

“How Do I Do that Wobbly, Shaky Thing?” Vibrato and Shifting for Heterogeneous Elementary String Classes

Vanessa Mio, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Music Education – Western University

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- All exercises and pedagogical concepts influenced by Paul Rolland, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, Mimi Zweig, Janos Starker, Dr. Brenda Brenner, and Rebecca Henry; various pedagogical resources (*Viva Vibrato!*; *Teaching of Action in String Playing*, *stringpedagogy.com*, *violinpractice.com*)
- All concepts can be modified for all instruments and levels of proficiency

“The teacher works with the student to release the vibrato impulse from the wrist, arm, and finger. It is important to keep the last knuckle of the finger flexible. Each student will find the most beautiful tone in different combinations of wrist, arm, and finger motion.” (Mimi Zweig)

- **The body must be free of excessive tension!!**

Preparatory Vibrato Exercises

Students introduced to **larger muscular motions** in the first lessons:

Sliding on the Magic X (rest position and playing position)

Swing-plop

Palm Pats – Twinkle rhythms on top of the rib (E string side)

Tapping Twinkle rhythms over high dot and left side of instrument (rest position and playing position)

Impulse Tapping – 1 12 123 1234 12345 123456 1234567, etc.

The Wave – In playing position, wave at your face (4th position); then play long whole bows

Hand Shine / String Shine

Sticky Taps

Cello – arm swings; vibrating on right arm

Tic-Tac Shake; Peg Knocking – against a wall first (isolate forearm); then hold the instrument

Knuckle Calisthenics – without instrument; gently allow first knuckle to collapse; repeat!

Polishing the String – rest position and playing position; all strings with all fingers

Open String Slides – Twinkle; slide on Magic X on all open strings; try with scales and other repertoire

The Wawa

Finger Wiggles – most useful vibrato exercise!!

Exercises for Refining the Vibrato

Mountains and Plains – Slide up the fingerboard with a curved knuckle and slide back with a flat knuckle

Half Step Finger Slides – square versus elongate knuckle

Releasing the Wrist, Arm, and Fingers Wiggling on the Impulse – practice in 4th position with all fingers; then regulate the impulse with the metronome at 60

One Finger, One String, One Octave – release hand during the open string

Releasing the Head, Neck, and Back – place scroll against a wall and lean; release tension; vibrate on any note using whole bows

Air Vibrato – without the instrument

Basic Concepts of Shifting and Preparatory Exercises (Many exercises have come directly from Paul Rolland's *Teaching of Action in String Playing* videos)

The Iceberg Principle

ANTICIPATED SHIFTS (SILENT) and DELAYED SHIFTS (EXPRESSIVE)

Preparatory Shifting Exercise – first lesson: Sliding on the “Magic X”

Long Silent Shifts -- slide up and touch your nose; slide back; swing elbow under

Matching Harmonics

Octave Harmonics

Taps and Swings

Pinky Plucks – first position, high dot, high position

Ghosts – Harmonic Glissando – fast impulse slide

Third Position – 0-2

Play, Pluck, and Shift Up the Scale with Clair de Lune

Slide and Pluck

Whistler – Introducing the Positions Book 1- Introduce when the student has been playing for 3-4 years

- Listen for slow bow speed and smooth bow changes
- Shift with the speed of the bow
- Listen for harmonic pressure under the fingers
- Maintain the pressure and speed of the bow to keep the sound resonant and beautiful
- The thumb moves with the hand
- Check the position of the left elbow

Difficulties in shifting occur between two notes. Isolate the note before the shift and the note of the shift. Practice the journey.

Advanced Shifting Exercises:

One finger scales

Scales on one string using different combinations of fingers (e.g., 3-1, 3-2, 3-4, 2-1, 2-3, 2-4, 1-3, etc.)

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Contact Information:

Dr. Vanessa Mio

www.vanessamio.com

vanessamio5@gmail.com

vmio2@uwo.ca