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Musicianship
For
Strings

VIOLIN
PRIMER

A comprehensive and systematic course in theory and technique specifically for string students, with different books for each instrument.

By Lee W. Kikuchi

Musicianship For Strings, VIOLIN PRIMER, is a systematic approach to theory and technique that is specifically catered to the string student, in graded levels primer to 10. Beginners who have never studied music should start with this primer book. Beginners who have studied another non-string instrument for at least one year should start with Level 1. Each instrument (violin, viola, cello, bass) has its own series, but the musical examples are the same and can be used for class instruction. Theory concepts are introduced systematically with reading and writing examples to ensure the student's comprehension and retention. The introduction of technical skills are introduced in coordination with the theory to provide the student adequate repetition and "to-do" examples.

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Preface

When I began teaching violin and cello several years ago, I was quite surprised that the teaching materials available have not changed substantially since I was a child. There were new method books, with CDs and DVDs, but despite the advances in technology, the actual material and teaching approach did not seem substantially different. The methods that exist today divide the technical skills into two different approaches: finger first with pizzicato or learn to bow the different open strings before fingering. Then, when it comes to teaching fingering, some systems start with finger 1, and others start with finger 3. [The latter is meant to help develop a better hand shape and position.] However, despite these variances, the method systems still seem to lack in their approach to theory and technique especially in regard to adequate explanation of the various muscle motions required to play the instrument.

Toward meeting these latter deficiencies, I have developed this *Musicianship for Strings* series which is both a workbook for music theory (from a string approach), and a rigorous approach to technique development through careful step-by-step instruction regarding all the necessary motions of the bow arm and left hand. I have attempted to avoid the issues of which is taught first whether pizzicato vs. arco, or finger 1 vs. finger 3, by giving exercises that use both on the same page. This way the teacher can use this series with any existing method system, choosing the exercises which match the system (or choose all of them for more in-depth instruction). If exercises are skipped, the teacher should return to them when appropriate to “back-fill” the skills not covered on the first pass.

The series is written in 11 different levels, with books for each instrument, so that the teacher may give the student substantive instruction from the beginning to the point of entering college (pre-professional study). Such systems exist for piano, but apparently not for any of the orchestral instruments. Now, finally *Musicianship for Strings* provides a comprehensive course in Theory and Technique for all pre-professional string students. A brief explanation of each level is provided below, to help teachers place students into the appropriate level:

Primer: All beginning students without any prior musical knowledge should begin with the Primer level. A pre-staff-reading approach (similar to what is used for piano methods) eases the student into reading by developing a solid understanding of rhythm, musical symbols and the instrument before placing the notes on the staff for reading. This approach is good for students of all ages, and is essential for the very young students (under age 7) whose reading and eye-focus development is not as advanced as students age 7 and up. Clear explanations and carefully constructed exercises teach the student how to read music, and how to approach the skills needed for playing the violin. Where writing is required by the student, extra large staves are provided so that very young students can perform these important written tasks. The Primer level covers rhythms using whole notes, half notes, dotted half notes, and quarter notes, reading notes on the staff and ledger lines, pizzicato and bowing all the open strings.

Level 1: This book follows the Primer book, but can be a first book for string students **who have prior musical education** (usually 1 to 2 years or more). The student must demonstrate the ability to read notes on the staff, and must have solid grounding in rhythms using whole notes, half notes, dotted half notes and quarter notes. Level 1 technique covers rhythms using whole notes, half notes, dotted half notes, quarter notes and two-eighths and their rest equivalents. Theory includes rhythms using the aforementioned note and rest values, ties, slurs, sharps, flats, keys of C major, G Major D Major & A major, reading notes on the staff & ledger lines and scales. Technical skills include: pizzicato & bowing all the strings, moving between strings, holding fingers while playing other strings and fingering with fingers 1 – 2 – 3 in the first position with 2nd finger in the forward (sharp) position (or all 4 fingers for cello). Half position for 1st finger only is introduced for flats. Scales include C major, G major, D major and A major.

Level 2: Level 2 technique covers rhythms using whole notes, half notes, dotted half notes, quarter notes, dotted quarters with a single eighth note and their rest equivalents. Theory includes rhythms using the aforementioned note and rest values, ties, slurs, sharps, flats, keys of C major, G Major D Major, A major, F Major, a minor & d minor, reading notes on the staff & ledger lines and scales. Technical skills include: pizzicato & bowing all the strings, moving between strings, holding fingers while playing other strings, slurs between two strings and block fingering (fingers 2 & 3) across two strings. Fingering technique includes fingers 1 – 2 – 3 in the first position with 1st finger both back and forward (flat & natural) and 2nd finger both back and forward (natural & sharp), (or all 4 fingers plus open hand position for cello). Scales include keys: G, D, A, F, a, d.

[Levels beyond Level 2 will be described in later publications.]

Lee W. Kikuchi
March, 2007

Introduction

This new series is not designed to replace any existing method system, but instead is to be used concurrently with your method of choice. The only exception is the PRIMER book, which is specifically designed to teach beginning strings students the skills of the instrument and musical theory using a pre-staff-reading system. The Primer is an alternative to Suzuki and an excellent first book for students who will be using a traditional system such as Stringbuilder, Samuel Appelbaum, Merle Isaac or Essential Elements for Strings.

Once your student completes this Primer, continue assigning these books to your student in sequence, to ensure that she/he is learning the appropriate musical theory as well as the accompanying string technique. The written exercises teach the theory and the playing exercises reinforce the theory and parallel technique. All technical skills are clearly explained with pictures, and the exercises are very specifically graded in a step-by-step approach to ensure that the student has mastered each skill before proceeding to the next skill. Use the traditional method and repertoire series to provide lesson and performance materials.

The books in this series are **workbooks**, and are meant for the student to write in. Each student should be given/sold a copy to keep and use until completed. You do not need to try to coordinate these books with the method systems directly, especially since not all the material is taught in the same sequence. If a student masters the theory and technique of one level, it is appropriate to advance the student to the next level directly. Often students will understand theory and master simple technical skills more quickly than they master the songs or appropriate repertoire. As the student progresses through the theory and technique, he/she will catch up in the other material eventually.

Parts of the Violin and Bow

Holding the Violin

When holding the violin to play just open strings, the LEFT HAND may grip the *upper bout*.



When holding the violin to play fingered strings, the LEFT HAND must support the violin at the neck, with the fingers over the strings.



When at rest (not playing) within an ensemble or when waiting to play, hold the violin by the neck on the left knee and the bow upright on the right knee.



When carrying the violin, always hold with the hand firmly gripped around the neck.



Holding the Bow



Step 1: Place the thumb of the RH in the groove where the frog meets the stick.



Step 2: Lower the index finger onto the winding.



Step 3: Wrap the middle finger around the stick (about 1 inch behind index finger).



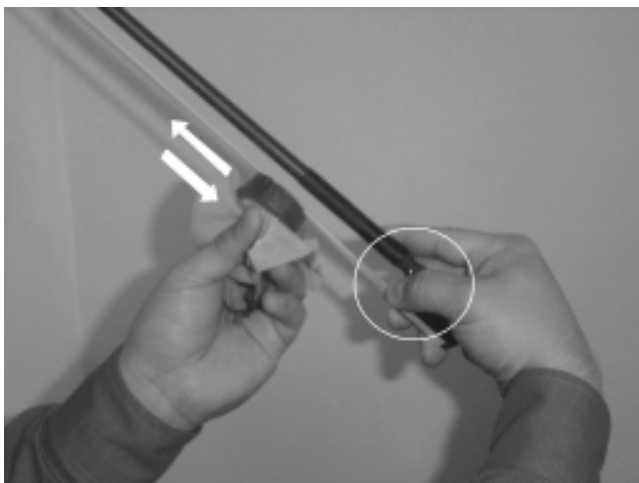
Step 4: Wrap the ring finger around the stick (behind the middle finger).



Step 5: Place the pinky on the adjusting screw to maintain balance.



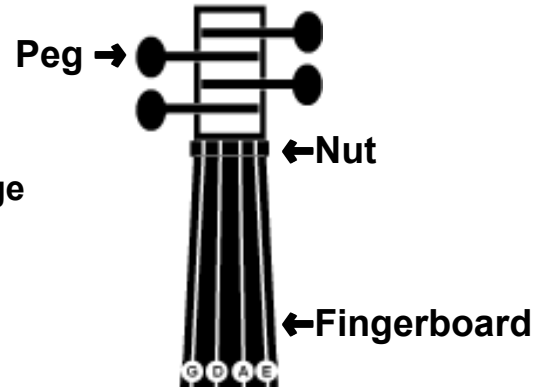
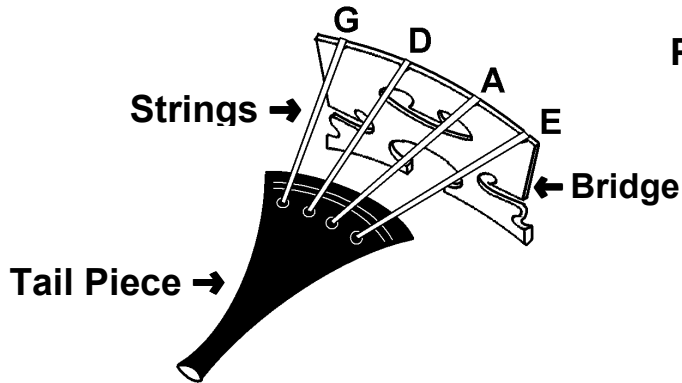
Rosining the Bow



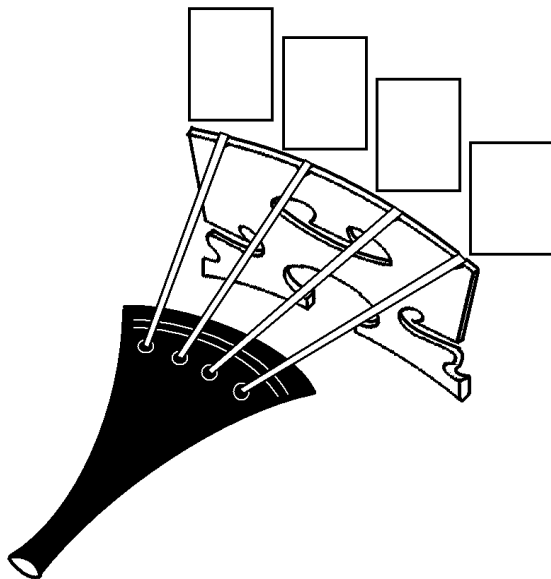
- 1) Make sure the bow hairs are properly tightened.
- 2) Cover the ferrule with the right hand thumb to keep the rosin from hitting it and chipping away.
- 3) Rub the rosin on the hairs in an up and down motion using the left hand.

String Names

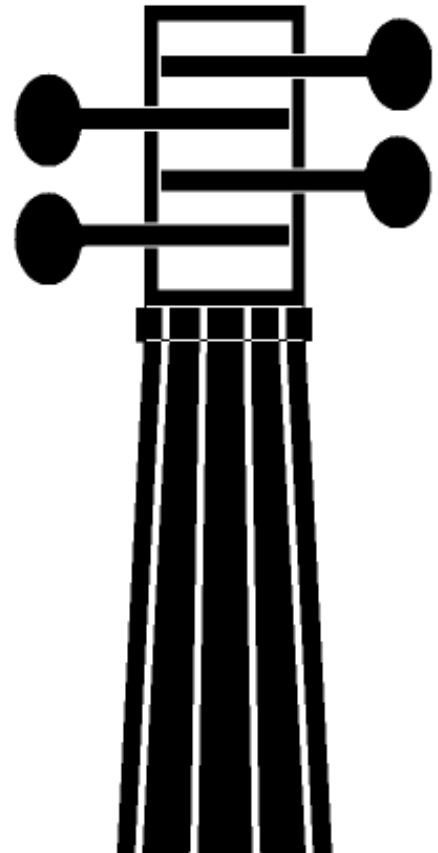
The Violin has ***FOUR*** strings.
Each string has a different letter name: G, D, A, E



1. Write the letter names of the strings in the boxes:



2. Color the strings as follows:
G String: RED
D String: BLUE
A String: YELLOW
E String: GREEN



EAR TRAINING

3. Play either the E string or G string and ask the student to say “high string” or “low string”. Repeat at each lesson until the student answers correctly every time.

Pizzicato

Pizzicato is the Italian word for “plucked”.
It is usually abbreviated as *pizz.*

Step 1: Place the thumb of the RH against the fingerboard to anchor it.



Step 2: Lower the index finger onto string.



Step 3: Pull the string with the end of the finger to pluck it.



4. Pluck each string on your violin.
- Notice that each string sounds different.
 - Notice how long the string continues to ring after you pluck it.
 - Notice that the string stops ringing when you touch it again.
5. Pluck the strings on your violin according to the letters in the boxes.
- Say the letter aloud as you pluck.
 - Keep a steady beat (one beat for each pluck).

A)	D D D D	A A A A	D D D D	A A A A
B)	A A A A	E E E E	A A A A	E E E E
C)	G G G G	D D D D	G G G G	D D D D
D)	G G G G	A A A A	G G G G	A A A A
E)	D D D D	E E E E	D D D D	E E E E

Rhythm in Music

Rhythm is the fact that all sounds have different lengths. Some sounds are long, some are short and some are in between.



A Quarter Note represents ONE BEAT.



A Half Note represents TWO BEATS.

Notes are musical symbols that tell us how long to make a sound.

- Each note looks different according to its length of time (also called value).
- The value of a quarter note is ONE BEAT (short note).
- The value of a half note is TWO BEATS (long note).

6. A) Clap each rhythm below, saying “quarter” or “half note” for each note symbol.
 B) Pluck each rhythm on one string, saying “quarter” or “half note”.

A)			
B)			
C)			

7. Draw TEN quarter notes on the line below: *[Always use pencil!]*

8. Draw TEN half notes on the line below:

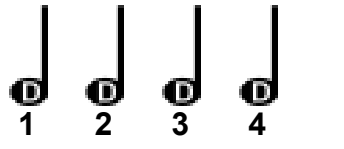
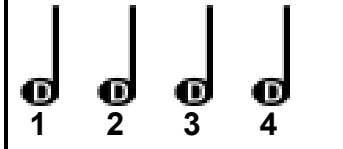
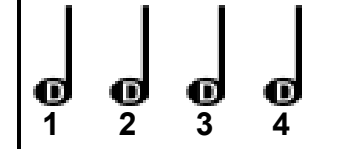
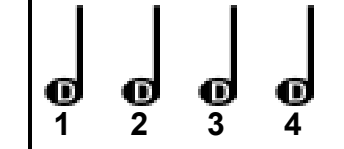
Arco / The D String

Arco is the Italian word for “bow”.


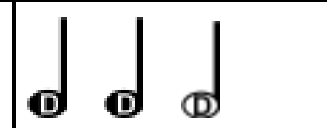
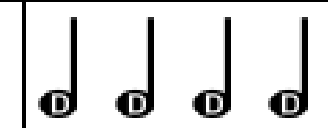

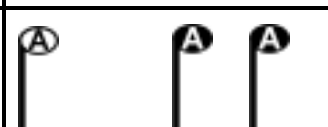
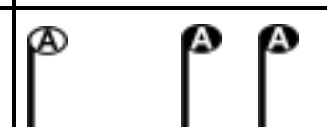
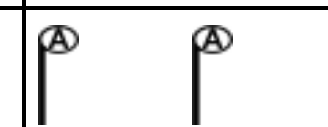
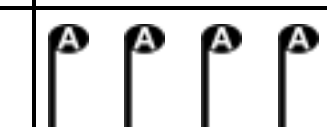
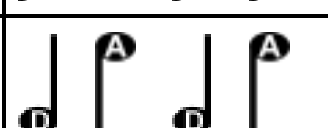

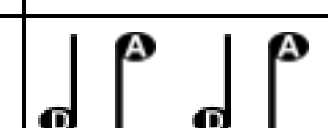
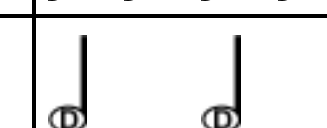
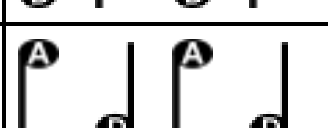


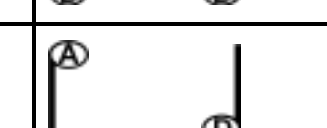
All violin music is played using the bow, unless marked with *pizz.*
The word *arco* indicates when to stop playing pizzicato, and use the bow.



9. **BOW** the D String in even quarter notes.
- Count 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 as you play.
 - Make sure the bow does not touch the other strings.
 - Make sure the bow is straight and between the bridge and fingerboard.

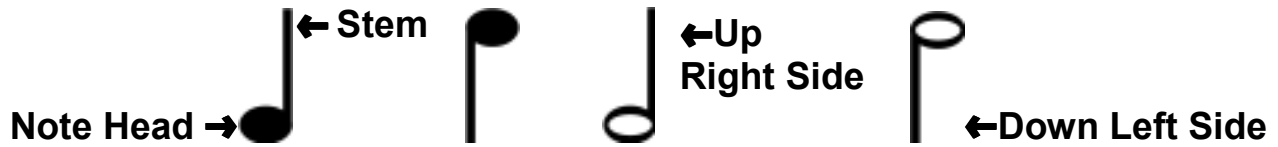
			
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10. **PIZZICATO** the following rhythms (twice each). Be careful which string you pluck!
- First time: Play and say the letters.
 - Second time: Play and say “quarter” or “half note”.

A)				
B)				
C)				
D)				

Stems on Notes

The note head is the oval (egg shape) part of the note.
The stem is the *vertical* (up & down) line part of the note.
The stem can go up on the right side or down on the left side.



11. Draw UP STEMS on the following note heads, to make them into quarter notes and half notes:



12. Draw DOWN STEMS on the following note heads, to make them into quarter notes and half notes:



REVIEW:

13. Write the letter names of the strings in the boxes
(Do not look at previous pages!)

