

# **I. Bow Hand Shape**

## **Violin/Viola:**

- A. Index finger rests on top of the bow near the second knuckle joint.
- B. Second finger drapes over the side of the bow and touches the stick near the second knuckle joint.
- C. Third finger drapes over the side of the bow and the finger print touches the concave side of the frog.
- D. Little finger is curved and its tip rests near the inner side of the bow stick.
- E. Hand leans slightly on the index finger throughout the bow stroke
- F. Thumb opposite the second finger at the first knuckle joint forming an oval.
- G. Inside corner of the thumb touches the stick where the frog meets the bow.
- H. In the upper half of the bow, the thumb gradually curves.

## **Cello/Bass:**

### **A. Cello**

- 1. All fingers traditionally draped over the side of the frog and bow stick
  - side of thumb tip where frog meets the bow
  - index finger draped over bow at or near second knuckle joint
  - ring finger "fingerprint" may fit into the "u" cut-out of the frog
  - fourth finger at or near eyelet
- 2. Hand more perpendicular to bow stick than upper string bow hand shape
- 3. All fingers naturally curved

### **B. Bass**

- 1. Same as above except hand more over side of frog
- 2. French bow versus German bow hand shape
- 3. German bow hand shape

- first finger and thumb touching, forming a circle
- all fingers/knuckles curved
- second and third finger curved next to first finger
- fourth finger (pinkie) positioned under frog for support

C. All finger joints should be supple and flexible

## **Bow Hand Shape Teaching Strategies**

### **A. Sequence I -- Flop Hand**

Hold left index finger at eye level

Flop right hand limply to check for relaxation

Flop right hand fingers over extended index finger, wiggling all joints and checking for continued relaxation

Place pinky finger on top of left finger and tap it lightly

Wiggle thumb and curve it around to rest below left finger opposite tall finger, knuckle bumped outwards

Move right wrist up and down, back and forth to check for relaxation

Repeat with pencil or straw

Repeat with bow

### **B. Sequence II -- "Spy Glass"**

Hold right hand up in front of face with tall finger and thumb curved to form a "spyglass." Thumb contacts tall finger at first knuckle joint and is curved to bump out.

Peek through "spyglass"

Open thumb and tall finger and place pencil/straw/bow stick between

Fold other fingers down in proper shape, index finger at or near the second knuckle joint, pinky curved and on its tip

Wiggle wrist to check for relaxation

### **C. Sequence III -- "Bunny Ears"**

Form Bunny Ears with right hand – index and pinky fingers sticking up (ears) and tall and ring finger folded down (teeth) over curved thumb

Wiggle Bunny Ears

Open bunny's "jaws and insert pencil/straw/bow stick behind bunny's "teeth"

Fold "ears" down to assume proper bow hand shape

"Hop" the bunny up and down to check for relaxed wrist

### **D. Sequence I – Flop hand with a wrist bump**

(For cello and bass)

Hold left index finger around belt buckle level

Flop hand as for sequence above

Be sure the hand hangs from the wrist (forming a “bump”) with fingers relaxed

Continue with steps as in Flop Hand

**E. Sequence II - Slip Method**

(for cello and bass)

Flop hand as for Flop hand with a wrist bump

Slip frog end of bow behind fingers to the correct position (tall finger by the ferrule, ring finger in the “valley”)

Advance index finger along stick slightly

Pronate hand slightly to the left

Curve and slide thumb behind the stick to take its place behind the tall finger, checking to be sure there is a “bump” in the knuckle

Wiggle hand up and down to check for relaxation

**F. Sequence III - Shopping Bag**

Hold right hand loosely down by side with fingers curved

Balance bow stick on fingers, bow hair towards ceiling

Spread fingers slightly to facilitate balance

Carry as you would a shopping bag

Slip thumb behind stick to take its place behind the tall finger, checking to be sure there is a “bump” in the knuckle

Turn hand over to assume bowing position

**G. German Bow Sequence**

Form a fist with left hand, index finger extended, in front of body at belt buckle level

Grasp fist with right hand, thumb on top and pinky on bottom, left index finger extending between thumb and hand

Curve right index and tall fingers around to almost meet thumb

Allow ring finger to rest lightly any place on back of left hand

Turn hands down so that the right hand is towards the floor

**H. Straw Bow Hand Shape**

Form bow hand shape on a straw to reduce risk of squeezing

**I. Fourth finger clicks/taps**

Tap pinky finger to release tension or ensure flexibility. It’s difficult if not impossible to tap a rigid, squeezing finger

**J. McDonald's arch analogy**

Way to describe pinky to emphasize the curved shape

**K. Pinky checks**

Have students hold up bow hand shapes to check for curved, relaxed pinky

**L. 12 o'clock bows**

Have students turn hands so that bows are pointing straight up (twelve o'clock) so the teacher can check for curved (bumped) thumbs