

Shifting

Violin/Viola:

- A. Prerequisite: well-shaped left hand in lower positions (positions 1-4)
- B. Guidelines for when to formally introduce
 - 1. ability to sustain a pitch for the entire length of the bow
 - 2. endurance
 - 3. ear training so that student can match pitch and adjust a pitch
 - 4. ability to remove left hand from instrument and maintain acceptable instrument position
 - 5. ability to release thumb while playing
- C. Lower positions (1-4)
 - 1. shoulder relaxed in its natural position, and it responds to the shifting arc and throwing motion
 - 2. elbow joint closes on ascending shifts
 - 3. elbow joint opens on descending shifts
 - 4. hand balanced on middle fingers throughout shift
 - 5. hand turns and forearm rotates
 - 6. release of thumb and finger weight before and during shift
 - 7. increase of finger weight following shift to establish new position
 - 8. thumb moves with the hand and provides support for the finger pressure necessary to depress the string
 - 9. in descending shifts, there is a gentle anchoring of the instrument by the chin

Cello/Bass

- A. Prerequisite: well-shaped left hand in lower positions (positions 1-4)
- B. Guidelines for when to formally introduce
 - 1. ability to sustain a pitch for the entire length of the bow
 - 2. endurance
 - 3. ear training so that student can match pitch and adjust a pitch
 - 4. ability to remove left hand from instrument and maintain acceptable instrument position
 - 5. ability to release thumb while playing
- C. Lower positions (1 – 4)

1. shoulder relaxed in its natural position, and it responds to the shifting arc and throwing motion
2. elbow joint opens on ascending shifts
3. elbow joint closes on descending shifts
4. hand balanced on middle fingers throughout shift
5. hand angle changes and forearm rotates
6. release of thumb and finger weight before and during shift
7. increase of finger weight following shift to establish new position
8. thumb moves with the hand and provides support for the finger pressure necessary to depress the string

Shifting Teaching Strategies

A. Prerequisites

Students must be able to play fluently and well in tune in first position

Students can play for reasonably long periods of time without fatigue

Left hand shape and finger placement is well developed

B. Pizzicato Shuttles

Holding left hand in correct shape for the instrument, the player plucks a string with the left hand while moving arm up and down the fingerboard freely

C. Shifting Finger Taps

Like the Pizzicato Shuttles except the player taps fingers on the strings while moving hand from low to high positions

D. Sliding "Glob of Hand"

Low strings – form fist to stop the string and slide it up and down the string while bowing

E. Sliding Tremolo Shifts

Low strings – Like the Sliding "Glob of Hand" except player uses a single finger to form note and plays tremolo with the bow while moving up and down the string

F. In the Groove

Place all four fingers between two strings and slide up and down the length of the string

G. Riding the Rails

Like In the Groove, except place all four fingers on any one string and slide

H. "Ghosts"

Lightly touch the string with one finger and slide up and down the string while bowing to produce ghostly whistles and sounds

I. "Sirens"

Place a finger solidly on a string and slide up and down the string while bowing to produce the siren sound

J. "Sliding Geminiani Chords"

Place first finger on bottom string, second finger on next, third finger on next and fourth finger on top string and slide whole hand up and down string. Works best for upper strings.

K. Thumb Pad in cradle for higher positions

Upper strings – The thumb pad goes in the curve of the neck where it joins the body of the instrument and the hand comes up and around the bout for the upper positions. Generally speaking, the higher the position, the lower the position of the thumb on the neck before this point is reached.

L. Harmonics

Lightly touching string at nodal points to get special partials – octave, 12th and two octaves are the main ones Good for shifting because light touch eliminates squeezing and tension

M. Shifting To and Between Harmonics

Slide same finger between two different harmonics – eliminates pressure and makes it possible to move hand lightly. Harmonic pops out when the nodal point is touched.

One-Finger Scales

Play a scale using one finger and moving hand up the fingerboard to find each new note

One-Finger Melodies

Play familiar melodies using only one finger and moving hand around on fingerboard to find notes

Rewriting fingering for supplementary exercises/orchestral parts

Find ways to use different positions in exercises or in parts to orchestral music and write them in for students to have them practice them

Additional Practice/Checkpoints

Use special etudes for the purpose of practicing shifting before using it in an orchestral piece

Make up little rote drills of tricky shifts or spots in another position in the music for the students to practice for additional experience with shifting

Watch for smooth shifts accomplished without squeezing, jumping and grabbing, or getting trapped behind the bout. Have players get in the habit of releasing weight during the shift and replacing it at the end. They should slide easily from position to position.