

Vibrato

Pulsing

Vibrato is made with only one active movement, which is *forward* to the in-tune note. The backward movement is like a rebound. This is like clapping: the hands go 'in-in-in-in', not 'in-out-in-out', and similarly vibrato goes 'forward-forward-forward-forward', not 'forward-back-forward-back'.

The forward movement leans the pad of the finger slightly more heavily into the string. (This is automatic – do not press the finger deliberately.) The backward movement releases the string slightly. Therefore the lower pitch of the vibrato is much less distinct than the upper, in-tune pitch. This results in a narrow, pure vibrato which sounds like BBBB BBBB, CCCCCC, etc. - in other words, sounding like one pitch which throbs or 'pulses' rather than a wide sliding of the pitch between the note itself and the same note flattened.

Practise passages with a controlled, slowed-down vibrato, playing a specific number of pulses on each note.

Example 1

Sonata in A minor, op. 105, Schumann
First movement

Sul G




Each semiquaver represents one vibrato 'pulse', or one forward movement. Keep the bow strokes smooth, making the pulsing with the vibrato only.




Example 2

Violin Concerto no. 2 in D minor, op. 22, Wieniawski
First movement

espressivo ma sotto voce



Begin with four 'pulses' on each crotchet, and then eight:



Continuous vibrato: hold down fingers

When passages seem to be too fast to allow a substantial vibrato on each note, one answer lies in the fact that any fingers that are held down on the string are, in effect, longer-value notes which you can easily vibrate. Then, because these held-down fingers are vibrating, the other fingers vibrate as well. Naturally, such a vibrato must be minimal to avoid the notes becoming unstable, but there is a big difference between semiquaver passages played with a 'background vibrato', and played with no vibrato at all.

Example 1.

Praeludium and Allegro, Pugnani-Kreisler
Praeludium

Example 2.

Practise holding fingers down and vibrating them even if in the end you may not hold them down so long. Afterwards, continuous vibrato will feel more automatic. In this passage the lower of each pair of notes can be held down as well as the first fingers:

Sonata no. 2 in A, op. 100, Brahms
Third movement

Continuous vibrato exercise

While playing the A string alone, raise and drop fingers on the E string (written as x-notes).

Vibrate the fingers on the A string continuously, without stopping the vibrato momentarily as the fingers drop or raise on the E string. Also vibrate the silent fingers on the E string, without stopping as the finger touches or leaves the string.

Make the vibrato on the A string sound the same as if you were not silently using the fingers on the E string.

Very slow

Silent fingering