

**Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic  
Wednesday, December 19, 2007**

**Presents**

**SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS IN THE STRING CLASSROOM**

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Some of the most important factors that determine success in playing a stringed instrument involve the beginning “set up” stage, which includes establishing a proper playing position and developing free and open muscular motions. Teachers can ensure success for their students by establishing a series of procedures that break down the set up tasks to a sequence of exercises that allow their students to look and sound great!

**Proper Instrument Sizing**

Always err on the side of too small rather than too large  
Violin/Viola – hand around scroll with no hyperextension of the elbow, straight bow at the tip with no straining  
Cello – endpin adjusted so scroll is at nose level when standing/ m3 in 1<sup>st</sup> position  
Bass – endpin adjusted so nut is adjacent to top of forehead when standing/ m2 in 1<sup>st</sup> position

**Playable Instrument Condition**

Good quality strings with tuners on the tailpiece  
Pegs adjustable  
Violins and Violas - comfortable chin rests/ sponge & rubber band shoulder rests  
Cellists and bassists - suitable rock stop  
Bows - good quality hair / properly adjustable.

**Chairs**

Correct size and angle

**Fingernails**

**Body Positioning**

Stand with feet together  
Make a V  
Take a step (shoulder width)

Rock back and forth like a “tree in the wind”  
Sit on the ends of the chairs  
Feet flat on floor  
Backs straight  
“fire drill” exercise  
Chair circles

### **Rest Position**

#### **High Dot**

Reference point at octave harmonic  
Taps over high dot with relaxed fingers  
Promotes relaxed fingers and proper left hand shape  
Pre-vibrato exercise  
Rhythmic reinforcement

#### **Magic X**

Violin/Viola students only  
Cello/Bass maintains C shape with fingertip/thumb contact only  
Placed at the base joint of the index finger of the left hand  
Reference point for proper left hand placement  
Start in rest position with left hand over high dot  
Slide back over the Magic X to first position  
Pre-shifting exercise

#### **Statue of Liberty**

For violin/viola only  
Start in rest position with left hand over high dot  
Lift left hand to “Statue of Liberty” position  
Counting games to develop strength  
Turn instrument toward body and float onto collarbone  
Head stays stable – no “turtle neck”  
No space between neck and instrument

#### **Check violin/viola instrument stability**

Wave  
Scratch back  
Swing arms

#### **Cello Positioning**

Endpin set so peg box is at ear level  
Knee position just below C bout – balancing, not squeezing  
Roller Coaster exercise

### **Bass Positioning**

Check feet and body balance  
Angle instrument toward center of body – left leg touches back of bass  
Look, No Hands Exercise

### **Ants Song**

Violin/Bass together, left hand pinky plucks (3X per string) over high dot  
Each, Each, Each, Each and every  
Ant, Ant, Ant, Digging in the  
Dirt, Dirt, Dirt, Underneath the  
Ground, Ground, Ground  
Viola/Cello together as above  
Ants, Ants, Ants, digging in the  
Dirt, Dirt, Dirt, underneath the  
Ground, Ground, Ground, all the way to  
China, China, China  
For all instruments, look for relaxed left hand fingers, vibrant and ringing sound  
Reinforces names of strings

### **GDG**

Continues to reinforce the names of the strings/proper shaping of the left hand  
Over the high dot, with the pinky finger, all students pluck:  
G D G rest  
G D G rest  
G G D D  
G D G rest  
In rests, either tap right hand on thigh, or tap toe/foot  
Variations:  
DAD (all)  
AEA, GEG (violin and bass)  
CGC, CAC (viola and cello)

### **Bow Set Up**

Mark middles with tape  
Pinky Houses for violin/viola  
Start with pencil  
Taps/Flexible Thumbs  
Look upside-down

### **Bow Games**

Spatial Games:  
Rocket Ship, Pinocchio, Unicorn, Stir the Soup, Windshield Wipers

### **Shoulder Bowing**

- Toilet Paper Tubes
- For correct motion without sound
- Hold with left hands in correct position for playing
- Use UH of bow for violin/viola, LH for cello/bass
- Say and play rhythms
- Partner playing

### **Instrument and Bow Together**

- Don't rush this step – previous skills must be set to ensure success
- Continually review all previous set up steps for reinforcement

### **DAD with the bow**

- Bow division – violin/viola in UH, cello/bass in LH
- Prepare silent string crossings between G and D, as well as D and A
- Different parts of the bow
- Smooth, open motions
- Play with half-bow martele strokes
- Impulsive motions
- Add left hand pizzicato version to bowed version to create first complete piece
- Pizz: CGC, GDG, DAD, AEA Add Bow: DAD (2x)

### **Shaping the Left Hand**

- Tapes for specific fingers
- Slide back over Magic X
- Fingerboard slides and taps
- Penny Game
- Finger faces
- Thumb taps

### **See Saw**

- Introduces 1<sup>st</sup> finger
- Legato
- In triple meter
- Bow division – violin/viola UH, cello/bass LH
- A—D—A—D—
- EEE EEE D—D--

### **D Major Scale**

- Tetrachords on D and A
- Twinkle rhythms
- Bow Division
- Block fingering – plops

### **Extended Bow Exercises**

#### Silent Bow Placements

- Check for loose, round fingers
- Thumb off for violin/viola at frog
- Check sounding point
- Straight bow at tip

#### Whole Bow Circles

- Frog to tip
- Follow through as important as initial motion

#### Bow Wanderings

- Tip to frog and back
- Loose tremolo

### **Special thanks to IU String Academy for providing the demonstration group:**

Chih-Yi Chen, piano

Zoe Martin-Doike, Seungmi Sun, violin

Ren Martin-Doike, Sangwoo Kim, viola

Nathan Vickery, Jake Woollen, cello

### **Visit the following websites for further information on the IU String Academy and string pedagogy:**

[www.music.indiana.edu/special\\_programs/sa/](http://www.music.indiana.edu/special_programs/sa/)

[StringPedagogy.com](http://StringPedagogy.com)

[Circlingaround.com](http://Circlingaround.com)