

Progress Report: Sebastian

STUDENT	PERIOD	LESSONS
Sebastian	Sep 2025 – Sep 2026	11 lessons

Sebastian — Violin Progress Report

Documented lessons: January–September 2026

I

Learning trajectory

Sebastian’s lessons moved from establishing a lighter, more continuous sound in Barber and Mozart toward applying those principles to the contrasting demands of Sibelius. The clearest documented gains are in expressive connection and character, alongside successful attempts at freer bow changes in September. Fast passages, shifts, and changes of bow direction still require deliberate preparation; the record does not yet establish that the September changes are repeatable throughout the concerto.

A more sustained singing line developed during the Barber work. On January 8, short notes were being dropped, vibrato could tighten or stop, and bow changes risked breaking the phrase. On February 19, the teacher praised Sebastian’s opening vibrato as richer and more connected to the music. The next refinement was to let vibrato enter organically and continue through slides, while keeping the bow moving to the end of each note. The later observation supports progress in the opening’s expressive sound, not a claim that connection was secure in every passage: bow distribution, transitions, and rhythmic precision remained active work.

Mozart gained lightness and more distinct character. In the Fifth Concerto, the January and February lessons called for clearer rhythm, less pressure, and operatic differences between gestures rather than a generalized sound. On March 13, the lesson recorded less effort and more clearly defined phrase inflections; on April 2, the teacher heard clear improvement in life and lightness, with more room to shape gestures. Beginnings could still sound labored, however, and rushing could make the music square or overly athletic. The April–May work in Mozart 39 likewise emphasized an elegant, broad stroke without racing. These are

related priorities, but observations in the two different Mozart works should not be treated as a single measure of mastery.

Economy and anticipation remained a substantial technical focus. In January, Sebastian worked on clear finger articulation without sustained pressure and on keeping the fourth finger close. April's Ševčík work brought an explicit observation that coordination was working better, while the teacher made the uneven bowings and stroke contrasts more demanding. In the Schumann scherzo, April and May observations still identified pitch patterns that lost specificity at speed and a fourth finger that arrived with too much effort. The remedy was to prepare the whole hand shape earlier, not to force the finger down. Similarly, September's Sibelius and Shostakovich work returned to anticipating shifts and note patterns before tension could build. Progress in an exercise does not yet establish the same ease in fast repertoire.

In **Sibelius**, the September 2 lesson identified pressing at the bow tip, gaps in the singing triplets, and shifts that interrupted sustained notes. Later attempts that day improved aspects of the up-bow and triplet rhythm, though both still needed thought and slow practice. On September 16, simplifying the bow's path produced a freer attempt, which Sebastian said felt less tiring on the G string; practising the octave shifts without gaps also improved their connection. The present task is to make those results dependable while developing sharper contrasts: warmth in the sixths, insistence in the octaves, and a cadenza whose distant opening grows through a deliberate range of colors rather than simply getting louder.

II

Current priorities

The most recent practice directions are to use scales and arpeggios to establish minimal left-hand pressure, then carry that feeling into repertoire; prepare shifts early, including the Sibelius cadenza arpeggio; and practise the new Sibelius bowings with an uninterrupted sound. Slow mirror work, adjacent-note connections, and listening at the frog were suggested to test whether bow changes stay free. In the concerto, Sebastian is also working on stronger dramatic contrasts without choking the resonance. Whether these September improvements hold consistently at performance pace remains unassessed.

III

Work studied

- **Concertos and solo repertoire:** Barber Violin Concerto, movements 1–3 (January–March 2026); Mozart Violin Concerto No. 5, movements 1–3 (January–April); Sibelius Violin Concerto, introduction, exposition, *Molto moderato* after rehearsal 3, *Moderato assai*, and cadenza (September). A Bruch long line was addressed in March.
- **Orchestral excerpts:** Schumann scherzo (April–May); Mozart Symphony No. 39, fourth movement (April–May); Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 fast passages (September).

- **Technical work:** Schradieck-style finger exercises and Ysaÿe string-crossing patterns (January); scales, arpeggios, vibrato and hand-frame work (throughout the documented lessons); Ševčík Op. 3 bowing patterns, uneven-bowing variations, and No. 5 (March–May); open-string sound and bow-change exercises, slow spiccato, and the Milstein fingertips-only bow-hold exercise (March–September). Dont Op. 37, Fiorillo, Mazas Op. 36, and work toward Rode 1–9 were given as etude practice directions in May; their subsequent results are not documented.