

# A Comparative Overview of Seven Beginning/Intermediate String Pedagogy Methods and Approaches



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*“Let us take our children seriously. Everything else follows from this....only the best is good enough for a child.”*

**Zoltan Kodaly** (1882-1967)

## **Beginning/Intermediate String Class Instruction Learning Objectives**

- Establishing/refining the proper stance (standing and sitting for violins and violas) and body frame (for cellos and double bass)
  - “Proper” operationally defined as *balanced & natural*
- Establishing/refining the proper instrument hold
  - “Proper” operationally defined as *balanced*
- Establishing/refining the proper bow hold
  - “Proper” operationally defined as *curved & flexible*
- Developing proper left-hand shape and movements
  - “Proper” operationally defined as the *straight wrist, relaxed thumb & quick fingers*
- Developing proper right-hand movements
  - “Proper” operationally defined as *bow discipline*
- Developing the foundation for good tone production
  - “Proper” operationally defined as *meaningful manipulation of the weight, the speed & sounding point*

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## **Samuel Applebaum’s the *Art and Science of String Teaching* Approach**

*“The first thing we have to do is to teach the player to think vocally while playing a melodic passage..... After all principles of phrasing and interpretation are planned, science ends and art begins.”*

Major principles and concepts of the *Art and Science* approach:

- The principle of “comprehensiveness”: Every single detail that goes into development of playing skill is dissected and analyzed to a smallest specifics from the rote stage of learning to advanced stages.

The *Art and Science* approach to establishing/refining the stance and body frame:

- Stance:
  - Violin & viola: Feet about ten to twelve inches apart. Weight shifted between two feet. If choice needs to be made, shifting the weight on left foot suggested, rather than on the right.

### The Art and Science approach to establishing/refining instrument hold:

- Violin & viola:
  - At early stage of instruction instrument rests on shoulder and is held by the shoulder and the head. He notices that many advanced players, however, successfully balance instrument between the collar bone and the jaw bone. In each case, instrument's scroll should be at the height of the nose.
    - Shoulder rest: for young students thin rubber sponge suggested. Liberal approach to the use of shoulder rest.
    - Chin rest: larger chin rest with flatter surface
  - Guiding principle: Instrument needs to be held in a way that allows left hand to move up and down the fingerboard freely.

### The Art and Science approach to establishing/refining bow hold:

- Violin & viola:
  - Detailed description of the placement of each finger and explanation of variables:
    - The right side of the thumb is partially placed on the inner side of the frog and partially on the bow stick. The exact placement of the thumb is considered to be *variable* determined by the size of player's hand.
    - Second finger (middle finger) is wrapped around the stick. The tip of the thumb points towards the first crease on middle finger.
    - Third finger (ring finger) points towards frog's pearl. If player's fingers are long it can touch the pearl
    - Fourth finger (little finger) is placed in curved shape on the stick. Placing little finger on the side of the stick that is close to the player's body suggested but not required (little finger can also be positioned at the top of the stick).
    - First finger (pointer) contacts stick midway between the first and middle joints ("the neutral position"). The exact position of the pointer of the stick is considered to be *variable* determined by the type of the bow stroke player uses. E.g. when drawing bows in fortissimo suggested contact point is closer toward the first joint of first finger; when playing off the string bow stroke good contact point is in between two joints; however, when playing martelé bowing stroke, contact point in the middle joint produces the best results.
    - Two other characteristics of good bow hold: two contact points (the tip of the thumb and the tip of the little finger) & sliding area on the first finger.
  - Nine steps for teaching the bow hold:
    - (1) Hold the bow with the left hand in front of you. Bow stick is vertical and bow hair is turned towards you. (2) Wiggle the right

thumb. (3) Bend the thumb and bring its right side to the inner side of the frog where frog meets the stick. Half of the thumb will be on the stick and half on the frog. (4) Place the middle finger right across the bent thumb so that stick is touching the finger in crease of the first joint nearest to the finger tip. (5) Place the ring finger next to middle finger. Ring finger should point towards the pearl button. It can even cover it. (6) Place the tip of little finger on the inner side of the stick, closer to the palm of the left-hand. (7) Place index finger over the stick in the middle point of the middle joint. (8) The distance between fingers should be the same. (9) Hold the bow in this position until count of ten. Release and do “Nine Steps” several more times.

The Art and Science approach to developing left-hand shape and movements:

- Violin & viola:
  - Two contact points (in first position): the base knuckle of the first finger and the right side of the thumb (particularly important for beginning students)
  - The fingernail of the first finger should face the player. The fingernails of the second, third, and fourth fingers will be turned more towards left.
  - The tip of the thumb needs to be pointed towards the ceiling but it can go slightly towards the scroll.
  - Five types of left-hand finger activities: *half step* finger activity; *whole step* finger activity; *minor thirds played with adjacent fingers* finger activity; *chromatic* finger activity; and *going from one string to another* finger activity
    - Teaching stages: exercises with rubber band; silent exercises; exercise with the bow
  - Teaches the concept of “press and release” movements in left-hand fingers & and uses left-hand pizzicato as the way to strengthen left-hand fingers

The Art and Science approach to developing right-hand movements:

- Drawing the bow in the upper part of the bow steps i.e. from middle to the tip (marking in the middle of the bow stick): On open D string (at first with the teacher’s help (to ensure success in first attempt to produce good sound) in *detaché lance* bow stroke (quarter notes slightly separated). Student applies the pressure on the thumb from below to “pinch” the bow and make firm contact with the string. → Same on open A string → Open D and open A strings with varied rhythmic patterns of quarter and eighth notes
- Drawing the bow in the lower part of the bow pre-exercises (“no instrument” and “no bow”): Start after several weeks of instruction; (a) Hold the right arm in front of the face like playing on the D string. With the left hand move upper right arm towards you and away from you. Elbow needs to be at the same level as hand. Swing back and forth slowly and smoothly

(MM=60); (b) Raise right arm over the right shoulder and touch the shoulder blade as far as possible. Bring right arm slowly down like stretching the spring that is attached to the shoulder blade.

- Drawing the whole bow steps: Place the bow hair on the string with the stick and the hair slightly tilted towards you ("side position"). Elbow should be in the straight line with the top of the hand. We will draw the bow for four counts from the frog to the tip (down-bow). → Draw the bow to middle for two beats → On beat three "change" the angle of the stick and the hair into "flat" or "full" position → Open the forearm and draw the bow to the tip for next two beats → On your way back (up-bow) on beat three "change" from "flat" position back to "side" position and finish in the frog with bow hair being tilted towards you.
- Three ways to start the bow stroke: (a) The bow is on the string and it drowse smooth bow stroke; (b) The bow is on the string but it drowse accented bow stroke; and (c) The bow is above the string before it touches the string.

The Art and Science approach to developing foundation for good tone production:

- To avoid "surface playing" students need to develop sensations of: (a) CENTER BALANCE of the bow hold: play D major scale in quarter notes in upper part of the bow while holding the bow with thumb and two middle fingers only and (b) LEVERAGE BALANCE: play open strings or D major scale in upper part of the bow while holding the bow with thumb, index finger and little finger (little finger needs to be resting on the inner side of the stick)

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## **George Bornoff's Skill Before Tune Method**

*"There is an enormous difference between being dependent on the ear--correcting after a mistake--and using the ear for the fine adjustments after placing the fingers where you know they belong."*

Major principles and concepts of the Skill Before Tune method:

- Whole-to-part approach based on Gestalt psychology: the mastery of details will come with time and not with insistence of perfecting every detail before moving onto next.
- Technical (playing) skills are always taught before student plays the piece that requires that skill.
- Rapid learning with lot of opportunities for creative repetition (review)
- Well-trained teachers can accomplish with this method in just few weeks what it takes to other approaches/methods to accomplish in several months.
- This method was created with string classes in mind (heterogeneous and homogeneous) but it is completely applicable in applied lessons.

The Skill Before Tune method's approach to establishing/refining the stance:

- Upper string instruments students stand throughout the class.
- This standing position should be relaxed, with the right foot being slightly forward and weight being placed on left foot.

The Skill Before Tune method's approach to establishing/refining instrument hold:

- Violin and viola are held under the chin (the left jaw)

The Skill Before Tune method's approach to establishing/refining bow hold:

- Index finger is curved around the stick and it touches the stick at the second knuckle.
- Index finger, middle and ring fingers are close together
- Little finger is extended, slightly separated and positioned at the top of the stick
- Middle and ring fingers are right across the thumb
- Thumb is curved but does not touch the bow hair
  - The feeling that student should have when holding the bow is “firm” but not “tight”

The Skill Before Tune method's approach to developing left-hand shape and movements:

- Five Fingering Patterns are introduced immediately (for cellos and basses Tonal Patterns)
  - Spatial vs. aural approach to intonation
- Harmonics—both natural and artificial—are introduced early
- Shifting with one finger, first on Fingering Patterns, then on one octave scales are introduced early
  - Emphasis is on learning the location of the note regardless of which finger is used

The Skill Before Tune method's approach to developing right-hand movements:

- The whole bow approach is used immediately
- Students play on all strings immediately
- Three types of bow strokes introduced immediately:
  - Detaché with the whole bow for development of coordination of large muscles that participate in drawing the straight bow and producing the “big sound.”
  - Spiccato in the frog for development of the flexibility of forearm movements.
  - Slurred staccato (two, three, four etc. notes per bow) for development of the solidity of sound, bow division, and bow distribution.
- Students play double stops on open strings almost immediately as well as they learn string crossing and various bowing patterns early on.

The Skill Before Tune method's approach to developing foundation for good tone production:

- In the beginning stages of instruction students may produce scratchy sounds but as soon as they gain coordination over large muscles they are instructed to concentrate on correcting the harshness of their tone by balancing the hand, wrist, and finger motions.

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### **Kató Havas' New Approach**

*"If all our energies are channeled into giving people, through the medium of music, a deeper understanding of their own potential as part of the wonderful mysteries that the universe contains, we would not only do justice to ourselves as musicians, but stage fright would be banished from the face of this Earth forever."*

Major principles and concepts of the New Approach:

- The principle of "inside-outside" playing: before one can express themselves musically, one needs to organize themselves "inside" in three areas:  
*physically, mentally, and spiritually*
  - Physical order is established through clapping the pulse of music, miming the playing movements, and singing the pitches.
  - Mental order is established through thorough understanding and appreciation of music one performs.
  - Spiritual order is established when body, mind, and spirituality are unified.
- Explanation of physical and mental causes of tension in playing:
  - Causes of physical tensions: *"The Wood", "The Eyes", "The Hold"*
  - Causes of mental tensions: *"Playing Violin is Difficult", "Vertical Movements & Images", and "Bow Arm Interprets the Music."*

The New Approach's approach to establishing/refining stance:

- Standing position: feet "hips" apart and weight distributed between two feet with the balance being centered in imaginary "third leg."
- Sitting position: student sits well forward in the chair, with the weight being centered on imaginary "third leg" and balance being distributed between two feet.

The New Approach's approach to establishing/refining instrument hold:

- Establishing proper instrument hold:
  - *"No Violin"* violin hold: instrument should feel like an extension of the body.
  - *"Humming Fiddle Steps"*:
    1. Student holds the instrument with "featherlight touch" with the right hand around the instrument's right rib (on the side of the body)

2. Student moves instrument in front of his/her body in gentle horizontal swinging motion. This will cause strings to “hum.”
3. Student places instrument with one swift, continuous motion, onto the collarbone and under the chin.
4. Student should imagine that his/her fleshy area beneath the left jawbone “spreads all over” and that there is an “air cushion” between the jaw and the chinrest.
5. Instrument slightly slopes downward.

The *New Approach’s* approach to establishing/refining bow hold:

- “*No Bow*” bow hold or “*Flying Bow Hold*”: the bow should feel like an extension of the arm.
- Bow hold steps: (bow in student’s left hand; horizontal or vertical position)
  1. “Link”: in a small circular motion student connects “bent thumb” with middle finger and inserts the frog between the thumb and middle finger; thumb is touching the stick and bow-hair.
  2. “Spread”: fingers comfortably spread over the frog
  3. “Curve”: curved pinkie positioned on top of the stick
  4. “Give”: add “fluids” in all joints to make them soft and malleable
  5. “Fly”: fingers are slightly “off the bow”

The *New Approach’s* approach to developing left-hand shape and movements:

- “*Gypsy Hand*” or “*Giving Hand*”
- Positioning left-hand steps:
  1. “Winging” position: arms suspended
  2. “Flip-Flop” into “Gypsy Hand”
- Movements of the left-hand fingers steps:
  1. “Slide”: student slides finger onto the fingerboard from “horizontal angle
  2. “Cuddle”: student wraps left thumb and the rest of the fingers “around” the note with an idea that while one finger is producing the pitch others are forming “sound chamber”
  3. “Tilt” or “Lean”: immediately upon making contact with the string at desired pitch, student tilts the base joint towards the scroll to prevent vertical pressure of the finger.
- Useful habit for 4<sup>th</sup> finger to be played in tune and vibrated (violins and violas): 4<sup>th</sup> finger should be preceded by the forward movement of the thumb.

The *New Approach’s* approach to establishing/refining right-hand movements:

- Three principles to keep in mind when bowing:
  1. Bow needs to move in natural “arc-like” patterns.



2. All movements originate in back muscle and focus needs to be on shoulder and elbow *hinges*.
  3. Bowing is response to what is musically happening in left hand.
- The down-bow stroke: when drawing the down-bow stroke arm needs to aim forward (in front of the body)
  - The up-bow stroke: when drawing the up-bow stroke arm needs to “scoop inward.” forward (in front of the body)
  - Rule for what part of the arm controls what bow strokes:
    - Strokes played in lower half of the bow are controlled by the whole arm with shoulder hinge opening and closing.
    - Strokes played in upper half of the bow are controlled by the forearm with elbow hinge opening and closing.

The *New Approach's* approach to developing foundation for good tone production:

- In *New Approach* singing (or vocalizing) pitches and miming playing actions is the key to tone production.
- Steps for learning piece of music:
  1. Student should learn everything about the composer, the piece and the style (no listening to the piece of music prior to learning it)
  2. Finding “inner pulse” by clapping or bending the knees
  3. “Sight singing” the letter names (or vocalizing on neutral syllabus)
  4. Add phrasing, character and style
  5. Mime the motions while looking at music (first mime left-hand intervals and right-hand movements separately then mime them together).
  6. Play on the instrument

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### **Louis Kievman's *Economy* Approach**

*“One of the most common faults of beginning students is that they spend all of their bow on the short notes, and they are stingy with their long notes. The opposite is true. Use less than one inch of bow on the short notes and give more bow to the long notes.”*

Major principles and concepts of the *Economy* approach:

- Insistence on basics (every movement dissected to its basic components)
- The main goal of the approach is to get the most quality out of little practicing time.
- Bow is the instrument
- Kievman wrote highly praised method books for violin and viola for use in applied lessons and he also wrote method books to be used in heterogeneous classes.

The *Economy* approach to establishing/refining stance:

- Explanation not found

The *Economy* approach to establishing/refining instrument hold:

- Explanation not found

The *Economy* approach to establishing/refining bow hold:

- Bow hand is in natural dropped position below the level of forearm
- Thumb is flexible. Not always bent and not always straight. It yields!
- All movements of the fingers on the bow are passive.

The *Economy* approach to developing proper left-hand shape and movements:

- Left-hand techniques covered in his method books:
  - Vertical movement of each finger (movement of each finger starts in the base knuckle; attention needs to be given to lifting motion and not dropping)
  - Horizontal movements with the finger and with the wrist
  - Left-hand pizzicato
  - Left-hand balance
  - Note finding
  - Left-hand facility
  - Vibrato exercises with no bow

The *Economy* approach to developing proper right-hand movements:

- Right-hand movements covered in his method books:
  - Broad détaché
  - Fast détaché
  - Spiccato
  - Sautillé
  - Attack
  - Martelé
  - Large string crossing
  - Small string crossing
  - Parlando
  - Tone control

The *Economy* approach to developing foundation for good tone production:

- The bow is like a paint-brush with the hair that needs to be pulled rather than pushed on each stroke. The bridge, then, is the pallet where different colors are produced.
- In order to play *f* or *ff* bow needs to move slowly in the frog and the tip and it needs to be released in the middle of the bow.
- A *p* is played by moving the bow at the fast speed throughout with a light pressure.

## **Paul Rolland's *Movement in Action* Approach**

*"Get them [string students] started right and aim them in right direction and they will reach the top.....students should use well coordinated movements without excessive tension as they play.....naturalness, naturalness, naturalness....."*

### Major principles and concepts of the *Movement in Action* approach:

- All tensions in playing can be resolved through movement. He explored this idea in five areas of techniques: "movement and violin support", "movement and bowing", "movement in swing, pushed, and sustained strokes", "movement and shifting", and "movement and vibrato." Three tenets of learning: early start, good method, and well-trained teacher
- Movement is fundamental aspect of playing as one cannot produce the sound on string instruments without movement.

### The *Movement in Action* approach to establishing/refining stance:

- Standing position:
  - Playing position: feet in "V" position with the heels touching
  - Student moves left foot for a small step to the left.
  - Knees are soft and "not locked."
  - Weight is primarily on the right foot when playing in the frog and on the left when playing in the tip.
  - To help with stance, shoulders, back and abdominal muscles Rolland developed "*Case Walk*" exercise.
- Sitting position: student sits well forward in the chair; the weight is evenly distributed among left and right foot and the bottom "like a tripod"; more flexible waist will compensate for more passive role of the legs

### The *Movement in Action* approach to establishing/refining instrument hold:

- Steps for teaching violin/viola hold:
  - Feet in playing position.
  - "*Statue of Liberty*": left hand is wrapped around the "saddle", student raises instrument "like a torch", student then turns instrument in counter-clockwise motion and places instrument on shoulder
  - Instrument's scroll should be positioned "upward" ("*Balancing a Ball*" game)

### The *Movement in Action* approach to establishing/refining bow hold:

- "*Early Bow Hold*": fingers are shaped like in regular bow hold but they make contact with stick in balance point area.
  - As soon as student can do "*Stick Walk*" exercise they are ready to move their fingers down to the frog area into a regular bow.
- Regular bow hold: traditional "Franco-Belgian" bow hold.
- Steps for teaching bow hold:
  1. Student forms "O" shape with the right thumb and middle finger.
  2. Middle finger is right across the thumb.

3. Index finger is slightly separated as it is the ring finger.
4. Curved pinkie is at the top of the stick
  - Exercises such as “Up Like a Rocket” came out of Rolland’s approach

The *Movement in Action* approach to developing left-hand shape and movements:

- Index finger contact point: the base of index finger touches instruments neck for additional support.
- Thumb is in between the first and second finger
- Left hand is shaped by the series of exercises: “Shuttles”, “Strumming with Elbow Swings”, and “Finger Tapping”
- Three elevations: “high”, “average” and “low”; determined by the size of player’s left hand
- Traditional left hand position/shape: high over the fingerboard with fingers hovering over the strings, thumb and index finger form “V”, elbow directly under the instrument (some elbow movements with string crossing)
- Instead of tapes as fingerboard markers, Rolland used “signal dots”: one for first finger, one for third, and one for first harmonic (on violin and viola)
- In this approach students are taught to tune their instruments early in the process.

The *Movement in Action* approach to developing right-hand movements:

- “Shadow Bowing”:
  - Bowing on top of the left shoulder
  - Moving the bow through cardboard tube held above the left shoulder
  - Moving the bow through cardboard tube held in front of the body
- “Silent Bow Placement” and “Silent String Crossing”
- Bow strokes can be divided in three categories: “swinging”, “pulling”, and “pushing” bow strokes
  - “Swinging” bow strokes include *detache*, *spiccato*, and *sautille*
  - “Pulling” bow strokes include *son file* and “intense *detache*”
  - “Pushing” bow strokes include *martele*, *cole*, *martele-staccato*

The *Movement in Action* approach to developing foundation for good tone production:

- Refining tone beginnings: Exercises such as “Place and Lift” and “Rebound” (short, repeated down-bow strokes) are helpful when developing students’ sensitivity to note beginnings.
- Refining tone releases: In order to prevent “chocking” the ending of the note, students should be taught to lift up the bow and follow-through movement of the right arm.
- Tone quality and tone colors: students are taught special bowing effects such as *sul ponti cello*, *sul tasto*, and *col legno*, early in the instruction so to range of tone qualities and colors.
- Lateral and bi-lateral movements of arms (bow and instrument)

## **Egon and Kurt's Sashmannshaus Tradition**

*“While prior knowledge is not a pre-requisite to using this method, this publication uses simple rhythms and intervals from early childhood programs and transfers them into small and easy steps to build up a basic violin technique.”*

### Major principles and concepts of the Sashmannshaus Tradition approach:

- Singing needs to precede playing (at early stages of instruction)
- Students need to learn exercises that will help them to relieve unnecessary pressure in the left hand fingers.
  - Method books available for all four string instruments
  - Approach can be used in private lessons and small group classes.

### The Sashmannshaus Tradition approach to establishing/refining stance:

- Two options:
  - Feet shoulder apart and weight distributed evenly between two feet
  - Right foot slightly forward and weight on left foot, but still shifted between two feet.
- Spine straight
- Shoulders straight (even shoulders, no pulling forward or backward)
- In sitting position both feet on the floor and sitting on the front part of the chair

### The Sashmannshaus Tradition approach to establishing/refining instrument hold:

- It is the weight of the head that hold instrument in place, rather than the pressure on the chin.
- Instrument (violin and viola) needs to be horizontal to the floor and not supported by left-hand.
- Shoulder rest is used to fill the gap between the shoulder and instrument's back-board.
- Chinrest: the position of the chinrest will depend on the length of player's arms. The objective is to be able to reach the tip of the bow in the tip on the lowest string (G on violin and C on viola) without extending right arm excessively.
  - For players with longer arms this may not be a problem.
  - For players with shorter arms instrument needs to be moved higher on the shoulder with the chinrest being positioned in the middle of the violin rather than on the left side.

### The Sashmannshaus Tradition approach to establishing/refining bow hold:

- The basic rule is that middle finger needs to be positioned opposite to thumb and that distance between fingers needs to mimic the natural distance between fingers when hand relaxed.
- Steps for setting the bow hold:
  - Bent thumb on the inner part of the frog and the stick
  - Middle finger right across it

- Ring next to it
- Index slightly separated
- Little finger at the top of the stick
- Functions of fingers explained:
  - Thumb: supports the bow and provides fulcrum
  - Middle finger: supports the bow hold
  - Index finger has dual function:
    - Applies bow pressure
    - Controls the sounding point; it can bring the bow closer to the bridge
  - Ring finger: also controls the sounding point and it can bring the bow towards the fingerboard
  - Little finger: lifts the bow pressure

The *Sassmannshaus Tradition* approach to developing left-hand shape and movements:

- Finger markings:
  - Finger marking, the piece of tread with the scotch tape over it, placed on the fingerboard is for 2<sup>nd</sup> finger (on violin and viola) which ensures balanced position of left-hand fingers.
  - Order of fingers (after the 2<sup>nd</sup>): 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> (by the end of Book 1)
- Dropping & lifting fingers exercises:
  - Dropping part: two functions of new finger on the string: (a) to establish new pitch and (b) to stop the previous vibration
    - In order to do this, finger needs to “hit” the string with high speed which increases the risk of applying the unnecessary pressure.
    - To avoid unnecessary pressure of the finger, as soon as finger is down on the string, it needs to be lifted up into “harmonic pressure.”
    - After student learns this “press-release” motion, student will be able to release pressure without getting the “harmonic sound”
  - Lifting part: finger can be lifted (a) straight up or (b) sideways for a slight action of left hand pizzicato
    - This slight left hand pizzicato motion gives the cleanest separation between the notes and it is very important in fast passages
      - This is practiced on Ševčík Op. 1 # 1

The *Sassmannshaus Tradition* approach to developing right-hand movements:

- Students are started with half notes in middle part of the bow. The goal is to gradually extend movements towards the lower and upper parts of the bow.
- In middle of the bow there is a square formed among four points: shoulder, elbow, hand, and sounding point.

- When moving the bow from middle to tip, students open forearms.
- When moving from middle to frog, students close the arm with elbow leading the motion and not lifting the arm.
- In the tip of the bow there is a triangle formed among three points: shoulder, elbow, and hand
- In the frog of the bow there is different type of triangle formed among three points: the shoulder, elbow, and hand.
- In string crossing right elbow changes the level

The Sashmannshaus Tradition approach to developing foundation for good tone production:

- Students are introduced to concepts of straight bow, sounding point lines, varied bowings including martelé in relatively early stage of instruction

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### **Shinichi Suzuki's Song Method**

*"Do not hurry. This is a fundamental rule. If you hurry and collapse or tumble down, nothing is achieved. DO not rest in your efforts; this is another fundamental rule. Without stopping, without haste, carefully taking a step at a time forward will surely get you there."*

Major principles and concepts of Song Method:

- Tone is expression of the life-force. Struggling for "better and good tone" encourages the development of good character
- Rote learning should precede learning by note.
- Playing techniques are taught through repertoire, thus nick name "song approach."
- Standardized repertoire, organized in ten books, with pieces that gradually progress from simpler to more complex, allows students from around the world to play together.
- Approach can be used in private lessons and small homogeneous group classes.

The Song Method approach to establishing/refining stance:

- Standing position:
  - Rest position: feet parallel, violin under right arm with scroll pointing out, bow hanging down on bent right index finger and with bow hair turned towards the teacher or audience; student takes the bow
  - Playing position: feet apart ("V" position), right foot steps back and the weight remains centered over the left foot for proper balance
- Sitting position: student sits well forward in the chair, with the weight being centered on the left foot, while right foot rests on the ball of the foot under the chair (heel is off the floor) and right knee slopes downward towards the floor.

The *Song Method* approach to establishing/refining instrument hold:

- Steps for teaching violin/viola hold:
  - Feet in playing position.
  - Student grasps the right side of violin and in one swinging, counter clock motion places it under the chin
- When instrument is placed under the chin there is a straight alignment starting with the nose, strings, elbow, and left foot (nose-scroll-elbow-toes)

The *Song Method* approach to establishing/refining bow hold:

- Establishing proper bow hold:
  - “*Beginners Bow Hold*”: over the years Suzuki experimented with two types of beginning bow hold: thumb resting on outside of the frog’s silver rim & “upside-down” bow hold
  - Advanced bow hold: thumb is placed on the inside part of the frog, first three fingers of the right hand rest on the stick (two middle fingers touch and there is almost no separation between the middle finger and the index finger), the little finger is placed next to the ring finger

The *Song Method* to developing proper left-hand shape and movements:

- Traditional left hand position/shape: high over the fingerboard with fingers hovering over the strings, thumb and index finger form “V”, elbow directly under the instrument (some elbow movements with string crossing)
- Developing the shape of left-hand steps:
  1. Place hand in fourth or fifth position with palm touching instrument’s shoulder to form proper angle of the wrist.
  2. While keeping the angle of the wrist, slide down to first position
- Left-hand fingers placement:
  1. *Song Method* uses tapes on the fingerboard
  2. Students stay for a long time in one fingering pattern and shifting is not introduced until much later

The *Song Method* approach to developing right-hand movements:

- Down-bow movements are executed by ring finger and thumb.
- Up-bow movements are executed by middle finger and thumb.
- Partial bow approach: Twinkle variations are designed to teach students how to use about the quarter of the bow length (either in upper middle while opening and closing the forearm or in middle of the bow while using the whole arm movement) with an idea that with each new song the use of the bow will be gradually extended towards the tip and the frog of the bow.
- “*Thumb Power*” or concept of “*Pan-Da*”: Suzuki used this term to explain to students the concept of transferring the weight of the bow and arm onto the strings; he also used the image of “magnetic bow”



- Steps for “Pan-Da” action:
  1. On “Pan” syllabus student holds bow straight in front of the body at 90 degrees angle
  2. On “Da” syllabus student apply pressure against the “frog’s nose” causing the bow to tilt to 45 degrees angle
  3. Eventually this action can be applied onto strings.

The Song Approach to developing foundation for good tone production:

- *Tonalization*: simple melody that allows students to focus on sound (“ringing tones”).
- *“Diamond Tone”*: an ideal combination of pitch, tone color, and volume
- *“Kreisler Lines”*: The space between the bridge and fingerboard can be divided by five lines, each corresponding to one dynamic level.
- *Casals Tonalization*: recommended for more advanced students to enhance the “singing” quality of their tone; combination of “Pan-Da” movements and sinking into the string pulsating movements

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Guiding Principles for Teaching Beginners/Intermediate String Classes:

- Careful development of playing skills so that proper habits can be established from the onset of the instruction.
- Most of the time should be spent on review.
- Right-hand and left-hand playing skills need to be taught separately.
- Learning “by rote” should precede learning “by note.”
- Instruction needs to be systemized and carefully graduated.
- Instruction needs to be well-rounded: it should educate heads, hands and hearts.

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