Trills

The great cellist Pablo Casals described trills as bringing 'exaltation' to a note (David Blum, *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*, London 1977, 125). The following are some of the factors which bring technical freedom so that the player can concentrate fully on the musical value of the trill without hindrance.

Speed: height of finger

In some ways trills are similar to vibrato. Where vibrato has proportions of speed to width, trills have proportions of speed to height of finger. To vibrate faster, it is usually natural to make the vibrato narrower to lessen the distance the finger moves. To play more notes in a trill, keep the fingers very close to the strings to lessen the distance they have to move up and down.

• Play the trill with such low fingers that they hardly clear the string, and there is 'fuzz' in the trill. Gradually use a little higher lift-off until the trill is both very fast and very clean.



Speed: direction of movement

Trills are also similar to vibrato in that in vibrato there is only one active movement – forward to the in-tune note. A vibrato with an active forward and active backward movement is difficult to do fast.

In trills there is also only one active movement. The finger moves up–up–up, not down–down–down–down or down–up–down–up. Trills with an active downward and an active upward movement are difficult to play fast.

• Play trills with the following dotted rhythms. Lift the trilling finger quickly as if the string were hot to touch.

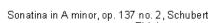


3 Example

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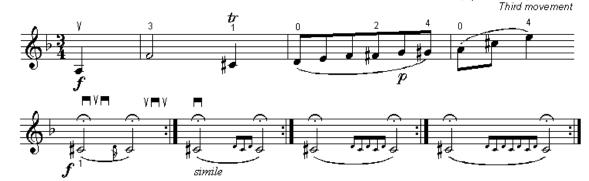
Example

Building the trill one note at a time





Example

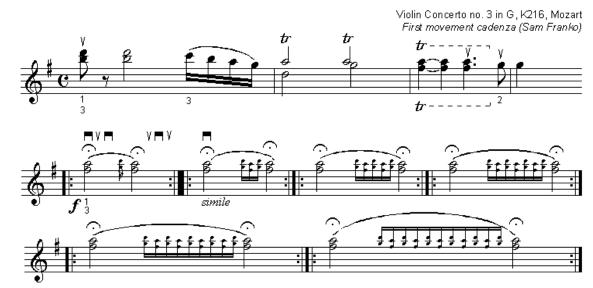


• Use many bows during the pauses, sustaining the sound fully and evenly near the bridge. The aim is to make the string vibrate as widely as possible to give the left fingers as big a task as possible.



Example

• When you then add the fingers, do not alter the stroke in any way as the fingers lift and fall. To isolate the fingers from the bow change, do not change bow and move the fingers at the same time.



Adding notes one at a time in tempo



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Example

Violin Concerto no. 4 in D, K218, Mozart *First movement*

Example

Play up to tempo with full character and expression but build the trills one note at a time. Begin with dropping and raising the finger only once, and then twice, three times, and so on.

Written out in longer time values for the sake of clarity:



Timing the rhythm of the turn

42 Etudes ou caprices, Kreutzer No. 31



Example



- (1) Leave out the trill and the turn. Play exactly in time.
- (2) Still leaving out the trill, play the turn very 'late' and fast, connecting it to the following note (C), not to the previous note (B).
- (3) Play both the trill and the turn.

Next month's BASICS looks at how to play sautillé.