

# *6 Steps to Learning A New Piece*

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## *The Virtuosity Blueprint*



# Hey there,

It was great to connect with you on my latest Zoom class on 6 Steps To Learning A New Piece on February 27th.

If you weren't there, I hope you can join us next time!

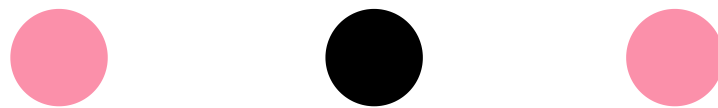
If you:

- Get excited about learning a new piece but struggle in how to approach it.
- Start a new piece, but hit The Dip and find yourself losing your initial excitement.
- Feel like you don't have a system to learn any piece on your music stand.

Then this resource is for you!

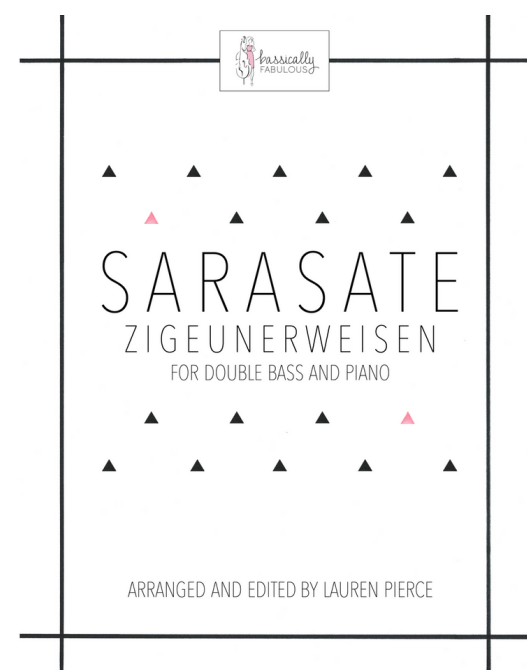
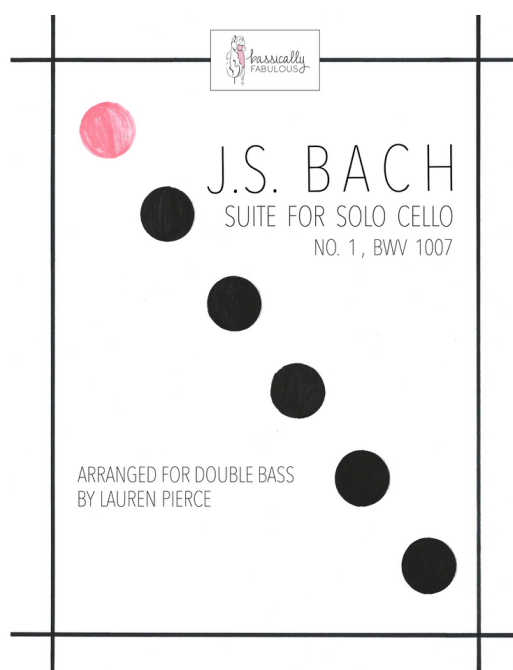
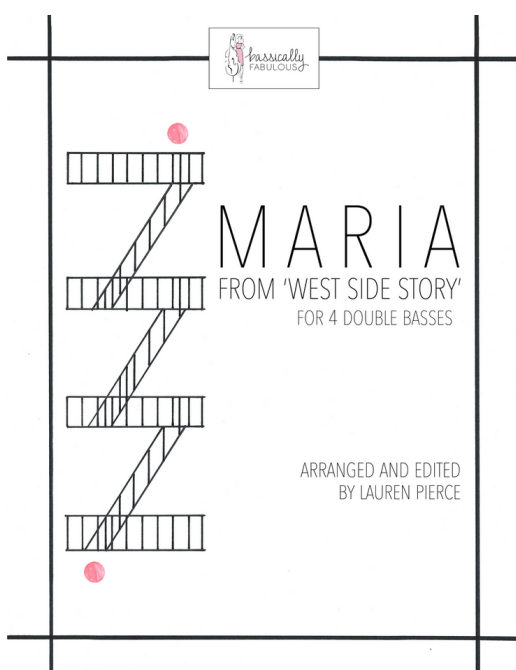
If you have any questions about any of the materials. Send me an email, and I may address your questions in a future post on:

Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook.



I've used these exact techniques to learn all of the music featured on my YouTube Channel.

If you'd like to dig into the repertoire that I have performed, I encourage you to visit my Music Shop that contains my personal editions of everything from Bach to Sarasate to Maria from Westside Story.



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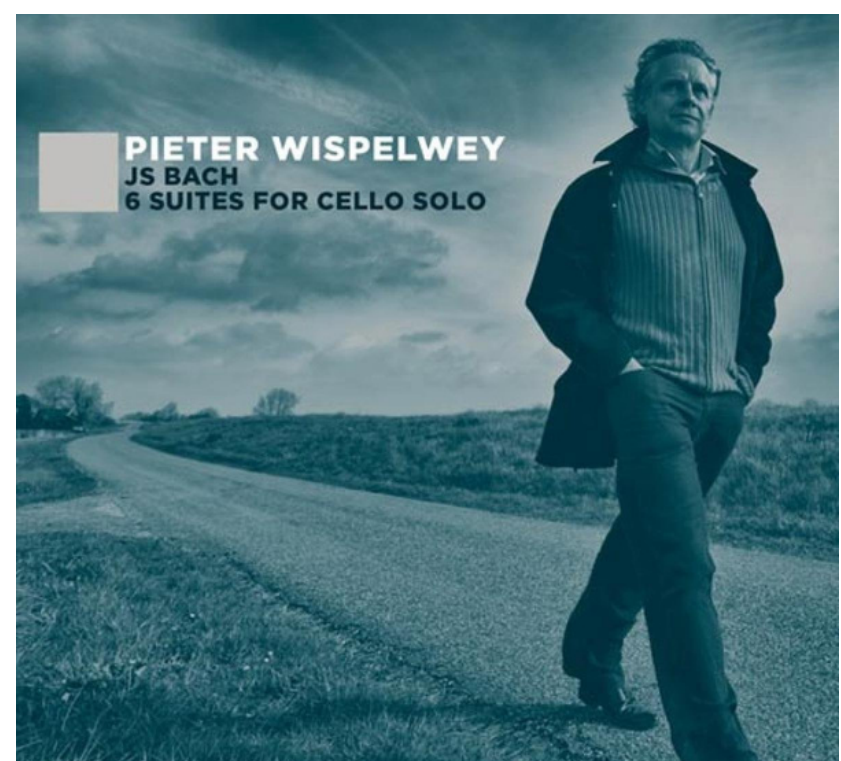
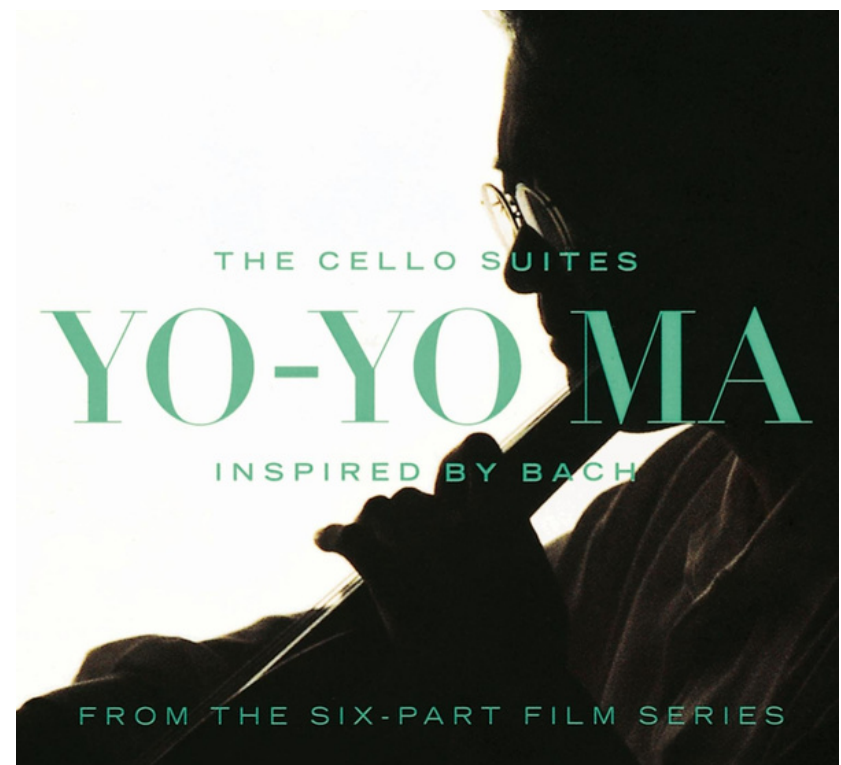
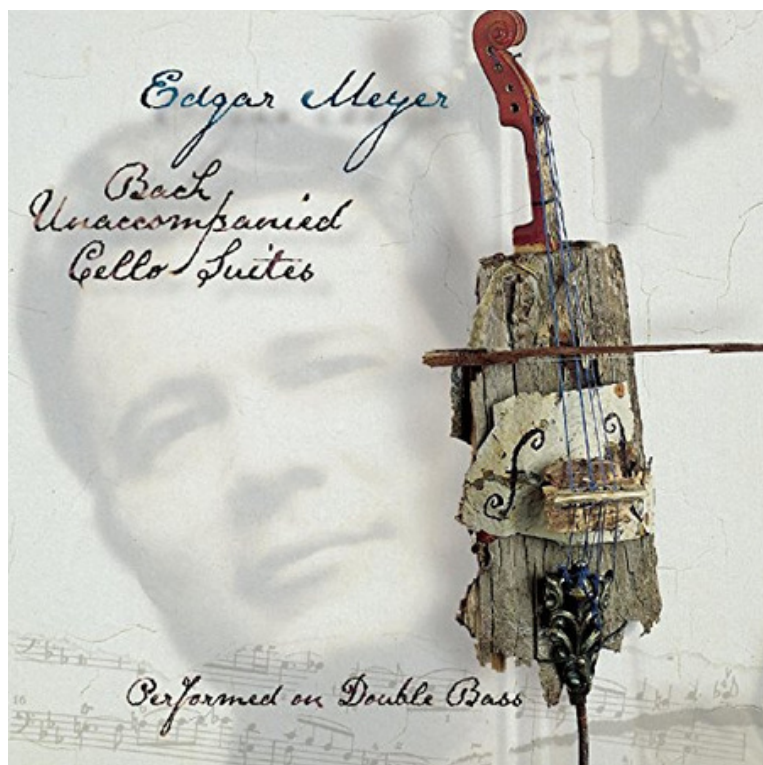


# 1. Listen to the Piece

Before I sit down to learn a piece of music, the first thing I do is listen to the piece over and over again. This could be a planned preparation, but usually, it's because I'm just so in love with the piece that I've naturally listened to it many times over. So by the time I sit down to actually work on the piece, I basically already have it memorized.

This helps because it jumpstarts the learning process. You already know how the piece goes, you know the little details and quirks, and you're already forming preferences for how it should be played.

Tap the images to listen to the recordings.





# 2. *Decide On Your Fingerings*

## Before



## After



I don't always decide on fingerings and then bowings in that order. Sometimes I do the bowings first and then the fingerings, but I usually do both of them somewhat together.

I don't always write every fingering down. I know my finger patterns well enough that all I might need is one or two-finger numbers as an outline. You can see an example of this in measure 14. I know how to finish the line downward based on the fingering and string numbers I have written.

Or if a note, a chord, or a series of notes happens again, I'll skip fingerings on those unless I decide to use different fingers/strings.

Write in however much information you need to help you remember what you're doing. You don't want your mental energy going there when you're trying to learn a piece.

**And write in pencil!**

I do, however, always write in bowings. Not necessarily whether it's up or down bow (although that can be really helpful at times), but I always plan slurs.

# 3. *Decide On Your Bowings*



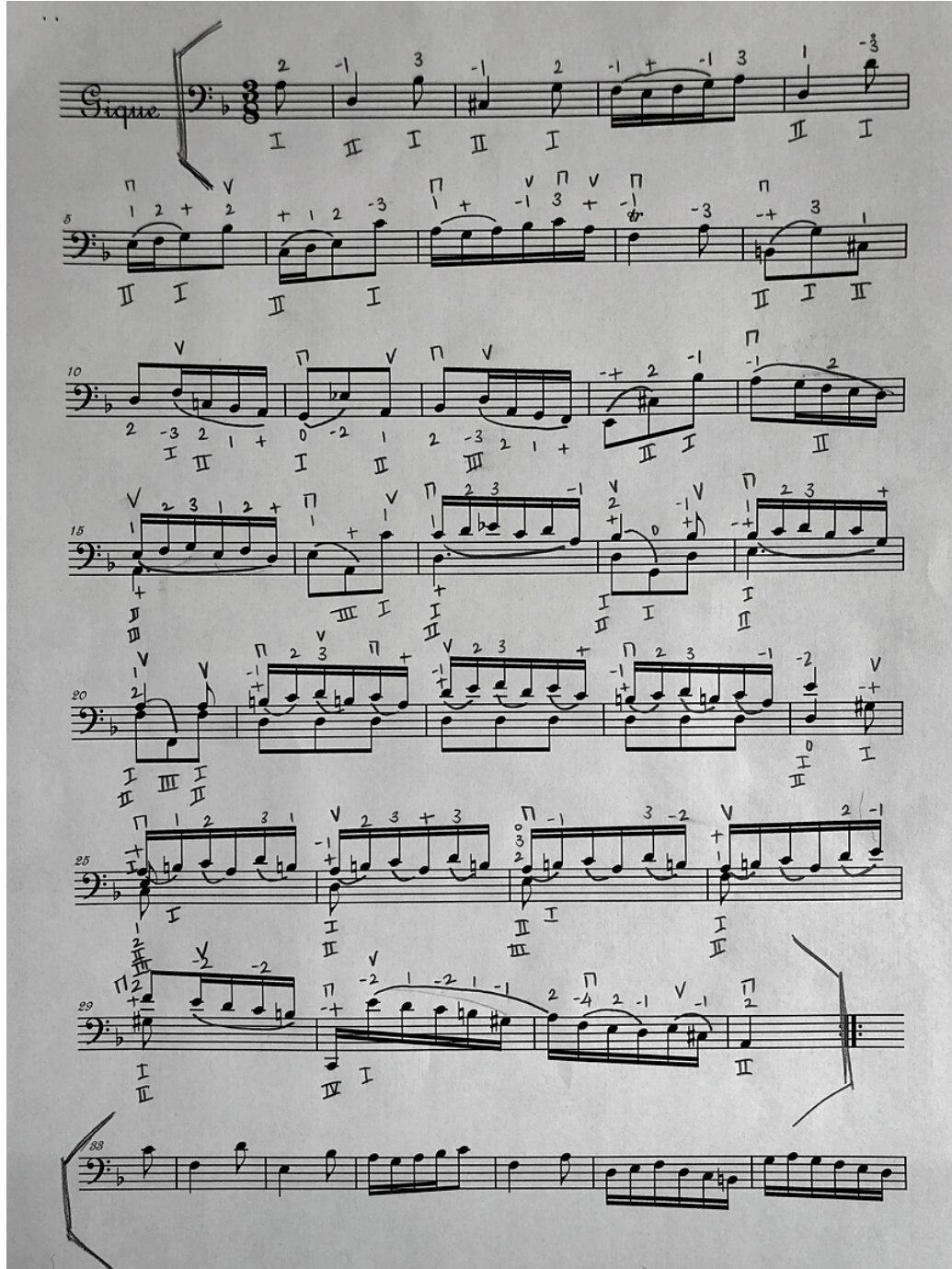
This is along the same lines as choosing your fingerings ahead of time. I know what bowings I'm going to be using ahead of time so I can practice consistently.

If you have to choose your bowings at the moment each time, that's mental energy you're taking away from other things. You also run the risk of landing in the wrong bow direction in an important spot.

I'm not as precious about bowings as I am about fingerings, so this part of the process usually looks like me either checking over the printed bowings or copying down bowings from somewhere else. I have the Peters edition of the 2nd suite. I transferred bowings from it into this one.



## ***4. Split the Piece Into Big Sections***



The reason I do this is that it makes the piece smaller. A lot of pieces, especially in the classical repertoire, are pretty long - they're 10, 15, 20 minutes, or longer.

For movements of Bach outside of the Preludes, I go off of the repeats. As you can see in the music, I've bracketed off measure 1 to measure 32, where the repeat sign is for Big Section 1.

When you first sit down with a piece, it can be overwhelming looking at the whole thing and trying to figure out where to even start, let alone what the piece is trying to say or where it's going.

Breaking the piece down into big sections changes in mood and tempo helps you to understand the overarching line in the piece and the bigger picture.

# 5. Split the Piece Up Into Smaller Sections



I do this solely for practicing purposes. I take the big sections from the last step and then split those sections into even smaller chunks that I can then sit down and practice individually.

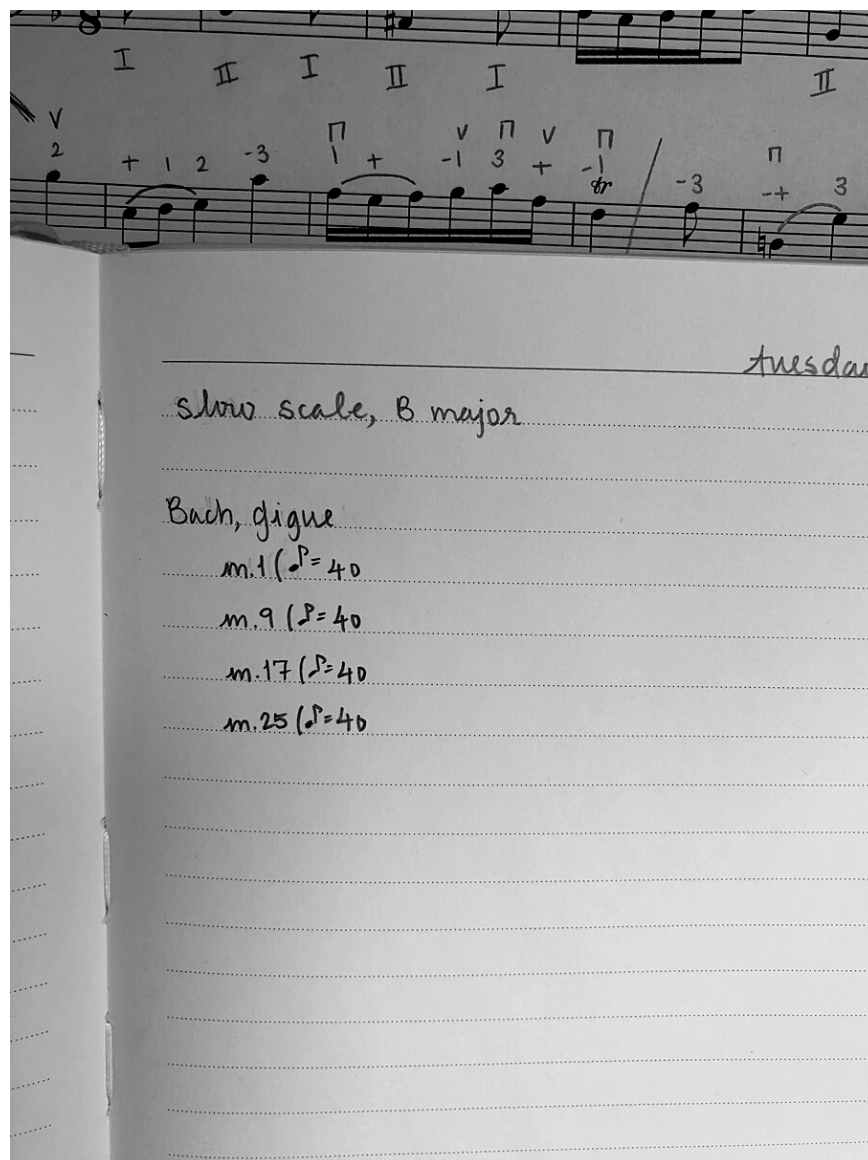
I find it's usually easiest for something like Bach to go off of the phrases, which you can see I've done here in the Gigue. If you can't see my lines I've written indicating each section, here's where I've marked:

- Beginning
- Measure 9 (I don't count the measure of the pickup)
- Measure 17
- Measure 25

The smaller the section you work on, the more focused you'll be and the more results you'll achieve. Too many people practice inefficiently and the biggest culprit is trying to work on too much music at one time.



## 6. Plan Your Practicing



Now we get out our handy-dandy practice journal (which I know you have sitting right next to you (with a pencil (with an eraser))). We're going to go through all of the small sections we marked off in the last step and figure out how we're going to practice each one individually, making a note of it as we go.

You can see what this would look like in my journal.

You could title each of your small sections with a number or a letter, but I typically just use the measure number as its "name."

For the Gigue, I know I'm going to need to do some slow practice method and metronome work. My slow practice method is repetition-based and involves several tempo levels for each section I'm working on, but all I need to determine here is my start tempo. I'll figure out the rest of the tempo levels when I actually get to work.

The start tempos I've written in for every section of the Gigue are the same, but that's not always the case. It just happens to be that all of the Gigue is equally really, really hard.



# *How was it?*

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Do you have any questions? I want to hear from you. [Send me an email](#)

