

Thirds

Last month's *Basics* looked at shifting in thirds, and continues here with four more shifting and intonation exercises. Discussed in full last month were three key points to watch in playing thirds:

- 1 Position the hand slightly more in favour of the upper finger of each third than the lower finger, and reach back with the lower finger. Do not base the hand position on the lower finger, stretching the upper finger forward.
- 2 To play a double-stop at the same volume as a single-stop you have to play twice as heavily with the bow, but the fingers should still stop the strings lightly.
- 3 If there is tension in the fourth finger, release it by relaxing the base knuckle joint of the first finger.

Exercise 1

- 1 First play through as written (see example below). Play *forte* with an evenly sustained tone, and a light left hand. Pivot to the tied notes smoothly. The lower bowing in the example gives the correct co-ordination for separate-bow string crossings.
- 2 'Ghost' the semiquavers — play them using as little bow and as little pressure as possible, and with harmonic-like finger pressure. These notes are written as x-notes.
- 3 Play without the quavers, joining the double-stops together as though there were no string crossings.

Play in a variety of keys to cover different tone-semitone possibilities.

Exercise 2

This useful eight-bar sequence contains every tone-semitone possibility of pairs of thirds.

For the purposes of the exercise, keep the first and third fingers down on the strings throughout. Be particularly careful not to lift them in the fifth bar of each line.

Practice methods:

Musical notation for practice methods, showing two staves with fingerings and slurs. The first staff has fingerings 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4. The second staff has fingerings 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4.

Also play the same sequence on the G-D and A-E strings.

Exercise 3

Musical notation for Exercise 3, showing a sequence of notes with fingerings and 'simile' markings. The first part has fingerings 1 2 1 2, 3 4 3 4, 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4. The second part has fingerings 1 2 1 2, 3 4 3 4, 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4. The third part has fingerings 1 2, 2 1, 3 4, 4 3, 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4, 1 3, 2 4.

Play in a variety of keys to cover different tone-semitone possibilities.

Exercise 4

Play slowly, but drop the fingers on to the string quickly and decisively.

Musical notation for Exercise 4, showing a sequence of notes with fingerings and '(Same fingerings throughout)'. The first staff has fingerings 1 2 2, 3 2 2, 1 3, 3 4, 4 3 3. The rest of the exercise consists of multiple staves of notes.

Also play the sequence on the G-D and D-A strings.

Practice method for scales in thirds:

Musical notation for practice method for scales in thirds, showing a sequence of notes with fingerings. The first staff has fingerings 1 3, 1 3, 1 3, 1 3, 2 4, 2 4, 2 4.

Exercises like these are a good investment of time since they save you more time than they take to practice. Just a little work on them, on a regular basis, will mean that all thirds encountered in scales, studies and pieces will need much less practice before they feel comfortable and reliable.

Next month's Basics looks at how to practice the passages of tenths in the Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor.