

Vibrato width

Area of fingertip

The width of vibrato is partly to do with the placement of the fingertip on the string:

More of the pad of the finger on the string: wider vibrato.

More of the tip of the finger on the string: narrower vibrato.

- Repeat a note or short phrase several times, each time experimenting with a different placement of the fingers. Move gradually between more on the tip and less on the tip, until finding the desired vibrato colour and expression.

Violin Concerto in A minor, op. 53, Dvorák
First movement



1

Example



Correcting over-wide vibrato

Use non-vibrato as a continual reference point to prevent the vibrato becoming over-wide (and slow).

If you generally play with too wide a vibrato, when you make it narrower the vibrato may seem inaudible and expressionless in comparison, and you quickly go back to the old, wider vibrato.

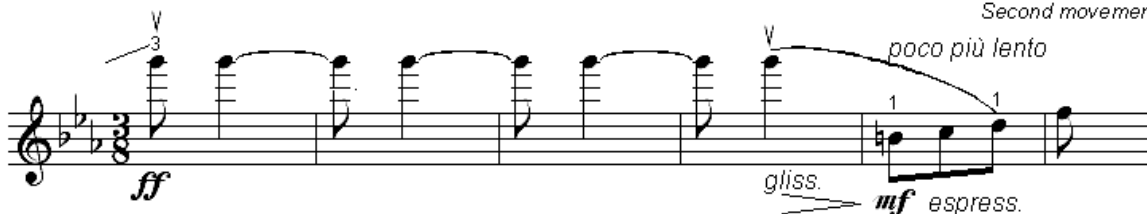
Using non-vibrato as the reference point ensures that a too-wide vibrato is unlikely. Having started with non-vibrato, the slightest vibrato seems obvious and much more variety of colour comes into the playing. Experiment on one note:

- Sustain a note without vibrato about 1 centimetre from the bridge, looking for the exact proportions of speed and pressure to make the string vibrate at its best.
- Having found the best vibration of the string, add the tiniest amount of vibrato. After the straight, bare tone of non-vibrato, even this vibrato seems very clear and obvious.

Hear the vibrato *in* or as part of the tone itself, rather than something extra put on top of the tone. Hear the tone change from a straight, bare sound to one that 'shimmers' or 'throbs'.

Afterwards, a wide vibrato seems *very* wide in comparison. Apply the same process to individual notes in pieces, and to complete phrases.

Symphonie espagnole, op. 21, Lalo
Second movement



2

Example

- (1) Play without vibrato. Play near the bridge, adjusting the speed and pressure until the tone is ringing and even, and the string is vibrating widely.
- (2) Add the narrowest vibrato and listen to the tone change from a 'straight' sound into one that 'throbs'. Notice how the throbbing is part of the tone itself.

This creates a vibrato that sounds like 'G-G-G-G-G-G' rather than alternating between G and a lower note somewhere between F# and G.

Sonata in A, Franck
First movement

3

Example

Using another finger as a model

Each finger on the same hand may have its own tendency towards one particular vibrato or another, some fingers tending towards a narrower vibrato, others towards a wider vibrato.

As part of experimenting to find exactly the right quality of vibrato for a particular note, use other fingers on the same note as a point of comparison. The new finger can serve either as a model, or as an immediate way to get a new musical feeling for the note, rather than using only the vibrato that the finger naturally offers.

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

4

Example

- Use the second finger as a model for the fourth finger A^b and A:

5

Example

- Make the same vibrato on each pair of fingerings: