“But I Want to Play Tchaikovsky, Not Kreutzer!”: A Guide to the Remedial Process

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Have you ever had a new student who needed to take a step backward to solidify and/or remediate fundamental technical skills in their playing? In this session, the remedial process will be outlined in detail, and specific examples will be drawn from the intermediate through advanced levels of studio violin instruction in order to provide samples of how this learning journey might look in a real life situation.

What is remediation?
- The process of examining the foundational techniques and establishing a healthy approach to the instrument through ease of playing, technical facility, release of tension, and artistry

  - Influences
    - Mimi Zweig
      - Peeling away the layers of an onion
      - Nonjudgmental approach
    - Paul Rolland
      - Kinesthetic approach that is focused on freedom of motion and release of tension

Why remediate?
- Physical health – tension, incorrect motions, postural alignment
- Musical outcome – students sounding better
- Is it always beneficial?
  - Looks bad, sounds great
  - Motivation
  - Timeline

Assessment of New Students
- The Body and Equipment
  - Posture: feet, knees, body alignment
  - Instrument size
  - Chin rest and shoulder rest
  - Instrument placement – correct angles

- Right hand
  - Bow hold
  - Straight bow
  - Mastery over basic bow strokes – legato, martelé, détaché, spiccato
- Sound quality

  - **Left hand**
    - Finger angle – Magic X Placement
    - Elbow placement
    - Relaxed fingers
    - Intonation – finger patterns
    - Shifting
    - Vibrato

  - **Personal assessment**
    - Goals
    - Attitude
    - Motivation
    - Parents

**The Process of Remediation**

- Sequential and spiral approach
- Understanding vocabulary

  - **Posture**
    - Feet
    - relationship between head neck and back

  - **Equipment**
    - Shoulder rest and chin rest
    - Instrument size

  - **Instrument Hold**
    - Correct angles

  - **Bow**
    - Pinkie house; tapes

  - **Exercises**
    - Windshield wipers
    - Thumb off at frog

  - **Open Strings**
    - Martelé, détaché, legato
    - Sequential approach to bow strokes (upper half, lower half, whole bow, whole bow half, hooked bowings)

  - **Sequence of Scale Study**
    - Bow division (open A; Twinkle rhythms; 1 octave, 2 octave, 3 octave scales)

  - **Etudes**
- Vary bowings
- Etude sequence
  - Wohlfahrt, Whistler *Preparing for Kreutzer*, Dont Op. 37, Kreutzer (especially #2-10)

**Left Hand**
- Relationship of Magic X to string – finger angle
- Elbow placement
- Hand frame within one position
- Hand shape/size – double jointed

- **Exercises**
  - Taps, slides, strums – ball and socket joint loose and malleable
  - Release every finger after you play
  - Thumb taps

- **Etudes/Materials**
  - Fiddle Tunes, Trott *Melodious Double Stops*, Schradieck

- **Shifting**
  - Organization of shifts – anticipated versus delayed
  - Speed of the bow matches speed of shift
  - Bow moves through shift
  - Harmonic pressure

- **Materials**
  - Arpeggios, Whistler *Introducing the Positions*, Kreutzer No. 11; Sevcik Op. 8; Yost

- **Vibrato**
  - Relates to posture, violin hold, left hand placement, and shifting

**Repertoire**
- Choose literature carefully
- Look outside of sequential repertoire (Royal Conservatory of Music syllabus, fiddle tunes, Kreisler pieces, etc.)
- Easier level of challenge

**Outcomes**
- Non-punitive process – life-long reevaluation
- Individualized and unique
- Physical change in approach to instrument
- Mindset