

# Ergonomic Set-Up: Chin- and Shoulder-Rest Choices for Violin/Viola

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*How we “fill in the gap”* between the jaw and collarbone has provoked controversy for a long time. Most players do require something that 1) prevents the instrument from slipping; and, 2) supports good posture as well as freedom of motion on the instrument.

Traditionally, the most vocal proponents re: how to place the instrument and what to use (if anything) have based their assertions on the system they've created for themselves, not necessarily on an understanding of joint/muscle function, or differences in body-types.

## **MYTH #1: “I should search for one, static solution”**

*The very argument* that favors a particular approach to the support of the instrument is faulty to begin with. We are each built differently and over time we each change. We need a dynamic solution based on a fundamental understanding of the components at play: length of the torso, bony or full-figured, width and slope of the shoulders, length of the neck, how the neck and shoulders are attached to the torso, how the thumb interfaces with the hand, the preexisting postural tendencies of that individual, other physical activities, and more.

## **MYTH #2: “Do As I Do: If it works for me, it should work for you”**

*We are each built differently.* We move through space differently; our stylistic preferences require varying methods of support; the time we spend practicing and playing varies, and so on. When analyzing the best support system per individual, these factors need to be taken into account.

When we address the question of set-up, we also need to factor in and educate our students about...

- 1) what kind of quality of experience on the instrument to expect and work towards;
- 2) how the prescribed equipment works;
- 3) how to use pain and discomfort as messengers of change;
- 4) the practice environment (height of the music stand, lighting, etc.);
- 5) the carrying case and how that player organizes their equipment;
- 6) whether that player spends the bulk of their time standing or seated;
- 7) postural tendencies and exercise regime; and,
- 8) when to replace or “reinvent” the set-up equipment

## **References:**

*Violin and Viola Ergonomics: Determine the Optimum Playing Position and Support For Your Body-Type* (DVD) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

*The Violin in Motion* (DVD) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

*You Are Your Instrument* (book) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

*The Instrumentalist's Guide to Fitness, health, and Musicianship*, (VHS) by Julie Lyonn Lieberman