Importance of Establishing a Healthy Foundation

These warm-ups and exercises, which have been adapted from the work of Mimi Zweig (www.stringpedagogy.com), Dr. Brenda Brenner, Paul Rolland, Shinichi Suzuki, Rebecca Henry (www.violinpractice.com), and others, are intended to develop flexibility, comfort with the instrument, and eventual artistic freedom.

These warm-ups could be incorporated into a public school string curriculum with the intention of reinforcing the motions through many repetitions throughout the early years of study in order for the physical motions to be internalized. While the exercises and terminology are intended for elementary school age students, they can be used with students at any age or level of proficiency. They can also be transferred to any string instrument!

**INSTRUMENT ONLY – REST POSITION**

- **Slide on Magic X** -- for violin and viola students only; cello/bass maintain C shape with fingertip/thumb contact only; Placed at the base joint of the left index finger; pre-shifting exercise
- **Tap Over High Dot**
- **Statue of Liberty**
- **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 towards the centre of body; left leg touches back of bass; “Look! No Hands!” exercise

**BOW ONLY**

- Bow Games; Shoulder Bowing (Twinkle Rhythms)

**LEFT HAND FINGERS**

- Thumb Taps; Fuzzy Fingers; Placing 1 2 3; Finger Taps; Finger Hops; Finger Slides
- **Elbow Levels** – Left Arm Strum; Tapping Levels
- **Pre-Shift** – Pinky Plucks; Tap ‘n Slide; Ghosts
- **Pre-Vibrato** – Shadow Vibrato; Slide on magic X; Peg Knockers; String Scrubbers; Wiggle Fingers

**INSTRUMENT AND BOW TOGETHER – don’t rush this step! Previous skills must be set to ensure success!** – Continually review all previous steps for reinforcement

- Right Finger Taps
- Silent String Crossings
- **“Boinga Boinga”** – bounce both arms to find the balance and the feeling of hanging
- **Surf the Bow** (instructor holds bow, resting at tip; student travels along the stick with bow hold, tip to frog)
• Silent Bow Placements – TOAD AND FROG STORY; note the square and triangle shapes
• POOFS – ½ bow martelé, middle-tip-middle-frog (wobble to check balance) – middle
• Bow Wanderings – baby steps (detaché) from tip to middle to frog to middle to tip.
• Bow Circles in Fruit Sizes (watermelon, orange, grape, etc.); down bow and up bow

Remedial Strategies for Posture Issues

• Posture affects every part of violin playing
• Internalization of body awareness in early lessons (De Alcantara, 1997; Rolland, 1974; Zweig, 2008)
• Discomfort – equipment assessment (Frisch and Denig)
• Alexander Technique; “hands on” approach – internalization of the correct motions
• “Musicians are athletes” (Lewis); importance of stretching, using the “complete body” (Ngai) through yoga/Pilates/core strength; Body Mapping workshops; Eldoa

Remedial Strategies for Bow Arm Issues

• Issues with bow holds, knowledge of articulations and basic bow strokes, stiffness, immobile fingers and wrists, tension in the arm, and poor tone production
• “The right hand . . . generally cause[s] most of the trouble for the violinist” (Galamian, 1999, p. 44).
• Internalization of skills through scaffolding strategies: holding a pencil; shoulder bowing – tapping fingers; mobilizing arm/hand/fingers through the martelé, detaché, and collé strokes – “springs”; three-dimensional string – tone production; push and pull; waves; “air violin”

Remedial Strategies for Shifting Issues

• Basic shifting principles: shift on the “old finger” and “old bow”; shifting finger; position; shifting with the speed of the bow; harmonic pressure; awareness of thumb
• Practice laying on floor – feel effects of gravity (like shifting on a cello)

Remedial Strategies for Intonation Issues

• Drone tones
• Basic intonation knowledge (just, tempered, selective intonation)
• Technology and smartphone applications – The Amazing Slowdowner; Cleartune; piano-accompaniments.com
• Lazy ears/fingers – awareness of distances (semitones and whole tones)
• “The best students are those who have the fastest ears and not the fastest fingers” (Lewis)

Remedial Strategies for Vibrato Issues

• Systematic/scientific approach: awareness of pitch, exact distances, and number of oscillations
• Metronome to work on different speeds and impulses (“wiggles”) – adapted from DeLay
• Others leave alone – personal musical expression

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