

Eat Your Vegetables and Practice Your Scales! Scales Are the Spinach of Left-hand Technique

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If notes are the building blocks of music, then scales and arpeggios provide the blueprint for its design.

Finger Pattern Study the Basis of Scales

Violin / Viola Patterns: Patterns Denote Half Steps

2-3 Pattern

1-2 Pattern

3-4 Pattern

Cello Open Pattern: 1-2 Pattern; 1-3 Pattern

String Bass Pattern: 1-2 pattern; 1-4 pattern

Finger Spacing

Violin / Viola: Emphasize wide whole steps and tight half steps

Cello: Equal spacing between fingers

Bass: Spacing between 1st and 2nd fingers equal to 2nd, 3rd, and 4th fingers held together loosely

Intonation

Most early intonation problems occur when the 3rd and 7th scale steps in a major key are too low
Teaching from a 4-fingers down pattern improves intonation and eliminates “snarps” (D Major F# and C# for example); these are often heard when students are taught from the open string upward and do not accomplish a wide whole step

Students should mark half step relationships in scales and music lines

Beginning and Intermediate Levels

Unison and Octave Scales recognizing finger patterns

Finger patterns generally are the same in the lower octave/strings and change in the upper octave/strings

Homogeneous and all students at same ability level

Advanced Middle School and Early Secondary Level

Scale Building

Major Scales

Understanding of whole and half step structure for a major scale (C Major)

Marking of half steps in major scale (3-4 and 7-8)

Minor Scales: Natural (Relative A minor)

Melodic – most used in composition

Harmonic

48 note scale and 18 note arpeggio

Violin/Viola/Cello: Two-Octave Scales and Arpeggios

String Bass: One-Octave Scales and Arpeggios

Offers repetition of the scale and arpeggio in known and new positions

It can be used simultaneously in a string class for:

- students who only know one octave
- students who are learning to shift to higher positions
- students learning three-octave scales and arpeggios

Creating interval combinations for listening and identification of intervals

Can accommodate rhythmic and bowing combinations

Developing fingerings for both velocity and orchestral study

Use of the 4th finger ascending and descending encouraged for violin and viola

- preserves correct hand position

- furthers the development of clean left hand articulation for advanced playing
- provides the same fingering for both sharp and flat keys of the same pitch for violin and viola (A and A flat Majors)

Scale Velocity: Getting around the instrument
 Learn fingerings for muscle memory
 Uses slow intonation study at the beginning
 Builds speed one note value at a time

Scale Velocity Procedure:

- Set the metronome at $\theta = 60$
- The bow speed remains constant throughout the exercise
- Each bow will have 2 clicks of the metronome
- Begin with two quarter notes per bow. Play entire 48-note scale
- Accelerate the scale with 4, 6, and 8 notes per bow each time
- Gradually increase the metronome speed as facility is demonstrated.

Advanced Secondary School Level

48 note scale and 18 note arpeggio study continued
Violin/Viola/Cello: Three-Octave Scales and Arpeggios
String Bass: Two-Octave Scales and Arpeggios
 Offers repetition of the scale and arpeggio in known and new positions
 It can be used simultaneously in a string class for:

- students who only know one octave
- students who are learning to shift to higher positions
- students learning three-octave scales and arpeggios

It can accommodate rhythmic and bowing combinations

Viola, Cello and Bass:

Alternate clef study must be introduced at this time
 Violin may study the alto clef for the possibility of playing the viola at some time

Cello and Bass:

Familiarity with Thumb Position
 Keep hand in "C" position
 Play on "inside" of upper strings to keep "C" position; no collapsed fingers

Violin / Viola:

Numerical fingering charts may offer a system that reduces the fingerings of major and minor scales to open string, 1st finger, and 2nd finger starts
 Use of the 4th finger ascending and descending encouraged for violin and viola;
 open strings may be substituted in faster tempi at the teacher's discretion
 Orchestral fingerings from 1st to upper positions and back may also be explored

Teaching from a Parallel Scale Key Point of View

Common fingering/shift patterns for major and minor scales of violin/viola
 Same fingering systems for violin and viola a fifth apart (same finger start)

Relating Scales and Arpeggios to Performance Literature

- Opening key
- Modulations throughout the piece; mark new half step relationships as they occur
- Use scale and arpeggio study to isolate and develop bowings
- Use scale and arpeggio study to isolate and develop rhythms