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Message from the President

The great news about our Maryland/DC Chapter of ASTA is that we have become a vibrant and extremely active organization. Please go to our new website www.asta.net and click on “News” and “Event Calendar” to see what we are doing. Then click on each of the items on the left of any page to see more exciting developments. I’m sure that those of you who are new to the site will be pleasantly surprised. So please take advantage of our Programs and attend our Events.

Strategic Alliances will be the theme of my presidency from now until I step down in May 2010. The various string communities in our chapter can benefit from our Programs, and we can also help to promote theirs. These communities are teachers in our colleges and universities, public and private elementary, middle and high schools, as well as Suzuki and home-school teachers. There are endless creative ways we can reach out to help strings students and their teachers, but first we need to develop our interconnected alliance web. This process is currently well under way. Please do not hesitate to write to me or call with any ideas you may have regarding working together.

By the time you read this, the **ASTA National Conference** in Atlanta will have taken place. Three board members and I will have attended; please wait for the Autumn issue for our reports.

The MD/DC Annual Membership Meeting is Sunday, May 17, 2009. All members are invited to attend this festive catered dinner. Send in your reservation now! Read the message from our President-elect below. Visit our website for further information. (<http://www.asta.net/calendar.php>) Or call me to reserve your place! My contact information is on the inside front cover.

Again, please let me encourage all of you to attend our Programs and Events. You and your students will enjoy them, and everyone will benefit.

I would like to thank the Officers, the Executive Board and the Board for contributing so many hours to get things going since last May. Your ideas, feedback, committee work, event planning and hosting, website work, and good spirits have enlivened our chapter, as well as string teaching in Maryland and the District of Columbia. Be advised, ASTA MD/DC members: we are just getting started!

Dorée Huneven

A Note from the President-elect

Our **Annual Membership Meeting** on May 17, 2009, will be held in a beautiful new performance facility in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Located in a lovely setting, imagine your next recital at the Lutheran Church of St. Andrew in Silver Spring! The brand new facility was designed to be musician friendly, with wonderful acoustics designed by a world class engineer.

There is ample seating for as many as 600, plenty of free parking, and the property is conveniently located a short distance above the Washington, D.C. beltway.

With an in-house Chef available, your guests can be treated to food and drink at the conclusion of your performance in the spacious new Commons reception area.

With an ongoing concert series that has featured singers and musicians from the U.S., the Czech Republic and Africa, the venue is causing quite a stir in the arts community!

For more information about the facility, contact:

Greg Twombly
Director of Ministries
The Lutheran Church of St. Andrew
15300 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20905
301-384-4394 (office)
703-887-2137 (cell)

Cathy Stewart

http://www.asta.net/ A Viewer's Guide

by Lorraine Combs

MD/DC Chapter's new website went live on December 1, 2008. As the Website Coordinator, I'm very pleased with the result, and I want to express my deepest appreciation to everyone who had a part in making this happen. My first thank-you goes to our Chapter President, **Dorée Huneven**, for starting the ball rolling early in 2008. At the ASTA Convention last March, she visited the booth of **Jonas Music Services** and met with the representative. After the convention, Dorée and JMS, which now hosts our website, developed the website proposal. This included specifics on the various pages, plus costs. As the summer began, website committee members were chosen: **Dorée, Mark Pfannschmidt, Lya Stern, Laurien Laufman, our newest committee member Leah Kocsis, and yours truly**. I was nominated to be Website Coordinator. Our first meetings consisted of agreeing on a look and design for the website, and refining the details of the various pages. My second thank-you goes to the rest of the website committee members, who had some great suggestions and continue to bring little problems to my attention.

In August 2008, the details of the proposal were finalized, the down payment was made, and the actual building of the website was underway. As the liaison between MD/DC Chapter and Jonas Music Services, I met via e-mail with Ann at JMS and our website committee members on a weekly, sometimes almost daily, basis. My apologies to the committee members for your stuffed-to-overflowing InBoxes! After giving JMS our design wishes, they came up with the final design that you see when you open our website. My third thank-you is to JMS, who were such professionals in this endeavor! The entire staff is friendly, knowledgeable, and eager to answer questions.

Now I'd like to introduce this website to all our members who haven't looked at it yet. It's my fervent wish, along with the Officers and Board of MD/DC Chapter, that more and more of you will refer to it often to find out what is happening in our world of ASTA. For those of you who either don't yet have

a computer, or for those who have access to one but use it very little, or use one only for specific duties, I hope you will continue reading. Discover how our new website works.

Home

Open this page (**Fig. 1**) in your web browser: **http://www.asta.net/** (Our former website had the same web address.) Our HOME page has WELCOME at the top of the text. The neat thing about the text on our pages is that it is editable by us, with EZ-Revise Hosting, an option offered by JMS to all its clients.

The design of the frame looks the same on every page, with the ASTA logo, the MD/DC Chapter title, the Bay Bridge picture, the stringed instruments, the U.S. Capitol dome, the left sidebar with the individual pages listed, and the picture of a C-bout and f-hole of a violin at the bottom of the page. Included in the basic frame of every page is a NEWS sidebar on the right side of the text. This is a little area that we can add or delete information as we see fit. On the far right of every page is a column of little boxes for our advertisers. All ads are the same size, and will randomly rotate with each click to a new page, or with each page refresh. Clicking on an ad will take you directly to that advertiser's web page. If you want to take out an ad, or you know of someone who would be interested in taking out an ad, simply go to the Contact Us page, and send an e-mail to our President-Elect, Catherine Stewart, for information.

Event Calendar

The second page is our EVENT CALENDAR, with four columns for **Date**, **Time**, **Event Title**, and **Details**. Sometimes there are links embedded within the Details. The topmost event automatically disappears when that date has passed. The NEWS sidebar is the same as the one on the HOME page.

Certificate Advancement Program

Our third page (**Fig. 3**) has two sections. There is an introduction to ASTA CAP on the first section—many members are already familiar with this program. To go to the Online Registration page, simply

click on the brown **Apply Now** button. Starting in 2009, teachers should fill out the applications for all their students online. **(Fig. 4)** The information automatically goes into an Excel file, which will save huge amounts of time for the Exam organizers.

The NEWS sidebar on this page contains news pertaining only to ASTA CAP. Notice there is a link to the National ASTA website's page of repertoire lists.

For teachers without access to a computer, you may still send in a paper application for each student. Contact Lya Stern, 301-320-2693, for application forms.

Other Programs

Our fourth page **(Fig. 2)** only has one program at this time, the **Solo String Festival**. The information here is exactly the same as the information in the Winter 2008-2009 issue of *Stringendo*.

When new programs are developed and added, the information about them will go on this page, as well. (Hint: the MD/DC Chapter board is planning a Fiddle Day for Fall, 2009. Keep checking the website for details!)

The NEWS sidebar on this page is specifically for OTHER PROGRAMS.

News

Our fifth page **(Fig. 5)** contains news items, just like a newspaper or a newsletter. We have found that it's helpful to include on this page the details of events in our EVENT CALENDAR. We can have as many NEWS items as we want. However, the text of only one item at a time appears on the page, but the viewer can click on any item in the MORE NEWS sidebar for the text of another piece of news. As you click on each item, it's fun to watch the ads rotate.

Officers and Board of Directors

Our sixth page is one of our longest text pages. Bios for all nineteen MD/DC Board Members are listed here. Sit down and read about us sometime, and find out about your fellow members! The NEWS sidebar here is specific to this page.

Studio Teachers

Any MD/DC member who requests it may be listed on our seventh page. The NEWS sidebar on this page is specifically for STUDIO TEACHERS.

Stringendo

A photo of the familiar cover of the MD/DC Chapter publication appears on our eighth page **(Fig. 6)**. In the STRINGENDO ISSUES sidebar, the user can click on a past issue to open a PDF file of that issue. The front and back covers of these issues have been deleted, as well as the original ads.

Photo Gallery

This page, ninth from the top, is our newest one. It went live on March 4, 2009. When you land on the page, you will see small thumbnail photos. Click on any photo to enlarge it. At the bottom of the enlarged photo you can read descriptive text and photo credit. Also, at the bottom of each large photo, you may click the left and right arrows to advance to the previous or next photos. Either click on the X or the photo itself to close the large image. The NEWS sidebar is the same as the one on the HOME page.

Links

Our tenth page contains links to items that members might find useful. The links are organized this way: Professional Orchestras, Community Orchestras, Youth Orchestras, Schools, Organizations, Publications, Misc., and Advertisers (the same as the ones in the right column). The NEWS sidebar is the same as the one on the HOME page.

Contact Us

Our last page offers the viewer the chance to contact any of our nineteen Board members via e-mail directly from our website. The NEWS sidebar is the same as the one on the HOME page.



Lorraine Combs is the Website Coordinator, and does Stringendo Layout and Design for MD/DC Chapter. Read her bio on the Officers and Board of Directors page on the website.

**Please visit our
MD/DC website!
www.asta.net**



Figure 1. Home page



Figure 2. Other Programs page



Figure 3. ASTA CAP page



Figure 4. ASTA CAP Application page



Figure 5. News page

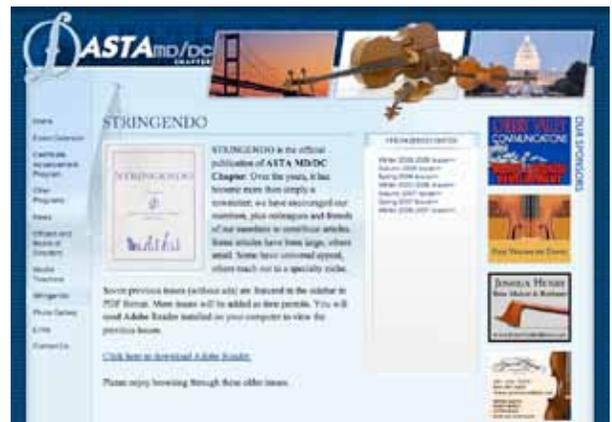


Figure 6. Stringendo page

Silent Auction Contributors

ASTA MD/DC Chapter would like to thank the following donors for their generous contributions! The items below were donations for the Silent Auction at the 2009 ASTA National Convention in Atlanta. Proceeds from the auction benefited the **National Foundation to Promote String Teaching and Playing.**

1. German violin c. 1920, bearing the label "Gunther Reber," value \$2000
Donor: The Violin House of Weaver
William Weaver
4706 Highland Ave.
Bethesda, MD 20814
2. Bobelock violin case, value \$138
Donor: S. Bobelock Inc.
Bruce Weaver
6252 Blooming Grove Road
Glenville, PA 17329
3. Violin bow, stamped August Dubois, value \$1500
Donor: Gailes' Violin Shop, Inc.
Bill Gailes
10013 Rhode Island Ave.
College Park, MD 20740
4. Bobelock bow case, value \$60
Donor: Gailes' Violin Shop, Inc.
Bill Gailes
10013 Rhode Island Ave.
College Park, MD 20740
5. Cello basket: unique hand crafted "basket" made from a cello, value \$250
Donor: The Potter Violin Company
Dalton Potter
4706 Highland Ave.
Bethesda MD 20814
6. Book "One Step Up" signed by author, value: \$12
Donor: The Potter Violin Company
Dalton Potter
4706 Highland Ave.
Bethesda MD 20814
7. CD: Steven Gerber Concerti and Serenade, two mugs, two T-shirts, tote bag, value: \$74
Donor: National Philharmonic
Ken Oldham contact
- The Music Center at Strathmore
5301 Tuckerman Lane
North Bethesda, MD 20852
8. 2 CDs: Washington Opera Commentary: Aida, Porgy and Bess, Washington Opera key chain, value \$46
Donor: Washington Opera
Sam Gill contact
2600 Virginia Ave. NW, Suite 301
Washington, DC 20037
9. 3 CDs: Baltimore Symphony Orchestra: John Corigliano, signed by Marin Alsop; Dvořák Symphony No. 9, value \$54
Donor: Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
Andrew VanderLinden contact
The Music Center at Strathmore
5301 Tuckerman Lane
North Bethesda, MD 20852
10. 2 CDs: Steve Abshire, signed, value \$36
Donor: Steve Abshire
11. 5 CDs: Rutlands Reel, Casey Driscoll Texas Style Fiddling, Nate Leath Mojo Espresso, Patrick McAvinue Grave Run, Nate Leath and Friends Rockville Pike, value: \$90
Donor: Patuxent Music
Tom Mindte
P.O. Box 572
Rockville, MD 20848
12. CD: Peace*ing It Together, signed; T-shirt, value \$38
Donor: Paul Wingo
13. CD: Cameos, signed, value \$18
Donor: Cherry Valley Music
14. T-shirt: Maryland Women's Basketball, value \$20
Donor: UM Women's Basketball Booster Club
15. Paul Reed Smith computer bag full of goodies: book, calendar, CD, hat, playing cards, lighter, key chain, value undetermined
Donor: Paul Reed Smith Guitars
Mary Fairbank contact
380 Log Canoe Circle
Stevensville, MD 21666

Johannes Palaschko: 18 Elementary Studies, Op. 51

by Mark Pfannschmidt

Viola Forum Editor and Executive Board Member, MD/DC Chapter

Almost completely unknown today, Palaschko's compositions are musically rewarding for teachers and students alike. *18 Elementary Studies for the Violin, op. 51* by Johannes Palaschko¹ were written to be played entirely in first position. Having studied violin with Joseph Joachim² and composition with Heinrich von Herzogenberg³, Palaschko clearly exhibits characteristics typical of German Romanticism in his music. His etudes are full of interpretive clues and help the progressing violinist (or violist) to become a better musical detective. A wealth of material for developing skills in ASTA CAP Levels 3 to 5 are found here, and they make great sight reading material for the more advanced student.

Pedagogical practices have changed dramatically since these works were first published. Today's violin students generally begin the study of positions and off-the-string bow strokes much earlier, which better prepares them for the opportunities provided by youth orchestras. Since there are many elementary and intermediate student violists today, these etudes have been transposed and put into alto clef for viola.

These etudes are musically engaging, and technical development can be targeted in the following areas:

1. **Musicality.** These short works provide a wealth of characters, which are often apparent. Learning to convey musical styles involves the student's imagination. Different students find different approaches helpful. Some various ways of reaching the creative side of the brain:
 - Colors: Be specific: *smoky blue, fire red, orange like the sunrise.*
 - Descriptive Words: Innocent, exuberant, mischievous.

- Pictures or movie scenes: "Picking flowers for Mommy" (innocent), "a knight in shining armor riding to battle" (powerful).
- Foods: Chocolate (rich, dark), cotton candy (sweet, light, airy), Jell-O (fun, jiggly).

2. **Musical Fingering.** Fingering has been carefully chosen to aid in dynamic shading and tone color. For the student with limited experience playing above first position, these studies can be initially learned in first position. Once the transition is made to playing these pieces in position, it soon becomes apparent that positions not only make certain passages easier (by minimizing string crossings or awkward reaches), but also expand the palette of colors available for musical expression.
3. **Bow control.** Palaschko is very specific in his articulation markings, giving us further clues in solving our musical puzzle. Characters are created by the use of a broad range of bow strokes. These works are well designed for developing and solidifying bow technique; indeed, their musicality makes mastery of the bow more enjoyable. The following questions can help in this endeavor:
 - How can bow speed help to shape the phrase? Should it be constant? Varied?
 - How much of the bow should you use? Should you use more bow on the faster notes?
 - Should these notes be at the frog? The tip? The middle?

¹ Original title: *Achtzehn Elementar-studien für violine (Innerhalb der 1. Lage)*, Leipzig: Steingräber, 1911.

² Joseph Joachim was one of the premier violinists of all time. The Brahms Violin Concerto was written for and dedicated to him.

³ Heinrich von Herzogenberg was a personal friend of Brahms. He and his wife had a lengthy correspondence with Brahms.

- Does the mood of the music call for a heavier or lighter stroke?
 - How short should the staccato strokes be? On or off the string? Light or accented?
 - Does the stroke change with the dynamic? From section to section?
4. **Intonation.** A characteristic of music of the Romantic era is chromaticism. Eight of these studies are in minor keys. Accidentals are frequent, providing opportunity for refinement of inner hearing, expanding mental awareness of fingerboard geography, and developing greater flexibility of the left hand and fingers. Understanding where the tension of a chromatic note is resolving helps a student to refine melodic intonation.⁴
 5. **Dynamics.** Palaschko is very specific in dynamic markings. While this does not preclude subtleties of shading not specifically in the score, dynamics are imperative in determining and creating the intended musical effect. Softer dynamics call for more subtle colors, while louder dynamics call for richer hues.

Using Etude no. 1 (Figure 1), we can see specific applications of these broad categories.

1. **Musicality.** “Andante quasi moderato” should be interpreted to mean not particularly slow, faster than Andante. It is helpful to think of this piece with two beats per measure ($\downarrow = 58$). If the tempo is slower, the piece seems to run out of breath and die. The longer note values and slurs clearly convey the lyrical quality. The dynamics call for a hushed mood overall with a touch of bold color at the two places marked *f*. The overall character could be described as warm and tender, or a muted green, or a sunrise, or cup of hot chocolate on a cold winter day.
2. **Musical fingering.** The long note values of this example make it especially useful for teaching or refining vibrato. The use of third

position in several places minimizes string crossings and open strings, resulting in a warmer tone quality. In m.4, shifting to third position avoids open A (Palaschko’s original fingering⁵) and delays the string crossing to the peak of the crescendo, where it enhances the shape of the phrase. The shift at m.27 is expressive (executed with some *portamento*), avoids the open E (Palaschko), and keeps the slurs on one string. In addition, the fifth in m.30 is made easier with the larger finger pad of first finger. Waiting to use the E string for the peak of the phrase in m.35 helps to create the climax of the piece. At the end, third position is combined with *sul tasto* to create the whisper-soft ending (avoiding open A’s and E’s).

3. **Bow control.** This etude is an opportunity to refine basics of bow control. Bow speed, weight and contact point all work together to create shades of color. When compared to mm.41–42, the addition of flats in mm.45–46 demonstrates how a skilled composer uses chromatic alteration to create surprise and variety. Enjoy the moment as each student carefully disappears at the end of this etude and experiences the magic of controlling a soft dynamic well—maybe for the first time.
4. **Intonation.** The G \sharp in m.13 occurs where there is a shift, making intonation trickier. The fingering was chosen to utilize the half step as a place to have a subtle shift. The A \flat and E \flat in mm.45–46 can be less familiar to students at this level. Hearing them in relation to G and D, respectively, can give the student a tool to use in similar passages. Point out the redundant natural sign in m.49 and ask why it is there. This provides an opportunity to review the rules of accidentals. Palaschko does not leave any doubt about his intentions, but uses the redundant natural (courtesy accidental) to make it clear he no longer wishes to change the E to an E \flat .

⁴ I like to ask a student, “Which note is higher, G \sharp or A \flat ?” In melodic contexts, G \sharp is often leading up to A (or even A \sharp), whereas A \flat is often leading down to G (or G \flat). So the tendency is for G \sharp to be *higher* than A \flat , though the note names seem to imply the opposite.

⁵ It should be noted that Palaschko lived in the era of (wound) gut strings, which had a warmer sound. This was also coupled with a tradition which used vibrato as a separate color, rather than a normal part of the violinist’s sound.

18 Elementary Studies for the Violin, Op. 51

Johannes Palaschko
newly edited by Mark Pfannschmidt

1. Andante quasi moderato

The musical score for the first study, 'Andante quasi moderato', is presented in a single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. The piece consists of 50 measures. The notation includes various musical elements such as fingerings (indicated by numbers 0-4), dynamics (p, mf, f, pp), and performance instructions (cresc., dim., riten., morendo). The score is divided into eight systems, each containing five measures. The first system starts with a piano (p) dynamic and a crescendo (cresc.) instruction. The second system begins with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The third system starts with a piano (p) dynamic. The fourth system begins with a forte (f) dynamic. The fifth system starts with a piano (p) dynamic. The sixth system begins with a forte (f) dynamic. The seventh system starts with a pianissimo (pp) dynamic. The eighth system begins with a morendo instruction and ends with a double bar line.

© Mark Pfannschmidt 2008

FIGURE 1

5. **Dynamics.** This is an excellent example of the need for a *dynamic plan*. The *p* at the beginning must be meaty enough so that there is contrast in the *pp* with the *morendo* at the end, yet leave plenty of room for audible crescendos and diminuendos. While the fingerings are a distinct aid, there is no substitute for refined control of the bow. Be sure to point out *morendo* (dying) at the end, which means get gradually softer and slower. The *riten.* at the end means suddenly slower (as opposed to *ritard*). This is an intensification of the slowing at the end.

The viola version of Etude no.14 (Figure 2) shows different skills.

1. **Musicality.** This etude in C Minor is a study in contrasts and there are some important clues to discover. The articulation contrasts between the staccato passages and the slurred *dolce* sections are fairly obvious, but it is important to note that the return of the A section at m.57 is *pp*. If the opening is timid, the return might be sneaky (and thus have more energy with less sound). The B section at m.21 is in the relative major (E \flat), while the return of the B section at m.77 stays in the tonic.
2. **Musical fingering.** The return of the A section uses third position for the dynamic, avoiding the brilliance of the A string and having a few harmonics to add interest. NB: The open D in m.56 is original, keeping all of the descending melodic notes on the downbeats on the same string.
3. **Bow control.** This was probably originally conceived to be played with a martelé stroke. Today's students should use a spiccato stroke with this piece, using a shorter stroke at m.57 for contrast. Spiccato also facilitates shifting, which can be accomplished surreptitiously while the bow is off the string. There are opportunities to teach or review common notational conventions:
 - m.2: The tenuto marking indicates that this note is not staccato (i. e., there is no missing dot); rather, it should be held for full value. (Try it both ways and see.)
 - m.4: The slurred descending second is a sigh; use most of the bow on the first note.

- m.5: Lift after the slur and before the third eighth note, the slurred sound should be between the first two notes only.
- m.7: Do not lift after the slur, because it interrupts the line; at this speed lifting after the slur creates a “hiccup” effect.
- m.20: The last note is a pickup to the phrase beginning in m.21, and should be legato to match the new mood of the section.
- m.24: The last note in this measure is the end of the phrase and should not be connected to the new phrase that follows.
- m.36: The slur indicating the hook is to show that both strokes are in the same bow, but the first note is the end of one phrase and the second note is the pickup to the new phrase.

This etude ends up-bow, which is Palaschko's original marking. This is unusual, but it works much better than slurring the last 4 measures together (not enough bow), or breaking the first slur at m.90 (too much bow).

4. **Key signature.** The key is the first intonation challenge. All those flats! Melodic variation is common in Palaschko's works and it challenges accuracy and intonation. Some examples:
 - m.21 and m.25 (also m.37 and m.41: The E \flat becomes E.
 - m.40 and m.44: The G becomes A.
 - mm.29–32 and 45–48: There are many differences here.
 - mm.53–56: The descending melodic line has chromatic changes.
5. **Dynamics.** The dynamic range of this etude is again a challenge. Some of the solutions for dynamic problems have already been discussed. At the end, care must be taken to not get too soft too soon, and not to get stuck at the tip. The ability to float the bow close to the frog is important here.



For a copy of these works, contact the author at mark.viola@yahoo.com for ordering information.

14. Rondoletto. Allegro moderato

The musical score is written in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. It consists of ten staves of music, each with a measure number at the beginning. The piece is marked *p* (piano) at the start. The first staff (measures 1-7) includes a *v* (accents) and fingerings 3, 0, 4, 2, 4, 2, 4. The second staff (measures 8-15) is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). The third staff (measures 16-23) is marked *dim.* (diminuendo) and *p*, with the word *dolce* (dolce) appearing. The fourth staff (measures 24-31) is marked *mf*. The fifth staff (measures 32-40) is marked *p* and includes a *v*. The sixth staff (measures 41-49) is marked *cresc.* (crescendo) and *f* (forte). The seventh staff (measures 50-58) is marked *dim.* and *pp* (pianissimo). The eighth staff (measures 59-67) is marked *mf* and *dim.*. The ninth staff (measures 68-84) is marked *dolce* and *p*. The tenth staff (measures 85-92) is marked *dim.* and *pp*, and ends with the word *morendo* (morendo).

FIGURE 2

College Entrance Auditions

by Laurien Laufman

Many of the students of ASTA teachers will be auditioning for college, some as Performance Majors, others as Music Ed Majors, and some as Music Minors or just for lessons and/or orchestra. The purpose of this article is to clarify how these auditions work, so that students and parents can know their options.

Performance Majors

If a student wants to audition to be a Performance Major, he should know that the audition will be the most important part of his application to college. First the university will look at grades and SAT's, and then the School of Music is notified if the student passes those requirements according to the standards of the school and is therefore eligible for admittance to the School of Music. However, it may be useful to students and parents to know that if the audition is particularly strong, the faculty involved in the audition have the right to make a special request that the student be admitted. This can happen, although the student will be admitted "On Probation" and must get high marks in all subjects his freshman year to remain in school.

Performance Majors are students who intend to become professional performers, either as soloists, chamber musicians, orchestra musicians, professors, or some combination of the above. Generally, they are already the strongest performers in their age group, and have experience in large and small ensembles and often in winning competitions at younger ages. There are many excellent music departments in colleges, universities, and conservatories in the United States.

Students can audition either to be admitted to a school or for a specific teacher's studio in the school. If a student has no specific teacher request, the school will assign him once he is admitted. If a student does have a specific teacher request he can contact that teacher in advance. He can request a meeting, or even a lesson or several lessons with that teacher. Some teachers will give a short lesson for free in this situation to get acquainted, others will ask their usual private lesson fee, and others will ask for a contribution to the school scholarship fund. This is

at the teacher's discretion. This can be helpful for the student to see what the lessons will be like, to see if he is comfortable with this teacher's approach, as he will most likely be studying for four years with this teacher—instrumental lessons are basically an apprentice situation. If a good rapport develops quickly this does, of course, enhance the chances of the applicant being admitted. But some teachers will not give this sort of lesson before admittance. The more well-known the teacher, the less likely he will acknowledge this sort of request.

The usual requirements for string students at most schools include a Bach Prelude, and the first or third movement of a standard concerto. Some schools also require scales and etudes, and some a short piece or sonata movement. Students need to get the requirements from each school. Most applicants perform these auditions without piano accompaniment. However, an applicant may bring an accompanist if it is convenient enough. Most schools will not supply one.

Representative string faculty will be at string auditions. If it is important to a student that a certain teacher be present, it is best to verify this in advance with that teacher. Generally, the faculty will chat a bit with the student, either before or after playing, and try to put the student at ease. Sometimes they may ask to which other schools the student is applying. This audition determines acceptance to the School of Music but also determines scholarship placement. At the end of all the auditions the faculty make a list of applicants in order of excellence and submit that to the scholarship office. A student can audition by tape or by live audition. Most prefer live audition since it gives them a chance to see the school and to meet with the teacher(s) if they haven't done so yet. But a tape audition is also perfectly acceptable.

Certain dates are set aside for these auditions, but a special request for another time can be made when necessary. Applicants should call the Admissions Office for the schools they are interested in, and ask for a list of audition dates and requirements. Auditions are usually held on weekends in December, January, February, and sometimes March.

Music Ed Majors

A Music Ed Major is someone who hopes to get a job one day as a conductor of a pre-college school orchestra. String students are sought after for this since they have an advantage understanding how to mark bowings in the parts. At most universities these students must also perform an audition, but the requirements are less stiff than for a Performance Major. Also, it is a completely different course of study than for Performance Majors, involving many Education classes. Some schools allow a double major if a student is also acceptable as a Performance Major.

Music Minors and students requesting only lessons or orchestra

For this it is not necessary to audition in advance of admittance to the school. Most large schools have an orchestra to accommodate non-majors. Lessons are offered to non-majors by audition at the beginning of the semester, at times to a teacher's studio, or more

commonly to an advanced graduate Performance Major assigned to this role. Chamber Music is not usually offered to non-majors.



Laurien Laufmann is the MD/DC Chapter Cello Forum Chair. Read her bio on our website: www.asta.net, Officers and Board of Directors page.



Fear Not the Beginning Bass

Developing Your Orchestra or String Ensemble from the Bottom

by Paul Scimonelli

To those who have been trained in classical European methodology, the traditional Suzuki method, or have just finished your Music Ed methods classes and are starting your first teaching job, the idea of starting a beginner on string bass can be daunting. A majority of new private and public school orchestra directors come from an upper strings background, and may feel more comfortable beginning a new student on cello because of the similarity to the other upper strings. The string bass poses special challenges: large size, tuned in fourths instead of fifths, very little use of the third finger, German bow as opposed to French bow, basic accompanying parts as opposed to melody lines. It is hoped that this article will help to assuage some of the anxiety that may come from the decision whether to start a young beginner on string bass.

New Advances

The principal challenge in beginning a new bass student is the instrument itself: it is just too large for young hands. I remember as an eager 7th grader having to stand on a custom-made wooden box for several years in order to reach half position on my standard 3/4 size Kay bass. This was the only size “back in the day,” and a youngster had to be nearly adult height before he could begin to study the instrument. With the advent of good quality fractional size string basses, this obstacle has been overcome.

Usually a teacher or orchestra director would have to wait until 4th or 5th grade, when students have attained some growth, to start or switch a child to string bass; however, with the advent of quality made 1/4 and 1/2 size instruments, a child can start in the 3rd grade. These new, smaller instruments are made with good quality woods and with expert craftsmanship. (See footnotes for a list of makes, models, and dealers.)

String makers have responded to these new sized instruments by making fractional sized strings to fit these instruments. Traditionally, these instruments were strung with standard length 3/4 or 7/8 sized strings cut down to fit. The new fractional length strings allow the strings to fit and “speak” properly;

giving these smaller instruments a good quality sound.

The adjustable bridge has also become a godsend in facilitating the technical development of the young player. A good string technician will be able to put small aluminum adjusting wheels into the feet of the bass bridge. This allows the bridge height to be raised and lowered as the temperature changes and the belly of the bass responds to the changing weather. As a beginner gets older and can exert greater left hand pressure on the strings, the bridge can be raised for greater sound power.

A caveat: basses are large and cost more to rent or own. Public or private school teachers should not only budget for the purchase of a string bass, but also for the maintenance of the instrument. Basses are often mishandled, chipped, and tripped over frequently. Also, do not be misled by cheaper internet prices. Yes, you can find a string bass at reduced prices from internet dealers, but you will pay extra when you find it is not set up properly for a younger player. Bad strings, improperly cut bridges and string nuts are the usual maladies. Would you buy a car over the internet without seeing it?

New Methodology

Advances in new teaching methodology have also helped to alleviate some of the anxiety of beginning a new bass student. Traditionally, it was either the Simandl or the Bille methods, both utilizing multiple positions and shifts. The Simandl method book was recently edited from the original English-German text into English-Japanese. Both methods are still exceptionally fine and contain a wealth of teaching material.

George Vance’s Suzuki-Rabbath method, however, has now become the “gold standard” in string bass pedagogy within the last 25 years. It is a tremendous advancement over the aforementioned methods, allowing teachers to get all their beginners on the “same page” from the start. Beginning with all of the familiar “Twinkle” variations, it mirrors the beginning Suzuki books, but with the proper fingerings for the bass.

Who Should Play the Bass?

When looking to recruit a student to play the bass, the teacher should look for a leader, someone who is, literally, able to stand out in a crowd. A student of average height and above average intelligence is also important. Look to your cello section first, as a cellist can make a quicker transition. Both right and left hand positions are similar and there is no clef transposition to be made. Shifting concepts and vibrato are also similar. If you do not have enough cellos, look to your violin section next. There may be someone who is overwhelmed with the number of violin players in the section and would welcome a chance to be the only bass.

“Above all, when looking for a bassist, make sure the person can match pitch. Problems with an individual’s intonation will only become accentuated in your ensemble. The best musicians always match to the lowest pitch in an ensemble. A bass section that plays in tune will enhance your entire ensemble’s intonation and tone.” (Lane)

General Rules

- **Picking up the bass:**
Pick up the bass by placing one hand on the right side C-bout with the right hand and the left hand on the neck. Gently pick it up, being careful not to nick the corners. Do not pick up the bass by the F-holes or the bridge, as this may damage the instrument.
- **Carrying the bass:**
 1. I have found an easy way to carry the bass. I instruct my students to “shoulder it like a rifle.” Place the right hand on the back side of the right side C-bout, then place the neck of the bass on your shoulder, just like a rifle. Walk with the bass out in front of you. This allows using the left hand and arm as counter balance, and for opening doors!
 2. *Never* drag the bass on the floor.
 3. Take extra time walking up steps. Walking up backwards is easier for young players.
 4. *Always* push the endpin in all the way before carrying the bass. This is also true for cellos.
- **Carrying the bass with the bow:**
If possible, the teacher should buy a bass bow quiver and secure it tightly to the tailpiece. Bows do well in these quivers and will not fall out. If that is not possible, I recommend the E

string trick: gently place the tip of the bow on the E string side of the bridge (on the bridge, not in the carved bridge hole.) Gently lift up the E string and slide the bow underneath it, letting the string tension hold it in place. If the bow has a metal frog, be careful not to scratch the fingerboard.

- **Dress your bass:**

If possible, have your bass student put the cover back on the instrument after using it, even if you have the luxury of a bass rack. It will save on a lot of wear and tear on the instrument.

The Healthy Player

The string bass is a large instrument and demands a bit more physical exertion to play than the smaller strings. This is not to say the other strings do not pose their own repetitive motion syndromes. It is imperative that younger players begin playing properly from the very first lesson.

- Warm up: have the student lightly stretch out his hands, arms, neck, and shoulders before beginning to play, and then again, about 15 to 20 minutes after he begins.
- Practice slow scales as warmup exercises, stressing proper hand, bow, and body techniques.
- Stop at the first sign of any pain, lightly shake out the hands and arms or gently massage the afflicted area. If a pain does not go away, stop immediately! This is extremely deleterious. Greater injury can occur if this is done.
- Stress the importance of practicing a little each day to help develop young muscles.
- Professionals have learned the benefits of both “warming up” before, and “cooling down” after playing. This may not be practical within the limits of your already too short orchestra rehearsal time, but certainly before and after a lesson.

Stand or Sit?

This is a good question. This should be addressed within the confines of your physical space, budget, and personal preferences.

The Vance-Rabbath method suggests young players should sit to play, and by middle school, should be standing. I tend to agree, but have had students who just prefer to stand. If he is comfortable, allow the

student to choose. It is recommended, however, that small students sit first. If your rehearsal space is small, standing may be a foregone conclusion.

If the child is sitting, the stool should be at a height where the legs are slightly bent and the feet touch the floor. Avoid at all costs the bent back! Remind him to sit up straight, towards the front of the stool, with the feet on the floor. Left leg should be placed on one rung of the stool, while the right leg should be flat on the floor out front. The bass should be *between* the legs, similar to cello, with a slight tilt towards the left leg side.

Adjusting the Height

For decades, the traditional method of adjusting the height of the bass has been pulling out the endpin so the nut is parallel to the eyebrows. What if your 7th grader is five feet tall with long arms? The bass should be adjusted for the comfort of the player's arms. Have the student assume a correct stance, hold the bow at the frog, comfortably extended, and place it on one of the middle two strings. Adjust the bass height so the bow plays parallel, directly in the middle, between the end of the fingerboard and the bridge. Too close to the fingerboard? Raise the bass, and vice versa if too close to the bridge.

French or German?

The question of whether to start a beginner on French or German bow is as old as the chicken and the egg, and subject to the same amount of debate. I would suggest the following: if you are switching a student from violin, viola, or cello, and the child is already familiar and comfortable with the standard French grip, do not change. Whereas there will be some adjustments to be made in order to bow the bass, a teacher should keep the student within his own comfort level. However, if you are starting a student on the bass for the first time, I would suggest the German bow.

French Grip

- Make sure the thumb is bent and “kissing” the tip of the frog, the tips of the fingers are folded over the stick, and the tip of the pinky finger is resting on the mother of pearl dot on the frog.
- Check to see that the fingers are evenly spaced on the stick and that there is little tension in the hand.
- Most importantly, the wrist should be either parallel with the stick or slightly below the

plane of the stick. This allows for maximum clearance and control of the bow on the low E string. Keep the wrist low.

A digression: The low E string poses special challenges for the beginning students, and many teachers and methodologies shy away from playing on the low string. Fear not the low E! It is the power of your ensemble. As previously mentioned, your ensemble will tune itself to the low E of your bass and the high E of your first violin. Care should be taken to teach the proper hand, bow, and intonation on the E string, especially the low G (2nd finger, first position.) A preponderance of beginning ensemble music is published in the key of G, and your success will lie in the sound of your lowest note.

German Grip

The easiest method for teaching the German grip is “shaking hands.”

- Shake hands with your student, then place the frog in the same position as your handshake.
- Have a little space between the frog and the palm to allow for easy movement of the wrist.
- The beginner's usual immediate reaction is to make a fist around the frog, with the fourth and pinky finger going in the middle of the frog. Discourage this immediately. He will lock the wrist and start “sawing.”
- Thumb and index finger go on top of the stick, with the tips of the finger making an “OK” sign.
- Pinky finger should be underneath the frog, touching the metal of the frog.

Most beginners have a tendency to point the tip of the bow towards the floor and make a “sawing” motion with the bow. Make sure the right arm is almost fully extended, but with just a little bend at the elbow. Most importantly, the fingers are at a 45 degree angle. Stress the importance of the easy movement of the wrist, like painting a fence from side to side, a la “The Karate Kid” movie.

The Left Hand

One of the most innovative concepts in the new Vance-Rabbath method is the initial approach to the left hand. In the more traditional methodologies, the beginner is started in the half position, and forced to make very large stretches in order to accommodate the half steps. In the Vance method, the beginners are

started with simple melodies in third position, first finger on D (on the G string) and A (on the D string.) The stretch from D to E, and A to B approximates the normal spacing of the 1st and 4th fingers, with only a modicum of stretch. Once the beginner is comfortable with this hand position, he is then placed in first position on the D and G strings where, with again a modicum of stretch, simple melodies can be played. Once the spacing concept between the 1st and 4th fingers is established, teaching the 1/2 step with the 2nd finger is facilitated. Regardless of the teacher's own methodology, here are some basic techniques for establishing a good left hand.

- Have the student hold a straight, round, clear water glass in his left hand, with the fingers curved and spaced evenly apart. With a clear glass, the student can see visually how the thumb should be behind the second finger.
- Stay on the tips of the fingers. Avoid letting the fingertips collapse.
- Hand is curved and relaxed. Avoid tension.

Here is where the new advancement for the bass becomes important. If the teacher has been able to purchase a quality instrument and it has been set up with an adjustable bridge, the string height can be lowered to enable the young player to press down the thick bass strings with a modicum of exertion. There is no getting around the fact that the young player will have to use a little bit of strength to press down the strings. Adjustable bridges allow the strings to be put as low as possible without rattling on the fingerboard, and facilitating the young left hand.

Pizzicato

The bass pizzicato is a very strong and percussive sound, one that can empower your ensemble. Young players love to play pizzicato parts and may just drive you crazy by doing it too much! There are two basic approaches to pizzicato.

Classical:

- The thumb of the right hand is placed on the edge of the fingerboard, approximately two inches from the end of the board. The string is plucked in an upward movement.
- If your student is playing a French bow: grab the bow in the fist, tip pointing upward, and use the first finger to pluck the strings. The thumb can rest approximately half way up the fingerboard. Pluck up and out.

- If your student is playing German bow: grab the bow with the 3rd and 4th fingers in the crook of the frog, bow tip pointing down, and use the first finger to pluck the strings. Again, thumb can rest approximately half way up the fingerboard. Pluck up and out.

Jazz:

- Place the thumb of the right hand on the fingerboard at approximately the same place as the classical pizzicato; however, the fingers should be pointing down, almost parallel to the strings.
- Pluck with the side of the finger, rather than just the tip. For a strong pizzicato, pluck with the tips of both 1st and 2nd fingers.
- For a light, running passage of 8th notes, place the thumb approximately half way up the fingerboard, and pluck with the 1st and 2nd fingers alternating.
- Do not pluck between the end of fingerboard and the bridge.
- The general rule is: the farther away from the bridge, the softer the sound. The closer to the bridge, the brighter the sound.

Encourage the young bassist to listen to as many different kinds of music as possible. The teacher can show him how every kind of music—popular, jazz, country, rock, ethnic, and religious, all need a bass player. There may be a particular form of music that the young bassist enjoys, other than orchestra music. It's all good.

I sometimes run into resistance from parents who balk at the added rental cost and the large size of the bass. I tell them: if their child sticks with it through middle school and high school, he can form a band in college and make his *own* spending money. I further encourage my young bass players to form their own bands by middle school. Parents roll their eyes and complain about the noise. My final pitch to them is: if they are in your basement, making noise and playing songs—you know where they are!



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Gail's Violin Shop, College Park, Maryland, <http://gailsviolin.com/>
Solano Bases, Severna Park, Maryland, <http://solanobases.com/>
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Gollihur Music, Ocean View, New Jersey, <http://www.gollihurmusic.com/index.cfm>
Upton Bases, Stonington, Connecticut, <http://www.uptonbass.com/>
String Emporium, Chandler, Arizona, <http://www.stringemporium.com/>

Fractional Sized Bases:

Aubert
Shen
Englhardt
Kay

Fractional Sized Bass Strings:

All manufacturers carry strings in sizes from 1/4 to full size.
D'Addario "Prelude"
Super Sensitive Red Label
Corelli
Tomastik-Infeld

Paul Scimonelli is the Private School and Bass Forum Representative for MD/DC Chapter. Read his bio on our website: www.asta.net, on the Officers and Board of Directors page.



Neck Pains:

Why do violin, viola, and cello necks have to be reset periodically?

by Kevin Cardiff

One of the most serious repairs that needs to be done to a stringed instrument is resetting the neck. Other than from accidents, the neck needs to be reset periodically due to the constant pressure of the strings over time. Also, since the pressure of the strings is unequal, the neck tends to shift to the left. More of the string pressure is on the treble side (E side on violin; A side on viola or cello) of the bridge. When the neck shifts, it becomes difficult to center a bridge between the *f* holes, and the position of the sound post relative to the bridge is also affected.

On cheaper instruments sometimes the fingerboard can be re-centered by removing it and re-gluing it, and reshaping the left side of the neck. Also, a neck can sometimes be raised simply by gluing a shim between the edge of the top and the front of the neck. To understand how this works, remember that the total height of the neck measured at the bridge is a geometric projection, and a shim of less than 1 mm can raise the neck projection by 2–3 mm. This repair is much less costly than resetting the neck and may be all that is necessary.

However, on better instruments, if the neck is substantially off-center, and the projection is more than 2 mm low, it is best to “bite the bullet” and reset the neck. This is a much more complicated repair since it involves first removing the neck from its mortise, then adding wood to the inside of the mortise—and possibly adding wood also to the bottom of the neck where it connects with the button of the back and refitting the mortise so that the neck is centered properly and has sufficient height. Another frequent complication is a broken button, which must also be reinforced or replaced. It should be noted that the neck button does not really function as far as holding the neck tightly into the body of the instrument. It is really an ornament: it connects the neck nicely to the back. The real strength of the neck joint is the glued surface inside the cutout (mortise), and the wedging action to the sides of the mortise. (In fact, there are student cellos that have no neck button. The neck is merely glued into the mortise, and there

is an empty space where the button would normally be). After the neck is fitted and glued, there is usually some retouching of the varnish to be done, and almost always a new bridge must be fitted, since the height of the fingerboard over the body has increased.

Certain instruments with higher archings are likely to need the neck reset more often than flatter models. The reason for this is the amount of end-grain exposure at the ends of the top. End-grain is the open grain of the wood that absorbs moisture when the tree is growing, and this absorption doesn't stop when the wood is carved into a violin top. The higher the amount of rise in the arching at the ends of the top, the more end-grain is exposed, and the more the neck height will vary from summer to winter. In summer, when the humidity is high, moisture is absorbed through the end grain of the wood, and the center of the top tends to swell. When the center swells, the ends flex slightly toward the center, and the neck loses a small amount of height. The typical violin that has a high arch will lose 1–1.5 mm of height, and a highly arched cello can lose 4–5 mm. These instruments may need lower bridges for summer use. One of the ways to alleviate this problem somewhat is to increase the amount of “overstand” when resetting the neck on a highly arched instrument. The overstand is the distance from the edge of the top (near the neck) to the bottom of the fingerboard. A rather flat violin will have an overstand of about 5.5 mm, but a highly arched one can have an overstand as high as 9 mm. Adding height to the overstand gives the same neck projection with a little less angle and less string pressure at the bridge. Thus, once the neck is reset, its position is a bit “kinder” to the instrument.

A third way to add neck height is a wedge under the fingerboard. This is a repair that is only recommended for cheaper instruments since no matter how well the wedge fits, it is always quite visible. Basically, the fingerboard is removed, and a piece of maple is glued to the neck surface. The wedge is thinner at the nut end of the fingerboard and a bit thicker at the neck end. After the wedge is

planed to the proper thickness to achieve the correct height, the fingerboard is re-glued, and the neck and wedge is reshaped to achieve a smooth playing surface.

A word about centering the neck: since the neck of a violin, viola or cello tends to shift to the left over time due to the unequal pressure of the strings, there is a bias of 1–1.5 mm, to the right. In other words, when looking down the fingerboard from the scroll end of the violin, the fingerboard should be centered so that one sees a little less space on the treble side than on the bass side.

There are many more issues involved with neck resetting, particularly on cellos, than can possibly be covered in a brief article, but hopefully this will take some of the mystery out of this interesting, though sometimes troublesome, repair. Remember—an ounce of prevention is important, too: Don't leave

your instrument inside a hot car; the neck can pop out. Cellists, don't leave your cello propped up on a chair; someone could knock it over, and the neck could break. If the neck breaks, a neck graft is an even more serious repair than resetting the neck!



Kevin Cardiff has been a professional violin maker, repairman, and restorer for over twenty years, and is the recipient of two “Baltimore’s Best” awards from Baltimore Magazine—“Best Custom Made Violins” in 1993 and “Best String Repair Shop” in 2003. In February 2008, he relocated his shop to Las Vegas, Nevada after twenty-nine years in the Baltimore area. Previously, as an orchestral violinist, he was a member of the Rochester Philharmonic, Chautauqua Symphony, New Haven Symphony, and the Baltimore Symphony.



At the Intersection of Parenting and Music Education

A Few Thoughts About Practice

by Sarah Cotterill

Because it is so rare to see a student develop disciplined practice habits without consistent parental guidance, I've come to view the problem as one of parenting. In a cultural climate in which reading and math homework rules can be strictly enforced, or at least aspired to, music education homework, i.e., practice, is left to the whims of the child. Not surprisingly, lessons begun in earnest good faith are quickly abandoned. It's even regarded as abusive by many well-educated middle class parents to insist on a moderate practice schedule. Parents say proudly, "I never ask him/her to practice. It has to be fun!" I have been disheartened to hear this from parents who were themselves serious music students. The same individuals will, if given the opportunity, say unapologetically that their child has to drop out of lessons for the next "x" number of weeks for soccer, basketball, swim-team—never mind that hard-won progress will be lost, practice habits will collapse, and teacher frustration and burnout will be hastened.

The Zen of the Laundry Room

Wrestling with this issue over the years, dealing with parents both successful and misguided in regard to practice skills, with students representing a broad range of talent, and with raising children of my own, I've tried to find the common elements that are present when parents find a balanced approach. At the back of my mind, there is always the image from my own childhood—not a commandment or an instruction, but an example.

Neither of my parents were professional musicians, but both were ardent listeners to and supporters of classical music. My father is an amateur violinist, as was his father and his grandfather. I do not remember a time when he did not play, though he began in adulthood. His studio, from which the etude or the concerto of the moment wafted, was a few square feet of cleared space between laundry baskets. Still, the steam from the Maytag humidified his instrument

in winter. Piles of clothes waiting to be folded or ironed muffled the shakier passages; the drone of appliances provided a kind of low bass to the airy high notes. Sometimes the practice room migrated to an upstairs hallway or bedroom. Whatever its location in space, it provided a constant background, daily and normal.

Decades later, I am still struck by the power of that example. The task required discipline and determination in the face of many obstacles: lack of time and fatigue after a full day at work and a long commute; the usual complex and consuming demands of raising a family; a mediocre instrument. These are understood from an adult perspective now. But even then my siblings and I sensed what drive and desire was needed, what tenacity and focused effort, and finally what pleasure could be achieved in mastering the difficult music.

This was an example of how to work and how to persist. More obscurely, but no less profoundly, we also sensed it was an example of the uses of, and pleasures to be found in, solitude. One performs in community—orchestra or chamber group, or with an accompanist. But most hours are with the instrument alone.

When we enter the practice room, be it the laundry room, a conservatory cell, or something loftier, we enter not just a physical space, but a psychological space as well. While we beaver away at what the teacher has assigned, or at what we've assigned ourselves for the next recital, the next gig, the next rehearsal, we also enter the solitude of practice—if we're very lucky, the zen of practice.

Because most people who play instruments, and most of our students, will not become professional musicians, we need somehow to help them locate that psychological space in which they find the rewards of solitude, the rewards of making beautiful music with only ourselves as audience.

If Not A Performer, A Listener

So there is this power of example. But what of the many cases in which neither parent plays an instrument of any kind, let alone a stringed instrument? And there may be no history of listening to classical music in the home or even occasional attendance at classical concerts. Parents in this case may have no idea how to support a child's efforts to study violin or cello. Some of my favorite moments in teaching have come when I've guided parents toward taking their children to concert series they would never have considered. Just following this lead, perhaps reluctantly, they often discover a new interest, even a new passion for themselves. Students need to hear and see live performance of good musicians their own ages, and, of course, to hear professionals playing at the highest level. And when the parents attend with them, a special kind of affirmation happens. The parent is demonstrating his respect for and regard for this endeavor. It's not uncommon that the parent is moved to take up an instrument after a few such outings.

Life's Persistent Questions

Garrison Keillor's Guy Noir, the sleuth of "Prairie Home Companion," is still trying to find the answers to life's persistent questions. For music teachers, one of the most persistent is, "How do you get students to practice?" This has been the long way around to saying, "I don't know." But I think that the answer lies only partly in strategies such as practice sheets that must be filled in daily and signed by parents. Parental attitudes toward practice need to be considered. We as teachers need to make sure that parents are engaged in the student's task of becoming a musician—not just as chauffeurs but as models of how to work—as audience and as lovers of music. We may even find them becoming part of our studio.



Sarah Cotterill is the Membership Chair for MD/DC Chapter. Read her bio at www.asta.net/officers.



Teaching Students to Play Expressively

by Alessandra Schneider

Playing expressively or with musical intent and understanding is the ultimate goal of any musician. The years of study of the instrument, the mastery of technique, and the analysis of music are all done to find unique self-expression. One of the most important roles of a teacher is to help students uncover their musical and expressive minds. While everyone has an innately sensitive core, many students need assistance in finding the freedom and confidence to show these emotions. To develop this, teachers must make sure the technique taught is serving ease of playing and exploration of the self. Although musicality can be analyzed and discussed to some extent, expressiveness is a personal and organic act.

Teachers can help their students build a sense of expression even before lessons begin. Just as babies learn to speak from the ample vocabulary surrounding them, children will absorb information in a rich musical environment if one is provided. To create this, parents should play quality recordings for the child and offer an assortment of pieces so the child will internalize a variety of musical ideas. Once the student begins lessons, these recordings can become a weekly assignment. By listening, the child will begin to build a vocabulary of musical terms such as the names of instruments, piece titles, genres, and composers. As the student gains maturity (both in age and technique), he or she may begin to analyze the expressive qualities of a performance, such as listening for rubato or noticing a performer's specific use of vibrato. Students at this more advanced level should never rely on one recording but should hear many different possibilities.

Listening to a recording of the specific piece the child is learning can be very beneficial. The recording exposes him or her to interpretive and musical ideas such as dynamics, phrasing, tempos, etc. From repeated listening, the musical song (internal song) will capture the essence of each piece as well, and guide fingers to the correct notes and intonation. This eliminates unnecessary technique lessons because the student develops an amazing ear and is already familiar with certain aspects such as articulations,

dynamics, and tempo. To avoid the student becoming fixed in one musical interpretation, the teacher must provide a sampling of artists with differing ideas.

Playing musically should be as natural as the human voice expressing itself in words. Poets are an excellent example of artists who use word choice and voice inflection to paint images, create stories, and express feelings. In the music room, reference is often made to singers because they express words through music very naturally. Teachers will often ask, "How would a singer sing this?" The string family fortunately has a timbre close to that of the voice, and, therefore, easily imitates this quality of singing. Thus singers serve as a model in most lessons. Putting down the instrument and simply singing a passage can be helpful in finding the true intention and meaning of the passage.

Because musicians are frequently comparing musical phrases to those of speech, students should be taught to speak expressively. Often it is necessary for children to explore the inflections of tone in their voices. Just learning to speak in front of someone in a loud and clear voice can be a challenge for some. Poems, speeches, and plays serve as wonderful material to analyze for meaning, expression, and presentation. From the very beginning lessons, students are asked to bring a well-learned and memorized poem to class. During the lesson the child will recite this poem and discuss the meaning with the teacher. Together they will work on presentation, such as how the child stands, where his or her eyes are during the poem, and the clarity with which each word is spoken. The teacher will also instruct the child as to the structure and phrasing of the lines. Some parts may end in a question; others may have different moods or voices, and still others may have an interesting word needing emphasis. By practicing to speak sensitively, students will gain confidence and have a better understanding of what it means to be "expressive." Memorization and recitation of the poems also nurtures a child's ability to perform from memory. If a child is comfortable and confident, then she or he will feel freer to expose internal emotions.

In order to help the child feel safe to explore ideas, the teacher must create a supportive and secure environment. The atmosphere in lessons should be one of trust while also being slightly eccentric. If a teacher acts silly and allows his or her actions to “let go,” the child will feel safe in the lesson and respond by letting out his or her true personality. If the atmosphere of a lesson is too reserved or restricting, then the child will see no reason to leave his or her comfort zone and try something new. Besides being safe and open, lessons should be supportive. The child must build the confidence to try new ideas in the lesson knowing that the teacher will not judge.

Although teachers must teach instrumental technique, technical ability should not become the end goal. Rather, technique should be treated as a process, or the tool through which students communicate. Often students and even teachers become overly concerned with technical aspects of music, disregarding the expressive content. Of course there must be a balance because no one can be musical if he or she is struggling technically. The teacher’s responsibility is to search for anything that could be hindering expression. By removing obstacles related to technique, the student will gain confidence in his or her ability to play and develop a sense of freedom in the piece. As the student advances, the teacher can show how different techniques affect what is being said. These ideas will be added to the student’s continually growing toolbox of musical ideas.

Finding ways for even the simplest pieces to have musicality is important as it shows young students that one does not need to be an advanced player to be expressive. From the very beginning, teachers can teach dynamics, movement, and even form. An example is the theme of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.” This short piece is ABA form that could be explained using a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. “A” would represent bread, “B” would represent peanut butter, followed with a soft echo, or jelly, and concluding with another “A”, or piece of bread.

The student should also learn to breathe and move to the music so the piece has life. Teachers can pick pieces that contrast in mood to illustrate how bow strokes and breathing affect the music. Examples of this include “Song of the Wind” and “Go Tell Aunt Rhody” from the Suzuki literature. Although these feelings may not come naturally to the student at first, the idea can be taught through specific instructions.

Once it is practiced into the child’s internal song, these feelings and the technique that accompany them will be instinctively added into later pieces.

Teachers should also keep in mind that some students may be more left-brained and others more right. Both sides of the brain must be initiated to simultaneously play the instrument with good technique and musical expression. Technique usually begins in the left-brain, while expressiveness is handled on the right side. Thus a teacher must find creative ways of helping students switch from left to right. Singing is a right-brain task that helps students immediately change to the right brain. Drawing a picture that describes how the passage makes one feel is also a right-brain activity. Movement engages the right side of the brain because movement is flowing and unrestricted. It allows students to explore how they are feeling without any inhibitions. This is especially useful with younger children. One will find their movements often correspond with the mood or tempo of the piece being played. Older students can be asked to move to the music to find where the climaxes are in the music or where a phrase ends. In more advanced playing, students should move in a manner that supports both their musical ideas and their technique. An example is adding movement to the Vivaldi violin concerti. Students must keep an energetic feel while playing many fast notes. It is helpful if the body has lively and quick movements that keep the feel “up.” This motion in music allows for freedom, creating a sense of release and ease that excites the inner musical self.

For those students who are shy, it can be very helpful to give lessons in pods (small groups) or to offer group classes. Opening up and expressing oneself is very personal and can be intimidating or daunting for a young student. By participating in a supportive group, the child is given the opportunity to experiment while still being “hidden.” Students in a group setting will also learn different musical ideas from each other and realize that it is acceptable (and rewarding) to be expressive.

Lastly, teachers must address practicing. It is easy for a student to become too focused on either practicing for expression or practicing for technique. Students must be taught to divide their time between the two. If the lessons, and consequently the assignments, are divided between the two, then the child will be practicing both at home. This will teach the

importance of balance. Assignments should include technical sections to practice, followed by a run-through of the assignment, incorporating any musical ideas that may have arisen. Teachers should emphasize that students are what they practice. If they wish to perform beyond the technique, then time must be set aside to practice playing expressively as well. Thus teachers and students must make sure there is emphasis on expressive practicing at home in conjunction with the technical practice.

By offering students a secure environment in which to explore new territories, teachers help their students build confidence and character. Every teacher

has a bold purpose of helping their students find themselves, develop their personal ideas, and express exactly what they intend. It is a process that touches the emotional, physical, and psychological character of each child. Without confidence in expression, music would lack all meaning.

Contents from this paper come from my own teaching experience as well as from seminars with Suzuki Teacher Trainer Ronda Cole.



Ale Schneider is the ASTA-Suzuki Liaison for MD/DC Chapter. Read her bio at www.asta.net/officers.

Steiner Street

by Dorothy Barth

Inspired by a visit to Yehudi Menuhin's boyhood house in San Francisco

Onto the street where music thrived,
Past boyhood park of glee,
With wonder we arrive to see
One thousand forty-three.

Steiner Street stands silent,
But when our car rolls in,
Glass breaks beneath a tire,
Reminder in the din.

That everything must change and turn,
A biblical decree;
Whereto the spirit once within
Who played so splendidly?

Steiner house stands silent,
Victorian abode,
Mozart, Bach, and Schubert,
Gone from where once they glowed.

A chosen cherub blossomed here,
Fleet fingers, golden bow,
Sublime endeavor bearing fruit,
Beloved by Apollo.

Steiner house stands silent,
Soft lavender its hues,
Alluring are its secrets,
Bright boyhood and the muse.

Will you not share your story now?
Chimes curiosity;
In stillness comes the answer:
What can I offer thee?

Stringful house stands silent,
As decades disappear,
Contemplation deepens,
Is that Chaconne I hear?

Enchanting old adjacent inn
Welcomes us to see
The history and fair façade
Of Chateau Tivoli.

Steiner house stays silent,
At last we must agree,
Discovery awaits us
At next door's B and B.

A cup of tea, a music stand,
A flute, a violin,
A serenade across the fence
Where once lived Menuhin.

Steiner Street stands silent,
And we go on our way;
As neighbors we will soon return,
If only for a day.

Mystery of Noel

by Dorothy Barth

The antique shop we've stumbled across on our way to a Napa restaurant is about to close, the proprietor informs us. It's 5:00 P.M. on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, which is supposed to be the most profitable day of the year for U.S. merchants. However, this little town in the heart of California's wine country doesn't appear to be abuzz with shoppers.

We've perused the merchandise to pass the time, and as we are about to leave, I mention to my husband Bert how fascinating it would be to discover some old violins or sheet music.

I'm not in need of either. My sheet music library overflows. This year, a work assignment outside music enabled me to buy not one but two violins: a robust 2008 gig violin and a wonderful old violin circa early- to mid-1800's, guessed to be of Bohemian origin and affordable by me only because it has sustained a few injuries and repairs. Of twelve violins sampled, I'd been swept away by the mysterious, mellow Bohemian.

Heading toward the store's exit, I'm suddenly greeted by a pile of what looks to be old music, and on closer inspection reveals itself to be old violin music, \$1.25 each, close to the original price. I grab all five Kreisler pieces, Carl Fischer editions. No matter that they may be included in my fuchsia Kreisler anthology—this is *old, weathered, falling apart* music with history, mystery to savor! I also grab Samuel Gardner's *From the Canebroke*, Schirmer edition. I generously leave behind a volume of Ševčík etudes for some younger violinist to discover—I've endured Ševčík in an earlier incarnation and don't welcome a return visit.

I can't wait to investigate the music and open the bag while awaiting my meal. Copyright years range from 1913 to 1920. Each piece was owned by a violinist named Noel, once an instructor at the Denver School of Violin.

I return home and want to find out more about Noel, walk not in his footsteps but prance on his fingerboard. I Google the violin school and look up its address, which is actually a building named after silver baron Horace Tabor, after whom, apparently, numerous Denver structures, old and new, have

been named. I find no sign to verify the present-day existence of the Denver School of Violin.

Stamped addresses on the covers of the music reveal that Noel did not always live in Denver. Of the Kreisler arrangements, the 1913 *Danse Espagnole* and the 1914 Dvořák *Slavonic Dance No. 3* bear an address from the New York Life Insurance Company in Cheyenne, Wyoming. But the 1915 *Spanish Dance* and the 1920 *Tambourin Chinois* are marked with the Denver address, as is *From the Canebroke*. The 1920 *Nocturnal Tangier* shows no stamp but instead an old label with a Bakersfield, California address.

I'm hoping that Noel went from life insurance sales in Cheyenne to the violin teaching position in Denver. Judging by the copyright years on the books and the addresses, this could be true—that is, if he purchased the earlier copyrights first. I prefer this scenario because too often, the reverse is true: The violin is neglected, abandoned, and eventually forgotten in favor of earning a living, raising a family. Or disappointment sets in about one's musical destiny, with similar results. I enjoy the thought that after selling life insurance, Noel returned to his first love, the violin.

I feel bad that Noel moved to Bakersfield, California, as evidenced from the 1920 label. Bakersfield is a place one passes while traveling the inland route from San Francisco to Los Angeles, too hot and polluted to stay longer than to fill the tank and grab a snack. Perhaps it was an orchard paradise in the 1920's—I hope so for Noel. What did Noel do in Bakersfield? Teach, or commute to L.A. and take part in the studio scene? But wait—the Bakersfield home was built in 1963, my research tells me, so perhaps he retired there. Why am I finding his old sheet music in this Napa antique shop?

When exactly did Noel enjoy his violin teaching career? Had he already accumulated the music when he began teaching? Did he find this music in an antique store as I did and put his name on it? The latter theory I must discard, since the florid ink signatures don't seem contemporary. The phone numbers has only four digits, so Noel had to have taught prior to 1959, when four-digit numbers evolved to seven digits.

I gaze at Noel's music, now mine, and at the markings I've inherited. The *Danse Espagnole* contains some second and third position fingerings and a 16th note run marked to transition from second to fifth position. On the second page, Noel deleted an artificial harmonic, which I might be inclined to do myself. The *Slavonic Dance* has *arco* and *pizzicato* markings in light red. Did Noel forget his black pencil that day, or was the *pizzicato* easy to overlook? The *Spanish Dance* and *Canebrake* are unmarked but heavily used, their middle folds reinforced with fabric and plastic tape. The *Tambourin Chinois* shows a few bowing changes to slur 16th note triplets to 8th note *spiccato*s in the following measure. A red reminder suggests a downward shift to the first position E string after a 16th note run. The *Nocturnal Tangier* with the Bakersfield address has five markings in bold red ink, something I've seen Nadia Solerno-Sonnenberg do on her music. Did Noel perform this piece?

Kreisler was in his prime when this music was published. Born in 1875, he would have been between 35 and 45 years old. Since Noel taught prior

to 1959 at the latest, he taught while Kreisler was still alive. The publisher's note on some of the Kreisler pieces adds to the copyright notice the warning that "Mr. Kreisler's name must appear on all programs and whenever these musical works are played in public."

Except for those few markings and his authoritative, underlined signatures, Noel leaves me with more questions than answers about his life as insurance man and violinist. Though his mystery remains unsolved, it will be a pleasure this Christmas season to bring Noel's notes in a bottle, his Kreisler and *Canebrake* music, to life, to mingle its mystery with that of my old Bohemian violin.



Dorothy Barth was born in The Netherlands and received her music degree from Stanford University. Her essays have been published both in the U.S. and abroad. She has contributed several essays to Stringendo. A violinist and recorderist, she has completed two volumes of Old English and Celtic duo arrangements. Her websites are www.flutesoffancy.com/ and www.recitalroom.com/

ASTA MD/DC Bass Workshop

Bass teachers and professional bassists often notice that student instruments are difficult to play because the instrument is out of adjustment. Are your students' basses easy to play?

Two bass set-up workshops are in store for 2009. The focus is to be sure that student instruments are easily playable. Some repairs will actually be done during the clinic. Bridge/nut height and fingerboard relief are among the topics. Don't worry, any sound posts that happen to fall will be reset.

Bassists handy in this area are invited to assist. And other instrumentalists are invited to bring a string bass needing attention.

The first workshop will be at Jeffrey Aaron's home: 2606 Hershfield Ct., Silver Spring, MD 20904, Saturday, June 6, 2009, from 2:30 to 5:00 P.M. In the fall, a larger venue will be acquired to serve more teachers (and basses).

Please call Jeff at 301-495-9717, or e-mail: drjefaaaron@aol.com, so that he can have an approximate head count for the June event.



The Lighter Side

C, E-flat and G go into a bar. The bartender says, “Sorry, but we don’t serve minors.” So E-flat leaves, and C and G have an open fifth between them. After a few drinks, the fifth is diminished and G is out flat. F comes in and tries to augment the situation, but is not sharp enough.

D comes in and heads for the bathroom saying, “Excuse me. I’ll just be a second.” Then A comes in, but the bartender is not convinced that this relative of C is not a minor.

Then the bartender notices B-flat hiding at the end of the bar and says, “Get out! You’re the seventh minor I’ve found in this bar tonight.”

E-flat comes back the next night in a three-piece suit with nicely shined shoes. The bartender says, “You’re looking sharp tonight. Come on in, this could be a major development.” Sure enough, E-flat soon takes off his suit and everything else, and is au natural.

Eventually C sobers up and realizes in horror that he’s under a rest. C is brought to trial, found guilty of contributing to the diminution of a minor, and is sentenced to 10 years of D.S. without Coda at an up scale correctional facility.



Concerto for Computer Keyboard and Orchestra

During his first lesson the viola student was given four notes to practice on just the first string. The next week he was given four more notes to practice on just the second string. The third week, he was given four notes to practice on the third string, and he was given four notes to practice on the fourth string at his fourth lesson. After that, the student never returned for another lesson.

After few weeks, the teacher phoned him and asked, “Aren’t you going to continue with your studies?”

The student replied, “Oh yes, I’ve been meaning to, but I just can’t find the time. I’ve been getting so many gigs...”

The following is an excerpt from the 3rd Movement Cadenza:

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“ k i wdehfg eweme f2e34f[0 932ru 2l/m,3mr  
f’2o3ru8’293dn d  
2efo k jed1eflyrther  
h2e33 f r ey  
9234’j323e923845’2332 9  
13er13 w 2qe rgqr gerg grt  
er q wwkdjfwed iueoijeo e e e  
4rem24df4wefterwregteqr3tger45t  
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~@#&%#~*#&#^~)((!_)#)_(&3’””””” “
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Benefits of ASTA Membership

American String Teacher Journal

An award-winning quarterly scholarly publication that keeps members informed of developments and news within the string profession, provides regular columns including Master Classes, Member2Member, Teaching Tips, as well as other important educational information.

National Foundation to Promote String Teaching and Playing

Our newest initiative provides grants, awards, instrument outreach programs, and contests and competitions exclusively for ASTA members.

Comprehensive Website at www.astaweb.com

Filled with information about each program ASTA administers. Whether you are looking for job openings, grants, string industry contacts, awards, competitions, or the latest news, you will find it here.

Online Discussion Groups

The new eCommunities provides members with online discussion groups where you can seek assistance when posed with a specific issue. Members find this method of communication extremely useful when posed with a specific issue. It provides the broadest and fastest way to gather information and find innovative solutions to unique problems in a short time span.

Access to String Employment Opportunities

Gives employers the opportunity to post available positions on the web. Provides ASTA members access to potential employment opportunities.

National High School Honors Orchestra

Performing group of 150 competitively selected high school musicians who assemble biennially to perform at the national conference under the direction of world renowned conductors.

Cutting-Edge Publications

Discounted members-only rates for a wealth of string publications in a growing library of new and revised resources. A variety of tools are available covering topics such as Pedagogy, Classroom and Orchestra Instruction, Private Studio, Research and Resources, Music, and Compendiums.

State Chapter Membership

Offering special clinics or conferences, chapter newsletters, state websites, and opportunities for

leadership at the state level. Payment of national dues also provides membership in your state chapter of ASTA. State membership dues are already included in the price of national dues and are sent to each state unit on a quarterly basis.

Conferences

Professional development avenues are available at the National Conference and the National String Forum and Festival to assist you and your students in achieving career and learning objectives. Special initiatives include: an Alternative Styles Forum, a National Studio Teachers Forum, special K-12 Focus Sessions, the Biennial National Solo Competition and the National Orchestra Festival.

Professional Development Documentation Program

Members may also enroll in a professional development documentation program in which ASTA will issue professional development certificates for approved conferences and workshops. Depending on your state's requirements, this service may assist you in meeting required continuing education goals.

Institutional Members

The Institutional Membership category provides members access to colleges, universities, and other educational programs. The ASTA website and the spring issue of *AST* provide a directory of institutional members and their summer programs/workshops.

String Industry Council

The String Industry Council builds a bridge between string teachers and players and corporate America. The Council encourages companies to support the string community and provides specialized support for corporate-sponsored projects. The annual and online directories are valuable sources of information for members to locate a wide variety of industry partners including: instrument manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers; music publishers and dealers, instrument repairs and rentals; bows, strings and other accessories, as well as music festivals and tours.

Advocacy and Outreach

ASTA has materials available to assist members in starting and growing string and orchestra programs as well as for community outreach programs. Some of the items available include *Why Strings?*, brochures, a public service announcement by Mark O'Connor, advocacy kits, posters, and more.