroujon, who assisted him in the last episodes of his life when Souroujon was living at Avenue Kersbeek in Brussels. Interview conducted on May 6, 2014.

National Academy of Music, he prepared a student for the George Enescu competition: Dora Ivanova (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Dora ultimately became a professor of music in Bulgaria. Meanwhile, Kazandjiewa organised weekly events that she called *Soirée d'Arts* with the purpose of educating the public about the treasures of classical music. The events were held at Slaveykov Hall, a prestigious chamber music venue operated by the French Alliance cultural organisation. The programme followed the history of music, starting with Bach. Each night a different pianist was invited to perform. One of the concerts she organised showcased the complete Beethoven Sonatas that she and Souroujon performed together to prodigious acclaim. A performance of this calibre and style, and on such a grand scale, was unheard of at the time in Communist Bulgaria.

In 1960, Kazandjiewa also joined the faculty at the National Academy of Music as a lecturer (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). She was in her own right a well-respected pianist and pedagogue, invited to be part of the jury for the Chopin competition in Warsaw. At a certain point, she found another post elsewhere, ecstatic to be appointed as Artistic Director at a private school of music for gifted students in Sofia. It was an afterschool programme taught by some of the professors from the Academy. Often working and engaging with Kazandjiewa in their music life, Souroujon also on occasion taught there. She arranged a variety of master classes by established musicians and professors from other countries (particularly from Russia). Her students included Dora Milanova, Luba Dimova, and Jeni Petrova. She proved to be exceptional in her role as Artistic Director of the school.

During their careers as chamber musicians, Souroujon and Kazandjiewa went on two key tours together (See Appendix I). Their first trips were to Asia (Korea, Vietnam, China) and the other was to Cuba in 1966–1967 (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). In Cuba, Leon was assigned to educate musicians at an academy, along with their orchestra. Pluta disclosed that, although her parent's earnings were regulated,

musicians were paid a reasonable living wage. In combination with their income from teaching, their combined salary was high. Life had been simpler then because they did not even think to purchase a television. Their first time they watched television would ironically be in Cuba. His days in Havana plunged him headlong into the whirlpool of artistry there, advising about a pedagogical system that could be applied at the music conservatory. He was also asked to perform a few concerts surrounded by the warm, vibrant sunlight and the brilliant colours of Havana.

Souroujon adored the capital, felt at home there, and wanted to prolong his stay. Both were innately curious about the world. Their daughter, Anna Pluta, joined them, her trip paid for as part of their contract (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). They stayed in a simple apartment with a terrace overlooking the sea. It was on the second floor of a house with a hair salon below them. The windows did not need to have glass panes since it was too hot – rather, they were fitted with shutters. Anna recalled playing chess with Souroujon while Kazandjiewa watched.

Leon was always taunting me when we played games. Kazandjiewa would constantly try to alleviate the fights and say, ‘Stop that, you two’. We had a competition between us. I had ambitions, but his ambitions were bigger than mine. He could be sometimes a bit cruel in games. My mother would say, ‘Hey it is only a game, just stop. Let us go for a swim. They felt very free in Cuba. Souroujon would perform with the orchestra, often as the soloist. (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016)

During this period, Pluta observed that Souroujon had a general affinity for Mozart, not drawn to any particular piece. He longed to stay in Havana, however, Kazandjiewa felt obligated to return to Sofia for her mother’s sake. Upon his return to Sofia in 1967 and until 1969, Souroujon resumed teaching full-time. His students included two respected Bulgarian violinists: Yossif Radionov, who as stated was his student and who became a violin professor

at the National Academy of Music in Sofia, and Angel Stankov, who was Vice-Rector at the Academy from 1999 until 2008 and was a conductor at the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra in 2007.

Under Souroujon's tutelage, Radionov, who continued instruction up until the moment when Souroujon emigrated to Belgium, recounted that Souroujon exposed him to notable compositions, including Mozart's Violin Concerto, Bruch's Violin Concerto, Kreutzer and Dont's *Études*, Kreisler's *Prelude and Allegro*. Radionov communicated how much he was impressed and affected by Souroujon's artistry (Y. Radionov, personal communication, December 20, 2018).<sup>46</sup> Stankov<sup>47</sup> also recollected Souroujon with a similar fondness, relating how special Souroujon's last solo concert in 1975 was when Souroujon performed Bach's *Chaconne* at the Slaveykov Hall in Sofia (A. Stankov, personal communication, November 28, 2018).

### **I.13 The 1970s: Introduction to Belgium and His First Études**

Feeling restless after their adventures in Cuba, Souroujon and Kazandjiewa began to consider other opportunities (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Belgium was a possibility. Staying in Sofia was out of the question for them, because they were both feeling some of the limitations that were inherent in a highly regulated Communist state. So, they opted to leave the country, as many Bulgarian artists were doing (E. Tassev, personal communication, May 15, 2014).<sup>48</sup> As such plans go, they took what they could carry with them or ship easily: for Souroujon, violins of course, books, and always his sister's luminous portrait paintings.

Through an association in Belgium, Souroujon applied for and obtained a position at De Philharmonie (now the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra) from 1969 to 1972, craving to

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<sup>46</sup> Telephone interview conducted with Yossif Radionov on December 20, 2018. He provided information about Souroujon as a professor.

<sup>47</sup> Bulgarian violinist Angel Stankov was born on April 28, 1948. He provided information about Souroujon as a professor, being a student of his for three years, starting in 1962. Telephone interview conducted on November 28, 2018

<sup>48</sup> Bulgarian-Belgian violinist Emile Tassev was born on September 19, 1947.



broaden his musical capacity (T. Peeva, personal communication, May 6, 2014). A highlight of his years in Belgium was as the soloist in a performance of Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D Major, Opus 61 conducted by Leonce Gras<sup>49</sup> in 1970 (See Appendix I). In the same year, Souroujon wrote the article, "Reflections upon the Original Text of Bach's *Chaconne*", which was published in a Bulgarian periodical titled *Musical Horizons Bulletin, issue 4*, in 1970 (See Appendix G). Kazandjiewa gave piano lessons and prepared students for the piano session of the Queen Elizabeth competition held every four years in Brussels. One of her students, Djeni Petro, made it into the competition finals in 1972 (playing Camille Saint-Saëns' No. 2 in G Minor, Opus 22, and Robert Schumann's 12 *Études Symphoniques*, Opus 13).

Even though the importance of Bulgaria to Souroujon and Kazandjiewa never faded, they would never feel at home there in their later years (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Nevertheless, in 1973, they returned to Bulgaria to resume their posts at the Music Academy, but soon felt wanderlust and out of sync. In 1975, on a trip to Warsaw to see her newly born grandchild, Kalina, Kazandjiewa declared that she felt it was time for her to retire and that she did not feel well. Soon after, Kazandjiewa officially retired from the Academy. Souroujon would follow suit. Both now wanted to leave Bulgaria and considered a few countries, including China. Kazandjiewa considered Chinese Communism to be truer to the fundamentals than Bulgarian Communism—less attached to the dogmas of philosophy and politics.

The idea to immigrate back to Belgium was Souroujon's, who had struck up many friendships there, such as with Composer and Pianist Denise Tolkowsky (Studiecentrum voor Vlaamse Muziek, 2018),<sup>50</sup> who was affiliated to the Royal Conservatory of Music in Antwerp, and the conductor Leonce Gras (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016

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<sup>49</sup> Belgian conductor Leonce Gras was born on June 6, 1908 and died on January 5, 1993. He wrote a reference letter attesting to Souroujon's performance of Beethoven Violinist. See Appendix I for a copy of the letter located in volume II of the dissertation.

<sup>50</sup> English-born Belgian composer and pianist Denise Tolkowsky was born on 11 August 1918 and died on 9 March 1991.

and April 1, 2016). Although they would move officially to Antwerp in 1976, they would divide their time between Bulgaria and Belgium. During this time, Souroujon gave masterclasses in Lahti and Helsinki in Finland (T. Peeva, personal communication, May 6, 2014). Souroujon, even in the flux of changes, worked on his études. In 1976, he published his *Études* 1–6 for solo violin with the Bulgarian publishers Music, with editing by Pancho Vladigerov, one of Bulgaria's pre-eminent composers and musicologists (National Academy of Music, 2001).

#### **I.14 Death of Katya Kazandjiewa**

As they prepared to depart Bulgaria for Belgium, Kazandjiewa was diagnosed with cancer at the end of 1975, and would undergo surgery and treatment in Belgium, with Souroujon by her side every day. In the summer of 1977, she felt healthy enough to travel back to Bulgaria to recuperate at their villa there. Anna Pluta described the melancholy atmosphere:

The whole family was there to support her. The atmosphere was sombre. She looked good, but had changed. They did not play music that summer. My father was not an exuberant person in general. He was reserved, not naturally jubilant. Generally, my father never showed his sadness. Yet, at that time, he had a bit of nostalgia. He was restless. In life, he seemed not to be really fulfilled. He was always waiting for the moment when he was really happy. My mother was more optimistic. My grandmother and I were the joyful ones in the family. My parents were always looking for something else. They constantly thought of music or how to teach their students, looking for something outside, to improve. They were filled with idealism. It was in their blood; it was their nature. My mother died in 1978 in Belgium and my father took her corpse back to Sofia. He was deeply affected by her death. Katya's mother was also absolutely devastated. My father (Leon Souroujon) remained with my

maternal grandmother until January 1979, when she too passed. To ease the pain of his loss of my mother, he was constantly playing his violin and composing. (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016)

After the death of Kazandjiewa in 1978, Souroujon visited his daughter, Anna, in Warsaw. He communicated to her that he needed to write music, diving headlong into composing. Devastated, mourning the death of his wife, Souroujon composed with intent: he completed his masterpiece *Quatre Pièces pour Violon Seul* at this time, which he dedicated to her indelible spirit. The dedication in French reads as follows:

À mon épouse Katya  
 Pour son humanisme sans partage,  
 pour son défi à l'injustice et au mensonge,  
 pour son élan vers la perfection  
 et la vérité dans l'Art (See Appendix F).

Souroujon was proud of his compositions, playing them many times for his daughter (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). During that visit, he informed her that he had decided to return to Belgium because he felt very alone in Bulgaria. Souroujon went to Belgium, but soon returned to Sofia in the summer to visit Anna and her daughter at their villa outside of Sofia. Souroujon would fly between Belgium and Bulgaria for the remainder of his life (E. Tassev, personal communication, May 15, 2014). At some point in the late 1970s, he wrote his first genre piece, *Images Espagnoles*, written for either violin or viola and which he would later record on viola for Bulgarian Radio in 1979, at the age of 66.

On August 31, 1979, his performance career ended with the termination of his activities with De Philharmonie in Antwerp. Shifting his attention to composing in the next decade, he already had a music collection that included numerous études, cadenzas, *Quatre Pièces*, and several compositions for his short genre pieces.

### I.15 Belgium in the 1980s: Souroujon Turns to Composing

In the 1980s, although Souroujon had retired from stage performance, music would continue to be a powerful force in his life (E. Tassev, personal communication, May 15, 2014). The last 20 years of his life were dedicated to teaching and composing and were, in retrospect, fruitful years. Reviewing his archives, it becomes evident that he composed several key pieces in this timeframe and reworked several études— *Ballade 2* and *Burlesque*, for instance—enabling him to expand his suite of compositions further. He also compiled music for his short genre pieces, which were definitely programmatic in nature. Following the 1979 recording of *Images Espagnoles*, in 1982 he recorded the viola version of *Berceuse*.

As a widower, Souroujon never relinquished his ties with Bulgaria even after he had moved to Belgium (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). During these years he travelled often, visiting family and associates, his violin always close to his side. When his wife passed away, he was exhausted from lack of sleep and unable to take care of himself. After a period, perhaps in need of care and companionship, he reconnected with Paula Piens, an old acquaintance of his and Katya's, who had recently lost her husband. After some time, they decided to co-habit. Even though she had little interest in music and culture, Souroujon repeatedly claimed that Piens saved his life, pulling him out of the woes of his sadness. Souroujon took Piens to Bulgaria, staying there for a short period in the summer of 1980. Whilst there, he taught masterclasses.

On November 16, 1983, Kazandjiewa's aunt, Dora Gabe, died, the event prompting Souroujon to return to Sofia to settle her affairs and his own. Within the year, he had sold his apartment in Sofia and kept only the summerhouse, which he sold soon after in 1984, cutting off nearly all ties with Bulgaria. All the furniture was sold, except for his wife's piano and Sultana's paintings.

In 1987, Leon visited his daughter and her family, who had immigrated to Montreal, Canada (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). Pluta stated that Souroujon was constantly working on his compositions while there.

### **I.16 The 1990s: Souroujon's Protégés and His Compositions**

Over the course of the 1990s, Souroujon focused only on his compositions and his violin pedagogy. Although he had retired from performance and academic life, opportunities always presented themselves to him to acquire a few pupils with exceptional promise. He taught more discriminately as a private violin teacher, garnering a reputation as a pedagogue wherever he went. Over his teaching career, Souroujon's students included Angel Stankov, Yossif Radionov, Dora Ivanova, Kristo Donkin, Helena Angelova, Vassily Paraschkekov, Konstantin Kolev Stoyanov, Emile Tassev, Sascha Maisky, and Leonard Schreiber (See Appendix D). Through his associations in Belgium, he befriended Igor Oistrakh and the cellist Mischa Maisky, for whom he transcribed *Quatre Pièces* for cello.

For his curriculum, he selected music across the spectrum of 400 years of violin music to teach to his students. The pieces he chose show his leanings towards a more expressive and singing quality that underlined his aesthetics: Bach, Telemann, Tartini, Paganini, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Ysaÿe, and Enescu were recurring favourites. All the knowledge that he had acquired from his teachers, his performances, and hours of rehearsals with his wife, all of it went into his teaching. Creativity and emotionality were balanced against discipline and practice. He was curious about how others were teaching and playing, constantly learning new methods and ideas and evolving with the passage of time.

Artistic resolve underpinned his teaching ethos. He emphasized individuality and above all else expressiveness as the cornerstones of music development. His curriculum combined diverse classical music training methods, pulling strands and strains from Franco-Belgian, German, and Russian violin playing styles. He drew on his knowledge of violin

history, his performance experience, as well as his collaborations with Katya Kazandjiewa and his own philosophy of music, to design a rich and balanced learning programme.

Having studied with Koch in Prague and Enescu in Paris, Souroujon was well informed about the various treatises available to a violinist and the range of methods of teaching violin. Furthermore, his partner and wife, Katya Kazandjiewa, was also well versed in music pedagogy. Her insight into musicology provided another perspective. Despite his teaching methods being very structured and strict, Souroujon instilled in his students a passion for the violin.

As a professor of music, he was tough, forceful, and demanding of the highest standards and utmost discipline, yet he was completely generous. He understood the nuances of violin music and articulated it to his students, such as the beauty and the complexity of Ysaÿe and the passion and underlying Romanian folk theme in Enescu's Violin Sonata No. 3 in A Minor.

Fundamentally, violin playing for Souroujon was a matter of problem solving: for each technique, articulation, tempo, bowing, or fingering, a violinist needs to consider and understand why each part is essential and to take analytical structural steps to accomplish it, and to do so with bravado. An inspiring teacher, Souroujon taught his students to be focused and very clear-minded, not only in their violin practice but also in all their endeavours. As a professor he was demanding, a perfectionist, every note had to be pronounced. It was expected that students did their homework and have memorized the music for the next class. Not only did he place a lot of pressure and responsibility on the students to be extremely disciplined, he also instilled in them a passion for music and a capacity to accomplish greatness. In the last episode of his life, teaching was fulfilling mission to continue to pass on his knowledge to the next generation. In a sense, taking on students gave him a resurgence of creative energy.

During these years, he composed études in general in Bulgaria and in Belgium and

some specifically for his individual students, including his *Étude en Forme de Variations 2* and *Étude Chromatic, Étude Ballade* dated April 1998, and *Mélodie Hébraïque*, inspired by Joseph Achron's composition of the same title in 1999 (See Appendix B and Appendix E). At the end of the millennium, he published a suite of compositions under the title of *Huit Pièces* with Fibonacci Music Publishing (1999) (See Appendix F).

### **I.17 The End: Honour, Teaching, Last Compositions**

Souroujon lived a remarkable life in which music was a constant solace. In the final decade of his life, he was restless, unable to find a place that he liked, moving three times in the city of Antwerp alone and to Brussels and then to Montreal. Alas, in 1997, after having just moved into an apartment on the Schulstraat in Antwerp, his partner, Paula Piens, died. Being nomadic in nature, he swiftly uprooted everything and moved to Montreal to live with his adopted daughter's family, taking with him his most prized possessions, his sister's paintings and his violin. In the cold of winter, he worked further on his compositions. He also had a hobby of selling and buying violins, spending time visiting violin shops (See Appendix M).<sup>51</sup> However, his time in Montreal would last only a few months. Not finding his feet there, he soon returned to the familiarity of Belgium, where he rebuilt his life again.

In 2000, at the age of 87, Leon Souroujon received an Honorary Doctorate from the National Academy of Music of Sofia. A few later years later, in 2003, a special event was organised for his 90th birthday to celebrate his legacy and accomplishments. Cellist Mischa Maisky, his nephew Albert Souroujon, his stepdaughter Anna Pluta, other colleagues, former students, and friends were in attendance (See Appendix L). Being his usual forthright self, Souroujon mentioned that he would have appreciated hearing more of his former students playing his compositions that special night. Even in the last years of his life, those he had nurtured, particularly his students, still called on him for music advice.

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<sup>51</sup> Leon Souroujon bought a 1922 Pierre Hel violin, currently being used by Violinist Miguel Simões in Portugal.

Not being able to live alone any longer, he decided to retire, choosing a Jewish seniors' home called Maison De Repos Israélite Heureux Séjour located at Rue de la Glacière 31 in Brussels. His last composition, *Improvisation sur Thème Folklore Tchèque Slovaque*, which he added to his collection of Short Genre Pieces, was written whilst living there at the age of 92. The composition is based on a melody that an elderly woman sang in the hallways of the seniors' home. When completed, Souroujon surprised her with a performance of it for her during a communal lunch, a small yet magnanimous gesture, typical of Souroujon.

It cannot be overstated that Souroujon aspired to be recognized as a composer. Even in retirement, he continued to promote his work, handing out copies of his manuscripts to relevant music institutions like calling cards and speaking about his work to other musicians. Certainly, he comprehended that his compositions were his legacy and desired that his music should live on. The same spirit of promoting himself as a musician and pedagogue he applied to himself as a composer to his last breath.

Being still active in spirit, he was not content in retirement (T. Peeva, personal communication, May 6, 2014). Searching for yet another adventure, an opportunity presented itself to return to Bulgaria. Through some dubious acquaintances he had met in Brussels, he decided to move back to Bulgaria with them, to the town of Plovdiv. The move would prove to be both futile and detrimental. During his stay there, some of his sister's paintings and money went missing. Eventually, through the assistance of his family, he returned to Brussels, tremendously aged. One positive outcome of his time in Bulgaria was that Souroujon managed to donate a few of Sultana's paintings to the City Art Gallery in Plovdiv as a memorial to her in 2006. Souroujon was 94-years-old when he returned to the retirement home at the Rue de la Glacière 31. Shortly afterwards, just before his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, he passed away on January 26, 2007 (See Appendix M). In his last year, he was still his charming self, but less robust, in repose, no longer able to compose, yet still animated about music.



## II Unaccompanied Solo Violin Genre

Leon Souroujon embraced unaccompanied solo violin genre as his art form.

The breadth of cohesive works that Souroujon wrote for the unaccompanied solo violin genre must be understood to be a remarkable feat. For this reason, his significance as a composer and his collection of music cannot be denied. From an early age, he concentrated on his instrument, the violin, exploring every facet in detail: from simple melodic variations and virtuosic tapestry to experimental sound production in both the tonal and the atonal spheres. He was aware of and curious about the variety of styles available in music and knew the history of violin music and violin playing through education and through practice. As a violinist, as a pedagogue and certainly as a composer, Souroujon was drawn to a very particular style and aesthetic in the violin catalogue, preferring romantic and expressive music, often with folkloric themes, that would permeate through his compositions.

To understand Souroujon's contribution to the violin repertoire, it is beneficial to understand how unaccompanied solo violin evolved over time, firstly, looking at music terminology. "Unaccompanied solo violin genre" refers to music that is centred only on the violin as the key single instrument, with emphasis on 'unaccompanied'. In the course of history, the term "unaccompanied solo violin" is often referred to as "solo violin". To outline what unaccompanied solo violin genre is, Emeritus Professor and Music Historian Robin Stowell describes a useful framework. In the music reference book, *The Cambridge Companion to the Violin*, Stowell (1992) defined solo violin repertoire in music history (by differentiating it from violin concertos and sonatas) to include: unaccompanied solo violin, variations, short genre pieces for violin and orchestra/keyboard, cadenzas, virtuoso displays, and transcription that aids in cataloguing Souroujon's works (p. 194).

Secondly, the number of unaccompanied solo violin compositions that exist in history at the time of writing is somewhat narrow, especially when compared with the many compositions for violin with piano or orchestra, violin in chamber music, or violin as part of

an orchestra's string section. For instance, the IMSLP<sup>1</sup> database lists around a thousand compositions within the unaccompanied solo violin genre, providing a good reference for study. Even if the number of compositions listed tripled, the fact remains that only around twenty compositions have been popularly and regularly selected for performance or for recordings. This is a surprising fact in a composer-rich and music-packed landscape. Why are there only a limited number of unaccompanied solo violin compositions that constitute solo violin repertoire? Perhaps a reason for this could be that the violin's inherent limitation as a melodic instrument. Being less polyphonic in nature, the violin is more suited to playing melody, therefore it is perfect as a counterbalance to other instruments such as the piano, in a string quartet, and as an important section of the orchestra. Therefore, an opportunity to grow the genre exists and to introduce and share Souroujon's compositions to violinists. In any case, the unaccompanied solo violin genre could be expanded, since its potential is still untapped and not fully explored.

Lastly, this chapter will highlight some unaccompanied solo violin compositions that inspired Souroujon's style and that are also foundational in solo violin repertoire. Since the inception of the violin, a specific collection of unaccompanied solo violin compositions exists inside the violin playing traditions established in the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern periods, forming the standards of repertoire that violinists study, practice, and perform. Of the unaccompanied solo violin compositions that consistently garner the attention of violin aficionados, Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*, Paganini's *24 Caprices for Solo Violin*, and Ysaÿe's *Six Sonatas for Solo Violin* are measured as keynote pieces. These important unaccompanied solo violin compositions form key anchor points in exploring the merits of Souroujon as a composer.

Pertinent to Souroujon, who composed several études, the seminal works of Bach and

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<sup>1</sup> IMSLP stands for the International Music Score Library Project; it is a database and wiki of music scores. Although it does not list out all compositions, it provides a rough estimate of compositions within any classical music genre: [https://imslp.org/index.php?title=Category:For\\_violin&transclude=Template:Catintro](https://imslp.org/index.php?title=Category:For_violin&transclude=Template:Catintro).

Paganini referenced above were in fact études, practical exercises to inspire and teach violin technique. Even Ysaÿe's original work, *Six Sonatas for Solo Violin*, was admittedly an inventive reimagining of Bach's études. Although designed to teach technique and musicality, these études are now key virtuoso performance pieces. In between these three milestone compositions (Bach, Paganini and Ysaÿe), the intention is to outline the evolution of unaccompanied solo violin genre from the Renaissance to the 21<sup>st</sup> century to give musical context to Souroujon as a composer.

## **II.1 Renaissance Period, 1400–1600**

In its inauguration, the violin began as an instrument for accompaniment and then evolved to one that was unaccompanied. In studying the music of the early violin, scholar Peter Holman has determined that the violin during the Renaissance was played as a consort of instruments, which included varying sizes of bowed stringed instruments to create polyphonic music (Holman, 1995, pp. 4-5). The violin played a secondary role to other instruments in period dance music, to the voice, and in early chamber music. However, within a short span of time, the violin proved to be immeasurably versatile in the hands of a skilled violinist, reproducing a range of moods, from sorrow, madness and rage to joy and ecstasy, and everything in between, replicating the sounds and crescendos of nature. The sound the violin produces is therefore often likened to the human voice. Even today, its adaptability and versatility continue to be discovered within the confines of its four octaves, semi-tones, microtones, scales, and chords. Despite its wondrous qualities, the evolution of accompanied violin to unaccompanied solo violin music would be gradual process and would take over a century to develop.

Ian Woodfield (2001), in his book *The Early History of the Viol*, referenced several patrons of the arts in the Italian aristocracy who played a part in the invention of the violin through their interest in the viol consort. In particular, Marchioness Isabella d'Este of

Mantua,<sup>2</sup> who was an important patron of the arts, being fond of music and dances and playing the viol herself, exerted her taste and influence on other courts in Europe (pp. 87-94). By placing several orders to a luthier for varying sizes of viol – fortuitously perhaps, like a spark to dry tinder – her actions acted as a catalyst increasing the popularity of a family of violin-like instruments, and introducing them to the royal courts of Europe. In time, stringed instruments in general became fashionable among the upper classes. Further afield, around 1540, King Henri VIII hired a consort of Italian viol players, who were Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain, who had made their living in Venice (Holman, 1995, pp. 15, 82-87). By mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, all the factors (the mood, the stage, the materials, the know-how, and the will) to construct a proper violin were in place.

Since the printing press had already been in use for a century during this period, historical documents do offer some insight into the violin's development. Three early references to the violin in printed music handbooks illuminate its birth: Martin Agricola's *Musica Instrumentalis Deudsch* (printed in 1528, 1542, and 1545); Jambe de Fer's *Epitome Musical* (printed in 1556) and Michael Praetorius's *de Organographia* (1618) (Schoenbaum, 2012, p. 15). The most explicit document outlining an early definition is Jambe de Fer's often-quoted description of the modern four-string violin in his treatise *Epitome* (translated from French):

The violin [violon] is very different from the viol [viole]. First of all, it has only four strings, which are tuned in fifths ... and in each of the said strings there are four tones [tons] in such a way that in four strings there are as many tones as in the five strings of the viol. The form of the body is smaller, flatter, and in sound it is much harsher [rude]; it has no frets ... [tuning instructions follow] and the French and Italians differ in no way as regards playing the instrument. Why do you call one type of instrument

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<sup>2</sup> Marchioness of Mantua, Isabella d'Este, was born on May 19, 1474 and died on February 13, 1539.

viols and the other violins? We call viols those with which gentlemen, merchants, and other virtuous people pass their time ... The other type [of instrument] is called violin; it is commonly used for dancing, and with good reason, for it is much easier to tune since the interval of the fifth is easier [plus douce] to hear [accurately] than the fourth. It is also easier to carry, a very necessary thing while leading [conduisant] wedding processions or mummeries ... I have not illustrated the said violin because you can think of it as resembling the viol, added to which there are few persons who use it save those who make a living from it through their labour. (Boyden, 1965, pp. 31-32)

In these early days, the architecture of what is perceived as the violin was formed. In his seminal book, *The History of Violin Playing from its Origins to 1761*, David Boyden (1965) pointed out that in Jambe de Fer's treatise written in 1556 the violin in its early days was considered a common instrument, played by ordinary working musicians:

For the most part, reputable people and musicians in the sixteenth century thought of violins as instruments of lowly origin played mainly by professionals. In comparison, viols and lutes, both belonging to an older and more aristocratic tradition, were played not only by professionals, but also by amateurs and gentlemen, who ardently admired these instruments. To play the viol or especially the lute was considered an admissible, even highly desirable, part of the general education of the well-born; and these instruments enjoyed a vogue among persons of social standing, who, as amateurs, generally regarded music as a commendable avocation, but not as a proper profession.

The violin enjoyed none of this social prestige. (p. 4)

However, the status of the violin would improve rapidly in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century once it was approved as an instrument in courtly dance music, and it would remain in high standing until contemporary times.

## II.2 Baroque Period, 1600–1750

The violin came to the fore and shone during the Baroque period. In the early phase of its dissemination, the violin was considered to be a lowly instrument played in taverns:

During the first part of its meteoric career, the violin was played in public by formally trained professionals, servants, and illiterate folk musicians. Ladies and gentlemen, when entertaining themselves in private circumstances, preferred the elegant sounds of viols and lutes to the raucous power of brash fiddles. (Zaslaw, 1990, p. 515)

As musical tastes evolved, the violin was played in a consort or a family of instruments intended for dances of the aristocracy in Italy and then in Europe (Holman, 1995, p. 30). By the end of the Baroque period, the violin would become a key instrument played by virtuoso violinists. For the first time in recorded history, the concept of a solo violin composition “without bass” entered the music vocabulary. As a consequence, the Baroque period would conclude with the fortuitous creation of Johann Sebastian Bach’s epic composition, *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*, for unaccompanied solo violin that to this day continues to stir the imagination. Although the violin was a minor instrument at the start of the Baroque period, by the end it was the instrument for composers all over Europe and would generate lovely compositions highlighting its many facets and features.

Undoubtedly, the Baroque period was a pioneering one for violin playing and for the profession of the violin. Musicians of this time discovered that, when the violin bow strikes the strings, its quiver, tone, and timbre enters into the sublime and the realm of poetic expression, equivalent to the human voice from scream to whisper, from sigh to groan. In its elevated status, the violin flourished in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and spread across Europe at astronomical speed in a relatively short time. The violin was a key instrument in the landscape of Baroque secular and church music.

Music production during the Baroque period relied on the patronage of either the

church or the court:

Music, perhaps more than any other art, had always been associated with direct patronage. In all but its simplest forms, music is a notoriously expensive entertainment: performers must be assembled, instruments procured, parts copied, and in the case of dramatic music, staging and sets must be arranged. Elaborate musical performances had traditionally enhanced the splendour of festive occasions at court and added solemnity to the great feats of the Church. In these two institutions, court and Church. European musicians from Machaut to Monteverdi to Bach necessarily found their places. (Plantinga, 1984, p. 5)

During this period, compositions were preserved. An improved system of music notation was developed, in part due to the printing press, which allowed the compositions to be steadfastly catalogued by the Church and the courts. Any appointed court composer had to be multifaceted to be able to govern the musicians under their wing, perform, and be responsible for pedagogy. Music education was the domain of the privileged classes and families; its purpose was to pass on their knowledge from one generation to the next. On occasion, an outsider with exceptional talent was welcomed in.

In the early part of the period, the purpose of the violin music was intended for dance, ballads, choral music, or as accompaniment to singers. Under the guise of secular music, dance music flourished during the period. An evening of entertainment was centred on the performance of a collection of suites comprised of several dances: overture, allemande, sarabande, courante, gigue, gavotte, minuet, and passepied (Laurson, 2018, p. 1). The dance music produced was not frivolous. In fact, it formed important musical structures, melodies, and rhythms that were to be used for generations.

In the early Baroque, music was based on bass or rhythm and was figured on rudimentary melodies. The structure was at its most basic, just single notes, following simple patterns. In the middle Baroque, the sonatas and concertos encroached on the scene and the

concept of chamber music sidled in. By the end of the period, music was polyphonic in nature. Moreover, the sonata would play an important part in the natural progression that led musicians to write for the unaccompanied solo violin: “Unless it was in unwritten and improvised music, the real potential of the violin was not developed until the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Italians began to exploit its idiom in the sonata and related forms independent of the dance” (Boyden, 1965, p. 53).

### ***II.2.1 Italian Baroque***

Italian composers reached extraordinary heights in music exploration in the Baroque period, partly due to innovations in violin design and bowing technique that matched breakthroughs in performance. New music idioms emerged, such as the sonatas and concertos with cadenzas, and by the end of period the unaccompanied solo violin genre surfaced. The sonata form is a foundational musical structure involving three components: an exposition, a development, and a recapitulation. In Baroque Italy, the sonata had two forms: one was violin with continuo (chamber sonata and church sonata); the second was the accompanied sonata such as that with a harpsichord or another stringed instrument (Stowell, 1992, p. 168). A number of Italian violinist-composers whose virtuosity stretched the imaginations of other musicians were integral to inspiring the next generation of composers.

An important development was that the violin was propelled onto the stage, into an orchestra and became a component of the opera. Its potential for being played would ultimately be tapped and put on display by virtuoso or superstar violinists. The virtuoso violinist would continue to rejuvenate the beauty and possibilities of the violin. Compositions for the violin were wonderfully experimental as violinists showed off the violin’s capacity and beauty:

Early 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy was a hot bed of experiment, culminating in the operatic masterpieces of Monteverdi. The violin was the only instrument fully able to match



the voice in the new aesthetic, which favoured a subjective and strongly projected individuality, expressed in a dramatic “affective” idiom, with exuberant virtuosity and ornamentation. (McVeigh, 1992, p. 46)

Virtuoso violinists became celebrated figures in Europe, establishing the violin as the key instrument of the Baroque. Although only limited evidence remains to enable us to gain a clear picture of the musical compositional activity in Italy, numerous Italian composers stimulated interest in the capacity of the violin. These included Marini, Farina, Uccellini and others.

Early in the époque, Biagio Marini,<sup>3</sup> who is credited with inventing the string tremolo and a variety of other string idioms, is often cited as the first of the virtuoso violinists (Carter, 1991, p. 43). A sought-after performer, he was also a pioneering composer of the violin. For instance, Marini’s *Sonata IV per il violini per sonar con due corde*, written in 1623 features double-stops, slurs, and the tremolo (McVeigh, 1992, p. 48). Even more inventive than Marini, Carlo Farina<sup>4</sup> concocted imaginative works for the violin to reveal its tints and gradations, figuring out important and even playful techniques to imitate “the mewling and spitting of cats, barking of a dog, cocks and hens, the drum, the trumpet, and many others which do not belong to the domain of music” (Van der Straeten, 1968, p. 52).

Other notable composers propelling the standing of the violin during this period include Marco Uccellini<sup>5</sup>, Salamone Rossi<sup>6</sup>, Giovanni Batista Buonamente<sup>7</sup>. “Much of the Italian music here was avowedly experimental, often improvisatory, showing a liberated delight in novel instrumental effect for its own sake” (McVeigh, 1992, p. 48). For instance, Composer Uccellini is stated as being the first significant composer to write solo violin sonatas with bass continuo (meaning the bass part to be played by another instrument). He

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<sup>3</sup> Italian Baroque composer and violinist Biagio Marini who was born circa 1587 and died circa 1663.

<sup>4</sup> Italian Baroque composer and violinist Carlo Farina was born circa 1600 and died circa 1640.

<sup>5</sup> Italian Baroque violinist and composer Marco Uccellini was born circa 1603/1610 and died on December 10, 1680.

<sup>6</sup> Italian Jewish Baroque violinist and composer Salamone Rossi was born circa 1570 and died circa 1630.

<sup>7</sup> Italian Baroque violinist and composer Giovanni Batista Buonamente was born circa 1595 and died circa 1642.

laid out the intricacies possible across the whole fret board to the sixth position (Allsop, 1996, pp. 238-239).

Although these early Italian composers did not actualise works in unaccompanied solo violin genre, their musical tinctures propelled the violin to unimagined heights. The experiments and trials of Carlo Farina, along with Uccellini and others, showed the incredible acoustics and scope of the violin and would influence the German and Austrian composers, who became fascinated by the violin. Historical records show that Farina took up a position in Dresden in 1625 and Uccellini in Vienna in 1626. Both were hired for their expertise with the violin (McVeigh, 1992, p. 49). The German composers would, in turn, finally detach the violin from song and dance and other instruments, allowing the instrument to stand solo without accompaniment for the first time in history.

Archangelo Corelli<sup>8</sup> reigned as the king of all violinists during this époque. Even though he did not compose for unaccompanied solo violin genre, he thrust the violin into the limelight and influenced generations of violinists. The splendour of Corelli's life cannot be understated, playing as he did for, and mingling with kings, queens, aristocracy, popes, clergy, artists, poets, singers, and musicians of the era, all against a backdrop of pomp and wealth (Van der Straeten, 1968, pp. 137-144). Virtuosos and students of music – including Geminiani, Vivaldi, Locatelli, Pisendel, Veracini, and Salieri – flocked from all over Europe to absorb knowledge from Corelli, being legendary for his clarity of tone and musicality.

Corelli published *Violin Sonatas, Opus 5* on January 1, 1700, after meticulous revisions, and it then became an instant classic. It was studied in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, published more than 50 times and distributed in all the main cultural centres – Rome, Milan, Amsterdam, Bologna, Paris, London, and Venice (Van der Straeten, 1968, pp. 137-144). The value of the work for the violinist is as études, for understanding compositional structure, and for improvisation and ornamentation (Zaslaw, 1996, p. 95). In this, he exerted an influence

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<sup>8</sup> Italian Baroque violinist and composer Archangelo Corelli was born on February 7, 1653 and died on January 8, 1713.

over every violinist in Europe, his style mimicked and emulated throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Thomas Lamb Phipson (1877) pointed out that “Corelli’s great reputation and the number of his pupils connect him more or less with all the great violinists who have followed, even down to the present day” (p. 15). A mastermind, Corelli established a school to share his knowledge of violin technique. His contribution overall to violin is foundational and formidable, with his works for sonata, variations, and concerti grossi inspiring composers such as Vivaldi, Handel, and Bach.

### ***II.2.2 German Baroque***

From the current academic observations of Western music history, the ubiquitous interest in the violin’s potential, and particularly the development of unaccompanied solo violin genre, carried forward from Italy to Germany. Having exposure to the pageantry of virtuoso violinists doing circuits in Europe, German composers and those of adjacent countries too were all naturally intrigued with this innovative instrument (McVeigh, 1992, p. 49). German violinists built upon the technical developments from the Italian school. However, they soon took virtuosity and composition to another level, specializing in double and multiple stops, and pushing forward the polyphonic capabilities of the violin (McVeigh, 1992, p. 49).

In that way, the next grand époque of violin music production shifted from Italy to Germany and, as an outcome, numerous key unaccompanied solo violin compositions were created (McVeigh, 1992, p. 49). Predominantly in the music centres of Dresden and Weimar, under the patronage of the Church, German composers, some of whom were contemporaries of Corelli, revelled in the violin’s singular potential: Heinrich von Biber,<sup>9</sup> Johann Jakob

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<sup>9</sup> Bohemian-Austrian composer and violinist Heinrich von Biber was born on August 12, 1644 and died on May 3, 1704. He is historically important in the history of the unaccompanied solo violin.

Walther,<sup>10</sup> Johann Paul Westhoff,<sup>11</sup> Thomas Baltzar,<sup>12</sup> and later Johann Joseph Vilsmyar,<sup>13</sup> Johann Georg Pisendel,<sup>14</sup> Georg Philipp Telemann,<sup>15</sup> and Johann Sebastian Bach<sup>16</sup> (Stowell, 1992, pp. 194-196). The outcome of their experimentations propagated the singular idea of playing the violin without accompaniment (without bass).<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, the concept of the unaccompanied solo violin genre came to fruition, and is now inscribed in the history books.

All of these composers contributed in some capacity to this newly formed genre. They contributed to violin practice as a whole and formed important compositional templates, exploring violin without accompaniment, simply for the sake of its sound, to actualize its exquisite harmonies and melodies. Up to this moment, the violin was typically accompanied by another instrument, as documented in the archives of musical scores. The evidence of this conscious innovation can be seen in the titles given, particularly “solo violin without accompaniment”, indicating clearly on some of the scores that the work was intended solely for the violin.

Souroujon was drawn to these early violin music treasures including Bach’s composition, Biber and Westhoff’s works, that precursors of Bach’s *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*, as well as Telemann’s *Fantasies* (Wang, 2005, p. 4). *Passacaglia*, which forms the last part of *Mystery Sonatas* written in 1676 by Baroque violinist-composer Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber, is one of the earliest compositions, if not the earliest, that starred a complete movement in the unaccompanied solo violin genre.

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10 German composer and violinist Johann Jakob Walther was born circa 1650 and died on November 2, 1717. He wrote *Scherzi da Violino solo con il basso continuo* in 1676. He was stated to be a significant musician of his time who, along with Biber and Westhoff, produced early examples of music for unaccompanied solo violin.

11 German Baroque composer Johann Paul Westhoff was born circa 1656 and died on April 17, 1705. He was part of the Dresden School and wrote one of the earliest works for solo violin.

12 German Baroque composer Thomas Baltzar was born on circa 1630 and died on July 24, 1663.

13 Austrian composer and violinist Johann Joseph Vilsmyar was born circa 1663 and died on July 11, 1722.

14 German Baroque composer and violinist Johann Georg Pisendel was born on December 26, 1687 and died on November 25, 1755.

15 German Baroque composer and multi-instrumentalist Georg Philipp Telemann was born on March 14, 1661 and died on June 25, 1776.

16 German composer and musician Johann Sebastian Bach was born on March 31, 1681 and died on July 28, 1750.

17 ‘Without bass’, also referred to as ‘sans basse’, ‘san basso’, or ‘san basso continuo’: Early composers needed to use two or even more instruments together to create harmonious music, one for the bass part and the other for melody. When composers began composing for just one instrument, they referred to this novel approach in the manuscript as ‘sans basse’, without bass.

It is incredible that the composition was only recently rediscovered in 1905, when Erwin Luntz published the first edition of the *Mystery Sonatas* (Lake, 2014, p. 4). The composition only became popular long after he had passed away. The *Mystery Sonatas* became Biber's most widely performed and most venerated of his compositions. The essence of the *Mystery Sonatas* is their capturing of the intangible in a religious context. The *Mystery Sonatas* is appreciated for its virtuosic singing style, intricate counterpoint, scordatura tunings, and its programmatic structure.

Moreover, the *Passacaglia* of the *Mystery Sonatas* is considered significant for being one of the precursors of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*. Commissioned by the Church, the *Mystery Sonatas* defined a pinnacle point in the Baroque violin catalogue, with 15 sonatas. *Passacaglia*, the 15<sup>th</sup> piece, is the unaccompanied solo violin composition component divided into 12 parts plus a coda and interweaving one potent repeating polyphonic motif that creates a spellbinding effect (Dann & Sehnal, 2001). Its variation in form must have been wondrous for Bach to hear.

Much less is known about the unaccompanied solo violin pieces of Johann Paul von Westhoff as few records pertaining to his life remain. However, some of his extant compositions appear structurally similar to Bach's. Westhoff was a well-established violinist in Dresden as well as in Weimar, where he probably encountered Bach, who was employed at the court's chapel as a Lackey in 1702–1703 (Wollney, 2016, p. 99). Although only a handful of his compositions survive, their significance in being part of the inception of the unaccompanied solo violin genre is definitive: *Sonata for Violin and Basso Continuo*, dated December 1682 and published in *Mercure Galant*, was soon followed by *Suite for Violin Solo without Bass*, dated January 1683 and published in *Mercure Galant* (Sadie, 1990, p. 193).

In 1971, musicologist Peter Varnai announced in a *Die Musik Forschung* magazine that he had discovered Westhoff's composition of *Six Solo Partitas* (Gao, 2017, pp. 3-5). The works were dated 1696, most likely a reprint of an earlier lost collection, composed in 1682.

Coming into prominence in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, these Baroque works are examples of latecomers to the violin repertoire playlist. The works of Biber and Westhoff, as well as those of their peers, exemplified the free experimentation and study of the violin for instrumental music during the finale of the Baroque era.

### ***Bach***

German composer and musician Johann Sebastian Bach, animated by the inventiveness of the violin and the new music that he was encountering, wrote one of the most beloved of unaccompanied solo violin repertoire, *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*. Bach composed and completed some extraordinary violin works (along with the *Brandenburg* concertos) between 1717 and 1723, during his period of service to a young and highly cultured Prince Leopold of Anhal-Coethen, a secularist and music enthusiast (Lester, 1999, p. 7). An ode to the violin, *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* is a meticulous arrangement, a perfect puzzle of arpeggios, variations, and double-stops.

In his autobiography, *Unfinished Journey*, Yehudi Menuhin expressed the view that Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* was "the greatest structure for solo violin that exists" (Menuhin, 1976, p. 429). Evidently, Bach designed the composition around the whimsical Baroque dances of the day (allemande, courante, sarabande), but in his typical solemn dramatic style (Lester, 1999, pp. 7-8). After Bach died, his work lay forgotten and neglected. Many of his violin works, including *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*, circulated only among violinists for the purposes of study. Fortuitously, 90 years after Bach's death, Felix Mendelssohn performed St Mathew's Passion in Berlin in 1829, catapulting Bach into the limelight and fostering a revival (Lester, 1999, p. 6). In particular, *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* would become significant over time in the unaccompanied solo violin repertoire.

The composition, comprising of three partitas and three sonatas, continued to appeal to each and everyone who heard it, and especially the *Chaconne* of the second partita.

Brahms said of this piece in a letter to his wife, the pianist Clara Schumann, in June 1887:

I do believe it's been a long time since I sent you anything as diverting as today – if your fingers can stand the pleasure! The *Chaconne* is for me one of the most wonderful, incomprehensible pieces of music. On a single staff, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and the most powerful feelings. If I were to imagine how I might have made, conceived the piece, I know for certain that the overwhelming excitement and awe would have driven me mad. (Avins, 1997, p. 515)

Vivid, divine, raw, and poignant, the *Chaconne* captures a kind of melancholic sorrow that resonates profound feelings.

Unequivocally, Souroujon valued the *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* and especially *Chaconne*.<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, he wrote an essay titled *Reflections upon the Original Text of Bach's Chaconne* in 1970 (See Appendix G). The paper was a study of performance practice that compared the nuances of various artistic interpretations of *Chaconne*. As aforementioned, Souroujon performed Bach's *Chaconne* of *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* during his last concert in Bulgaria.

In contrast to its stature today, *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* was actually intended as a set of études to teach musicians how to traverse the complexities of the violin and to improve their performance. In the book *Bach's Works for Solo Violin: Style, Structure, Performance*, scholar Joel Lester (1999) demonstrated with historical references that the compositions were intended for violin study and practice. For instance, in Bach's first biography written in 1802, Johann Nikolaus Forkel<sup>19</sup> wrote:

In his youth, and until the approach of old age, he [Bach] played the violin cleanly and penetratingly, and thus kept the orchestra in better order than he could have done

<sup>18</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing *Chaconne*: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/BachChaconne.mp3>

<sup>19</sup> German composer and musicologist Johann Nikolaus Forkel was born on February 22, 1749 and died on March 20, 1818.

with the harpsichord. He understood to perfection the possibilities of all stringed instruments. This is evidenced by his solos for the violin and for the violoncello without [accompanying] bass. One of the greatest violinists told me once that he had seen nothing more perfect for learning to be a good violinist, and could suggest nothing better to anyone eager to learn, than the said violin solos without bass. (p. 8)

Another instance that points to the compositions being intended for study can be found in Bach's obituary. His pupil, Johann Friedrich Agricola,<sup>20</sup> and Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach,<sup>21</sup> pointed out that the compositions were for studies and exercises: "designed for learning to master the full resources of an instrument ... present[ing] all possible difficulties to enable the student to acquire a firm control of them" (Lester, 1999, p. 20).

Further investigation into the background of various classical violin compositions reveals that many of these historical works being performed on grand stages in the 21<sup>st</sup> century were originally intended for pedagogical use. Surpassing Bach's intention, *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* has been recorded or performed by every virtuoso and studied by violin students everywhere since its revival. Imbued with emotionality, melancholic weight, and perfect flow, this awe-inspiring work for solo violin is an étude demanding rigorous and intense practice. Perhaps this is why George Enescu,<sup>22</sup> who was Souroujon's professor at École Normale de Musique in Paris, called the piece "the Himalayas for a violinist" (Blanc, 2017).

### ***Telemann***

The whimsical musical style of Georg Philipp Telemann delighted Souroujon, who often taught his students with Telemann's compositions and who also recorded some of his

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20 German organist and composer Johann Friedrich Agricola was born on January 4, 1720 and died on December 2, 1774.

21 German musician and composer Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was born on March 8, 1714 and died on December 14, 1788.

22 Romanian conductor, pianist, violinist, and composer George Enescu was born on August 19, 1881 and died on May 4, 1955.



works.<sup>23</sup> Telemann is known to have had an effervescent, charming personality that endeared him to others, including his contemporaries and friends Handel, Pisendel, and Bach. It was Bach who chose Telemann to be the godfather of his son, C.P.E. Bach. Fearless and confident, his three autobiographies are valuable reference documents (Zohn, 2001, p. 1).

A multi-instrumentalist (violin, harpsichord, vocalist, recorder, cello, lute), Telemann was possibly the most versatile of composers, writing more than 3,000 known compositions in every known style in his time. Although most pieces were superficial in the gallant style, some were complex in nature and are considered masterpieces. Telemann was essentially a wizard at combining music styles, drawing from various technical practices of Italy, France, and Germany with ease, depending on his whim and churning out compositions effortlessly (Zohn, 2001, p. 5). Telemann's *12 Fantasias for Solo Violin* (1735), being light in spirit and melodies, is an exquisite example of Baroque music. In Germany, the potency of the violin in a newly formed genre—namely that of the unaccompanied solo violin was realized; however, in Italy, the ecstasy and drama of the violin would be developed.

### ***II.2.3 Precursors of the Bravura Traditions***

#### ***Locatelli***

Souroujon often mentioned Pietro Locatelli's<sup>24</sup> *Harmonic Labyrinth, 24 Caprices* (Cadenzas for 12 Violin Concertos), which is a standard composition in the solo violin repertoire. In 1733, the work was published in Locatelli's instruction manual, *The Art of Violin Playing*. The 12th cadenza, in particular, is painfully incessant in complexity; it is arduous, rigorous, and difficult to play. In the book *From Vivaldi to Viotti: A History of the Early Classical Violin Concerto*, Chappell White aptly summed up the composition's difficulty and as a precursor of Paganini virtuosity:

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<sup>23</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing Telemann:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TelemannFantasyMvt1.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TelemannFantasyMvt2.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TelemannFantasyMvt3.mp3>

<sup>24</sup> Italian composer and violinist Pietro Locatelli was born on September 3, 1695 and died on March 30, 1764.

L'arte del violini claims attention, however, largely because of 'XXIV Capricci', which are inserted into the solos. These lengthy, written-out cadenza contain the most difficult violin display passages of all Baroque literature; they place Locatelli as the immediate predecessor of Antonio Lolli (c. 1725 – 10 August 1802) and an important early precursor of Paganini. (White, 1992, p. 9)

In the last concerto, Locatelli wrote in it an inscription issuing an open challenge to all violinists: "Harmonic Labyrinth: Easy to enter, difficult to escape." This mischievous challenge spoke to Paganini, inspiring him to compose his own composition to also taunt future violinists. It was titled *24 Caprices*. Locatelli's composition continues to be relevant today, requiring an advanced violinist's technical prowess to manage its intricacies, including double-stops, triple-stops, double trills, and extensions to the top register as high up as the 22nd note (Dunning, 2001, p. 2).

### ***Tartini***

Composer Giuseppe Tartini<sup>25</sup> wrote several renowned pieces for violin, however his most popular work, *The Devil's Trill* sonata, was not published during his lifetime, only circulating among his students (McVeigh, 1992, p. 51). A wondrous myth that it was conceived in a dream surrounds *The Devil's Trill* sonata, French astronomer, Jerome Lalande, in *Voyage d'un Francois en Italie 1765*, related Tartini's tale:

One night, in the year 1713, I dreamed I had made a pact with the devil for my soul. Everything went as I wished: my new servant anticipated my every desire. Among other things, I gave him my violin to see if he could play. How great was my astonishment on hearing a sonata so wonderful and so beautiful, played with such great art and intelligence, as I had never even conceived in my boldest flights of fantasy. I felt enraptured, transported, enchanted: my breath failed me, and – I awoke.

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25 Italian composer and violinist Giuseppe Tartini was born on April 8, 1692 and died on February 26, 1770.

I immediately grasped my violin in order to retain, in part at least, the impression of my dream. In vain! The music which I at this time composed is indeed the best that I ever wrote, and I still call it the ‘Devil’s Trill’, but the difference between it and that which so moved me is so great that I would have destroyed my instrument and have said farewell to music forever if it had been possible for me to live without the enjoyment it affords me. (Holman, 1992)

The *Devil’s Trill* sonata has since then captured the imagination of many a violinist. It is an intense violin composition suited to an advanced violinist, thanks to its complex passages and double-stop trills.

Beyond being a composer and writing an important piece for the violin repertoire, Tartini was a critical figure in violin history for his contribution to music theory and violin pedagogy (Petrobelli, 2001, p. 1).

Tartini’s lineage can be traced forward from his student, Nardini, to the French Violin School. His students, particularly Pietro Nardini, were important purveyors in violin history.<sup>26</sup> Nardini taught Gaetano Pugnani,<sup>27</sup> who passed on the teachings of Tartini and Nardini to Giovanni Battista Viotti,<sup>28</sup> who, in turn, inspired the founders of the French Violin School. This musical lineage connects further to Souroujon, who was particularly drawn to the music of Tartini as well as Nardini and recorded several of their compositions.<sup>29</sup>

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26 Italian composer Pietro Nardini was born April 12, 1722 and died on May 7, 1793.

27 Italian composer and violinist Gaetano Pugnani was born on November 27, 1731 and died on July 15, 1798.

28 Italian composer and violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti was born on May 12, 1755 and died on March 3, 1824.

29 Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing the compositions of Nardini and Tartini:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDidoneAbandonataMvt1.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDidoneAbandonataMvt2.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDidoneAbandonataMvt3.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/NardiniSonataMvt1.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/NardiniSonataMvt2.mp3>

### ***II.2.4 End of the Baroque***

When Bach died, the Baroque period faded and interest in the unaccompanied solo violin genre declined, in lieu of the sonata and the concerto (Stowell, 1992, p. 196). The opera, a musical drama, entered the musical landscape, to become the key source of entertainment on a spectacular scale of the coming century, requiring the newly formed concept of the orchestra pit and the spectacle of the virtuoso violinist (McVeigh, 1992, p. 48). Alongside that, composers gained and benefited from the standardisation of musical structure, notation, melody, harmony, and chords.

### II.3 Classical Period, 1750–1830

The unaccompanied solo violin genre that germinated in the Baroque period in Germany did not spread as a practice, with only a few compositions of consequence being written, through until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Stowell, 1992, p. 196). However, a few compositions of note, particularly Paganini's *24 Caprices* were created in the Classical Period are extant (Stowell, 1992, p. 197). Despite the limited number of compositions for unaccompanied solo violin genre to emerge during the era, the use of and interest in the violin did not diminish. Notably, violin concertos of this period would prove to be key to expanding the range of the unaccompanied solo violin repertoire, by way of the cadenza.

Categorically, music of the classical period is characterized by grandiose motifs, harmonious sound, in parallel to the large expanse of a change sweeping society. Utopian ideals permeated, propagating the long-lasting principles of democracy, of a civil society, manifesting in revolution across the strata of European society. Philosophers Montesquieu,<sup>30</sup> Rousseau,<sup>31</sup> Voltaire,<sup>32</sup> Smith,<sup>33</sup> and Locke<sup>34</sup> espoused universal human rights that strove to liberate the masses from daily toil and suffering. A luminous philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn,<sup>35</sup> who promoted German and Jewish Enlightenment, argued successfully for religious freedom, particularly Judaism, as an individual's right (Dahlstrom, 2015, pp. 1, 8).

The 18th-century European society was ripe for a people's revolution culminating in the French Revolution of 1789. Power shifted from the hands of wealthy monarchs and aristocrats to those who had become wealthy from commerce, and were able to hire and support artists of their own volition.

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30 French philosopher Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de la Brede and de Montesquieu, was born on January 18, 1689 and died on February 10, 1755.

31 Swiss-born French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau was born on June 28, 1712 and died on July 2, 1778.

32 French philosopher Francois Marie Arouet also known as Voltaire was born on November 21, 1694 and died on May 30, 1778.

33 Scottish philosopher Adam Smith was born on June 16, 1723 and died on July 17, 1790.

34 English philosopher John Locke was born on August 29, 1632 and died on October 28, 1704.

35 German Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn was born on September 6, 1729 and died on January 4, 1786.

The period from the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> into the 19<sup>th</sup> century rich with violin music was an exciting time for string instruments in general; the violin was a full-fledged instrument along with its cousins, the viola, the cello, and the double bass. In conjunction, the development and refinement of other instruments occurred. Keyboard instruments, particularly the piano, rose in popularity and equal prominence.

Yet the violin would retain its importance, with the virtuoso violinist fixed on centre stage, shining and bright, despite the plethora of other instruments available to a composer. Incorporated at every level of music production, the violin was an integral component of the symphony, the opera, the sonata, concertos, and the string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello). It is important to note that Souroujon, aspiring to be a virtuoso violinist, studied the breadth of compositions in the classical period as part of the required study in the music pedagogy of the 1920s and 1930s, performed the works of Beethoven and Mozart, and completed the cadenzas to the Mozart's Violin Concertos.

### *II.3.1 Cadenzas*

Souroujon's first composition was a cadenza written during the Second World War, afterwards, he would continue his exploration of composing cadenzas in the following decades. Cadenzas are the exciting component of a concerto that places the spotlight on the soloist. Generally, concertos abide by a three-movement structure centred on a soloist, who performs at times in unison with or in opposition to the orchestra, and at its climax plays a cadenza alone without accompaniment. Thus, the peak of a concerto is the cadenza, a kind of sensational solo part improvised along the melodic line. The cadenza perpetuated the elevated role of the virtuoso violinists, creating a musical concept called the "bravura tradition" (Stowell, 1992, pp. 155-159). Concertos stemmed from the Baroque traditions of the concerto grosso and the sonata and, particularly, from the influential works of Corelli and Antonio Vivaldi<sup>36</sup> (Stowell, 1992, pp. 148-149). Although Vivaldi died in obscurity, his impact was unquestionably considerable. His concertos would inspire his contemporaries and later particularly Bach, who transcribed several of Vivaldi's compositions (Talbot & Lockey, 2001, p. 2). His lively style was studied and his arrangements were mimicked. Despite having written more than 500 concertos, nearly half of which were for the violin, many of his works went unpublished. He was rediscovered before and during Second World War through the efforts of American writer Ezra Pound<sup>37</sup> and violinist Olga Rudge<sup>38</sup> (Robbins, 1993, p. 8).

From the Baroque period through to the Classical period, the application of the cadenza as a performance activity cannot be understood, as little documentation on it has been found (Swain, 1988, p. 27). The cadenza was part of the performance and unfortunately for the sake of posterity was not written down. It was only after the Classical period that composers took over the responsibility of writing the cadenza portion (Latham, 2002, p. 194).

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<sup>36</sup> Baroque composer and violinist Antonio Lucio Vivaldi was born on March 4, 1678 and died on July 28, 1741.

<sup>37</sup> American poet Ezra Pound was born on October 30, 1885 and died on November 1, 1972.

<sup>38</sup> American violinist Olga Rudge was born on April 13, 1895 and died on March 15, 1996.

Subsequently, since Ludwig van Beethoven<sup>39</sup> and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart<sup>40</sup> did not write out the cadenzas to their violin concertos, violinists today can only imagine what could have been played (Stowell, 1999, p. 155). The practice of performing and responsibility of creating the cadenza fell to the virtuoso violinist and, in most cases, improvisations on the spot were more commonplace during the Classical period (Latham, 2002, p. 194).

However, it was only into the Romantic period when, at long last, composers were taking control of what was performed, that they wrote down the cadenza component (Stowell, 1992, pp. 159-161). The practice of writing cadenzas would become the norm in the Romantic period, with even many violinists producing their own version of cadenzas for concertos from the Classical period. Reviewing violin music repertoire, the practice declined in second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but more recently, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the tradition has regained some popularity, although it has not yet reached the peak of the Romantic era.

Some compositions from these early periods have remained appealing to composers, who have been inspired to write their versions of a cadenza for the various violin concertos, particularly Mozart's Violin Concertos and Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D Major, Opus 61 (1806). For instance, many composers—including Henri Vieuxtemps,<sup>41</sup> Joseph Joachim,<sup>42</sup> Eugene Ysaÿe,<sup>43</sup> Fritz Kreisler,<sup>44</sup> and Alfred Garrevich Schnittke<sup>45</sup>—have written cadenzas to Beethoven's Violin Concerto. For Mozart's Violin Concertos, the following musicians have composed their own versions: Joseph Joachim, Leopold Auer, Ferdinand David,<sup>46</sup> Nathan Milstein,<sup>47</sup> as well working violinists today: Nigel Kennedy,<sup>48</sup> Hilary Hahn,<sup>49</sup> Maxim

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39 German composer Ludwig van Beethoven was born on December 17, 1770 and died on March 26, 1827.

40 Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born on January 27, 1756 and died on December 5, 1791.

41 Belgian composer and violinist Henri Vieuxtemps was born on February 17, 1820 and died on June 6, 1881.

42 Hungarian virtuoso violinist Joseph Joachim was born on June 28, 1831 and died on August 15, 1907.

43 Belgian composer and violinist Eugene Ysaÿe was born on July 16, 1858 and died on May 12, 1931.

44 Austrian virtuoso violinist Fritz Kreisler was born on 2 February 2, 1875 and died on January 29, 1962.

45 Soviet and German Jewish violinist Alfred Garrevich Schnittke was born on November 24, 1934 and died on August 3, 1998.

46 German composer and violinist Ferdinand David was born on June 19, 1810 and died on July 18, 1873.

47 Ukrainian-American virtuoso violinist Nathan Milstein was born on January 13, 1904 and died on December 21, 1992.



Vengerov,<sup>50</sup> and Gidon Kremer.<sup>51</sup>

Likewise, another popular concerto, for which Joachim wrote a cadenza, is the Brahms Violin Concerto in D, Opus 77, written at the end of 1878. Remarkably, although the composition is one of the most beloved in the violin repertoire, Brahms was not well versed in the violin, composing the work with instruction and input from his violinist friends, particularly Joachim (Wilson, 1999, p. 51). This work played a significant role in Souroujon's life; a catalyst that likely propelled him to become a composer. In an atmosphere rampant with anti-Semitic sentiment that existed just before the onset of the Second World War, Souroujon was not permitted to buy the sheet music of the Joachim cadenza. As a result, he undertook to write his own cadenza to the Brahms Violin Concerto in D, Opus 77, which was eventually published in 1954. Venturing into the world of composition, he would, in time, write several other cadenzas, including a set for Mozart's Violin Concerto.<sup>52</sup>

As an outcome of this era, cadenzas effectively preserved the popularity of the violin, manifesting in a fruitful period for violin music and keeping the concept of writing for unaccompanied solo violin compositions in the subconsciousness of future composers.

### ***The Paris Music Conservatory and the Viennese composers***

As a performing violinist, Souroujon was certainly aware of the important music hubs and violin playing schools. In this époque, music production stood poised between the dynamically opposed centres, Vienna and Paris (Stowell, 1998, pp. 11-16). On one side, composers that define classical music today—Haydn,<sup>53</sup> Mozart, and Beethoven—made distinct marks in the illustrious city of Vienna, driving a new wave of compositions that

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48 English violinist Nigel Kennedy was born on December 28, 1956.

49 American violinist Hilary Hahn was born on November 27, 1979.

50 Russian-born Israeli violinist and conductor Maxim Vengerov was born on August 20, 1974.

51 Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer was born on February 27, 1947.

52 Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing Mozart:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/MozartConcerto6Mvt1.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/MozartConcerto6Mvt2.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/MozartConcerto6Mvt3.mp3>

53 Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn was born on March 31, 1732 and died on May 31, 1809.

postulated instrumental music without dance or voice. These classical composers, known as the First Viennese School, explored the dramatic capacity of a variety of instruments, including the violin, on an enormous scale. Their violin concertos and the violin sonatas, in particular, would become staple pieces in the violin repertoire. They worked independently of a school, in sharp contrast to composers in France, who followed a pedagogical tradition stemming back to the Baroque.

On the other side, three violinists—Pierre Rode,<sup>54</sup> Rodolphe Kreutzer,<sup>55</sup> and Pierre Baillot<sup>56</sup>—who were partial to the performance style of virtuoso violinist Viotti, formalized and codified music education and playing within the confines of a newly conceived Paris Conservatory (Schueneman, 2004, pp. 757-758). Importantly, the Viennese composers and the Parisian violinists-pedagogues were very much aware of and attuned to one another. In the relatively short Classical period, the cities of Paris and Vienna would produce the next batch of brilliant composers.

The following section gives a general overview of some important composers that were inspirational to Souroujon and contributed to unaccompanied solo violin genre through their cadenzas.

### ***Mozart***

Mozart's impressive Violin Concertos written between 1773 and 1775 are important pieces in every violinist's repertoire, along with his 32 violin sonatas. As it happens, Leon Souroujon wrote several cadenzas to the Mozart Violin Concertos (I, II, III, VII) (See Appendix B). Even though it is unlikely that Mozart composed the 7th concerto, Souroujon thought it was interesting and wrote a cadenza for it anyway. Mozart had free rein to compose as he wished from an early age, writing more than 600 compositions in the three decades of his short life. His colossal works, *Marriage of Figaro*, *Magic Flute*, *Don*

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54 French violinist, teacher, and composer Pierre Rode was born on February 16, 1774 and died on November 25, 1830.

55 French conductor and composer Rodolphe Kreutzer was born on November 15, 1766 and died on January 6, 1831.

56 French violinist, teacher, and composer Pierre Baillot was born on October 1, 1771 and died on September 15, 1842.

*Giovanni*, and *Requiem in D Minor*, feature the violin prominently. Lightness, perfection, and singing qualities mark his compositional style.

### ***Beethoven***

The compositions of Beethoven certainly were significant in Souroujon performance career as well as a professor of music. As aforementioned, Souroujon and Kazandjewa performed the complete Beethoven Sonatas in Sofia, in a series of performance. Later in 1970, Souroujon performed Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D Major, Opus 61, conducted by Leonce Gras. In a letter, Gras wrote of the Souroujon's talent (translated from French, see Appendix I):

Your sound is immense and beautiful. You have magnificent bowing. And your technique and accuracy are impeccable. Besides all these qualities, I should also mention your interpretation is very classic, very Beethovenian; Really it was a wonderful interpretation.

One of Beethoven's masterworks, the Violin Concerto in D, Opus 61, is a milestone piece for violinists. It is stirring and symphonic in nature, surveying the wonders of the violin. Written during a period when composers were expected to put on long, entertaining performances, it was commissioned by Franz Joseph Clement,<sup>57</sup> his friend and violinist, who needed a showstopper piece (Stowell, 1998, p. 32). Beethoven composed it in a rush for its premier on December 23, 1806. Clement felt ill-prepared to play it; as a result, the work was not well received when it premiered. It was shelved until 1844, when the 12-year-old Violinist Joseph Joachim performed it, with Felix Mendelssohn conducting the London Philharmonic, to much success.

Because he favoured the piano, it is less commonly known that Beethoven studied violin as a child and was attuned enough to the instrument to compose for it (Stowell, 1998, p. 3). As a composer and performer, Beethoven had an incredible capacity to improvise, to

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57 Austrian violinist, pianist, conductor, and composer Franz Clement was born on November 18, 1780 and died on 3 November 1842.

make music on the spot (Borio & Carone, 2018, p. 8). Leon Souroujon, too, explored the facets of the violin, drawing on his ability and technical memory to create music through improvisations.

### ***II.3.2 The Bravura Tradition***

In part, the development of the unaccompanied solo violin genre during the Classical period is engraved in the bravura tradition. The Oxford Dictionary defines the term “bravura” as a “great technical skill and brilliance shown in a performance or activity” or “the display of great daring” (Lexico, 2020). The musical scene in Europe in the Classical period was cross-referential, with violinists engaging and competing with, and inspiring one another (Stowell, 1992, pp. 61-69). The bravura tradition saw the rise of the violinists who were like acrobatic performers, particularly Niccolò Paganini.<sup>58</sup> The bravura tradition for the violin sprang out of the twilight of the Baroque period in Italy and continues. Violinists are expected to perform extraordinary musical pyrotechnics with poise and flair, and command the stage. Such compositions were geared to display virtuosity or drama or, at the very least, allow for various techniques to be exposed.

#### ***Paganini***

Souroujon considered Paganini a brilliant artist and virtuoso violinist, who exemplified the bravura tradition par excellence. “Virtuoso”, “magician”, and “showstopper” are the words that come to mind when one thinks of Paganini. Souroujon said of Paganini:

He was the first composer to use pizzicatos, perhaps also because he played the guitar. He wrote and pushed the virtuosity in such a way that few violinists are currently able to play Paganini at such a level, with such brilliance while Paganini himself played these pieces centuries ago with ease. He was very popular with the public and very successful. His composition “La Campanella” was a

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58 Italian composer and violinist Niccolò Paganini was born on October 27, 1782 and died on 27 May 1840.

big hit. The church claimed he was inspired by the devil partly because he didn't want to leave his possessions to the church. (C. Walton, personal communication, 1995)

As an entrancing performer with a volatile and striking personality, Paganini conquered Europe, beginning with one fateful evening in 1813 at the renowned music theatre, La Scala, where a cast of the foremost figures of music were in attendance to see him perform (Pulver, 1936, p. 76). That moment launched him forever into the limelight. A whirlwind of recitals transpired, with the phenomenon of Paganini spanning the years 1828 to 1834. Fortunately, armed with confidence, he stood invincible on stage, mesmerising audiences in Europe, from the aristocracy to common folk. Stories of mythical proportions have circulated about his superhuman capacity to play the violin. Furthermore, Jeffrey Pulver (1936), in his book *Paganini, the Romantic Virtuoso*, presented various documented accounts that exemplify Paganini's impact. One account of a review of his performance in the Viennese paper, dated 5 April 1828, is stellar:

The artist handles his instrument according to rules that are his own, and for this reason his achievements remain inexplicable to violinists of even the first rank ... Gifted by nature with the liveliest charm and placed by destiny in environments where he could devote himself to study of the instrument of his choice without interruption; supplied with an artistic sense which can make use of conditions that impede and confuse ordinary mortals, Paganini experimented with exercise that led more and more certainly to new constructions and their effective combinations. Only in this way could he tread paths that now before him, because they were not there. He literally detached himself from himself by his continuous pacing to and fro in fixed direction. In his manner he developed a mechanism that raised him to heights from which he could survey the whole realm of his art as none of his predecessors could do ... Such is Paganini. Those who have not heard him cannot form even the slightest idea of him. To analyse his performance is a sheer impossibility-and number

of rehearsing can help but little ... When we say that the violin in his hands sounds more beautiful and moving than any human voice; when we say that his fiery soul pours a quickening glow in every heart ... we shall not have said enough to give an impression of a single feature of his performance ... Paganini's compositions are of no artificial texture; they are just pure music. (p. 137)

And later in the chapter another account of Paganini from the writer, Ludwig Halirsch, is featured:

In Paganini's whole being, as a composer and virtuoso, breaths the most elevated spirit of poetry in the noblest significance of these words. It is not the magic of a momentary charm; it becomes more firmly rooted the more his greatness is appreciated by more frequent hearing. The present writer has known him for seventeen years, has often heard him in Italy, and has missed none of his concerts here ... and with each new achievement on the part of the artist the conviction has grown deeper: that Paganini is the greatest instrumentalist known in the history of music. (Pulver, 1936, p. 141)

Throwing himself wholeheartedly into his practice, Paganini swiftly outranked the others as the most important violinist of his time. Applying and expanding upon the violin techniques of Corelli and Tartini, Paganini brought the violin to the highest level technically. Soon his skills surpassed the compositions that existed, so he was compelled to write his own (Kawabata, 2013, p. 105). Perhaps inspired by the guitar, his second instrument, Paganini's compositions are imaginative, entertaining, injected with humour, emotion, dramatic effects, flamboyance, and flair. Intrinsicly, his compositions were designed to flaunt his technical prowess. He intermingled double-stops, harmonics, double harmonics, pizzicato and bowed notes, and played with tempi from very fast to very slow. He rarely played the music of other composers, except the reworked compositions of Viotti and Kreutzer (Stratton, 1907, p. 144). Wherever he toured, he made an impact and would influence other artists. He influenced

Franz Liszt to become a virtuoso pianist and, notwithstanding his legacy, endless other composers (Kawabata, 2013, p. 23). As the centuries have passed, Paganini's star quality has not diminished.

Souroujon was strongly inspired by Paganini to write his études, using a number of similar techniques. Paganini's composition, the *24 Caprices for Solo Violin*, challenges a violinist in every capacity: speed, technical dexterity, tone, and timbre. Written as études, his *24 Caprices for Solo Violin* are dazzling and a perceptive tribute to the musicality of the violin. Today, the composition is probably second in esteem to Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*. Paganini's *24 Caprices for Solo Violin*, written in 1818 and dedicated to all violinists, forms one of the key landmark pieces a violinist must scale. Leon Souroujon considered these works important in violin pedagogy to elevate the violinist's skill level and to motivate and energize them. Paganini would mesmerise, challenge, and provoke future violinists.

Marking the end of the Classical era, and moving towards the Romantic era, some musicians bridged the two eras—like Paganini, who was much more experimental, for example, applying as he did techniques of the guitar to the violin.

## II.4 Romantic Period, 1830–1910

Many compositions for unaccompanied solo violin surfaced out of the Romantic period, filled to the brim with haunting, poignant, beautiful music, subsisting through charismatic protagonists flanked by Ernst at one end and Ysaÿe at the other. Virtuosos commanded the stages: bold, disciplined, playing exquisite and expressive music. Poet Charles Baudelaire perfectly described the spirit of times in his book of poetry, *Flowers of Evil*, published in 1857: “The violin quivers like a tormented heart”. Romantic violinist-composers wrote music to express feelings and ideas, yet were aware of the importance of being simultaneously entertaining. Emotions, expression, individualism, and the natural world would inform the aesthetic of Romanticism.

During the Romantic period, ideals of democracy stemming out the century past swept through Europe, percolating the Age of Revolution (Dobney, 2004). Through commerce, individuals could also amass wealth and knowledge. In the wake and the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, the metropolis drew in masses from small towns looking for opportunities. A new demographic of the middle class emerged, changing the shape of society and causing a shake-up, not only in politics, but also in art and culture with an ever-growing audience.

Even though the Church or the State still commissioned some works, a paying audience became an integral component of music production. Composers produced music to perform for and entertain a paying audience in a variety of venues (Rink, 2002, p. 55 and 58). Concurrently, in the Romantic era, musicians were expected to not only be masterful performers but also to be capable composers, often without the support or need of patronage.

A larger portion of the population now sought a music education and music academies were built to accommodate the demand (Rink, 2002, pp. 80-82). The newly formed demographic— the middle class— had more time and wealth, and desired spectacle and entertainment. To this end, composers such as Brahms and Wagner fulfilled the demand and



produced grandiose, oversized programmes (Dobney, 2004). Enormous concert halls were built as a vehicle for commerce. Inventions allowed for the mass production of instruments. On the other hand, performers could make a living playing for small, intimate settings, such as in the parlours of upper-middle class benefactors (Dobney, 2004). The ascent of parlour music began during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In vogue, the wealthier patrons entertained cultured guests in their homes by hiring musicians. The intimate setting of the parlour prompted composers to develop music that was more intimate, romantic, impressionistic, and, notably, to develop music for single instruments.

### ***Ernst***

What is often remembered of Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst<sup>59</sup> is that he was the musical rival and arch nemesis of Paganini. Mark Rowe (2008) wrote in his book, *Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst: Virtuoso Violinist*, of the rivalry Ernst felt towards Paganini:

Imagine the impact on young Ernst when he saw and heard Paganini at the height of his career in Vienna. To be before an artist that controlled his instrument to evoke stories, Ernst heart must have stopped. Ernst was so impressed that he attended as many of Paganini's concerts in Vienna as he could to study Paganini. From that point onwards, his objective was to learn Paganini's techniques, with or without his consent. He tracked Paganini around from concert to concert, analysing and scrutinizing every note and move. Even going as far as renting a room next to Paganini's in order to hear him practice through the wall. He would challenge Paganini, and rival Paganini. Ernst would become the next important virtuoso of his time, adding more ideas of harmonics. (p. 38)

Nevertheless, in the latter part of his life, Ernst matured in temperament and was generous in spirit. His path would take him on an illustrious career engaging with Louis

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<sup>59</sup> Moravian Jewish violinist and composer Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst was born on 8 June 1812 and died on 8 October 1865.

Hector Berlioz,<sup>60</sup> Frederic Chopin,<sup>61</sup> Franz Liszt,<sup>62</sup> Felix Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann<sup>63</sup> (Rowe, 2008, p. 1).

Investigations into the life Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst unveil very little pertaining to his life, for a number of reasons. Ernst was one of many artists, like Souroujon, fractured by the political circumstances of the great wars. Ernst was a musician of Jewish heritage living in the environment leading up to the First World War (Rowe, 2008, p. 2). Forced into the underground, his family had to hide their ethnicity. All of his family would be killed during the war, with their most personal records eradicated. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, attention to Ernst's compositions for the solo violin repertoire, such as *Six Polyphonic Studies for Violin Solo* (1854), refortified his importance and catapulted him towards renewed interest in his work. This piece is a direct precursor of Ysaye's distinctive works *Sonatas for Solo Violin* (Rowe, 2008, p. 254). Ernst would inspire future violinists George Enescu, Yehudi Menuhin, Jascha Heifetz,<sup>64</sup> Joseph Szigeti,<sup>65</sup> and Isaac Stern<sup>66</sup> (Rowe, 2008, p. 1).

### ***Wieniawski***

Burning fast and bright, Henryk Wieniawski was a heralded virtuoso violinist of the Romantic period who equalled Paganini in musicality, technicality, and prowess on the stage (Stowell, 2006, p. 71). From 1851 to 1860, then from 1872 until his death in 1880, he performed all over the world, giving hundreds of recitals in Russia, Europe, and North America (Schwarz & Chechlinska, 2001).

Like Souroujon, Wieniawski composed numerous practical études for the unaccompanied solo violin genre. Specifically, the exercise album *L'École Moderne, Études-Caprices for Violin Solo, Opus 10* is considered a seminal piece for study. Stylistically, his

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60 French composer Louis Hector Berlioz was born on December 11, 1803 and died on March 8, 1869.

61 Polish composer and pianist Frederic Chopin was born on March 1, 1810 and died on October 17, 1849.

62 Hungarian composer and pianist Franz Liszt was born on October 22, 1811 and died on July 31, 1886.

63 German composer and pianist Clara Schumann was born on September 13, 1819 and died on May 20, 1896.

64 Russian-American violinist Jascha Heifetz was born on February 2, 1901 and died on December 10, 1987.

65 Hungarian writer and violinist Joseph Szigeti was born on September 5, 1892 and died on February 19, 1973.

66 American violinist Isaac Stern was born on July 21, 1920 and died on September 22, 2001.

collection is varied, sprinkled with fantasies, pièces de salon, elegies, reveries, capriccios, and concertos, underpinned with romantic and dramatic notes. He often wrote music modelled on polonaises and mazurkas in deference to Polish traditional music.

### ***Vieuxtemps***

Violinist, Pedagogue, and composer, Belgian Henri Vieuxtemps, is now mostly remembered for being an important faculty head of the Brussels conservatory, which represented the influential Franco-Belgian school of violin, and for being the teacher of Eugene Ysaÿe (Campbell, 2004, p. 46). Vieuxtemps was, in actuality, a skilled composer (Schwarz & Hibberd, 2001, p. 1). With drawers full of compositions still to be discovered, his compositions for the unaccompanied solo violin genre are little known. However, they do merit attention, particularly his *Six Études for Solo Violin*.

### ***Joachim***

Hungarian virtuoso violinist, Joseph Joachim, contributed several exceptional pieces to the unaccompanied solo violin genre through his cadenzas. His other compositions for violin are simply exquisite and are often selected for concerts, particularly his Hungarian Concerto, Violin Concerto No. 2 in D Minor, Opus 11. As a performer, he was very selective of what he played (Borchard, 2001, p. 1). For this reason, more attention was paid to the music he chose, such as Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* and Beethoven's Violin Concerto, which had been cast aside in archives over the passage of time. Of course, he is forever associated to Brahms' Violin Concerto, having written one of the most treasured cadenzas to it.

## II.5 The 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 1900–2000

Albert Einstein said in an interview in the *Saturday Night Post*:

If ... I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music ... I cannot tell if I would have done any creative work of importance in music, but I do know that I get most joy in life out of my violin.<sup>67</sup>

These sentiments exemplify just how personal and individualistic music would become in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Souroujon, as a composer and as an interpreter of music embedded in this period, was indeed highly individualistic in his approach and in his artistry.

In this century, societal transformation occurred at an exponential rate compared to that of the centuries before. Social upheaval and political struggles occurred on a massive scale and affected millions in a day. Although the positive attributes of democracy and individualism were immeasurable, the century would be punctuated by crises, delivering two world wars, numerous civil wars, post-colonial challenges, malevolent nationalist ideologies, the Holocaust, and Hiroshima. Furthermore, robust innovation in transportation took place, progressing from the simple mechanics of horse and carriage to complex engineering innovations behind the inventions of automobiles, trains, submarines, airplanes, and the moon rocket. Musicians could tour the globe in weeks and be seen and heard anytime and anywhere instantly through the mass media.

With the development of the phonograph in the early part of the century, musicians could record their music on albums (Wen, 1992, p. 86). In 1922, BBC Radio began broadcasting, propelling access to music to reach everyone in the society and further beyond to other continents (BBC, n.d.). The mass production of record players surged up, followed by that of television sets. In an era when a musician could be heard in an instant countrywide,

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<sup>67</sup> What life means to Einstein by George Sylvester Viereck, printed in the American magazine, Saturday Evening Post, on October 26, 1929: [http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/wp-content/uploads/satevepost/what\\_life\\_means\\_to\\_einstein.pdf](http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/wp-content/uploads/satevepost/what_life_means_to_einstein.pdf)

or even in several countries, the audience seated right in the comfort of their homes were exposed to a range of music the world had to offer (Wen, 1992, p. 86).

In the Baroque and Classical periods, it was expected that a composer and a performer were one. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, music became more specialized, compartmentalized (Wen, 1992, pp. 46-47). The trend towards producing violinists solely as interpreters or performers dominated, possibly instigated by the creation of departments in the music academies that forced students to choose the route towards either performance or composition. Since then, a clear separation has existed. It is likely that the demand from a sophisticated audience clamouring to be awed by performers was too exorbitant. Violinists logically invested their time in practice, perfecting popular standards in order to play on a worldwide circuit.

At the start of 20<sup>th</sup> century, under the blanket term of “modernism”, classical musicians experimented in the same manner as their counterparts in the fine arts, breaking away from established practices and traditions (Gagné, 2012, p. 178). In the process, the polarization of tonal and modernism atonal became delineated (Rosen, 1975, pp. 1-12). During the latter half, the ideas of post-modernism festered alongside other isms, enabling musicians to feel free to study music from all angles, drawing on any source for inspiration: the past, ancient times, traditional forms, world music, and from the present, using new, unexpected instruments to produce new forms of music (Gagné, 2012, p. 7-17; Albright, 2004, pp. 13-15). At the end of the century, the Computer Age would herald electronic music, reliant on synthesizers and computer effects (Gagné, 2012, p. 63). However, Souroujon remained an advocate of romanticism, appreciating the breadth of violin music repertoire and wedded to the discipline and traditions of violin playing of old.

In the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the violin ranked high in popularity and remained an outstanding instrument in classical music compositions, and continues still in contemporary times to be a significant and beloved part of the orchestra. In addition, playing an instrument in this period was an accepted norm for any individual, having available numerous methods

of instruction, curriculums, instructions books and methods (Botstein, 2004, p. 50) Along with the rising number of music academies, the quantity of virtuoso violinists increased exponentially. These included Fritz Kreisler, Jascha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern, David Oistrakh,<sup>68</sup> Itzhak Perlman,<sup>69</sup> and Ida Haendel.<sup>70</sup> Travel became affordable through an improved railway infrastructure and safer ships, by which musicians with or without backing from sponsors could tour back and forth between Europe and further to the Americas and Asia and elsewhere. Parents, from every corner of the world, had aspirations of producing the next child prodigy. The competitive environment fostered a rich ecosystem for sustaining the violin and classical music popularity, growth, and development in general.

An explosion of music genres swept aside the classical one (Botstein, 2004, pp. 44-49). The violin, as an instrument of choice, would compete with ease against other classical music instruments and within a widespread landscape of genres. Particularly in the latter half of the century, music diversified, beginning with jazz and blues before the Second World War and continuing with rock & roll, folk, punk rock, new wave, disco, metal, world music, pop, electronic music, and more. The music of the vernacular would circumvent in popularity the music of high society.

Classical music would retain its relevance in cultural settings and, more significantly, in the cinema, producing unforgettable scores and soundtracks. In addition, poly-stylistic composers such as George Gershwin,<sup>71</sup> Duke Ellington,<sup>72</sup> and Maurice Ravel<sup>73</sup> would thrive in a democratic landscape, defying categorization. Souroujon would embrace music across the spectrum, for instance recording Ravel's *Habenera*<sup>74</sup> and *Improvisation on Gershwin's Summertime* on the National Radio of Bulgaria (See Appendix C).

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68 Soviet violinist David Oistrakh was born on September 17, 1908 and died on October 24, 1974.

69 Israeli-American conductor, teacher and violinist Itzhak Perlman was born on August 31, 1945.

70 Polish British violinist Ida Haendel was born on December 15, 1928 and died on July 1, 2020.

71 American composer and pianist George Gershwin was born on September 26, 1898 and died on July 11, 1937.

72 American composer and pianist Duke Ellington was born on April 29, 1899 and died on May 24, 1974.

73 French composer, conductor, and pianist Maurice Ravel was born on March 7, 1875 and died on December 28, 1937.

74 Audio recording of Souroujon playing Ravel: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/RavelHabenera.mp3>

In the biosphere of romantic music in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, artistic collectives coveting free self-expression popped up in music hubs around the western world. Artists (philosophers, socialists, writers, poets, dancers, composers, pianists, and violinists) interacted in intimate settings, meeting in the private salons of wealthy patrons, or underground bars or nightclubs, intermingling in elite or bohemian circles, engaging in intellectual dialogue that often took place in salons, or in risqué activities. Parlour music (or salon music) became prevalent. A spirit of irreverence filled the air, a sense of provocation and daring. An array of composers and isms cropped up, such as the Romantics, the Impressionists, the Neo-classicists and the Expressionists. The Impressionists—exemplified by general composers such as Maurice Ravel, Camille Saint-Saëns,<sup>75</sup> and Claude Debussy<sup>76</sup>—explored the breadth of beauty, the glory of the world, and tranquillity, expanding the confines of harmony and melody into atmospheric, dreamlike, emotional, and moody music (Kennedy, 2006, p. 428).

Another group, under the umbrella of Neo-classicism, took inspiration from the past, revering the grandeur of the Classical period, as exemplified by the sweeping works of Russian composer Igor Stravinsky<sup>77</sup> (Griffiths, 2011). The Expressionists in the world of violin, typified in some of the music of Paul Hindemith<sup>78</sup> and Béla Bartók,<sup>79</sup> explored how music could be sensuous and dramatic. In addition, embracing the colloquial music of their roots, Bartók and other eastern European composers (including Leon Souroujon) introduced folk-inspired compositions into the roster of classical music.

It was the 20s and 30s that Leon Souroujon dreamt of being a virtuoso violinist. He was certainly exposed to the mercurial changes in music that sprang out of the incredible advancement of modern times. In his stance, Souroujon stood lucidly with tonal music, a

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75 French composer Camille Saint-Saëns was born on October 9, 1835 and died on December 16, 1921.

76 French composer and pianist Claude Debussy was born on August 22, 1862 and died on March 25, 1918.

77 Russian-born composer, conductor, and pianist Igor Stravinsky was born on June 17, 1882 and died on April 6, 1971.

78 German composer and multi-instrumentalist Paul Hindemith was born on November 16, 1895 and died on December 28, 1963.

79 Hungarian composer, pianist, and ethnomusicologist Béla Bartók was born on March 25, 1881 and died on September 26, 1945.

Romantic ever drawn to emotive music. Idealistic violinists of the Romantic era would play and create music that expressed their own vision, perspective, inner thoughts, and in their own style. In this, the Romantics and Post-romantics created music based on the tonal system that was pleasurable and consoling to the ear.

### **Ysaÿe**

Eugène Ysaÿe inspired countless violinist, including Souroujon. Bridging romanticism and modernism, Ysaÿe is a venerated violinist-composer and violin teacher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Considered the pioneer of modern violin playing, he was referred to as “a king or czar of the violin” because of his incredible range of technical skills, expressive style, and unique tone (Wen, 1992, pp. 81-82). To demonstrate this, Ysaÿe’s treasured masterpieces, *Six Sonatas for Solo Violin, Opus 27*, constitute the third pillar of the solo violin repertoire, after the aforementioned works of Paganini and Bach.

In a now-famous moment in violin history, Ysaÿe first heard Bach’s *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* at Joseph Szigeti’s recital in Brussels in 1923 (Stowell, 1992, p. 197). Returning home afterwards so inspired by the music, Ysaÿe locked himself in his studio and worked for hours to create the outline of his *Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin, Opus 24*. Within a day, he had drafted the work and within the year published it. Ysaÿe, who had a generous spirit, dedicated the sonatas to important violinists at the time, his contemporaries:

- No. 1 in G Minor “to Joseph Szigeti”
- No. 2 in A Minor “to Jacques Thibaud”
- No. 3 in D Minor “to George Enescu”
- No. 4 in E Minor “to Fritz Kreisler”
- No. 5 in G Major “to Mathieu Crickboom”
- No. 6 in E Major “to Manuel Quiroga”

The third sonata was dedicated George Enescu, whom Ysaÿe had a high regard for. Enescu taught Leon Souroujon at École Normale de Musique in Paris from 1937 on. Ysaÿe’s



technically profound works are abstractions of emotions and character, seamlessly weaving dazzling cries, haunting melancholic melodies, and eerie stillness that celebrate in unison the violin and virtuosity. Austrian violinist Benjamin Schmid,<sup>80</sup> in an interview for Henle Publishing on their YouTube channel, spoke of the significance of Ysaÿe as a composer:

He invented multiple stops with up to six notes, unheard of up to then. He was the first to write micro-intonation—very sparingly, but it was mentioned in the glossary so he wanted to single it out. He invented new arpeggio techniques, mixed even and uneven metres in some movements—a very modern effect, reminiscent of Stravinsky as far as the form of music is concerned. Perhaps most importantly, he came up with the whole tone scale for the violin, developing it and expanding it even further. Of course, he was influenced by Richard Strauss and Debussy but he was the one to actually put the idea into practice for the violin in diatonic runs, sixths, thirds, in the most incredible manner. (Schmid, 2013)

Analogously, Leon Souroujon's musical vocabulary echoes Ysaÿe's, in his broad applications of interval runs in sixths and thirds and with more atonal notes. However, Souroujon goes even further using interval runs of fourths, sevenths, octaves, and tenths.

A child prodigy whose education would be formulated on the ideals of the Belgian school, Ysaÿe studied in Brussels under the tutelage of Wieniawski and Henri Vieuxtemps, with whom he formed a strong lifelong bond (Stockhem, 1990, pp. 15-16). Ysaÿe had important engagements in Berlin and in St. Petersburg, but it was in Paris where he established his status, intermingling with personages of the period (Stockhem, 1990, pp. 17-19). In 1886, he returned to Brussels to teach at the Brussels Conservatory and soon created the Ysaÿe Quartet in 1889 with Mathieu Crickboom,<sup>81</sup> Leon van Hout,<sup>82</sup> and Joseph Jacob.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Austrian Violinist Benjamin Schmid was born on September 13, 1968.

<sup>81</sup> Belgian Violinist Mathieu Crickboom was born on March 2, 1871 and died on October 30, 1947.

<sup>82</sup> Belgian violist Leon van Hout was born on November 28, 1864 and died on November 23, 1945.

<sup>83</sup> Belgian cellist Joseph Jacob was born circa 1865 and died on October 25, 1909.

Ysaÿe's contributions to the violin along with his friendship and association with Queen Elisabeth of Belgium prompted the creation of the Ysaÿe Competition in 1937, which has since been renamed to the Queen Elisabeth Competition, an annual competition showcasing emerging virtuosos (Queen Elisabeth Competition, 2015).

### ***Enescu***

An important figure in Souroujon's musical development, the Romanian composer, George Enescu, composed imaginative musical tapestries, easily traversing from wistful nostalgic timbres to grandiose, joyous vignettes. An advocate of gypsy music from his homeland, Romania, he drew inspiration from it to produce the raw emotionality the music embodied:

Enescu summed up his attitude to it in the following words: "The Rumanian peasant is carrying music in himself. Music has been his faithful companion in lonely mountains and fields; it is alleviating his anxieties, helping him to air his sacred heart. Born through the sufferings of the Rumanian people subjugated by greedy rulers, this music is full of pain and dignity even in dance rhythms. In itself this music represents a wealth Rumania [sic] can be proud of." In his native folklore, Enescu valued most its emotional riches in which various contrasting dispositions are organically combined. (Malcolm, 1990, p. 198)

Romanian gypsy music was a constant motif in Enescu's music, which he synthesized effortlessly. Souroujon, like his teacher, Enescu, was deeply affected by the music of his roots: the nostalgic sounds of Sephardic Jewish folk music accented Souroujon's compositions. At the age of only 16, Enescu composed and presented *Poema Romana* in Paris on February 6, 1898, a wondrous, uplifting symphony (International Enescu Society, 2006). By the end of his life, Enescu would compose in all genres and for a variety of instruments. His unaccompanied solo violin works have only recently been discovered. In

September 2005, violinist Sherban Lupu<sup>84</sup> published and produced several recently discovered compositions of Enescu's (MacDonald, 2012, p. 11). Enescu wrote several superlative works for unaccompanied solo violin, such as *Airs Dans Le Genre Roumain for solo violin* (1926), *Fantaisie Concertante for solo violin* (1932), *The Fiddler for solo violin*, and *Sarabande for solo violin*. The significance of these solo violin works is too recent yet to be understood. However, they are undeniably superlative and expand the unaccompanied solo violin genre.

### ***Prokofiev***

A composer who is more renowned as a pianist than as a violinist, Russian Sergei Prokofiev,<sup>85</sup> is primarily esteemed for his large scores for the ballet and cinema. But he composed a piece for the violin, titled *Sonata for Solo Violin in D Major, Opus 115* (1947). The work is an example of creative possibility of unaccompanied solo violin genre. A project commissioned by the Soviet government for violin students, Prokofiev designed the sonata to be played solo or in a group in perfect unison as one (Steinhauser, 2009, p. 20).

### ***Kreisler***

Souroujon was drawn to the compositions of the charismatic virtuoso violinist and composer Austrian Fritz Kreisler<sup>86</sup>, recording several works.<sup>87</sup> Kreisler, who understood both his audience and the newly developed medium of the radio and the record player, composed shorter pieces for this reason, and had collaborations with popular singers such as Enrico Caruso (Cross & Proctor, 2014, p. 155). With similar intent, Souroujon also recorded short genre pieces. Musicologist Daniel Leech-Wilkinson (2009) detailed Kreisler's violin playing style with the use of vigorous strokes and vibrato in sound recordings as part of a catalogue

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84 Romanian violinist Sherban Lupu was born in 1952. He is a specialist of Eastern European composers, particularly George Enescu.

85 Soviet composer, conductor, and pianist Sergei Prokofiev was born on April 27, 1891 and died on March 5, 1953.

86 Austrian composer and violinist Fritz Kreisler was born on February 2, 1875 and died on January 29, 1962.

87 Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing the compositions of Kreisler:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/KreislerPraeludiumAndAllegro.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/AlbenizKreislerMalaguena.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/DeFallaKreislerLaVidaBreve.mp3>

of performance history (pp. 7-10). With his intimate knowledge of the violin, Kreisler's compositions were certainly suited to the violin and to the unaccompanied solo violin genre. For instance, *Recitative and Scherzo-Caprice, Opus 6, for Solo Violin*, written in 1910, which is dedicated to Ysaÿe, *Study on a Choral in G Major*, written in 1930, and other exuberant compositions are often selected for recitals (Potter, 2014).

### ***Khachaturian***

Armenian Russian Composer Aram Khachaturian<sup>88</sup> established his place in music history with a grandiose collection of ballets, film scores, and theatrical plays such as his insistently rhythmic work "Sabre Dance" (Blackwood, 1999, p. 341). In the last stages of his life, he wrote a few smaller works for strings, specifically *Sonata-Monologue* written in 1975, a poignant exposition of solitude. Music critic, Malcolm MacDonald, postulated that Khachaturian composed it especially with Bach's motifs in mind (MacDonald, 2011, p. 7). It belongs to the unaccompanied solo violin genre; however, it is one of his least-known compositions. Much of Khachaturian's inspiration is rooted in his Armenian folk heritage; he partook in a sojourn to Armenia to study its traditional music (Steyn, 2014, p. 11). In many ways, contemporaries, Souroujon and Khachaturian had a comparable musical journey, both worked in the cultural confines of Communism (Schultz, 2016, p. 89).

### ***Milstein***

Remembered first and foremost as a virtuoso violinist, Nathan Milstein, is not thought of as a composer, despite the evidence to the contrary. Unobtrusively, he wrote several striking cadenzas and a multitude of transcriptions, and a composition for unaccompanied solo violin work. Taking on Paganini's challenge, he crafted a playfully titled composition, *Paganiniana*, for the unaccompanied solo violin in 1954, which is often chosen for recital (Schwarz, 2001).

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<sup>88</sup> Armenian Russian composer Aram Khachaturian was born on May 24, 1903 and died on May 1, 1978.

## ***Souroujon***

Within this modest overview of composers who wrote for the unaccompanied solo violin genre, Leon Souroujon<sup>89</sup> fits in perfectly in that his oeuvre exclusively consists of solo violin compositions. Like the other 20<sup>th</sup> century composers mentioned above, he belongs to the canopy of Romanticism, further unravelling the emotionality of the violin, surpassing even the modern sensibility of Ysaÿe. A violinist, a pedagogue, and a self-taught composer, Souroujon wrote original works, short genre pieces, pedagogical études, cadenzas, and transcriptions combined to form a unique collection (See Appendix B).

Resilient and determined, Souroujon's passion for the violin never faltered, even against terrible obstacles endured in the Second World War. After reaching the heights of Bulgarian music society, he changed course late in life and recommenced in Belgium, where he first established himself as a performer and pedagogue. The last three decades of his life, dedicated to teaching and composing, were very fruitful amassing above 30 compositions for solo violin. In the third chapter of this dissertation, his works and unique style are examined in detail.

### ***II.5.1 Modernism, Tonal versus Atonal Music, 1910–2000***

Although Souroujon considered himself a romantic, Souroujon used atonal sounds that are associated with Modernism in his compositions for effect. Modernism is, in simple terms, the rejection of tonality. American conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein, in *The Norton Lectures* series that he gave at Harvard University in 1973, articulated the époque of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a moment when composers split into two music camps: atonal and tonal.

Despite the polarization or even dilemmas that occurred in the classical music scene, which mirrored the same concepts being posed in art discourse, new conceptions of music would be born: What is music? Why do we make music? What does music sound like? Why

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89 Bulgarian composer, pedagogue, and violinist Leon Souroujon was born on January 28, 1913 and died on January 26, 2007.

are there rules in composing music? For Bernstein, the answer to the question “What is music?” is: tonal music is based on the harmonic series:

But the overriding fact that emerges from all this is that all music—whether folk, pop, symphonic, modal, tonal, atonal, polytonal, microtonal, well-tempered or ill-tempered, music from a distant past or the imminent future—all of it has a common origin in the universal phenomenon of the harmonic series. And that is our case for musical monogenesis, to say nothing of innateness. (Bernstein, 1973)

The atonal music camp (the Modernists) resided in avant-garde thinking, a break from the norm that is analogous to modern art. Modernist composers abandoned all the traditional methods of composition to re-imagine what music could be under an atonal system.

Concocted by the composer Arnold Schoenberg,<sup>90</sup> his 12-tone system applied equal value to each note of the chromatic scale—a shocking rejection of the standard practice that works with accents, rhythms, melody plus major and minor scales. Numerous composers (including Schoenberg’s disciple, Alban Berg)<sup>91</sup> were attracted to the concept. In the mid to latter part of the century, the pinnacle of experimental and abstract music would be reached by experimental composers such as John Cage,<sup>92</sup> Steve Reich,<sup>93</sup> Philip Glass,<sup>94</sup> Arvo Pärt,<sup>95</sup> Henryk Gorecki,<sup>96</sup> Luigi Nono,<sup>97</sup> Edgard Varese,<sup>98</sup> and Karlheinz Stockhausen.<sup>99</sup>

Outliers outside the definition of atonal or tonal music included several composers, such as George Gershwin, who intermingled jazz with the traditions of classical music, or those who dabbled in both systems, such as Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, and Sergei Prokofiev. This latter group would create dissonant scores that stayed within the boundaries

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90 Austrian and American composer Arnold Schoenberg was born on September 13, 1874 and died on July 13, 1951.

91 Austrian composer Alban Berg was born on February 9, 1885 and died on December 24, 1935.

92 American composer, music theorist, and philosopher John Cage was born on September 5, 1912 and died on August 12, 1992.

93 American composer Steve Reich was born on October 3, 1936.

94 American composer Philip Glass was born on January 31, 1937.

95 Estonian composer Arvo Pärt was born on September 11, 1935.

96 Polish composer Henryk Gorecki was born on December 6, 1933 and died on November 12, 2010.

97 Italian composer Luigi Nono was born on January 29, 1924 and died on May 8, 1990.

98 French composer Edgard Varese was born on December 22, 1883 and died on November 6, 1965.

99 German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen was born on August 22, 1928 and died on December 5, 2007.

of tonal system. Souroujon stayed within the traditions of violin playing, although he enjoyed experimenting on occasion, as when he improvised on Gershwin's *Summertime* on Bulgarian Radio.

The tonal music camp favoured music based on harmony, now an established tradition with roots going back to the beginning of time. Tonal music based on the 12-note scales with major and minor chords is deemed to sound accordant or agreeable to the ear and to appeal to the heart, a belief perfectly exemplified by the expressiveness of Baroque through the eloquence of classical and within the beauty of romantic music. The romantic composers such as Souroujon for the most part fall in the tonal camp.

### ***II.5.2 1950–2020 Postmodernism to experimental music***

Retaining his own singular style, Souroujon created many of his compositions in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the ideas of Modernism entered music discourse, but also Postmodernism. Also affecting the way in which music history was understood, Postmodernism, which includes pluralism of ideas, pluralism of style, fragmentation of time, and fragmentation of history, considers the definitions of music, music periods and music tastes as arbitrary in the context of global and historical awareness. For Souroujon, the freedom to compose what he felt he could compose was an outcome. In the book, *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources*, author Daniel Albright (2004) explained that Postmodernism works as a perspective rather than as a specific style:

As an artist movement, Postmodernism is pluralistic and hard to define. But as a movement in criticism, Postmodernism has a certain coherence-and tremendous influence. Postmodernist criticism starts with the premise that art, science, and human thought of any sort are governed by a search for validation... Similarly (perhaps), if we can learn to hear a composition by Beethoven or Schoenberg as if no one in particular had written it—that is, without feeling behind the notes the myth of the

man, the thunder of his presence—we can hear it more freely, more critically. Shorn of the fiction of the composer's ego, deprived of the normal context that music historians have contrived, a piece of music loses its sacred aura and recedes into tame, culturally plastic, cooperative state. Romanticism and Modernism tend to enforce the awe of genius; but Postmodernism tends to assume that the author is dead, and that the pages of text circulate endlessly in the slow whirlwind of culture. (p. 14)

With access to music from the past and the world over all in an instant, composers could now explore any style of their choosing, some reflecting on the long-established classics standards going back to Baroque and others resting their mantles firmly on creating new music in contemporary time. By the end of the century, the number of musical styles available increased and in a sense had reinvigorated the need to really understand music and its history. Musicians and listeners alike became interested in historically informed performances, for instance, performers re-enacted authentic Baroque music on Baroque instruments. For many centuries, music knowledge has been passed down haphazardly, with only few scholars keeping records of the music selected by the upper classes. As only some materials were being archived, historians have recognized pointed gaps in history. Only records that are considered important to collectors or institutions have been recorded, based on arbitrary, subjective, or political choices (Albright, 2004, p. 15). With revelations of numerous misconceptions and biases, historians have realized a need to review, revise and, if need be, correct the recorded past to reflect a truer picture of what occurred.

Reviewing music history over the centuries, many composers, particularly around the two world wars, have been forgotten or ignored or eliminated from history. In some regard, it could be argued that Leon Souroujon is an example of a generation of composers who were stifled or blocked by oppressive external forces. An incredible opportunity exists, therefore, to bring to light these composers and to expand and to enrich the music repertoire.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, even more experimental and ground-



breaking music was being created and generated in unaccompanied solo violin repertoire. Despite, the work being less relatable to Leon Souroujon and rather removed from his oeuvre, he regularly exposed himself to new music. The following selection showcases the expanse of the unaccompanied solo violin repertoire that is an interesting note on which to close this slight history of the genre. In today's broader landscape of violin music, a number of composers have contributed an array of compositions for the unaccompanied solo violin genre: George Rochberg's *Caprice Variations*,<sup>100</sup> John Harbison's *Four Songs of Solitude*,<sup>101</sup> George Perle's Sonata No. 1 for Solo Violin and Sonata No. 2 for Solo Violin,<sup>102</sup> John Corigliano's *Red Violin Caprices*,<sup>103</sup> and Jeffrey Harrington's Sonata for Solo Violin, and *Grand Tango for Violin and Video*.<sup>104</sup>

## II.6 Summary of the Unaccompanied Solo Violin Genre

To summarize, in examining the selection here of compositions of unaccompanied solo violin genre, it is startling how varied the composers, heralding from every class of society, were in their relationship to the violin. Some composers are still famous today; some were only celebrated in their time and are less pervasive today. In looking at these composers of unaccompanied solo violin works over history, what is common between them all is their fascination with the violin and its unique and emotionally satisfying qualities. In studying the spectrum of composers, Leon Souroujon qualifies as on a composer of violin music, particularly in unaccompanied solo violin genre. He has all the merits of a composer, and he is entitled to recognition as such. As an academic and as a violinist, Souroujon was naturally aware of the array of composers, their compositions, their styles and techniques, particularly those who had an affiliation with the violin, including Bach, Tartini, Mozart, Paganini,

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<sup>100</sup> American composer George Rochberg was born on July 5, 1918 and died on May 29, 2005.

<sup>101</sup> American composer John Harris Harbison was born on December 20, 1938.

<sup>102</sup> American composer and music theorist George Perle was born on May 6, 1915 and died on January 23, 2009.

<sup>103</sup> American composer John Corigliano was born on February 16, 1938.

<sup>104</sup> American composer Jeffrey Harrington was born on December 28, 1955.

Enescu, and Ysaÿe, who inspired him his compositions. Immersed in the world of violin and its history, Souroujon was fearless in his own sense of being a composer in it.

In addition, with a never-changing global market and the normalization of the Internet as a form of instant mass communication, the landscape for classical music and violin music in contemporary times has become much more open to less recognized composers. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, concert-hall directors are willing to take a chance on lesser known composers coming from all corners of the world to draw in new audiences and expand their demographics. It is important to note the role that scholars and music-lovers play in bringing to light neglected or lost compositions. Overall, the environment is much more conducive to bringing Souroujon into the limelight.

### III Leon Souroujon: The Composer and His Compositions

Leon Souroujon understood that making music was like alchemy, a magical mixture of sounds, textures, tempos, beats, patterns, pitches, variations, rhythms, repetition, speed, and frequency. Despite not having had any formal instruction in composition, he was determined to create music, having an unswerving resolve to express his unique voice. Unlike many violinists, particularly those of the latter part of the century who chose performance over composing, Souroujon was rather inclined to be a composer and even expressed an innate desire to be remembered as a composer. His desire was to express a feeling in his music, to create a mood, to make an effect, to tell a story, and to narrate his imaginative mind. From his palette of sounds and rhythms, and textures, Souroujon attempted to build musical poems that meander and float in our imagination, founded on romantic motifs and themes. Leon Souroujon only promoted himself as a composer in the last episode of his life, with only a few people knowledgeable about his compositions.

Although Souroujon's collection of compositions is not extensive, the character and quality of it is substantial, capturing the zeitgeist when ordinary folk music rose in appreciation within the confines of classical music. An examination of his oeuvre reveals a distinctive musical language and his melancholic spirit. The variety of his composition extends from short genre pieces, a suite that he dedicated to his wife Katya Kazandjiewa, études, cadenzas to transcriptions. Exempting the transcription of Bach's aria *Aus Liebe will mein Heiland Sterben*, all his compositions are written for unaccompanied solo violin. They have a distinct style, one often infused with a melancholic singing tone or, at times, highly programmatic, with exquisite character that deserves attention. Several of his compositions are musical homages to his Sephardic Jewish roots.

Undoubtedly working from a profound appreciation of the violin, he was naturally attuned to music and its nomenclature. Some cornerstones of his compositional style feature gentle harmonies and exquisite bowing techniques, from wistfully slow tempos to the passionately rhythmic. He utilized the potency of simplicity, intricacy, and repetition in

sound. He exploited the instrument's range of timbres, the use of double-stop scales to heighten suspense or poignancy. His collection of works showcases the splendour of sound that can be produced from a multitude of violin techniques and bowing strokes, a sound ringing with his unique singing style.

Beyond the beauty of his work, he contributed greatly to the unaccompanied solo violin genre. First, in reviewing the genre of unaccompanied solo violin repertoire within the confines of history, the quantity of quality solo violin pieces is limited, underlining the importance of Leon Souroujon's compositions. Secondly and notably, his compositions have historical relevance. He represents a collective of musicians affected by the austerity of Fascism who somehow persevered under the radar. Inevitably, numerous musicians suffered from the disruption caused by the devastation of the Second World War and further even by the artistic constraints of Communism. Thirdly, he is one of a collection of classical composers (Bartók, Enescu, Ravel) who were driven to highlight their roots in their music – specifically for Souroujon, Sephardic Jewish melodies. Instinctively, some of his compositions such as *Images Espagnoles* or *Berceuse* are part of a movement that embraced the charm of the ordinary folk music that surfaced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century before and after the Second World War. With formidable resolve, he produced a collection of works for the unaccompanied solo violin, which he was determined to publish, and did. He continued to compose up to the last years of his life.

### **III.1 Romanticism**

He considered himself as a romantic and associated himself with the ideas of Romanticism. The concept of Romanticism can be defined to be the period between Classicism and Modernism in music; however, it defies closure and permeates the ages. Edward Kravitt (1992) offered an updated definition that fits the essence of Romanticism and how it is generally used:

A more recent definition, which holds that the shift of focus to an expressive aesthetic, centred on the artist as creator, is the essence of romanticism. Instead of creating primarily to please a patron or public, the romantic artist created mainly for self-expression. Romantic art is introversive, generated by a consciousness of self, stimulated by and embodying the artist's own perceptions, thoughts, and feeling. (p. 93)

For Souroujon, composing music was a poetic and even a dramatic act, embodying his perceptions, aesthetics, inner emotions, and spirit. He felt a connection to the ideals of Romanticism as defined: “a style of art, music, and literature, popular in Europe in the late 18th and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, that deals with the beauty of nature and human emotions” (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2018). Souroujon's singular singing style runs rampant through his compositions. His works show a mastery of violin playing and an awareness of the full capacity, nuances, and emotionality of the violin. Although his catalogue has a clear romantic filament running through it, Souroujon was, of course, conscious of and open to other genres and styles in classical music and to other music categories. Nonetheless, his musical sensibility is rooted in tonality, in harmony, and strives always to be expressive and engrained in the melodic traditions of violin music.

### **III.2 Souroujon's Creative Process**

In his later years and into the twilight time of his life, Souroujon considered himself foremost a composer, preoccupied with all aspects of his craft, from creating and refining to publishing his works. His collection of compositions can be categorized into these groupings: *Cadenzas*, a set of études called *Recueil d'Études*, his *Short Genre Pieces*, and his *Suite of Nine Compositions*. His catalogue is also augmented with his transcriptions and editions of key classical compositions. While there are these distinct categories, his identifiable musical style permeates: the musical sonority and emotionality of Sephardic Jewish music underpin

the works. In 1999, after years of manually printing and issuing his own compositions, he accomplished a “coup d’état” when he published *Huit Pièces* with Fibonacci Music Publishing. Determined to be a composer, he self-published many of his compositions and recorded his music in a variety of formats, including an archive of cassette tapes, LP albums, and CDs. Well after he received his honorary doctorate in 2000, he was still working on getting published. In his collection of self-published compositions, he had marked his last address as the retirement home where he had moved to after receiving his doctorate, showing how clear and focused he was on his work to the end.

Leon Souroujon composed for two reasons: personal expression and violin pedagogy. On the one hand, his composition grew out of emotional corners: in the midst of sorrow, pain, joy, love, and beauty. On the other, Souroujon’s compulsion to compose stemmed from his need to help his students or other violinists to practise violin technique, as numerous other composers have also done, including Bach and Paganini. As a self-realized composer, an autodidact, his starting point for his compositional process was the violin. Souroujon designed his music from his aesthetic preferences, his incredible memory of melody and his musical taste. He had a strong affinity to the music of Ysaÿe, Paganini, Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, Tartini, Bach, and Mozart and a deep connection to Sephardic Jewish folk melodies.

Perhaps inspired by his teacher, George Enescu, improvisation was his chosen method of composing. To compose he simply played the violin, working with motifs and techniques, improvising passages, and then writing down the notes. He also had a little booklet in which he collected his ideas for melodies (A. Pluta, personal communication, March 31, 2016 and April 1, 2016). In general, composers create music through a process of improvising (playing an instrument to create music) or through a process of writing based on music theory and established compositional rules built up over the centuries, or both approaches. There has always been a long tradition of improvisation in composition and performance. Many violinists and composers—Kreisler, Enescu, Menuhin, Ysaÿe, and earlier, Paganini, even

Bach and Beethoven—were accomplished at either improvising in performance or at creating music.

In the Baroque period, it was expected for violinists to add ornamentations to colour a composition. In later periods, composers expected musicians to play the notes written precisely. Improvisation in performance would resurface only later and flower in modern times, with jazz starting in the 1920s. Of note is that Souroujon improvised on Gershwin's *Summertime* live on the national Bulgarian radio (See Appendix C). Notably, he composed through improvisation in a similar fashion to Enescu, by playing passages on the violin (Malcolm, 1990). From Souroujon's anecdotes of his life that he had shared, he certainly began improvising in the woods when he was in the labour camps circa 1942 (C. Walton, personal communication, 1990s). As the evening's forced entertainer, he was given some leeway by the guards to practise pieces alone in the nearby woods. There, Souroujon without his music scores, played from memory. However incidental the practice of improvising was to Souroujon, it is really noteworthy that he had a natural gift for composing.

Looking at his processes as a composer, it is apparent that he was very precise, orderly, meticulous, methodical in his practice, and often worked on one piece over a long stretch of time. In general, he discarded his sketches or notes or drafts and kept only near-perfect or completed versions. Although he was systematic in his compositional practice, he rarely dated his work. Fortunately, it was possible to cross-reference across his catalogue to realize good estimations of when he composed his works.

In his cache of manuscripts, various copies and letters reveal how meticulously he produced music. It is a fascinating glimpse into his working process. Even the earlier working editions, which he printed out manually during the time of typewriters, are neatly collated, collaged, and taped together, with the music neatly typed out together with clear handwritten notes and deliberate notations highlighting changes he had considered as important final touches to the composition.

The unique singing style that embodied his music is showcased through recurring melodic motifs, slurs, intervals of thirds, diatonic runs and jumps in thirds and sixth, and string crossings. His compositions evoke feelings, images, and ideas through his trademark signature vocabulary that include arpeggios, chromatic scale, whole tones, double-stops, and multiple stops into the highest positions. Often favouring arpeggio and legato, his passages frequently incorporate variations, chromatic scales, and chords in uneven intervals, and accents with different types of articulation. In his short genre pieces, his artistic narrative is amplified by using irregular metres, a mixture of even and uneven rhythms, and minor chords, typical of Sephardic folk music. He applied dynamic effects and harmonies with ease, depending on whether he desired a lyrical or dramatic outcome, playing semitones or switching to playing whole tones to create more harmonics. His music unfolds and flows: to this end, he utilised beautiful bowings and string crossings, traversing across octaves over the finger board for drama and effect. As composer and performer, Souroujon created his own musical language, lyrical harmonies that echo his roots, his essence and his emotions.

Analysing his complete work, his musical style fuses motifs from folk music, classical music, and violin playing traditions. It should be emphasized that his melodic and harmonic foundation—an underlying awareness of Sephardic Jewish and Spanish melodies—has always been part of his own internal musical vocabulary, his trademark, underlining his musical language and instilled either subtly or forcibly in most of his compositions. Like other Romantics, he often juxtaposed idealistic, fantastical tales in his compositions, reminiscent of tone poems.

Forming his legacy, his crafted exquisitely structured compositions are rewarding for a violinist to play. The feeling of some of the works is improvisatory and virtuosic. At a deeper level, he seemed to be in a continuous search for a way to express nostalgia, yearning, and longing, of time passing. In the end, he managed to impose his own personal, distinctive



singing style, embodying an expressive voice that is highly individualistic and idiosyncratic.

### III.3 The Beginnings: The Cadenzas of Leon Souroujon

Leon Souroujon commenced his activities as a composer writing cadenzas (See Appendix B). Analysing what prompted him to be a composer, it seems likely that he began to compose music out of defiance. After the “Crystal Night” occurred in 1939, many Jews were attacked and denied their civil liberties. One of the first occurrences of suppression was that Jewish citizens were not permitted to shop. Among many of the indignities he had to face, Souroujon often related the story of when a shopkeeper refused to sell him the sheet music of Joachim’s cadenza to the Brahms’ Violin Concerto because he was Jewish. As a consequence, Souroujon, who never tolerated injustice, composed his own unique version of the cadenza to the Brahms’ Violin Concerto. This cadenza was probably his first composition; it was published only several years after the war ended, in 1954, through Editions Musique publishing house (Figure 1).



*Figure 1. Excerpt of Leon Souroujon’s cadenza to the Brahms Violin Concerto*

Souroujon countered the oppression by composing. Out of tragedy, beauty arose. Still, he would always create music to reflect romanticism. Resisting the foreboding force of Fascism, Souroujon found solace in music, his escape out of austere circumstances.

Inspired by his foray in the composition world, he continued in this direction and composed several other cadenzas. His next venture into composition was most likely the cadenzas to Mozart’s Violin Concertos I, II, III, and VII. Written in the 1960s, these works highlight how much he appreciated Mozart. Even though many composers and violinists had

written cadenzas to Mozart's first three Violin Concertos, Souroujon wrote his own, which are delightful and light in spirit, referencing Mozart in a more nostalgic and dramatic way (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Cadenza for the first movement of the Mozart Concerto No. 3, bars 13 to 18

Although Souroujon knew that Concerto VII was disputed as being attributable to Mozart, he decided to write a cadenza for it in any case, simply because he liked it. In addition, he wrote a cadenza to Mozart's *Rondo in C for Violin and Orchestra K 373* in the 1970s. Although his cadenzas respect the style Mozart wrote the composition in, they are still lightly infused with Souroujon's musical signature markings (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Souroujon's cadenza to Mozart's *Rondo KV 373*

Souroujon, who was quite fanciful in spirit, loved Tartini and had an affinity for his

compositions such as Tartini's *The Devil's Trill* sonata<sup>1</sup> and particularly his lesser-known work, *Didone Abbandonata*, Sonata in G, Opus 1, No. 10, which was one of several works he recorded in the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> In this edition of *Didone Abbandonata*, he employs his own unique fingering and bowing techniques (Figure 4).

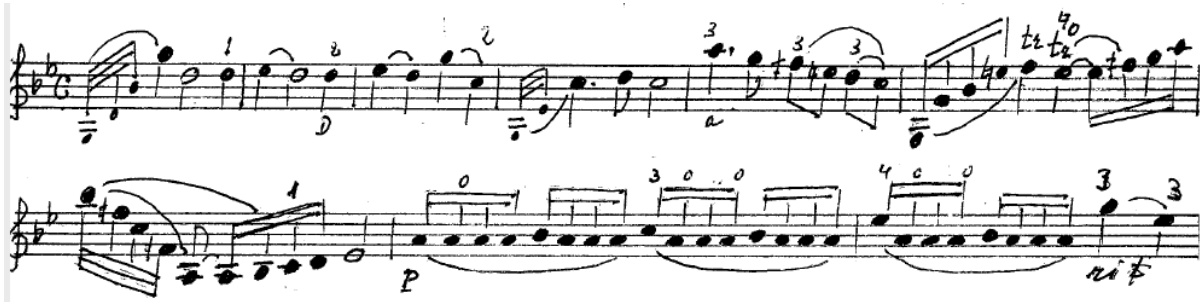


Figure 4. Cadenza for Tartini's sonata, *Didone Abbandonata*, bars 1 to 9

When Souroujon discovered that the third movement of *Didone Abbandonata* was not part of the original composition, he decided to write a cadenza for it. It is possible to postulate that Souroujon's cadenza was written around 1969–1970, because he had handwritten part of the cadenza on the back of the article on Bach's *Chaconne* from *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* that he published in 1970. His cadenza is a ravishing and delightful composition written in his own musical language and taking a little inspiration from Kreisler's cadenza to Tartini's *The Devil's Trill* sonata. Overall, his cadenzas are difficult, applied liberally with his trademarks of intervals, thirds, fourths, sixths, arpeggios, and scales in different double-stops.

1 Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing Tartini's work:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDevilsTrillMvt1.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDevilsTrillMvt2.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDevilsTrillMvt3.mp3>

2 Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing Tartini's work:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDidoneAbandonataMvt1.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDidoneAbandonataMvt2.mp3>

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/TartiniSonataDidoneAbandonataMvt3.mp3>

### III.4 Recueil d'Études

The *Recueil d'Études* are practical studies, each exhibiting the breadth of Souroujon's technical skill and music vocabulary (See Appendix B). Like Paganini's breathtaking *24 Caprices* or Bach's weighty *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* or even Ysaÿe's reflective version of the *Six Sonatas* (as an extension of Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*), Souroujon's numerous compositions were composed for educational purposes. He aspired to showcase both the instrument's emotionality at a basic level plus to enhance the capacity of each student individually.

His students still credit him for their development as artists and have expressed the view that it was a privilege to study under Leon Souroujon (Y. Radionov, personal communication, December 20, 2018 and A. Stankov, personal communication, November 28, 2018). As part of his practice, starting in the 1970s, he often wrote études for his students. The driving force of these études, although admittedly for pedagogical reasons, was to instruct his students on technical aspects or to perfect certain violin techniques, such as double-stops, trills, octaves, and pizzicati. The exercises are exuberant and expressive rather than routine and orderly: the scope of his études requires virtuosic skill and emotional maturity. He twists and turns arpeggios, scales, and double-stops, mixes whole tones and chromatic tones, and slows and speeds up as the music calls. In fact, he had a predilection for composing music beyond technique and towards expressiveness. Some of these études he considered special enough to rework and add as part of his *Suite of Compositions*.

#### III.4.1 The Early Études

It is difficult to pinpoint precisely when or where he composed many of the études, since he did not date his work and lived equally between Bulgaria and Belgium in the 70s.

One of Bulgaria's most important composers, Pancho Vladigerov,<sup>3</sup> edited Souroujon's first compilation of études (*Études 1–6*), which was published by Editions Musique Publishing in 1976. Therefore, it is logical that the first portion of *Recueil d'Études* was composed prior to 1976, probably in Sofia, and the remainder, which formed the later études in Antwerp in the 80s and 90s.

### *Étude 1*

The piece titled *Étude 1* is his first étude, an exercise in various violin techniques; it features the chromatic scale and legato form and fits perfectly under the heading of *Recueil d'Études* (Figure 5).



A potent musically rich composition, he included it in his first compilation of his suite, *Quatre Pièces*, which was dedicated to his wife.



Figure 6. *Étude 2*, bars 9 to 12

### *Étude 3*

*Étude 3* is a virtuoso piece that greatly emphasizes chromatic scales and original intervals such as 7ths and 9ths. It is in an allegro tempo and features a range of string crossings with legato form with accents (Figure 7).



Figure 7. *Étude 3*, bars 19 and 20

### *Étude 4*

*Étude 4* is slightly slower, in an allegro moderato tempo. Starting on a declarative tone, with help from accelerando and ritardando the music turns into a whirlwind of chromatic scales and arpeggios, as intermingling legato, detaché, spiccato, marcato and string crossings (Figure 8).



Figure 8. *Étude 4*, bars 1 to 7

### *Étude 5*

*Étude 5* is composed in rubato con anime form, a lyrical and dramatic piece, featuring free tempi, scales in double-stops and artistic shifts in mood (Figure 9).

Figure 9. *Étude 5*, bars 31 to 37

Following his custom of amending études that he found worthy, as he had undertaken in a similar fashion with *Étude 2*, Souroujon included a slightly altered version of *Étude 5* that he renamed *Ballade* in his *Suite of Compositions*.

### *Étude 6*

*Étude 6* has the tempo marking of *allegro con fuoco* and features drastic shifts in dynamics from soft and mysterious fragments to fiery outbursts, like musical explosions. The techniques applied include string crossings, accents, legato and spiccato, as well as a range of

low to very high positions, and scales in double-stops (Figure 10).



Figure 10. *Étude 6*, bars 27 and 28

Interestingly, Souroujon decided to use this *étude* as the allegro portion of *Prélude et Allegro* that is featured in his *Suite of Compositions*.

### *Étude Octave*

*Étude Octave* is an interval exercise meant for a violinist to practise octaves.

Technically very demanding, riddled with double-stops and arpeggios in different positions, it is suited for an advanced violinist (Figure 11). Souroujon wrote it after the *Études 1–6* in late 1970s and in Sofia, since the language of the manuscript is Bulgarian. He considered *Étude Octave* worthy to be included in his *Suite of Compositions*, slightly modifying and retitling it to *Les Octaves*.

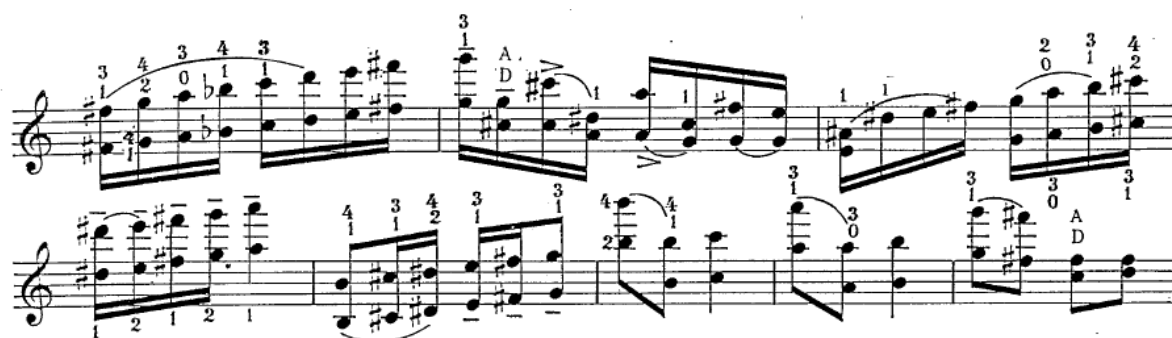


Figure 11. *Étude Octave*, bars 53 to 60

### *Étude Arpeggio*

Written around the same time as *Étude Octave*, the header found on the manuscript for *Étude Arpeggio* is written in Bulgarian, thus it is likely that it was composed after the *Études 1–6* that were published in 1976. The passages are in his typical style. The arpeggios



are played on different strings, various positions, and in legato form (Figure 12).



Figure 12. *Étude Arpeggio*, bars 1 to 3

Played in extreme positions, the composition is technically demanding. Stylistically, the piece has a Modernist feel, with elements of atonality. Here, Souroujon employed the same arpeggio technique as in Paganini's Caprice No. 1.

#### *Étude I (as categorised in the Radionov/Levi Edition)*

An elaborate composition, *Étude I* begins with echoes of Bach but moves quickly to showcase Souroujon's typical language, including liberal use of intervals such as fourths, fifths and chromatics. He then turns to exhibit sequences of sixths and octaves in the style of Ysaÿe, which then flow into triplets and arpeggios (Figure 13).



Figure 13. *Étude I*, bars 1 to 8

Even though this composition is thoroughly constructed with an exposition, development and

re-exposition, it ends rather abruptly with a major chord. The composition is chromatic, acrobatic, modular, and well-crafted and it makes interesting use of string crossings.

### *Étude V (as categorised in the Radionov/Levi Edition)*

Another virtuoso composition titled of *Étude V* immediately starts off with a dancing character in the 5/8 metric. The tempo marking of *allegretto* evolves rather soon into a faster and less refined *allegro rustico*, reinforcing the dance feeling (Figure 14).



Figure 14. *Étude V*, bars 36 to 41

In spirit *Étude V* conjures up the lighter and more devilish *Allegretto Scherzando*. With joyous exuberance, Souroujon inflects the piece with spiccato, trills and accents, giving it its distinctive character. Even though the use of double-stops is limited, the composition features his archetypal intervals such as fourths, fifths, sixths and even sevenths. In the middle, Souroujon introduces the effect of hesitation and drama by intermingling arpeggios punctuated with pauses. The coda is fast and frivolous and ends comically and surprisingly with a natural harmonic, a technique he also used for the beginning of this piece. Its harmonic and rhythmic nature is infectious.

### *III.4.2 The Later Études*

Leon Souroujon taught violin privately in Belgium from the 1980s until his retirement in 2000. During this period, he composed additional études, intended to improve the skills of his students' complex techniques, intonation, and rhythms, and the artistry of violin playing embodied in violin practice.

### *Étude en Forme de Variations 1 and 2*

*Étude en Forme de Variations 1* was composed circa 1989. The *Étude en Forme de Variations 2* is dated 10 March 1990. As the title suggests, both are rampant with variations. Every variation has its own character and technical difficulty augmented with *detaché*, string crossings, octaves, and position shifting (Figure 15 & 16). Being less demanding and more tonal than his other études, they are ideal for aspiring violin students to practise and can be played as an encore during concerts.

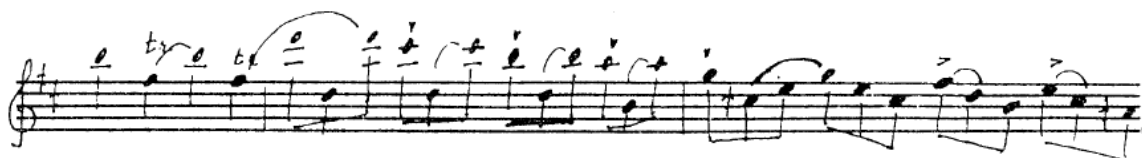


Figure 15. *Étude en Forme de Variations 1*, bars 17 to 19



Figure 16. *Étude en Forme de Variations 2*, bars 88 to 91

### *Étude Chromatique*

*Étude Chromatique*<sup>4</sup> is a light and beautiful composition, a relatively easy piece for a young violinist to use to practise the chromatic scale. This étude, along with various others, was composed for the sole purpose of violin pedagogy. He implemented in it every variation of the chromatic scale with a mixture of bow techniques and positions: *legato*, *staccato*,

<sup>4</sup> Souroujon wrote *Étude Chromatique* for Eliot Lawson.

martelé, double-stops, arpeggio, and chords (Figure 17).



Figure 17. *Étude Chromatique*, bars 10 to 13

The music has symmetry, is fast-paced and dramatic, and is lovely to listen to. *Étude Chromatique* was played successfully in a few national competitions in Belgium in the 1990s.

### *Étude Staccato*

*Étude Staccato*<sup>5</sup> is a pedagogical work written in Belgium around 1993. With some minor modifications, Souroujon included it later in his *Suite of Compositions*. Upon playing the piece, the work is defiantly virtuosic. Its singing introduction is expressive and nostalgic, followed by beautiful shifts in tempo that start with *moderato*, followed by an *allegro* that is fast and difficult, and layered cascading staccatos in different rhythms (Figure 18).



Figure 18. *Étude Staccato*, bars 56 to 61

<sup>5</sup> Souroujon wrote *Étude Staccato* for Eliot Lawson.

It was performed in several competitions, where jury members were always interested in knowing more about the composition and its origin. With some minor alterations, *Étude Staccato* became *Le Staccato* that the composer later included in his *Suite of Compositions*.

### *Étude Ballade*

Integrating a variety of violin techniques artistically, Souroujon wrote *Étude Ballade* in 1998, a pedagogical work written in an andante quasi rubato tempo. As was his usual practice, he considered the work musically rich, complex, and cohesive enough to add it to his suite of nine compositions, as he had with a few of his other études. After he made minor changes to the tempo, dynamics, and articulation markings, particularly from andante quasi rubato to amabile e quasi rubato, he renamed it *Ballade 2* and published it under his *Huit Pièces* (Fibonacci collection) (Figure 19).



Figure 19. *Étude Ballade*, bars 19 to 21

During the Romantic period, Chopin, Schumann, and Brahms wrote compositions titled *Ballade*. Souroujon is unmistakably referencing the convention of ballads outlined by these composers— however, in his own style. It is an exquisite piece that resonates with the singing qualities of the instrument.

### III.5 Suite of Compositions: *Pièces pour Violon Seul*

Souroujon wrote exclusively for the unaccompanied solo violin genre. His *Suite of Compositions* comprises the music he considered his masterworks (See Appendix B). In total, there are nine compositions which he had first conceptualized as a compilation of four pieces under the title *Quatre Pièces pour Violon seul*. Written around 1980, he finalized and

arranged these four pieces during an agonizing time of grieving and mourning for his wife, Katya Kazandjiewa. *Quatre Pièces pour Violon seul* is dedicated to Kazandjiewa, who was a profound influence on his life and his artistry.

Each piece in *Quatre Pièces pour Violon Seul* has its own character and is named accordingly: *Méditation*, *Allegretto Scherzando*, *Ballade*, and *Prélude & Allegro*. The selection included three original pieces plus an étude, which he considered a special enough piece to be included. He published them in Antwerp at a historical printing house, Jos van Ael. The compositions are a philosophical reflection on life and death: *Meditation* is dreamy; *Allegretto Scherzando* is diabolical; *Ballade* is dramatic; *Prélude and Allegro* is dynamic. He then added four more to his *Suite of Compositions* over the next decades, continuing into his 90s.

*Quatre Pièces* became *Pièces pour Violin Seul*, a compilation of his signature pieces. In essence, they are standalone pieces that he wrote as his homage to the violin and its playing traditions. Eventually he would publish eight pieces under Fibonacci Publishing in 1999. He did add *Les Octaves* to his *Suite of Compositions* in his personal records; however, it was not published. Overall, the style of his *Suite of Compositions* is more absolute than programmatic in nature, but it is still rooted in emotionality.

### ***Méditation***

The composition is meditative in feeling as the title *Méditation*<sup>6</sup> suggests. Quietly flowing, it is a slow, sombre, melodic piece that has a dreamy, singing quality. Souroujon selected the tempo of andante for its constraint to create long, spacious passages and he uses dual-string techniques to build a magical ambient atmosphere (Figure 20).

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<sup>6</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonMeditation.mp3>



Figure 20. *Méditation*, bars 1 to 3

It is interesting to note that this composition falls under a sub-genre in classical music called “meditation”, as outlined in International Music Score Library Project which several composers have written for, including Massenet,<sup>7</sup> Ysaÿe, Saint-Saëns and Dvořák. Souroujon was very proud of his composition, and wrote to professors and to conservatories to introduce the work.

### *Allegretto Scherzando*

Part of the *Quatre Pièces* collection, *Allegretto Scherzando*<sup>8</sup> is based on the *Étude 2* that is part of Souroujon’s *Recueil d’Études*. He made some minor adjustments to it, such as reducing the tempo from allegro to allegretto and applying the comical effect of the scherzando. *Allegretto Scherzando* is a divinely witty violinistic piece with shifting dynamics, requiring exaggerated bowing and articulations (Figure 21).



Figure 21. *Allegretto Scherzando*, bars 9 and 10

For this piece, he used the bowing technique from Paganini’s *Caprice No. 2* (Figure 22).

<sup>7</sup> Jules Massenet was born on May 12, 1842 and died on August 13, 1912.

<sup>8</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonAllegrettoScherzando.mp3>

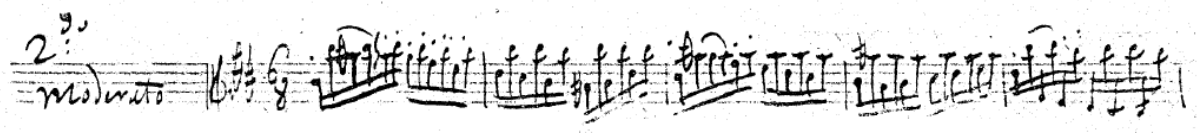


Figure 22. Paganini's Caprice No. 2, bars 1 to 5

### **Ballade**

*Ballade*<sup>9</sup> is a touching, emotive, achingly passionate piece. It is certainly one of Souroujon's masterworks. It is filled with anguish. It transports you through anger, sorrow, fury, and elation. It is magical. A stand-alone composition, he figured in much more complex motifs and nuanced soft textures, advancing his music through a lovely sequence of arpeggios, double-stops, and scales in thirds and sixths (Figure 23).



Figure 23. Ballade, bars 14 to 17

It is very delicate in parts, unrestrained in other sections, and vigorous in others, marked *rubato con anime*, freely to be played with animation. *Ballade* is formed from *Étude 3* of *Recueil d'Études*.

### **Prélude et Allegro**

*Prélude et Allegro*<sup>10</sup> is a difficult piece that concluded his collection, *Quatre Pièces*. *Prelude* has the tempo-marking *andante*. *Allegro* was first conceptualised as an études to which he added the introduction portion of *Prélude*. The *Prélude* is marked by the tempo

<sup>9</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonBallade.mp3>

<sup>10</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonPreludeEtAllegro.mp3>



allegro con fuoco (with fire or with energy) that starts slow and builds in speed and intensity, and features a multitude of techniques including tremolo, glissando, double-stops, scales, arpeggios, and free style. In the Allegro part, Souroujon features particular accents such as spiccato, marcato, and legato (Figure 24).



Figure 24. *Prélude et Allegro*, bars 1 and 2

Souroujon's individual musical language permeates the piece, as in all his compositional works: it has the spirit of nostalgia and a singing feeling. The composition weaves different articulations and intervals and explores a dynamic range of articulations to evoke from sweeping dramatic effects to delicate, magical, otherworldly soundscapes. There is always a thoughtful virtuosity in his composition, where each technique serves the narrative of his music in his singing style. These four pieces are the original compositions forming *Quatre Pièces*, which would in turn form the first part of his *Suite of Compositions*.

### ***Prélude B.A.C.H.***

On one occasion in the 90s, Souroujon went to a concert to listen to a work of Belgian composer Jacques Leduc. Souroujon observed and easily deciphered the concept behind one of Leduc's compositions that juxtaposed letters to music notes. The piece titled *B.A.C.H.* played off of the musical notes B, A, C, and H to spell out the name of the composer. After the concert, being really intrigued with the idea of composing in this experimental way, Souroujon decided to write a composition based on this concept. Titled *Prélude B.A.C.H.*, he began the composition with these related notes (Figure 25). It is a lyrical, singing, experimental modern piece, punctuated with arpeggios, expressive intervals, pizzicatos, scales, double-stops, and chromatic scale, tinged with a touch of atonal harmonies.



Figure 25. *Prélude B.A.C.H.*, bars 1 to 3

## **Ballade 2**

Souroujon's titles have a sense of flair and yet often reflect an awareness of the violin's discipline. They are purposeful and often indicate the intent and central idea of his compositions. For instance, this "ballade", which was first composed as *Étude Ballade*, is named *Ballade* to add formality and flourish on top (Figure 26).



Figure 26. *Ballade 2*, bars 1 to 4

Furthermore, his compositions are sometimes highly programmatic and often have an added narrative dimension, such as the story behind his *Ballade*, in which he relates a story of when he was in a village at the foot of a mountain:

One day I was walking and I stood by the gate of a pretty house with a balcony full of flowers, and a big, rose-coloured garden. All of a sudden, someone touched me on my shoulder. An elderly lady bent over her cane and spoke to me, "You do not know what happened at this house long time ago" and she went on to tell me that it is the story of a girl named Rosalia. She said, "If that steeple with its clock there could speak, it would tell you a very sad story." She walked away from me and repeated again: "Yes, if it could speak, it would tell you the story of Rosalia." Not able to sleep

in my room that night, I was awakened by the sound of clock. Two strokes rang, two very sad chimes. Half asleep, I could hear someone telling me the story; it was the clock from its tall bell-tower relating the story to me: Little Rosalia had a friend, an orphan, Michel, who came to live them. At the age of seventeen, Rosalia's family had decided to send him to the big city to learn a trade. Pretty Rosalia sewed him a shirt, which she had made with her own hands and spent up all of her savings on his gift. She promised she would wait for him. A lot of time went by and, one fine day, she learned that Michel would return to the village. As he approached, she could hear the bells of the horses of his carriage. Rosalia waited on her balcony, surrounded by the most beautiful roses from her garden. She wondered if he would stop in front of her house. When he passed without stopping, without a glance, the bouquet of flowers all became sprinkled with tears. All the petals fell to the street below. Then I heard the clock of the steeple sound three strokes and I woke up from the dream. (C. Walton, Personal Communication, 1990s)

As a child, he often heard this folk tale, which inspired the composition. Through a process of discovery and experimentation, Souroujon composed deliberately coherent compositional pieces that he envisaged being played one day, on stage, or being recorded.

### ***Burlesque***

The burlesque in the performance arts has a long history dating back to the Italian Baroque: a comedy of exaggerations applied to theatre, dance, and music, reaching its pinnacle through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and into early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The core intent of the burlesque is to mock. Musically, burlesque is high-spirited, underpinned with comical and bawdy sounds. Souroujon's *Burlesque*<sup>11</sup> is a technically demanding piece that stretches the violinist's skills with complex combinations of legato, accents, arpeggios, shifting dynamics,

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<sup>11</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition:  
<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonBurlesque.mp3>

and alternating string-crossings (Figure 27).



Figure 27. *Burlesque*, bars 1 to 4

Marked *allegro a la burlesca*, it is funny in character, fast-paced, with diverse accents, playful, and reminiscent of the vibrancy of Paganini's *Caprice No. 12* (Figure 28).



Figure 28. *Paganini Caprice No. 12*, bars 1 and 3

### *Le Staccato*

*Le Staccato*<sup>12</sup> is another composition that was formed from an étude of the same name. Comparing the sheet music of the *Étude Staccato* to *Le Staccato*, one can discern how Souroujon retained the key components, making only minor alterations to the dynamics and the articulation (Figure 29).



Figure 29. *Le Staccato*, bars 98 to 100

<sup>12</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition:

<http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonLeStaccato.mp3>

Because he considered it a strong piece, he incorporated it in his suites published through Fibonacci Music Publishing. Like the other composers, especially Bach and Paganini, Souroujon developed many of his fully-fledged compositions from his études.

Here, Souroujon uses the special characteristics of the staccato—a sound achieved with short bow strokes such as *martele*, *spiccato*, *sautille*, *jete*, up-bow, down-bow, and *ricochet*—to create extraordinary effects (Figure 30).



Figure 30. Paganini Caprice No. 10, bars 1 to 4

Many other composers have featured the technique. For example, Wieniawski did so in his *L'École Moderne*, Études (9) for Violin, Opus 10, No. 4, *Le Staccato* in E-flat Major.

### *Les Octaves*

Even within this quite strict violin technique of octave shifts, *Les Octaves* radiates Souroujon's musical language (Figure 31).

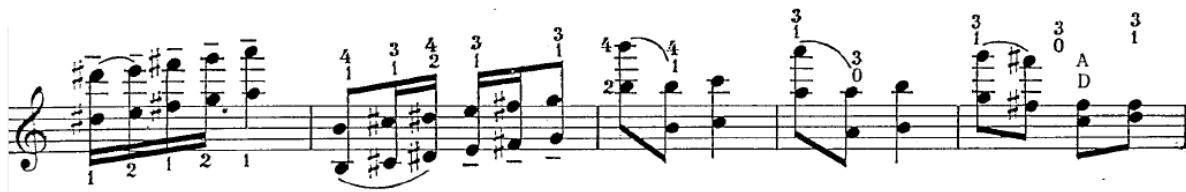


Figure 31. *Les Octaves*, bars 56 to 60

From an analysis of copies of his sheet music, it emerges that *Les Octaves* is based on an étude of the same name. Comparing the sheet music of the two works, Souroujon in this case made quite bold adjustments to *the Étude Octave*, probably after 2000, and then retitled it *Les Octaves*.

Intensely reworked, this piece underwent major changes, with Souroujon editing large

sections and cutting out a full page of music. The effect is that the new version is much more precise and refined. The composition is shorter, less repetitive. It is a difficult piece, reminiscent of Paganini's *Caprice No. 23*, cleverly planned and mapped around the octave (Figure 32).



Figure 32. Paganini *Caprice No. 23*, bars 1 to 6

Considering it an important piece, he allocated it to his *Suite of Compositions*, completing the set of nine pieces.

### III.6 Short Genre Pieces

Expressive of his inner emotions, Souroujon composed five exquisite *Short Genre Pieces* that he categorized as a set and titled *Pièces pour Violon seul (ou Alto ou Violoncelle)* (See Appendix B and Appendix F). Thematically, the works were consistently narrative in nature and highly programmatic, often inspired by the fairy tales, folk melodies, and lullabies of the Sephardic Jews as well as romantic stories and the music of Spain (Armistead, 2010). Always linked to a story or a narrative, imbued with his improvisational singing style, the short genre pieces have character and encapsulate Souroujon's romantic style. These beautiful compositions express nostalgia, longing, and warmth, with a lyrical, melodic, and in-depth sound. They echo Spanish melodies and rhythms, as in *Images Espagnoles*, or melancholic Jewish lamentation, as in *Improvisation sur un Thème de Schema Israel (Liturgie Juive)*.

By the end of his life, he managed to compile the five pieces together under one category, archived in the same folder. These works require more of a violinist: artistry and interpretative prowess rather than just technical finesse. Interestingly, he recorded four of the

five pieces on the viola, preferring the distinctive character of that instrument for these pieces and later transcribed them for the cello. Each piece has its very own, unique temperament and is imbued with Souroujon's signature singing style.

### *Images Espagnoles*

His composition, *Images Espagnoles*,<sup>13</sup> self-published in October 1979, requires a violinist to be able to traverse a full range of emotions, to capture the weightiness of life, love, drama, passion, jealousy, loss, and sadness. A programmatic piece, Souroujon based *Images Espagnoles* on the play, *The Love of Don Perlimplin*, by Federico Garcia Lorca.<sup>14</sup> According to Souroujon's retelling of it translated from the French, the story goes as follows:

One evening, at sunset, after reading Garcia Lorca's play: Don Perlimplin was a well-known character in his village; he was a scholar and astronomer. In the first scene, we see Don Perlimplin, hiding behind the curtain of the door of his balcony, listening and watching Belissa singing from the balcony opposite. Having finished her song, Belissa returns to her room and the governess of Don Perlimplin enters the scene and declares: "You are in love but do not worry, you must marry Belissa". On that, she leaves the terrace and starts shouting to whoever wants to hear it: "Don Perlimplin is in love with you, Belissa, he wants to marry you." At the same time Belissa's mother appears in the window hearing this, addresses Belissa: "You must marry Don Perlimplin; like that you'll have whatever you want to have because he is a rich man, serious, intelligent." The curtain falls, and the first scene is closed.

The second scene takes place after the marriage: In the bedroom, Belissa is already in bed. There are some exchanges of words between them and Don Perlimplin, who has his whole life watched the stars, was not prepared to consummate their love. Don Perlimplin gets into his nightgown and goes up the stairs in his

<sup>13</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonImagesEspagnoles.mp3>

<sup>14</sup> Spanish poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca was born on June 5, 1898 and died on August 19, 1936.

observatory, sits in front of the telescope and falls asleep. It is a fact that Belissa was one of the prettiest girls, but also the most promiscuous. All the boys in the neighbourhood were in love with her. They came out one by one, whistled to her to come down to meet them, and she did. The scene dissolves to black for a few minutes and then it is dawn. We see Belissa still sleeping in her bed. Don Perlimplin climbs down from the observatory but he goes down with heavy heart. Just he is about to wake Belissa up, he discovers black spots on her bust. “What are those black spots on your bust, Belissa?” “It's you who made them with your wild temperament,” answers she. Don Perlimplin, who was intelligent, understood quickly, vows revenge: ‘I'm going to make sure that she is so sweet to me’.

In the third scene, Belissa begins to receive anonymous letters from a mysterious lover and often listen to his serenades. One day, they finally decide to meet each other in the garden; she is nervous enough. She gets dressed and makes herself look very beautiful for their meeting. She is surprised to find Don Perlimplin instead waiting for her in the garden and he says to her: “I know why you are made yourself so beautiful, so I will challenge your lover to a dual.”

Finally, in the fourth scene, Don Perlimplin gets ready and dresses up with a beautiful red cloak. Belissa sees a person in a red cloak approaching her in the garden and runs toward to meet him. Suddenly, she screams. She is very shocked because the person has been stabbed. She is convinced that it was Don Perlimplin who did it. When she moves back the hood of the red cloak, a long silence ensues as Belissa realizes that the person she was in love with was no one other than Don Perlimplin, who had committed suicide. (C. Walton, personal communication, 1992-1993)<sup>15</sup>

Connected to his Sephardic Jewish roots, Souroujon looked to faraway Spain as a

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<sup>15</sup> Leon Souroujon related the story of how Frederico Garcia Lorca's *The Love of Don Perlimplin* inspired his composition *Images Espagnoles* to Claude Walton, who noted it down (with Souroujon's permission) sometime in 1992-1993.



fantasyland, here recounting through the sounds of the violin the tale of a tragic love affair. The textures highlight Spanish melodies in a pure sense. Even though he did not know it well, he felt a bond to Spain. When musicians review his manuscript with the date 1979 handwritten on it, it becomes apparent that *Images Espagnoles* was first composed initially for viola. The music of *Images Espagnoles* is expressive and exploratory, founded on an andante refrain elevated with pizzicato and allegretto passages (Figure 33). It is imbued with Spanish rhythms, starting from a slow refrain and building towards more potent exuberance and strong character at the end.



Figure 33. *Images Espagnoles*, bars 1 to 6

### *Nocturne*

Generally, the nocturne form resides much more prevalently in the world of piano than in the world of violin, however, violin nocturnes do exist. Many were created during its pinnacle in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with a flourish of nocturnes from Chopin, Debussy, Liszt, Fauré, and others. Inspired by the darkness of night, the moods and characteristics of nocturnes range from introspective to lively.

The nature of Souroujon's *Nocturne*<sup>16</sup> is mysterious. Although the piece is relatively short in length, Souroujon's singing style shines through. *Nocturne* is programmatic yet whimsical, underlined with his vocabulary of arpeggios, pizzicato, double-stops, and

<sup>16</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing composition: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonNocturne.mp3>

chromatic scales that he loved to include in his pieces to reinforce the feeling of night (Figure 34). He wrote the manuscript for the viola version of *Nocturne*, which is dated 27 May 1982.

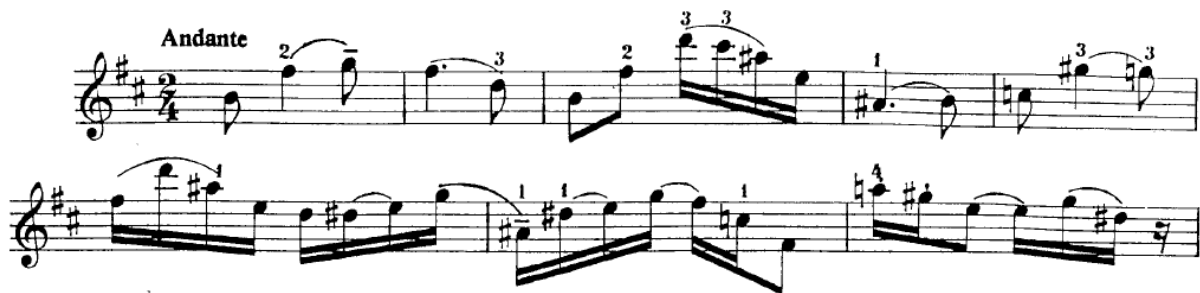


Figure 34. *Nocturne*, bars 1 to 8

### *Berceuse*

In the winter of 1980, Souroujon composed his wondrously lyrical piece, *Berceuse in D Major*. *Berceuse*<sup>17</sup> is a perfect example of Jewish Ladino folk melody, a lullaby that he composed for either the violin or the viola.<sup>18</sup> It starts slowly with a gentle, soothing passage and then speeds up, involving many scales and chord shifts, finishing with another slow, quiet section (Figure 35). It follows an ABA pattern, a slow-fast-slow movement.



Figure 35. *Berceuse*, bars 1 to 6

Souroujon's stylistic and aesthetic influences can certainly be traced back to his Sephardic roots and upbringing, whilst his work is permeated with his mastery of technique and his innate connection to romanticism. Meritoriously, the lyrical simplicity of the

<sup>17</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing composition: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonBerceuse.mp3>

<sup>18</sup> In 2012, *Berceuse* was performed and recorded on ATV television in Belgium by Eliot Lawson.

composition is a perfect example of his capacity to produce haunting melodies. The piece has a nostalgic, yearning, compelling quality. He often spoke of the composition. Its transparency provides startling insight into what joy and inspiration he had in conceiving it. Souroujon improvised the piece. He did describe on occasion how he composed the work: he picked up his violin and then played whatever he liked, trying out passages that he would note down, and then continuing in this manner and repeating the process.

On several occasions Souroujon expressed the connection he felt to Heinrich Heine,<sup>19</sup> the poet and essayist. Souroujon had related to his daughter, Anna, that Heine believed that the most beautiful stories of spring were always written in the winter, which is ironically when he composed *Berceuse*. He was composing from the stance of a violinist, a melodic master technician.

*Berceuse* is the French word for “lullaby”, a gentle melody to lull children to sleep. Frederic Chopin is credited with inventing the berceuse genre and breathed fresh air into other genres (nocturnes, preludes, études, ballades) for the piano in classical music (Bielecki, 2003). His *Berceuse, Opus 57 in D Major* in 1843, a gorgeous, complex composition inspired composers such as Fauré, Ysaÿe, Stravinsky, and Ravel, who also composed lullabies, or “berceuses”. In the spirit of this tradition, Souroujon composed his *Berceuse*, which he sometimes referred to as *Babushka*, or “grandmother” in Russian. The work depicted for him a dreamy childhood memory, a musical painting of his beloved grandmother.

The composition is based on a Sephardic Jewish folk tale often told to him by his grandmother. The stories, passed on through oral traditions from one generation to the next, are significant for Souroujon’s aesthetic. Being a romantic, fantastical stories were appealing to him, particularly those he had heard as a child. His grandmother related bedtime stories to Leon full of whimsy, stories of love, of adventurous quests, with heroes and beautiful heroines. The heroes were full of courage and brave, and she would often adapt the tale to

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<sup>19</sup> German poet and essayist Heinrich Heine was born on December 13, 1797 and died on February 17, 1856.

depict him as the romantic hero. His grandmother, whom he called “Babushka”, was invaluable in forming his musical aesthetics, passing on as she did the folk stories and folk music of his ancestors. In the following passage, Souroujon recanted the specific folk story that his grandmother often told him, which formed the inspiration for *Berceuse*:

My grandmother was a small, petite figure, always dressed in black. I remember our bedtime ritual fondly. She would begin by saying, ‘Leon, it is time to go to sleep,’ I always answered, ‘I will go to bed if you tell me the story about little Belissa.’ I remembered that together we would climb the stairs. After washing me and tucking me into bed, she would sit next to me and tell me her stories. The composition of *Berceuse* that I wrote was based on this story.

A long time ago in the palace lived a king who was very sad, because his beloved daughter was taken from him because of a curse placed on his wife. The king was so devastated with grief that he kept the palace dark. Everywhere you wandered in the palace was dim and gloomy. Candlelight was forbidden. One day, he looked into his crystal ball and was able to see where the witch had gone, travelling through the desert and over the mountains and into a secret cave. There she hid the key of the room where Belissa was being held captive in a cave in a faraway valley. At last he knew where his daughter was situated. The king appointed a young man to the treacherous task of finding the key. After enduring the desert heat, the young man was bitten by a cobra and could not continue on his quest.

At that point in the story she would stop and say to me, ‘don’t worry’, singing a melody. Taaaaaadaaa taaaadaaa tada daaaaa, a certain melody that would comfort me and often I would sleep to. And then she would continue. The king was very angry with the fellow whom he had trusted to get the key. Another was sent who passed through the desert, but in the mountains, he could not pass the glaciers. I would tell

her I was afraid that Belissa could not be saved. My grandmother would sing various refrains in the same melody, “Do not worry; everything will be fine, do not worry, when you wake up, you are going to take your pony and with that pony you will be strong and you will pass through the desert and over the mountain and you would get the key and with flowers under your arms, you are going to get Belissa and you are going to save her from the witch’s enchantment and she will wake up”. (C. Walton, personal communication, 1992-1993)<sup>20</sup>

Souroujon related the narrative accompanying the piece, which he wanted to be written out for prosperity. Part of the charm of Souroujon’s compositions is these narratives he builds around them. *Berceuse* was based on the melody his grandmother sang to him at bedtime. Stylistically, it combines Ladino folk music motifs brushed with an ordinary lilting lullaby.

His perspective was of a romantic, seeing the wonder of life, the magic of love, and the spirit of beauty. At times, reminiscences of his childhood, his beloved grandmother, or his memories transported him. The composition is touching, moving, simple, nostalgic, passionate, and appealingly natural. In his imagination, his Babushka was like a goddess whom he had lost. The piece encapsulates his musical aesthetics perfectly. His connection to Sephardic folk music shares common traits with other composers like Bartók and Enescu, who were drawn to the music of their ancestry. Each versed in classical music idioms, they were driven to embed their personal roots in their music: Bartók’s lifelong fascination with Romanian peasant music, and Enescu’s interpretations of the music of the Romanian Gypsies and Souroujon’s exploration of Sephardic and Spanish melodies.

### ***Improvisation sur un Thème de Schema Israel (Liturgie Juive)***

Written in 1984, *Improvisation sur un Thème de Schema Israel (Liturgie Juive)*<sup>21</sup> was

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<sup>20</sup> Leon Souroujon related the folk story his grandmother told him as a child to Claude Walton, who noted it down (with Souroujon’s permission) sometime in 1992-1993.

<sup>21</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonImprovisationsThemeJuive.mp3>

inspired by sacred Jewish cantorial music or Hebraic chants. Mimicking the cantor's spiritual wail, the melody utilises the G-string to propel a spiritual and reflective tone (Figure 36).



Figure 36. *Improvisation sur un Thème de Schema Israel (Liturgie Juive)*, bars 1 to 10

As indicated earlier, Souroujon's titles have always specified his intent. The title, *Improvisation sur un Thème de Schema Israel (Liturgie Juive)*, is a direct reference to a Jewish religious melody, specifically to the Schema Israel (commonly spelled Shema Israel, a significant prayer for those of the Jewish faith). In Jewish tradition, the Cantor (or 'Chazzan' or "Hazzan") leads the congregation in chanted prayers in a synagogue. Souroujon was not religious, but naturally identified with the Jewish culture (Denburg, 1996).

Many classical composers have also created music based on Jewish themes: Leonard Bernstein (*Kaddish – a Jewish Prayer of Death, Hashkiveinu*—a Jewish cantorial piece), Joseph Achron<sup>22</sup> (*Hebrew Melody*, Opus 33, for Violin and Orchestra, 1911), Arnold Schoenberg (*A Survivor from Warsaw*, 1947), Darius Milhaud<sup>23</sup> (*Kaddish*), Sergej Prokofiev (*Overture on Hebrew Themes*), and Ernest Bloch<sup>24</sup> (*Schelomo: Hebrew Rhapsody*, 1916; *Suite Hebraïque* for Viola or Violin and Orchestra, 1951).

### ***Improvisation sur Thème Folklore Tchèque***

Souroujon's last composition, *Improvisation sur Thème Folklore Tchèque* (2005), is loosely constructed on Dvořák's *Slavonic Dance Opus 42, No. 2* (1878), which in turn was loosely inspired by Brahms' *Hungarian Dances* (1869) based on local folk music. It

<sup>22</sup> Russian-born Jewish American composer Joseph Achron was born on May 13, 1886 and died on April 29, 1943.

<sup>23</sup> French composer and conductor Darius Milhaud was born on September 4, 1892 and died on June 22, 1974.

<sup>24</sup> Swiss-born American composer Ernest Bloch was born on July 24, 1880 and died on July 15, 1959.

is a lovely example of how musical inspiration ripples across the centuries. Souroujon found his inspiration at the retirement home in Brussels where he lived in the last years of his life. Entranced by a haunting melody sung by woman that echoed through the hallways, Souroujon was moved to capture that moment, composing an achingly sweet piece in an andante tempo that exudes a feeling of longing and yearning.

As in all his programmatic compositions, he imagined a narrative to go along with the composition: Souroujon related to me a story of forbidden love between a prince and princess that would have accompanied the piece. After he wrote the composition, he wanted to do something special for the singer in appreciation, arranging a surprise performance to present the work to her when everyone would be gathered together. He was ultimately a romantic and an idealist. *Improvisation sur Thème Folklore Tchecoslovaque* is composed of a simple, uncomplicated melody with creative variations enjoyable for the violinist to play, heightened with a range of dramatic, exciting, funny, quiet, fast, and sad moments (Figure 37).



Figure 37. *Improvisation sur Thème Folklore Tchecoslovaque*, bars 1 to 6

### ***Caprice (as categorized in the 2013 Radionov/Levy edition)***

As its title *Caprice* suggests, this short composition is capricious, using long and short notes leading somewhere and then elsewhere, resulting in a charming and lyrical composition. Its texture and atmosphere are reminiscent of *Images Espagnoles*. However, stylistically, it is much more modernistic. It is rather free (tempo rubato and no bars), with

mood and tempo swings ranging from animato to meno and largamente with its punctual tenutos (Figure 38).



Figure 38. *Caprice*, beginning section

Using double-stops, Souroujon builds the music towards a dramatic point, changing to a faster tempo. Following the largamente marking, the coda is slow and declamatory like that of his *Ballade*, floating into oblivion in thirds but finishing off with a long major double-stop marked piano. Souroujon did not catalogue this composition. Because of its nature and style, it can be categorised within his genre pieces together with *Berceuse* and *Images Espagnoles*.

### ***Mélodie Hébraïque***

Even though *Mélodie Hébraïque* was composed as an étude, its compositional programmatic nature places it here within the short genre pieces category. Souroujon wrote it for Belgian violinist Leonard Schreiber as a teenager to use to practise various singing violin techniques, such as vibrato and legato transposed in the chromatic scale (Figure 39). It is clearly an improvisation on an existing melody, it has a strong melodic nature and it is short. Inspired by Joseph Achron's *Hebrew Melody, Opus 33* (1910), the piece illustrates the singing qualities of the violin: mournful, emotional, and moving.



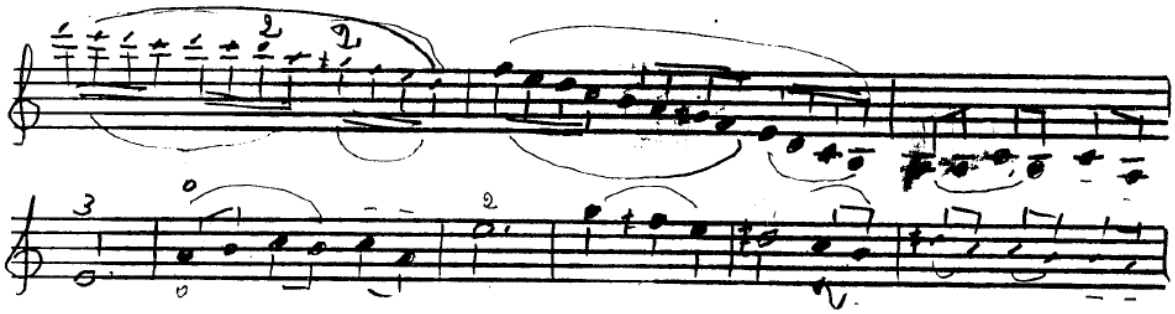


Figure 39. Souroujon's arrangement of Achron, *Mélodie Hébraïque*, bars 35 to 43

### ***Improvisation on Gershwin's Summertime***

Souroujon did not include *Improvisation on Gershwin Summertime*<sup>25</sup> in his short genre pieces. In fact, only one recording exists, showcasing Leon Souroujon improvising on the spot, which was recorded live on National Bulgarian Radio in the 1960s. Recently, a score has been written for it, even though it is not part of Souroujon's collection (See Appendix B). The work has been added here since the composition belongs in spirit to his programmatic collection. The piece warrants discussion, since it is an exemplary work capturing his process of improvisation as a system of composing. His compositions developed out of his improvisations on the violin first and then he would write the music down. Based on Gershwin's *Summertime*, this improvisation encapsulates his compositional process whilst highlighting his natural flair for jazz and improvisation.

It is a short piece in the same sphere as the other short genre pieces, imbued with Souroujon's signature sound by utilising his favoured techniques of scales, double-stops in thirds and sixths, free tempos, intermingling rubatos con anime, ritardandos, accelerandos, glissandos, and pizzicatos.

### **III.7 Other Compositional Activities: Transcriptions and Edits**

Souroujon transcribed and edited numerous compositions of note over the span of his

<sup>25</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his composition: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/SouroujonImprovisationsGershwin.mp3>

career (See Appendix B, Appendix E and Appendix F). At the height of his performance career in Bulgaria, he edited and published many pieces, such as the Corelli, Vivaldi, Veracini, Tartini, and Locatelli sonatas, to play along with his chamber music partner, Katya Kazandjiewa, on piano. Immersed in the world of the violin, he took on all the opportunities to write music. Through Igor Oistrakh, Souroujon met the Cellist Mischa Maisky, for whom he transcribed his compositions *Quatre Pièces* for cello. Another notable transcription, which Souroujon produced and recorded was Bach's aria, *Aus Liebe will Mein Heiland Sterben*, from *Passion St. Matthew* for violin and piano (Figure 40).<sup>26</sup>

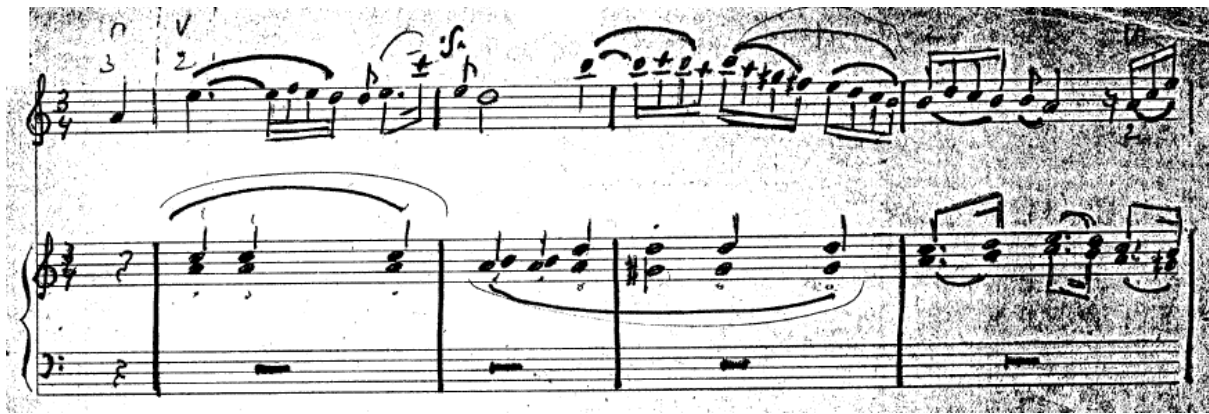


Figure 40. J. S. Bach's Aria: *Aus Liebe will Mein Heiland Sterben*, from *Passion St. Matthew* (manuscript), bars 1 to 4

This is the only transcription that he composed with a piano accompaniment in collaboration with his wife, Kazandjiewa; all the other compositions he wrote were for unaccompanied solo violin. It is a gorgeous, reflective piece that captures innately its ethereal qualities.

As fortune would have it, an overlooked untitled manuscript of his, identified later as *Toccata, Adagio and Fuga in C Major, BWV 564*, was discovered in his sheet music collection (Figure 41). This is a composition that Bach wrote for organ and Souroujon transcribed for solo violin.

<sup>26</sup> Audio recording of Leon Souroujon playing his transcription of Bach: <http://www.eliotlawson.com/media/souroujon/BachSouroujonAria.mp3>



*Figure 41. Transcription for solo violin of J. S. Bach's Adagio from Toccata, Adagio and Fuga in C Major, BWV 564, bars 1 and 2*

As this last section demonstrates Souroujon was not only able to create original works, but also transcribed music from other instruments to solo violin. Part of a master violinist and a composer's roster is to be able to review and understand music notes and to be able to form their quintessence suitably:

Musical interpretation, therefore, exists at three distinct levels. At the editorial level, there is an art of deciphering musical scores, of contextualizing them historically, of adjusting and expanding them to make them suitable for performance. At the level of composition, there is an art of transcribing and adapting certain types of music to a form in which they reinterpret their originals in the language of the desired performance forces. At the level of performance, pre-existing material is interpreted or reinterpreted through the local and global interpretations of performing artists.

(Thom, 2007, p.xv)

## IV Conclusion

Fittingly, composing has been an essential activity embedded in every episode of Souroujon's life ever since he discovered his own capacity to write music during wartime; and his love of the violin fastens all the aspects of his life together. Forming the framework of Leon Souroujon's life, the violin, and violin history, and in particular the unaccompanied solo violin genre, have been surveyed. It is interesting to note that the chronology of violin music, too, is skewed and filled with compositions that are out of their time, only discovered decades or centuries after a composer passed away. A perfect example of this is Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin* that became popular long after he had died. Souroujon's calibre as a violinist and as a teacher is confirmed and acknowledged; however, his significance as a composer remains less acknowledged at this time.

In seeking to understand Souroujon's place in history and the value of his compositions, an understanding of the history of the violin, the development of the unaccompanied solo violin genre, and a review of the variety of composers of unaccompanied solo violin music were foundational in postulating the case. To appreciate his contribution, an overview of special pieces in the unaccompanied solo violin genre has been provided, ranging from the Baroque to the Modern era and even touching on the Postmodern era. The selection of violin music shows the breadth of the styles and variety of the composers but, more importantly, that the quantity of quality pieces in the genre is limited. Studying Souroujon's biography, including his heritage, his upbringing, personal relationships, music education, career, the impact of Second World War and Communism, his activities as a violin pedagogue, and his capacity as a composer has provided considerable context to his artistry.

A review of his archive of music reveals that he was a conscientious composer aware of his music language and compositional style. His music displays a profound love of the violin, a deep understanding of the styles and its history, aesthetics in general, and a gallery

of his compositional skills. Steadily, he created one piece at a time until he had amassed a beautiful set of music for solo violin. Souroujon undoubtedly deserves a place in violin history based on the outstanding collection of music he created.

Violinists as composers were a rarity in the last century, owing in part to the demand for virtuoso performers and to the departmentalization of composing in the music education system. Souroujon was one of the last of violinists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who can be listed together with such performer-composers as Eugene Ysaÿe, George Enescu, and Fritz Kreisler. He did not produce large quantity of works, but what he created are gems of their oeuvre. Many unaccompanied solo violin compositions were produced to illustrate the wonders of the violin, as exemplified by Bach, Paganini, Ysaÿe, Ernst and others. In this august company, Souroujon's works also showcase the joy of violin technique that should appeal to violinists. The addition of his compositions to the catalogue of the unaccompanied solo violin genre will be an acknowledgment of his determination to have his music heard and to be accepted as a composer.

For Souroujon, the violin was his principal mode of expression. His compositions are natural, lyrical, harmonious, and improvisational in feeling and tonal in structure. He was a curious, exploratory, and open-minded person in music. His interpretations of his own compositions, as heard in his own recordings and in those from the National Bulgarian Radio, fluctuate depending on his mood, yet they are still meaningful. He never played a composition the same way twice as doing so allowed for natural and authentic output. He applied his philosophy in his scores, outlining so as to play with ease, through *rubato* (play at any tempo), a *piacere* (play the tempo or dynamics as you please) and *animando* (play with increasing animation). Cultural or folk motifs featured extensively in his music, as in the case of his composition *Berceuse*, based on a Sephardic Jewish lullaby that his grandmother sang to him in his childhood, or in the case of his composition, *Images Espagnoles* inspired by the playwright Lorca's artistry, attitude, and stories.

Encapsulating the complexity of Leon Souroujon's life as a violinist, teacher, and composer and capturing his experiences and accomplishments in the context of the changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been a fascinating undertaking and journey. The purpose of cataloguing his compositions and creating a new edition is to establish a point of reference for future studies by other scholars and musicians.

Recently, several musicians have expressed an interest in playing Leon Souroujon and have been performing his compositions: Yuriy Bekker, Concert Master of the Charleston Symphony; Leonard Schreiber and Sasha Maisky, concert violinists. Many other musicians and academics such as Michel Stockhem<sup>27</sup> have recognized the importance of Leon Souroujon as a composer (M. Stockhem, personal communication, June 21, 2019). Mischa Maisky recognized it personally as Souroujon transcribed for him four of his short genre pieces for cello. Those who knew Souroujon and of him, understood that he was an important figure in music, a consummate violinist, and an inspiring teacher, but are yet to discover that he was inherently a composer. The endeavour here is to share with violinists and to highlight to others his contributions to the unaccompanied solo violin repertoire as a wondrous feat.

Much is still to be considered and understood about the genre of unaccompanied solo violin, such as having a comprehensive overview of the compositions within the genre, defining the genre more succinctly, and researching further to reveal those composers lost in the turmoil of history. Although the demand for virtuoso performances is high, the selection of music played in the genre of classical music remains limited to well-loved standards, even more so in the unaccompanied solo violin repertoire. Violinists today are looking to broaden their repertoire beyond Bach, Paganini, and Ysaÿe, to surprise their audiences, as exemplified by the interest expressed in articles and forums on popular music websites such *The Strad magazine* and *Violinist.com*.

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27 Belgian musicologist and pianist Michel Stockhem was born on May 13, 1964. Interview conducted June 21, 2019 in Mons, Belgium. He wrote the book titled, *Eugène Ysaÿe et la musique de chambre*.

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the music audience base has shifted their interest away from classical music. However, within the realm of classical music, a growing gamut of musically sophisticated listeners, who have a voracious appetite for it and are curious to know more and to hear more, exists. An interest in experiencing new music, in listening to something not yet heard, to experiencing historical music on historical instruments, has revitalized the classical music realm and bolstered attention to unknown works and new music. In the light of the current music landscape, Leon Souroujon's compositions can at last find their audience, their niche, their place in history, perfectly situated in the unaccompanied solo violin genre.

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## **Appendices**

See Volume II of the dissertation.