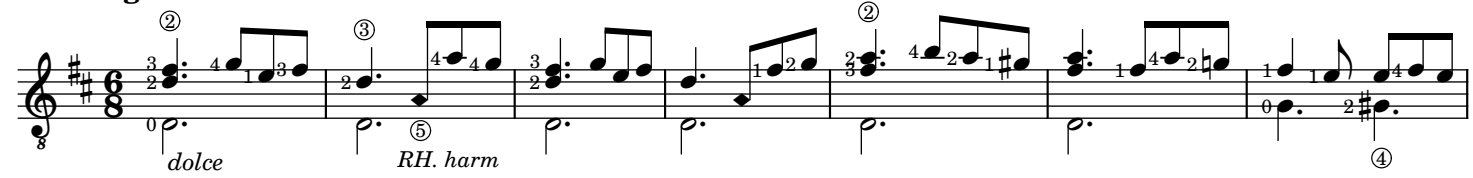
Capriccio no. 20

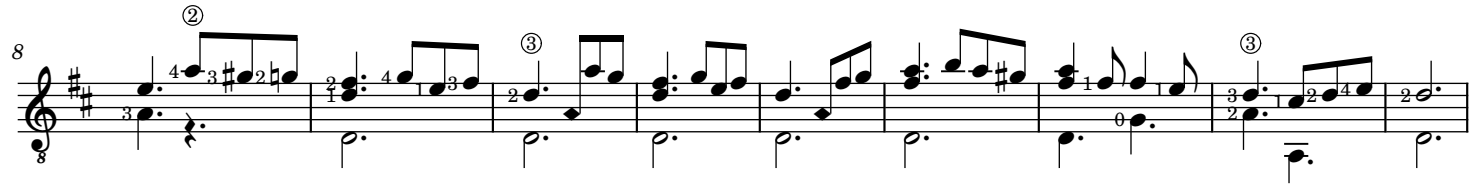
Op. 1, No. 20

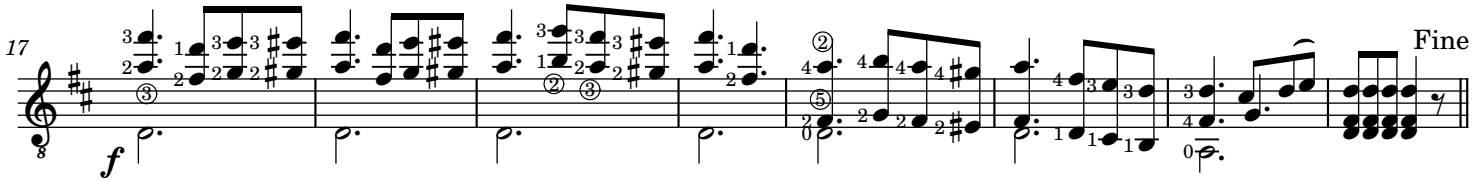
Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840)

arr. for guitar by Drew Henderson

Allegretto







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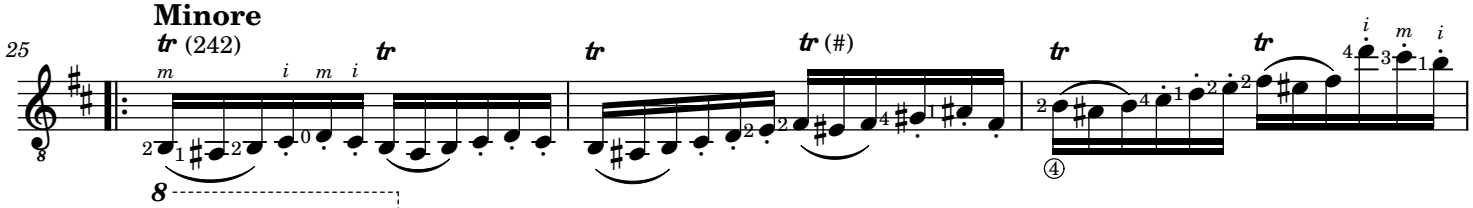

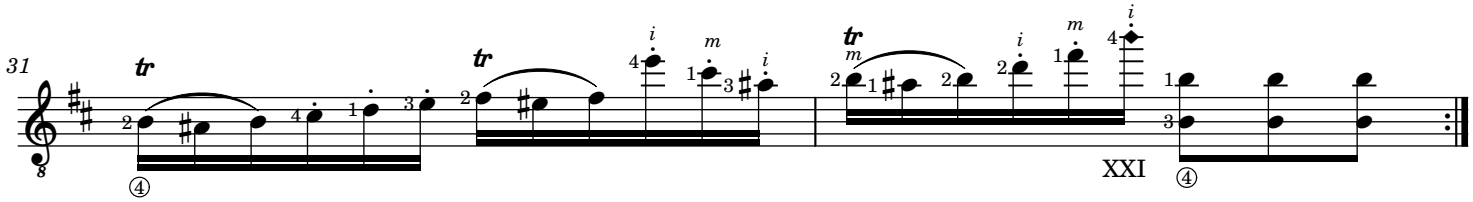

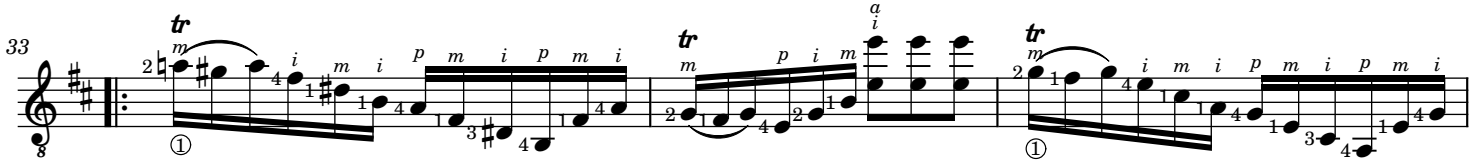

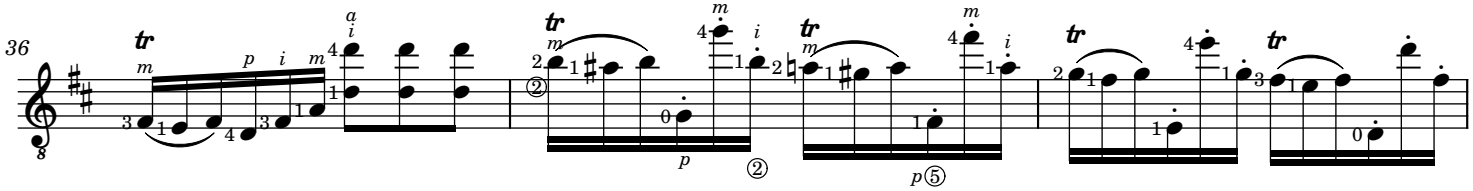

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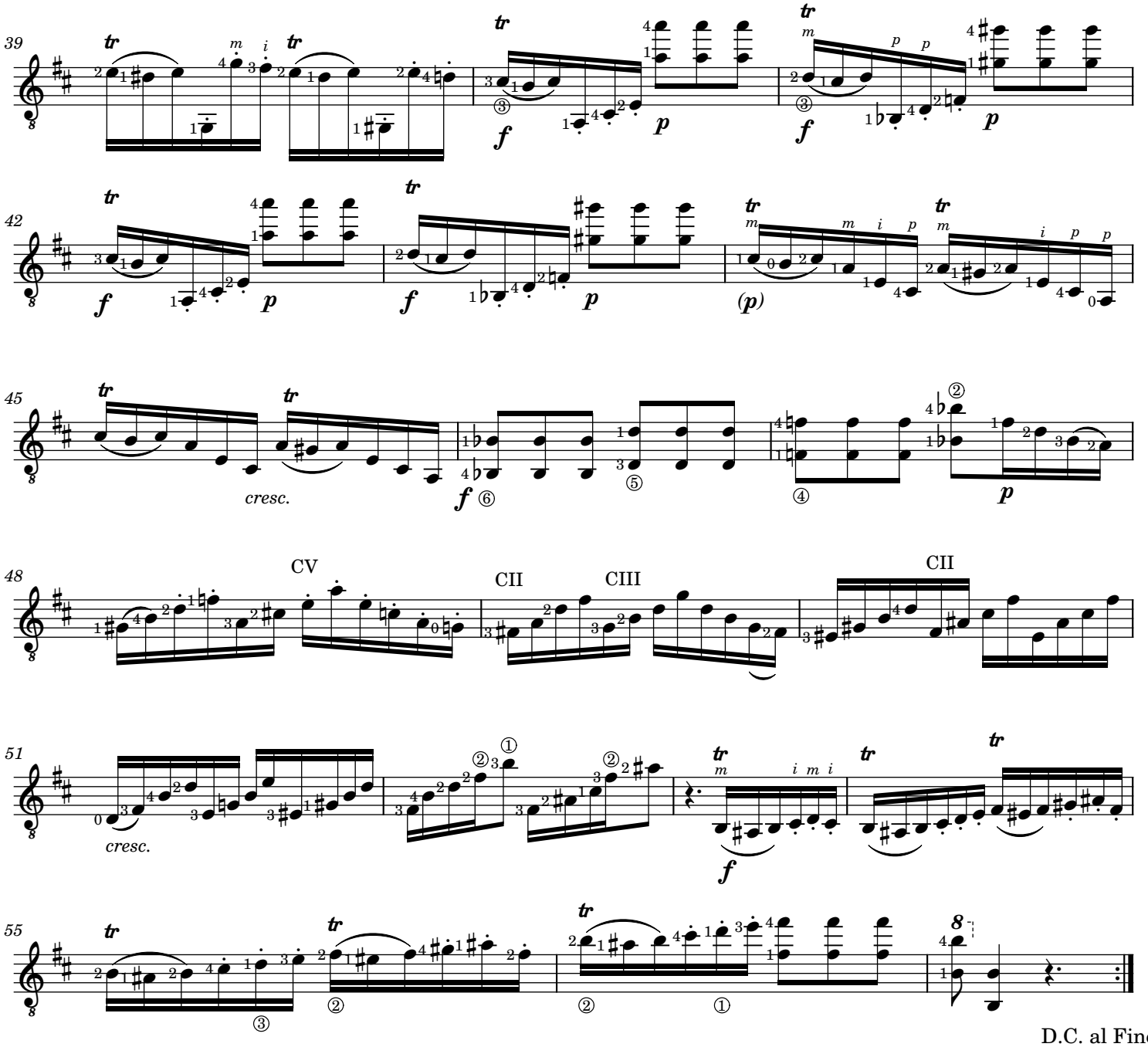

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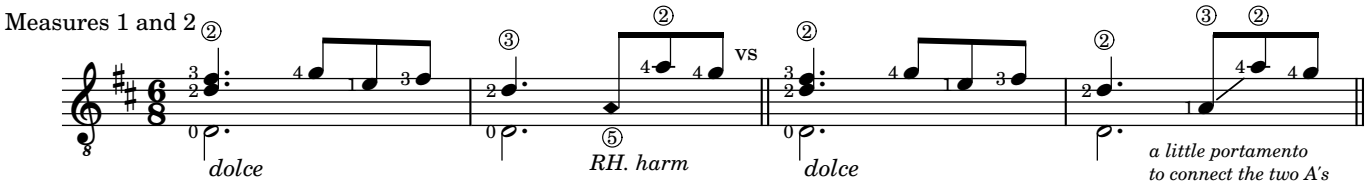
Notes on Paganini's Caprice no. 20

Of all the Paganini caprices, the 20th seems to be the easiest to adapt to the classical guitar.
The extensive use of the open D string as a drone, the lack of any "light speed" violin runs, and the general range of this piece make it readable off the original score with only a few considerations to make when adapting it to the guitar.

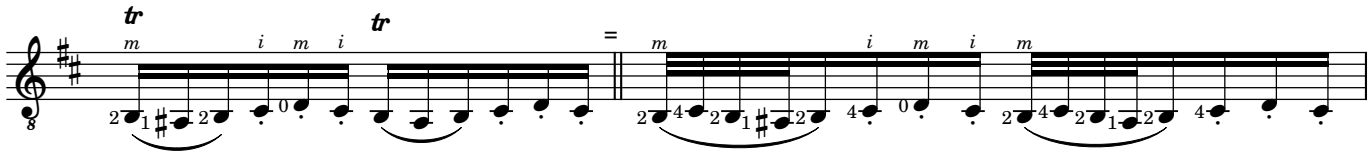
Below I discuss a few of these considerations, for anyone looking to study this caprice.

1) In this arrangment I use harmonics to help avoid disturbing the constantly droning D string, while also avoiding large shifts. If one chooses to play the passage withought harmonics, it would result in more portamenti, a technique that may also work stylistically. I felt that being forced to always do a big glide up to the high A became a little predictable as this move happens a few times. Whatever you choose to do, don't touch the open D! It should drone on like a bagpipe, aparently.



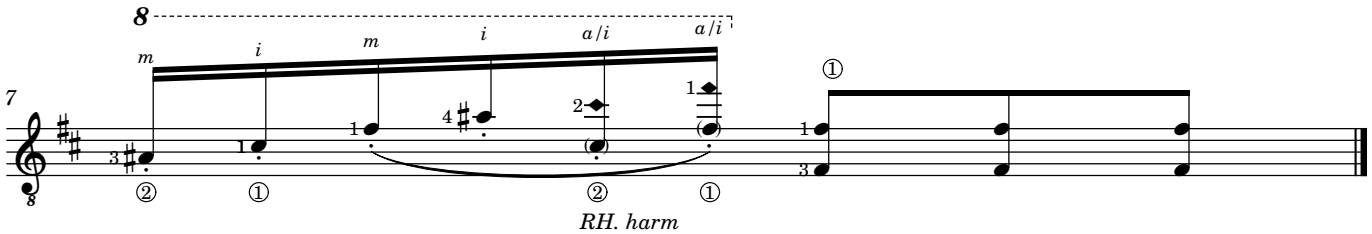
2) Aside from the speed, the challenge of the second section in B minor is the clarity of the trills. In fact, I feel that this section is an excellent slur study for the guitar.

On the guitar, the action of "hammering-on" and "pulling-off", neccessary for slurs, takes a lot of energy and movement compared to what bowed string instruments do. Sustaining clear slurs throughout this piece can be quite taxing on the left hand. It is not so hard to get the first few "passable", but to get all of them perfect where every slur is clear and even requires one to really examine their slur technique.
Here is my realization of the trills:



As you can see the A# get converted to a 32nd note. To play the trill notes as 64ths is just not clear or sustainable on the guitar in my opinion, but i'd be happy to be proven wrong!

There are a couple of tricky high notes, but luckiky there is a fairly straight-forward solution. In the example below, all the notes are playable except the last two. By leaving the 1st finger on the F# played earlier, you can set up the *8ve* harmonic for the right hand. Unfortunately, this harmonic is in the middle of the sound hole, and requires a lot of practice (and maybe a magic marker) to get used to. As I play this passage with rest stroke, the "i" finger will already be resting on the 2nd string to execute the first harmonic.



I am offering this score as a small token of thanks to my subscribers. I realize there are sometimes long pauses between videos, but rest assured i'm always working on the next one. It takes a long time to get the pieces ready to present, and I appreciate your patience greatly! Happy practicing!