

Giving Beginning Bowing Technique a Musical Purpose

Motivating and Supporting Technical and Musical Development Through Enjoyable Musical Tasks

Bret P. Smith, Ph.D.

*Assistant Professor, School of Music
University of Maryland, College Park
bpsmith@umd.edu*

Introduction and Basic Teaching Premise

Research on teaching and learning in a variety of domains has highlighted the importance of the task itself in supporting student motivation, interest, and achievement. In beginning string settings, I suggest the learning goals in left and right hands be presented in the form of interesting tunes.

These tunes should:

Be authentic

Be challenging but achievable with teacher preparation and facilitation

Offer opportunities for student choice (variation model)

Represent a variety of musical styles and cultural traditions

THE ACHIEVEMENT LOOP

1. **A Music Learning Objective** ‘Set in Sound’ defines the elements of:

Rhythm (Tempo, Meter, Melodic Rhythm)

Melody (Tonality)

Harmony

Tone Quality (Timbre)

Intonation

Phrasing

Style of Articulation

Expressive Nuance

Music Culture

2. **Preparation and Facilitation**

Something the teacher does to get students ready for:

3. **Practice**

Something the student does that leads to:

4. **Achievement**

A result that pleases everyone and motivates the student to take on:

5. **A New Music Learning Objective** (Step 1)

LEGATO-With a smooth and connected style of articulation

DETACH&The bow stroke used to produce a legato style

Preparation:

Right hand bow hold is developing (fingers curved and relaxed, in assigned places, thumb curved and flexible)

Bow is at right angle to strings

Arm weight provides friction for stroke

Instrument supports the bow, right hand guides

Upper strings: Middle to upper part of bow

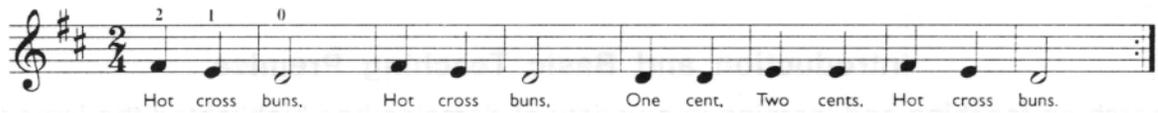
Lower strings: Lower part of bow

Duple meter

Hot Cross Buns

Moderato

English Folk Song



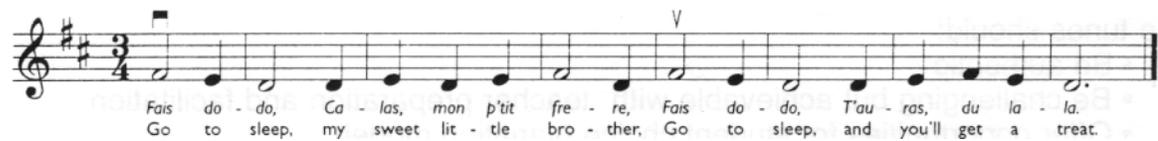
Hot cross buns, Hot cross buns, One cent, Two cents, Hot cross buns.

Triple meter

Fais do do

Legato

French Lullaby



Fais do - do, Ca - las, mon p'tit fre - re, Fais do - do, T'au - ras, du la - la.
Go to sleep, my sweet lit - tle bro - ther, Go to sleep, and you'll get a treat.

Extension of technique

Bow lift (reset nearer frog)

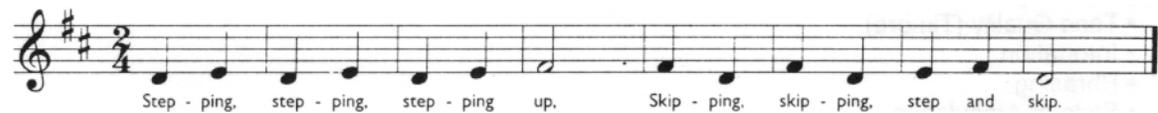
Hooked bow (stop and continue in same direction)

Slurs

Stepping and Skipping (THEME)

Moderato

U.S.



Step - ping, step - ping, step - ping up, Skip - ping, skip - ping, step and skip.

Variation One on Stepping and Skipping



Variation Two on Stepping and Skipping



Nonsense Song

Legato

Hungary



Relation to musical style: Lyrical expression

Au Claire de la Lune

Legato French Folk Song

Au claire de la lune, Mon ami Pierrot,
In the moon's pale shimmer, My dear friend Pierrot,
Prêt-e-moi ta plume, Pour écrire un mot.
I would like to write you, Just a word or so.

The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a legato style with smooth, connected notes. The melody is simple and lyrical, with lyrics in French and English.

STACCATO-A style of playing that makes use of separation between notes.

Relation to musical style: Reggae, folk song, folk dance

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Lively Traditional Folk Song

Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb.
Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow.

The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a lively style with a bouncy, rhythmic melody. The lyrics are simple and well-known.

Juba

Playfully African-American Folk Song

Ju-ba this and Ju-ba that, Ju-ba chased a yel-low cat, Ju-ba up and Ju-ba down, Ju-ba run-ning all a-round.

The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It features a playfully rhythmic melody with a strong beat. The lyrics are simple and rhythmic.

Variation on Juba

A variation of the 'Juba' melody, maintaining the 2/4 time signature and G major key. The melody is more complex and rhythmic than the original.

Polka

Lightly Dance Tune

A polka melody in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It features a light, bouncy, and rhythmic melody typical of the genre.

Variation One on Polka

A variation of the polka melody, maintaining the 2/4 time signature and G major key. The melody is more complex and rhythmic than the original.

Variation Two on Polka

A variation of the polka melody, maintaining the 2/4 time signature and G major key. The melody is more complex and rhythmic than the original.

Extension of technique: Mix staccato and legato styles to replicate a musical model

Jacob Drink (SOLO, ENSEMBLE 2-5 PARTS)

With enthusiasm Polish Folk Song

A polka melody in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It features a mix of staccato and legato styles, with a strong rhythmic pattern. The lyrics are simple and rhythmic.

MARTELE - A term describing an accented style of bowing. The arm and hand provide weight to the bow before the beginning of a tone, gripping the string, and release the weight as the bow is moved.

Scotland's Burning (FOUR PART ROUND)

Brightly Traditional

1. Scot - land's burn - ing. 2. Scot - land's burn - ing. Look out, look out,
3. Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire! 4. Pour on wa - ter, Pour on wa - ter.

Relation to musical style: Baroque conventions

In duple meter, subdivision can be played legato, tempo beats and elongations can be played staccato or with a martele stroke (especially in cello and bass).

Theme from "Spring" (FOR STRING ORCHESTRA - VIOLIN I)

Allegro Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
arr. Bret Smith

Theme from "Spring" (FOR STRING ORCHESTRA - CELLO II)

Allegro Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
arr. Bret Smith

4

SPICCATO- A bowing style that allows the bow to spring or bounce away from the string between notes. The first of a series of spiccato strokes usually begins on the string. A dot (.) over or under a note can indicate a spiccato stroke.

Relation to Musical Style: Folk dances

Norwegian Dance

Lively Scandinavian Folk Tune



Musical score for Norwegian Dance, featuring a lively tempo and a Scandinavian folk tune. The score is written in treble clef, 2/4 time, and D major. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo marking 'Lively' is placed above the first staff, and 'Scandinavian Folk Tune' is placed to the right. The music is characterized by a series of eighth-note patterns, often with a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, and some notes are marked with a dot below them to indicate spiccato strokes.

The Shining Young Moon

Accelerando poco a poco Russian Folk Melody



Musical score for The Shining Young Moon, featuring an accelerando poco a poco tempo and a Russian folk melody. The score is written in treble clef, 2/4 time, and D major. It consists of two staves of music. The tempo marking 'Accelerando poco a poco' is placed above the first staff, and 'Russian Folk Melody' is placed to the right. The music features a series of eighth-note patterns, with some notes marked with a 'v' above them to indicate spiccato strokes.

Variation One on The Shining Young Moon

Accelerando poco a poco Russian Folk Melody
Spiccato



Musical score for Variation One on The Shining Young Moon, featuring an accelerando poco a poco tempo and a Russian folk melody. The score is written in treble clef, 2/4 time, and D major. It consists of two staves of music. The tempo marking 'Accelerando poco a poco' is placed above the first staff, and 'Russian Folk Melody' is placed to the right. The tempo marking '*Spiccato*' is placed above the first staff. The music features a series of eighth-note patterns, with some notes marked with a dot below them to indicate spiccato strokes.

Variation Six on The Shining Young Moon

Accelerando poco a poco Russian Folk Melody
Spiccato



Musical score for Variation Six on The Shining Young Moon, featuring an accelerando poco a poco tempo and a Russian folk melody. The score is written in treble clef, 2/4 time, and D major. It consists of two staves of music. The tempo marking 'Accelerando poco a poco' is placed above the first staff, and 'Russian Folk Melody' is placed to the right. The tempo marking '*Spiccato*' is placed above the first staff. The music features a series of eighth-note patterns, with some notes marked with a dot below them to indicate spiccato strokes.

**A SPECIAL OPTION FOR INDIVIDUAL AND ENSEMBLE TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT
APPLY RHYTHMIC SUBDIVISION AND SPICCATO BOWING TO A FAMILIAR TUNE
("BY EAR")
HOT CROSS BUNS**

Procedure I. Direct students to "Play the melody or use rhythmic subdivision."

**Procedure I a. Direct students to "Use the spiccato bowing on the subdivisions."
(If playing without accompaniment, tempo can be modified to ease bowing.)**

Example:



**Procedure 2. Assign sections or groups of students either the melody or the subdivided variation
(on the string or spiccato).**

Example:

A four-staff musical score for strings in D major, 2/4 time. The staves are labeled VN. (Violin), VA. (Viola), VC. (Violoncello), and D-B. (Double Bass). The VN. staff plays the melody from the previous example. The VA. staff plays a simplified accompaniment of quarter notes. The VC. and D-B. staves play a rhythmic subdivision of eighth notes. The word "etc." is written to the right of the staves.

**Procedure 3. Create an ensemble arrangement by alternating sections or groups of students on
the melody and subdivided variation.**

**Procedure 3a. Teacher or student volunteers can suggest other musical variations,
such as pizzicato, dynamics, legato, and octave transposition.**

APPLY THIS PROCEDURE TO FAMILIAR TUNES SUCH AS:

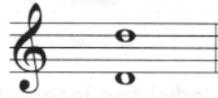
- Mary Had a Little Lamb
- Notes
- Down By the Station
- Stepping and Skipping
- Au Claire de la Lune
- Old King Cole
- Lightly Row
- Shepherd's Hey

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUSICAL CREATIVITY IN
APPLICATION OF BOWING TECHNIQUE
INTERPRETATION OF NOTATED MUSIC
IMPROVISATION
REPLICATION OF VOCAL OR INSTRUMENTAL MODEL**

COOL

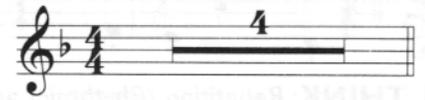
(VOCAL CALL AND RESPONSE -TEACHER CALL, STUDENT RESPONSE IN A SWINGING STYLE)

(Use the Tone D)



INTRO

(In a swinging style ♩ = ♪♪♪)



TEACHER CALL *1, *2, *3 Gm7 Am7	STUDENT RESPONSE Imitated or Improvised	TEACHER CALL *2, *3 Gm7 Am7	STUDENT RESPONSE Imitated or Improvised
Du Du Du Du de Dot Du		Du de Dot Du di Dot Du di Dot Du	

CALL *2, *3 Gm7 Am7	RESPONSE Imitated or Improvised	CALL *2, *3 Gm7 Am7	RESPONSE Imitated or Improvised
Du de Dot Du de Dot Du de Du de—		Du Du de Du de Dot Du de Du de—	

Interlude



CALL *4, *1 Gm7 Am7	RESPONSE Imitated or Improvised	CALL *1, *5, *4 Gm7 Am7	RESPONSE Imitated or Improvised
Du Du DAH Du de Du DAH		Du Du DAH Du - de - Du - dit	

CALL *5, *4 Gm7 Am7	RESPONSE Imitated or Improvised	CALL *1, *5 Gm7 Am7	RESPONSE Imitated or Improvised
Du - dit Du - dit Du - dit DAH		Du - de - Du - dit Du - de - Du - de—	

- * 1. **Du and de** normal articulation with a slight separation between tones
Du as in "due;" de as in "day"
- * 2. **Du- and de-** connected style of articulation
- * 3. **Dot** slightly sharper articulation with a quick release of the tone
- * 4. **DAH** strong accent with a sharp release of the tone
- * 5. **du-dit** fully extended tone to a short tone with a quick release (dit)

REVIEW OF STRATEGIES FOR CREATING MUSIC IMPROVISATIONS
THAT ARE INTERESTING AND WELL-STRUCTURED

Don't Know What to Do"

1. **THINK:** *Rhythmic Subdivision* to create excitement and to energize your performance.

2. **THINK:** *Sound and Silence* to provide interest, variety, structure, and expression.

3. **THINK:** *Repetition (Rhythmic) and Variation (Melodic)* for interest and structure.

4. Another example of the use of *Repetition (Rhythmic) and Variation (Melodic)* as structural elements.

5. **THINK:** *Musical Articulation* to provide an expressive element to your performance.

6. **THINK:** *Musical Dynamics* as an expressive strategy.

7. **THINK:** *Blues Scale* to provide interest, variety, and expression.

8. Another example of the use of selected tones of the *Blues Scale*.

9. Another example of the use of selected tones of the *Blues Scale*.