

Tone production

Exercise for all string instruments: fast whole bows on each soundpoint

The single most important factor to consider in tone production is always the proportions of speed of bow, pressure and distance from the bridge.

The more bow that is used (ie the faster the bow speed), the more pressure is needed to keep the contact with the string. The nearer the bridge, the harder the tension of the string, and again the more pressure that is needed.

Therefore, using a lot of bow near the bridge requires a great amount of pressure. This exercise highlights the pressure differences, and serves either as an excellent technique-building exercise, or as an effective warm-up exercise.

Soundpoint 5 Near the fingerboard

Soundpoint 4 Between the fingerboard and the middle

Soundpoint 3 Middle, between the fingerboard and the bridge


Soundpoint 2 Between the middle and the bridge

Soundpoint 1 Near the bridge

- 1 Start at $\text{♩} = 50$. Playing on one note, play continuous whole bows on soundpoint 5, down-bow and up-bow. Play two bows to each metronome beat. Keep the sound smooth and even throughout: the bow must not shake, whistle over the surface of the string, or change soundpoint.
- 2 Do the same on soundpoints 4, 3 and 2, with more pressure as the bow plays nearer and nearer to the bridge.
- 3 Increase the metronome to 55. Start again on soundpoint 5, always playing whole bows on one note, two strokes to a beat. Gradually increase the metronome speed to about 70.

Whole bows on each stroke

(Repeat many times)



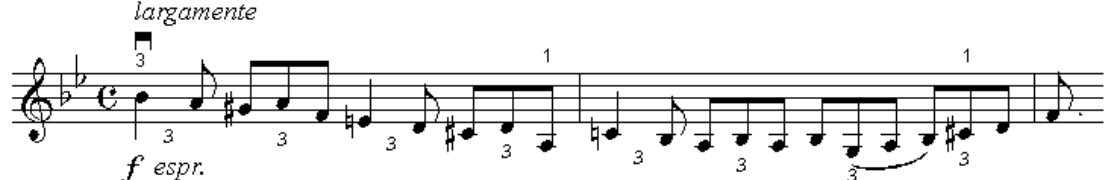
Quality of tone: building individual notes

- Practise selected notes on their own, removed from their context. Experiment with speed of bow, pressure and distance from the bridge until finding the tone quality you want. Then add vibrato.
- Use this combination of speed, pressure and distance from the bridge as a model for the note when you play it with the rest of the phrase. Find exactly the same feeling in the bow, bow hair and string, and with it the same tone.

Example 1.

Violin Concerto no. 1 in G minor, op. 26, Bruch

largamente



f espr.

The quavers in this passage can be played with as much as half a bow or more each. Practising by exaggeration, learn the feeling of playing the strokes with whole bows; afterwards, the correct amount of bow will not feel at all excessive:

Whole bows throughout



Repeat, using a note on the G string.

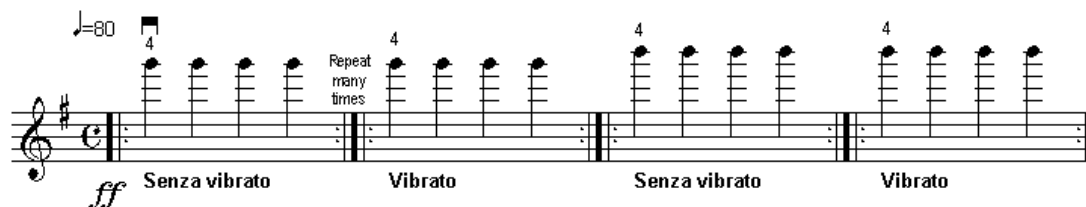
Example 2.

In this example the top G and B need to be played close to the bridge because the string length of those notes is so short.

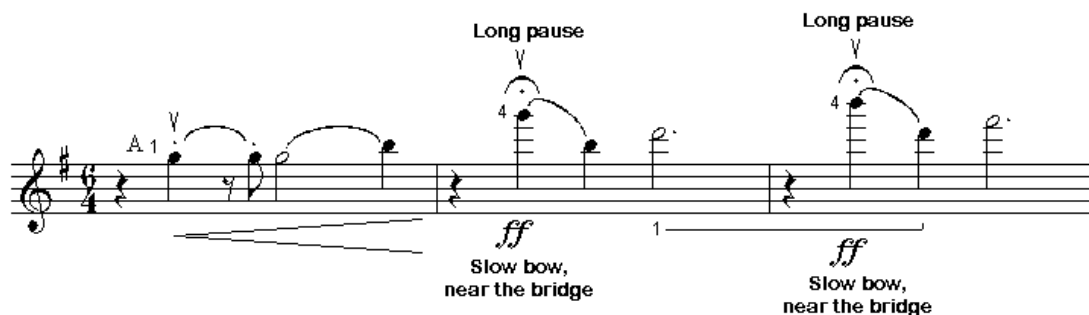
Sonata in G, op. 78, Brahms



First practise the notes individually. Use whole bows, at about soundpoint 2:

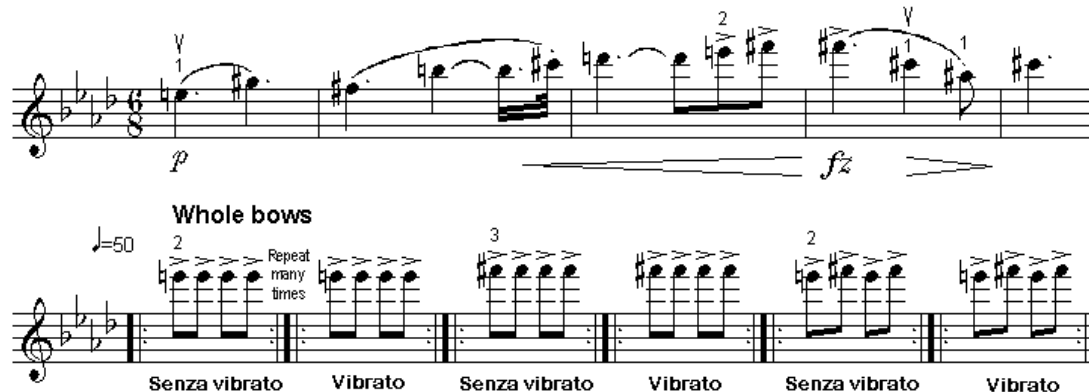


Then practise them in context. Aim for exactly the same tone as when playing the notes individually, but exaggerate them by playing 1) longer, 2) slower, 3) deeper in the string, and 4) nearer the bridge:



Example 3.

Romance, op. 11, Dvorak



Next month's BASICS looks at one of the most important practice methods for all instrumentalists: practising in rhythms. [Dear Juliette, Please open README.DOC on floppy.]