

# Classical shifts

Classical shifts are also known as ‘beginning’ shifts, the hand moving on the finger that begins the shift.



- \* **Ascending** Move the hand up on the finger that is playing the lower note. Drop the new finger directly on the upper note.
- \* **Descending** Move the hand down on the finger that is playing the upper note. Place the lower finger on its note before lifting the upper finger.
- \* **Co-ordination** In separate-bow shifts, shift with the ‘old’ finger on the ‘old’ bow, play the ‘new’ finger on the ‘new’ bow.

Although the shifts in the example above are between 1st finger B and 3rd finger F, the actual shifts are really 1st finger B to 1st finger D (first bar), and 3rd finger F to 3rd finger D (second bar). All Classical shifts use either 1-1, 2-2, 3-3 or 4-4 as the means of travel.

## Intermediate-note exercise

In the example above, the notes given in brackets are known as ‘intermediate’ notes. The clearer the mental picture of the intermediate note in each shift, the more secure it feels. This exercise is a quick-practice routine which covers all the commonest possibilities in one go.

160'5 Slow, medium and fast

- 1 First play each line through as written (see the example below). Keeping the left hand light, play *forte* with an evenly sustained tone. The lower bowing in the example gives the correct co-ordination for separate-bow shifts.
- 2 Then play the middle note of each triplet like a grace note, but hardly sound it: to play the grace note use very little bow, lighten the bow, and lighten the finger on the string.
- 3 Last, play without the middle note at all, as simply one note followed by another. In other words, play ‘note-note’ rather than ‘note-shift-note’.

160'4

Play the same sequences on the other strings in different octaves, beginning each as follows:

160'6

## Static finger scales

Since Classical shifts use either 1-1, 2-2, 3-3 or 4-4, a simple and time-efficient way to practise all the different shifts at once is to play 'static finger scales' - scales, arpeggios and broken intervals using only one finger.

### Exercise 1

199'1 sul D

2

3 4

Play the same patterns on each string, using a variety of major and minor scales.

### Exercise 2

This arpeggio sequence, used extensively by Carl Flesch (who borrowed it from Sevcik), is useful for practising single-finger shifts. As well as slurring, also play fast spiccato or sautillé, three and four strokes to a note. The shifts must be very fast to co-ordinate with the bow, so that it sounds the same as if played with a normal fingering.

sul A

1 simile

164'3

Play the same arpeggio pattern with the other fingers, starting on different key notes on each string.

### Exercise 3

165'1 sul A

3rds 1 simile

4ths 1

5ths 1

Using each finger in turn, and on each string, play the broken intervals in a variety of keys to cover different notes and intervals:

218'2

The advantage of exercises such as these is that they save so much time. Having played them for only a short period, all the Classical shifts in your current repertoire will feel as good as if you had practised each one individually.

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Next month's BASICS stays with shifting, with a practise routine for Classical and Romantic shifts.