

J. Dont Op. 38, No. 13

MAIN DIFFICULTIES: Sliding fingers

OTHER DIFFICULTIES: Legato, string crossing

SIMILAR ETUDES: Dont: Op. 38, No. 14, Dont: Op. 37, No. 21,
Hofmann: Op. 25 No. 73, Wohlfahrt: Op. 74, No. 23, 40, 42.

Sliding the left hand fingers is a very commune movement in violin technique. In fact, it becomes the only way to play chromatic passages as we start to get acquainted with other kinds of fingerings. Never the less, it is always a good resource for tricky chromatic passages. As comfortable and natural this movement feels there are several things to have in consideration.

As you practice this etude make sure that the left hand fingers are very light during the sliding action. At the same time, you have to make sure that the finger performing the slide does not change shape or contact point with the string during the slide. If the finger comes forward in shape this means that you are probably pressing too hard. Besides, make sure that you push with the tip of the finger with the main movement coming from the knuckles in the hand and not with the first knuckle of the finger. You can also think that you are “pushing” the sliding finger from behind, and not from above. It is also helpful to feel that the sliding movement is not straight but curved towards the fingerboard. This movement can only be achieved if the fingers are very light.

It is important to leave the finger before the slide down. Doing so will greatly facilitate the movement and almost assure that we are pushing from the knuckles of the hand. This practice also helps the finger to maintain its proper position.

Pay attention to the string crossings, making sure they are not sudden, but rather slow and small. Take into consideration the intonation as well. If you try several times omitting the first sliding finger pitch, you will be able to hear more clearly to which note you need to arrive. After doing so, try as written. The omitted note is one half step below.

Last but not least, it will be very useful for the intonation if you have a chance to play this etude with your teacher playing the second violin part.