

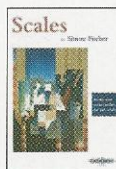
BOOKS

SCALES

Simon Fischer

212PP ISMN 970577087610

EDITION PETERS £21



'A new scale book, what could possibly be new about a scale book?' were my initial thoughts

when commissioned to write this review of Simon Fischer's latest instructional publication. Surely a scale book is something that has been published in enough iterations to make a new one redundant? However, as I appraised this beautifully presented volume, it was immediately apparent that this is not just a scale book, but an incredibly detailed series of lessons into what it takes to play the violin (or indeed viola) to a high technical level. The printed music looks more akin to a graphic score at times, but it becomes clear once one has worked out what the symbols indicate, and the lessons encapsulated are those of high-level pedagogy.

Too many students play scales and arpeggios with abandon, not really examining their intonation and method of finger placement in enough detail. In this book every note is marked with a sign to indicate where and how to place the note (I remember my teacher tearing his hair out trying to encourage the same care and attention from me). There are printed signs to indicate early finger placement and when to hold a finger down, essential for good intonation and efficient fingerwork. 'Helping notes' are indicated in the arpeggios to facilitate clean shifts.

The explanations and introductions for each stage of building a good scale and arpeggio technique are at the beginning of each section, but I found some needed multiple

reads and rereads in order to appreciate their contents in the necessary detail. *Scales* could be used as a violinist's self-help book, but in my opinion some of the concepts introduced would benefit from the careful supervision of a teacher, if a player is to reap the full rewards. I would certainly use this book with my own students.

JACK LIEBECK

NOUVELLE TECHNIQUE DE LA CONTREBASSE BOOK 4

François Rabbath

200PP PLUS DVD

ISMN 9790046304873

ALPHONSE LEDUC £58.99



François Rabbath needs no introduction. His exploration and innovation in the field of double

bass technique are unparalleled, yet even when he discusses technique it is clear that sound is of paramount importance to him. To this end his latest volume of the *Nouvelle Technique* contains advice about the choice of endpin and fingerboard, with Rabbath advising players to attach their strings on the inside of the tailpiece. He also suggests that by playing in tune 'the wood will grow accustomed to these vibratory phenomena' and the instrument will resonate better.

The scope of the 200-page book and DVD is enormous – a snapshot reveals video footage of all aspects of the bow, exercises for interval leaps, pivots, sautillé, jeté, double-stops, chords, octaves and the crab. There are pages for scales, arpeggios and orchestral excerpts fingered to use the thumb. Studies from previous books also appear at various stages in a different octave or key, but only a few lines of each are printed – Rabbath believes in memorising works.

Close to 50 pages of the book consist of unaccompanied compositions and it is interesting to see some earlier pieces published in the 70s – *Poucha-Dass*, *Breiz* and *Ibérique Péninsulaire* – reappear but notated differently. As an improviser and composer, Rabbath is constantly faced with reducing his music to dots on the page to be translated back into music by a performer who may never have met or heard him. This makes the DVD an indispensable part of the package.

I am not an aficionado of the *Nouvelle Technique* but each time I come across Rabbath's work I am overwhelmed by his ceaseless energy for pushing the boundaries of our expectations of the double bass. Many of the studies and exercises are dedicated to eminent bass players who I am sure share my enthusiasm for his work. His books are a treasure trove of creativity and an inspiration.

CATHY ELLIOTT

BEETHOVEN ROMANCES IN F MAJOR AND G MAJOR

Ed. Jonathan Del Mar

38PP ISMN 9790006540846

BÄRENREITER £9



Beethoven's romances have stayed in the mainstream of the violin repertoire with

remarkable consistency. Modest in scope yet long embraced by many leading violinists, they demand purity of line, refined phrasing and a range of bow articulations, making them of great value for students first approaching mature repertoire in the Classical style.

Beethoven's autograph score is extremely sparing in terms of dynamics and expressive markings. By its fidelity to the source, this Bärenreiter edition aims to reveal the piece's original simplicity before it was tampered with by subsequent elaborate ones. Editions from

the 19th century, such as Joachim's (reissued by Simrock in 1956) or Schradieck's (Schirmer, 1895), stay close to the original, retain its Classical simplicity and include the original source when offering an alternative. In a range of later editions by Flesch (Peters, 1927), Rostal (Schott, 1969) and Igor Oistrakh (Peters, 1970, revised in 1998), the changes are extensive to varying degrees and often obscure the initial canvas. Flesch, the most influential teacher of his generation, alters the time signature of both pieces from 2/2 to 4/4.

Bowing is of the utmost significance in works by Beethoven, and it is useful to note his clear-cut distinctions between spike (staccato) and dot (spiccato), while legato strokes are often more extended than one might expect to do in practice. In the F major Romance, editor Jonathan Del Mar adds to the nearly non-existent markings of the original based on other contemporary works by Beethoven. The composer wasn't much more detailed in the G major Romance. He must have expected performers naturally to inflect the singing line and repetitious or sequential passagework.

Two violin solo parts are presented by Bärenreiter. An urtext without fingerings employs bracketed markings, and slurs with broken lines are employed in the few instances of editorial additions. The other solo part includes fingerings from Detlef Hahn, which serve the clarity of the music well while enabling expressive nuance. Thus the edition is convenient both for less experienced students in need of detailed guidance and for advanced, self-sufficient players. For a transparent return to the source with minimal editorial interference Bärenreiter is an obvious reference, though it should be noted that Henle Verlag has brought out a similarly 'clean' edition, but without the extra solo part.

NATHANIEL VALLOIS