

The *Sei Capricci* of Salvatore Sciarrino: Technique and Style

An homage to the *24 Caprices* (1819) of Niccolò Paganini, the *Sei Capricci* (1976) of Salvatore Sciarrino (b.1947) build upon the iconic technical achievements of the original work with an entirely new vocabulary of extended techniques developed by Sciarrino. This project includes a narrative component detailing Sciarrino's advances in technique and notation for the violin, briefly outlined in this poster, and a forthcoming recording of the complete work.

The examples to the right are the opening measures of the first caprices by Paganini and Sciarrino. In addition to borrowing the combined ricochet/arpeggio bowstroke from Paganini, Sciarrino works within a harmonic and timbral palette that is almost entirely composed of harmonics. This refers to any technique which produces one of the pitches of the overtone series rather than the fundamental. While the use of harmonics is not in itself an extended technique (passages involving harmonics are featured prominently in works by Saint-Saëns, Sarasate, Ravel, and Sibelius, among others), Sciarrino is unique in using technique derived entirely from string harmonics to create a harmonic, formal, and timbral vocabulary rich enough to sustain a large-scale composition.

Notable technical innovations in the *Sei Capricci*:

1. Impossible harmonics: Sciarrino notates harmonics that do not exist, i.e., do not lie on one of the nodes on the string length that produce an overtone. The intention behind this notation is simply to play as if the harmonic were possible, and the resulting noise becomes part of the sound palette.
2. Oscillating harmonics: Sciarrino notates two pitches, and indicates that the player should oscillate between the two pitches as fast as possible, with a light finger as in any other harmonic. Combined with a ponticello (very close to the bridge) bow stroke, this achieves a remarkable simultaneous projection of multiple overtone series.
3. "Spazzolare": literally 'brushing' the bow *along* the string from bridge to fingerboard and back, rather than *across* it as normal. This creates an almost pitchless sound, with just the faintest hint of the written harmonics when the bow changes direction.
4. Pressed notes: pitches intended to be fingered by the left hand only without any action from the bow, resulting in the very faint sound of the string meeting the fingerboard.

Niccolò Paganini:
Caprice No. 1



Salvatore Sciarrino:
Caprice No. 1



To date this study has generated lectures on Sciarrino's unique extended techniques in addition to numerous performances. All research will be compiled into a website with video demonstration of the techniques as well as recordings of the caprices. The *Sei Capricci* will be the centerpiece of Dr. Sung's FSU faculty recital in Fall 2013.

This project is part of a long term investigation of composers who integrate extended violin techniques into their works such that the technique creates a new musical style. Other notable examples include the chamber music of George Crumb (b.1929) and Helmut Lachenmann (b.1935).

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