

MIDWEST BAND AND ORCHESTRA CLINIC
 McCORMICK CENTER, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
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Viola Fingerboard Dominance: Skills for Developing Left-Hand Facility in Your Viola Section

PRELIMINARIES

- Proper set-up is crucial for left side freedom of movement
- Viola set-up differs from violin in that there is a general lack of standardization in size and shape leading to a lack of standardization in setup (student set-up must be very individual)
- Consider building up the chinrest, not the shoulder rest to keep the right arm from having to reach above the shoulder because the instrument is raised by the shoulder rest
 - Explore the possibility of a centered chinrest to help position the instrument on the shoulder, not the chest
- Keep a basket of shoulder rests/pads and chinrests with lots of variety on hand for students to experiment
- Remember that bigger is not necessarily better—important to aim for physical comfort when choosing an instrument and not be overly tempted by the big tone of a too-large instrument

SKILLS

- **Finger action and speed**
 - Drop-release of fingers to string
 - Christine Rutledge, "Viola Pedagogy: The Art and Value of Warming Up," in *Journal of the American Viola Society*, vol. 14/No. 2 (1998): 31-44.
 - Sevcik, Op. 1/Pt. 1 and Pt. 2—also practice with separate bows to train the fingers to move evenly with the bow changes as the "metronome"
 - Grieg, *Holberg Suite*, Prelude, beginning 9 measure before letter B
 - Fast scales and arpeggios across strings in one position
 - Galamian scales across four strings in one position (p. 1 in the original violin edition)
 - Telemann Concerto in G, movement II (Allegro)
 - Handel, B minor concerto first movement (scales)
 - Tchaikovsky, *Capriccio Italien*, Op. 45, mm. 156-174 (advanced)
 - Bruch, *Romance*—arpeggios, *Un poco stringendo* (top of page 3)
- **Basic fingerboard geography and interval training to develop hand frame and comfort**
 - Scales in one position across all four strings in 3rds, 4ths, 6ths, 7ths
 - Katrina Wreede's *Violaerobics*

- Mazas Op. 36, #10, 11: 8vas and 10ths across strings
- Kreutzer #6, 7
- Double stops (Trott, Hoffman, C. Harvey; later Galamian)
- Transposition exercises to reinforce interval relationships (Kreutzer #5 transposed at sight into 2nd, 3rd, or 4th positions)
- Playing notes on one string while naming the corresponding notes a 5th away on an adjacent string
- Octave transpositions up and down

- **Shifting fluency and speed**
 - Gaylord Yost, *Exercises for Change of Position* (available in violin on www.imslp.org)
 - Galamian—one-finger scales on a single string
 - Introducing the Positions/Whistler, #34 Adagio-Elegy in E-flat
 - Dont-Svenceski, *20 Progressive Exercises for Viola*, #16
 - Berlioz, *Roman Carnival Overture*, measures 36-60
 - Praludium and Allegro—prelude

- **LH-RH coordination and synchronization**
 - There is a time and a place for left-hand movement, coordinated within the bow for a legato passage or timed between strokes in fast playing
 - In lyrical playing:
 - Scales with non-equal rhythms under slurs
 - Hooked bowings
 - Doris Gazda, *Melodious Etudes for Viola, Selected from the Vocalises of Marco Bordogni* (Carl Fischer)
 - Mazas op. 36, #7
 - Saint-Saens, *The Swan*
 - Bruch, *Romance for Viola and Orchestra*, opening
 - G. P. Telemann, *Concerto in G*, movement I
 - Subdivision of uneven rhythms into 16th-notes, triplets, etc. (i. e. for dotted rhythms, etc.)—re-visit Berlioz *Roman Carnival Overture*
 - In fast passage work:
 - Slur these passages to encourage the fingers of the left hand to connect in a legato fashion both within a position and between positions when shifting
 - Tchaikovsky Symphony #5, movement III, 16th-note passages
 - Tchaikovsky, *Capriccio Italien*, Op. 45, measures 391-409
 - Mendelssohn Scherzo from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
 - Beethoven Symphony #3, Scherzo

CONCLUSION

Orchestral violists are not challenged at the same level of frequency as orchestral violinists with regard to left-hand technique. I hope that this clinic has offered you resources to give students in your viola section extra assignments to enhance their basic skills and to progressively build a skill set which prepares them for more challenging repertoire.

①

Sevcik Op. 1/P4. 1

1

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3

Also to be practised
in the following ways:

② Grieg Holberg Suite

Quarter note=146



③ Telemann, Concerto in G, mvt. I



④

Capriccio Italien (op. 45), Tchaikovsky

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Dotted quarter note = 58

156 *arco*
ff

158

160

162

164

⑤ Bruch, Romance

Un poco stringendo

f *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

f *sempre f*

⑥ Mazas Op. 36, #10

Allegro non troppo.

10. *f*

⑦ Mazas Op. 36, # 11

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Allegro non troppo.



1091

⑧ Kreutzer #6

Moderato



⑨ Kreutzer #7

Allegro assai



⑩ Kreutzer #5

Allegro moderato



11 Dont-Svencenski, #16

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The sustained phrases are to be played broadly, with the whole bow; the rhythmical ones gracefully, with the lower part of the bow.

Andante espressivo

16

Violin 16 score, measures 16-30. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It features a variety of musical textures, including sustained phrases and more rhythmic passages. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above notes. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The first system ends with a first ending bracket labeled *I^a*. The second system ends with a second ending bracket labeled *II^a*. The third system includes a trill marked with a *V* and a final first ending bracket labeled *I^a*.

Viola

12 Berlioz: Roman Carnival Overture, m.36-60

Viola score, measures 36-60. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of four systems of music. The first system is marked *mf espress.* and includes a first ending bracket labeled *1*. The second system is marked *f* and includes a second ending bracket labeled *2*. The third system includes markings for *cresc. molto*, *f dim.*, *p*, and *mf*, and includes a third ending bracket labeled *3*. The fourth system is marked *poco cresc.* and ends with a final first ending bracket labeled *1*.

⑬ Mazas, Op. 36, #7 Cantabile White-Smith 7

Andante.



⑭ Saint-Saens, The Swan

Adagio



Max Bruch, Op. 85

⑮ Bruch, Romance

Andante con moto. Die ♩ = 69 Solo

Tutti

Viol. I pp

A

dolce



16 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, mvt. III White-Smith 8

10 *spiccato assai*

p

13

1. 2.

mf *mf*

17 Capriccio Italien (op. 45), Tchaikovsky

Quarter note = 164

K *arco*

391 *ff*

396

401

406 *fff* **L** *fff*

18 Allegro vivace $\text{♩} = \text{app. } 116$ SYMPHONY No. 3 L. van Beethoven, Op. 55

sempre pp e staccato

1 2

sempre pp