Magic, Mystery and Mayhem: The Basics of Functional Bow Technique
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"One needs to hear only a few notes from a Kreisler, or Heifetz to recognize the artist instantly, sight unseen thanks largely to their uniquely individual and infinitely varied bow technique, proving the truth of the saying "the Bow is the Soul of the Violin".
The Art of Bowing Practice 1991

A functional bow technique includes all of the major bow techniques and all of the expressive potential of the bow.
Ease Control Freedom of Movement Balance Tension and Release

General Concepts:
The bow should be seen and felt as an extension of the arm.
The bow should be viewed and used as the source of musicality.
The bow hold, bow arm and bow motion should be established for concerto level repertoire.
Teacher must play a student's bow before teaching a new concept or bow technique.

Bow Arm/Stroke Preparation:
Natural Motions of the hand and arm.
Learned motions of the hand and arm.
Down and Up Motion

Sizing the Bow:
Basic length
Contact point

Bow Arm Preparation:
Hand carries the bow.
Knee pats and flat hand shakes

Bow Hold Preparation:
Prepare the bow hand. Think a career bow hold from the first.
Find the most natural position.
Build muscle control away from the bow. Work toward long-term development of strength and endurance.
Exercises with prep bow or fat pencil.
Exercises with vertical bow position with real bow.

Establishing the Bow Hold:
Teacher places bow hold many times.
Teach vertical approach or touching string
First contact is vertical. Maintain this approach as long as possible: Touch e string and roll to lower strings.

First strokes:
Best first stroke is an open ended staccato from square of the arm. First motion is quick. Sound is clear.
Continue to practice the e string and open strings forever!!!
SOS = Start on the string! Set then play.

Bow Placement: (Where in the bow are we?") Address height and arm length issues "Touch Point"
Square of the arm
Center of the bow
Frog definition
Tip and actual tip
Balance point
Touch Point
Contact Point

Bow Contact Point: (Where on the string are we?")
Lanes of traffic analogy.

Bow Direction:
Teaching ideas: Visual, Physical, and Aural
Knee pats with subconscious directions.
Ride my hand or arm.
Verbalize "Go down, go up." Concept Say "up, down and slu-ur" pattern out loud.
Write up and down lines on a chalkboard while singing a rhythm pattern.
Shadow bow the teacher in a mirror. Follow my hand in the air. Follow my bow on the string.
Reversing patterns need more preparation for some students. Knee pats are great!
Traveling patterns should be introduced before repertoire calls for them.

Bow path: Straight path levels necessary for each string platform.
- See the path. (Mirrors and look thru the bow)
- Feel the path. (Other watch and give feedback.)
- Hear the path.

Basic bow division:
- First concept is "the amount of bow equals the length of the note". (Half note/half bow)
- Introduce this concept early. Small note, small bow.

Use of the arm and body:
- Hand leads up, elbow leads down.
- "Hand carries the bow."
- Power of the thumb
- Hinges of the arm
  - Shoulder, elbow, wrist, finger and pivot arm.
- Thumb rotation and hair control
- Balanced hand

Tone = Weight speed and contact point.
- Develop power and volume control. Develop strength and balance.
- Listen for clarity and cleanliness.
- Special issues on G and E strings
- "Pull and pull."
- Use violin position to enhance or change tone and tone color.
- Use factors of weight, speed and contact point to develop tone and tone colors.

String crossings: Stay close to both strings.
- Silent landing on e roll to lower strings is important for bow balance. "Hand carries."
- Hinge choice
- Review Bow Placement: Center vs, square of arm
- Visualize spatial patterns
- Voicing string crossings
- Slurred string crossings

Slurs: Do not assume that if a student can play one type of slur that he can play all slurs of that type.

Partial Slur Teaching Sequence
- Stopped two note slur
  - Two note on same string
  - Two note crossing to adjacent strings
- Smooth slur
  - Two note on same string
  - Two note crossing to adjacent strings
- Reverse pattern slurs
- Four note slurs on same string
- Four note slur on adjacent string 2 + 2, 1 + 3, 3 + 1
- Slurs with return string crossings
- Stopped hooked bowing
- Slurred hooked bowing
- Seamless slur with and without string crossings
- Three note slur on same string…

Super Legato: Most expressive, singing bow stroke. Son filé
- Student must have control of speed, weight and contact point and a straight bow path
- Student must demonstrate easy unaccented bow change i.e. silent bow change including seamless slur technique.

Slow Bow Control:
- Gingold: Creaky Bow Exercise
- Add a beat/add an inch long bow bowing with same speed

Basic Articulation:

Define of articulation
- On string introduction: consonant.... begin with k, then add t, d or g
  - vowel ..... w and h
- Off string:
  - Placed or Landed
  - Brushed or Dropped

Chords:

Decisions of Division & Approach
Bow Distribution is vital.
Stylistic determinations
Develop flow through the hand (Bridge roll exercise)

Basic Preparatory Concepts for Off String Bowing Technique

Student must understand and be able to demonstrate:

Bow as extension of the arm
Bow as source of musicality
Bow hold, bow arm and bow motion technique established for concerto level repertoire
Bow as entity unto itself

-Teacher should play a student's bow before teaching a new concept or bow technique.

TEACHING IDEAS

Off String Bowings: Create conditions for success. Play the student's bow! Establish balanced bow hold.
Do not demonstrate final off string aspect to student until preparation is complete!

-Lift and Land

Prep stroke: Lift up, rest, soft/silent land down.

-Up bow spiccato:

Prep actions: Wave or fishing line tug.
Prep stroke: Begin on string with "k" accent. Stopped slur. both up and down.
Feel and practice the fishing line tug.
Double up-bow scoop. Up-bow spiccato with string crossings and shifts are different skills.
Traveling up-bow spiccato Stationary up-bow spiccato.

Spiccato:

Prep actions: Jumping, rocking, with prep bow hand in all parts of bow
and then later with normal bow hold, rolling thru hand on bridge and thumb role....
Prep stroke: Stroke is under tempo and dish/u shape is over exaggerated.
Begin with balance point hold.
Begin with brush stroke. (dish or bowl shaped)
Find easy spiccato "tempo" and use the metronome first to suggest tempo later to dictate it.
Practice 2,3,4 patterns down and up-bow on a single string first.
Review the elbow carry before introducing string changes!
Then 8 on each string, 4 on each 2 on each & 1. Then learn sequence up-bow then in sets of 3.
Practice volume/dynamic changes. Develop different articulations and speeds.

Alternating Spiccato/Legato:

Prep stroke: Legato in upper half. Spiccato in lower half with pause in between.

Try to create the conditions where the Sautillé or ricochet stroke occurs naturally. "Oh look it is bouncing!"

Sautillé: The "Novacek Perpetual Motion" stroke

Prep stroke: On string above "sweet spot" Teach articulated 16th notes on string
It is vital that this stroke be even and unaccented.
Prep action: Silent, even bow tip wiggle.
Bow may begin to bounce.
If it does not activate the bow tip.
Practice preparing the string crossings. Bounce will not be interrupted if crosses are prepared.

Rolling Ricochet: The "Mendelssohn Concerto" stroke

Prep stroke: Suzuki Ex. from Volume 5
Begin down and up on lower to higher string with k articulated martelé stroke.
Start A-E, D-E, G-E. Practice the stair step rolled slur in bow center.
Practice the outer string outline.
Sequence to seamless, **even** slur.

Dropped Ricochet: The "William Tell/La Gitana" Stroke

Prep stroke: Drop and free bounce with support of the entire arm
Then drop with measured bounce 1,2,3,4. Then drop 1,2,3,4 and catch the bow.

Use metronome to determine speed and then turn it off until stroke is easy.

Winifred's Rules for Off String Bowing Development

RULE OF SEPARATION
Separate bowing practice from left hand practice.

RULE OF FATIGUE
Fatigue can create tension and tension prohibits technical ease and causes many off string bowing problems.
Watch for tension. Stop stretch, release and begin again.

RULE OF PATTERN ENDURANCE
Lack of endurance destroys many great bowing attempts.
Require that student learn at least 3 times as many repetitions as necessary for section of the piece.
Learn the technique not just the piece.

RULE OF BOWING PATTERN EVENNESS
Many excellent patterns are interrupted by accents, string crossings or other uneven motions.
Practice the pattern until bowing pattern is unaccented and even at the tempo desired.

RULE OF CROSSING STRINGS
Prepare the string crossing whenever possible.
Prepare the approach to the string crossing when not.

RULE OF FLIGHT SPEED
Many off string bowings require a certain tempo in order to "take flight"
The teacher should determine that tempo using the student's bow.
Students should practice on string preparation bowings until flight speed is easy and comfortable.
On string bowing preparation is vital for left and right coordination.

RULE OF RIGHT BOW
Use the right amount of bow in the right part of the bow.
The teacher should determine this using the student's bow.

RULE OF HORIZONTAL STRINGS
While a relaxed and balanced violin position is vital to injury and pain free playing, occasionally lifting the violin to a horizontal string position will greatly assist in technical passages with complex bowings.

RULE OF TECHNICAL MAINTENANCE
Complex bowing techniques need consistent maintenance. If you don't use it you will lose it.
Once the techniques are mastered establish a

RULE OF THE ABLE BOW
Some bows are not capable of advanced bowing techniques.
Please check student's bows often to be assured the bow is able.

Recommended Sources:

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Winifred Crock is the Director of Orchestras at Parkway Central High School and maintains a private violin studio in suburban St. Louis, Missouri. During her tenure, the Parkway Central High Music Department was named a *GRAMMY* Gold Signature school. Mrs. Crock has been named a Pillar of Parkway, the Missouri ASTA Private Studio Teacher of the Year, the Missouri ASTA Secondary String Teacher of the Year, a member of the "USA TODAY" National Teacher Team, the St Louis Symphony Educator of the Year and is a recipient of the Singer Prize, given by the University of Rochester for excellence in secondary teaching. This year she was named the Outstanding Music Educator in the state of Missouri by the National Federations of High School and was the recipient of the ASTA Elizabeth Green National School Educator Award.

In demand as a clinician, lecturer and conductor, Mrs. Crock has lectured at numerous music conferences including NAFME, Midwest, ASTA and SAA conferences and has been the featured string clinician at music conferences in over 20 states, Canada, Lebanon and New Zealand. Mrs. Crock holds music degrees from SIU Edwardsville and Kent State University in Ohio. Mrs. Crock also graduated from the Suzuki Talent Education Institute in Matsumoto, Japan under the tutelage of Shinichi Suzuki and is a certified Kodály method instructor through the Kodaly Center of America. Mrs. Crock is the co-author with Dr. Laurie Scott, and Mr. William Dick of the Alfred Publication, *Learning Together: Sequential Repertoire for Solo Strings or String Ensembles*. They were the recipients of the SAA 2011 Community Learning Award presented May 2011. Mrs. Crock is the author of soon to be released *"Before the Reading Book and the Reading Book Series, Forrester Press.* Mrs. Crock is married to Steve Crock and has a son, William.