The Art of Vocal Fingering

AUSTA Conference
Perth, July 2018

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- E string - E F# G# A
- A string - A B C# D
- D string - D E F# G
- G string - G A B C
- C string - C D E F

The major open string tetrachords

- E string - F# G# A# B
- A string - B C# D# E
- D string - E F# G# A
- G string - A B C# D
- C string - D E F# G

The major first finger first position tetrachords

- E string - G# A# B# C#
- A string - C# D# E# F#
- D string - F# G# A# B
- G string - B C# D# E
- C string - E F# G# A

The major first finger second position tetrachords

The practice of Indian classical violinists tuning to Do, Sol, Do, Sol produces deep resonance and is yet to be tested in the performance of mainstream western repertoire.

Violin G D G D: Viola or cello C G C G

In this tuning, the fingering of the lower two strings can be exactly duplicated when playing an octave higher on the upper two strings.

E, A, D, G (A, D, G, C) represent soprano, alto, tenor and bass

Allocating each a range of one octave allows for an overlap of a perfect fourth between each voice.

In any of the movements of the twelve solo string works of Bach we can clearly identify the presence of SATB voicing.

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We are advised to avoid, within a voice, leaps of an augmented second or fourth, or a major seventh.

We are also advised that leaps of a diminished fifth or minor seventh should return within the compass.

The implications of this are that when the augmented intervals occur, they should be fingered so as to create a change of string at the precise moment the interval occurs.

The new string implies the entry of a new voice and as such avoids creating bad voice-leading.

Diminished fifth leaps that return within the compass should remain on the same string.

Intra-vocal

Melodies remaining within a voice

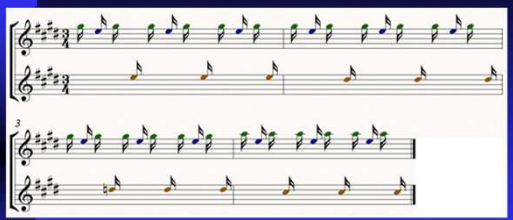
Inter-vocal

Melodies shared by more than one voice

The interval of a semitone should generally be fingered on one string, this being an unlikely place for a melody to change voice.

Change from one tetrachord to another is normally the optimum place to change string.

Where there is a mixture of stepwise intervals and leaps it is advised, where practical, to change string on the leaps.

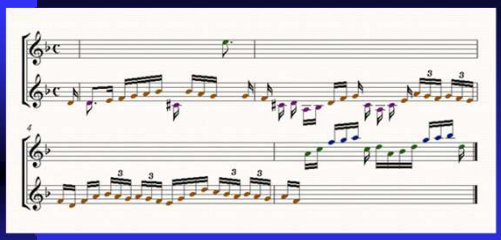


Bach - Prelude from Violin Partita in E major

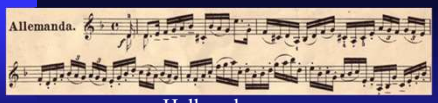
Bach – Chaconne from Violin Partita in d minor

Many composers have written music where the voices clearly have extended ranges and need to move imperceptibly between strings. For that reason it is important to include tone production and string crossing in practice routines so that tonal colors of strings can be matched and the joins between them be imperceptible.

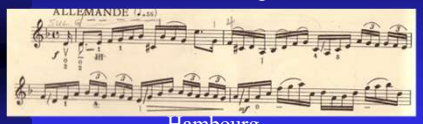
This is also assisted greatly by following the principles of string changes supporting good voice-leading and the use of tetrachords as natural register breaks.



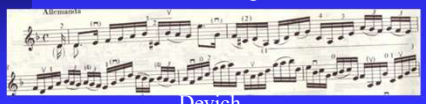
Bach – Allemande from Violin Partita in d minor



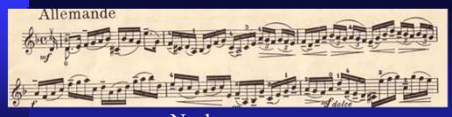
Hellmesberger



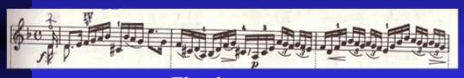
Hambourg



Devich

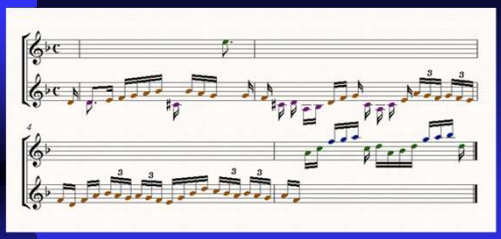


Nachez



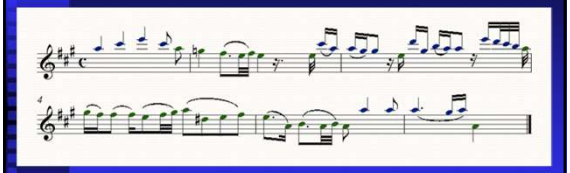
Flesch

Galamian

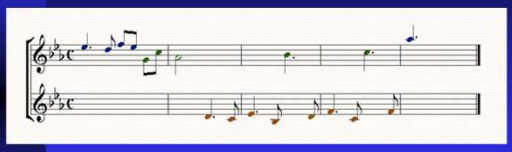


Bach – Allemande from Violin Partita in d minor

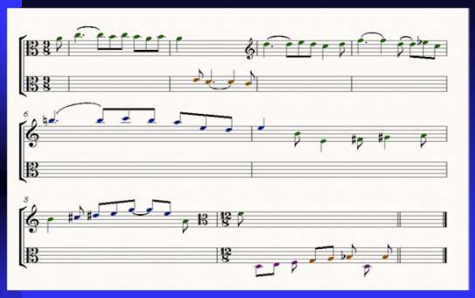
Bach – Fugue from Violin Sonata in C major



Mozart – Violin Concerto No 5 in A major

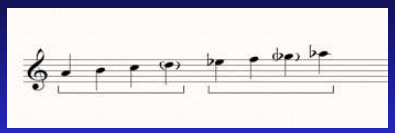


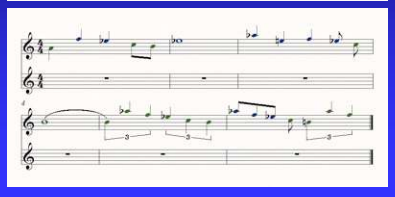
Brahms – Viola Sonata in F minor



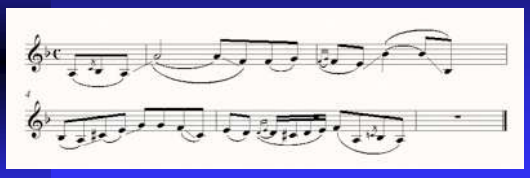
Walton – Viola Concerto

Bartok Viola Concerto

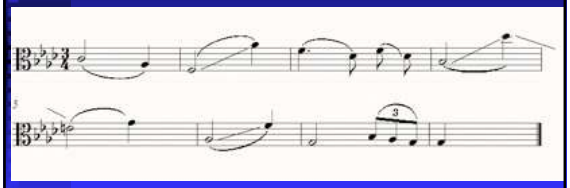




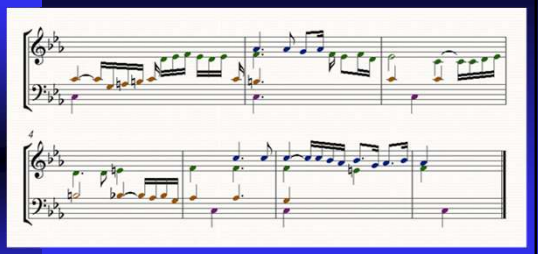
Monti Czardas



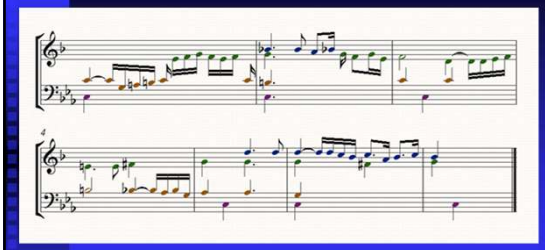
Brahms Viola Sonata in F



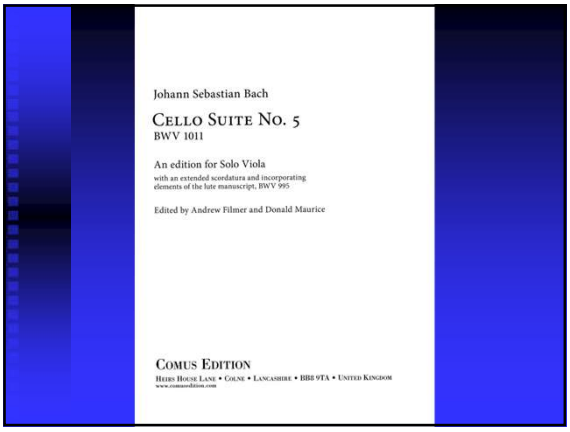
Bach – Cello Suite No 5 in C minor

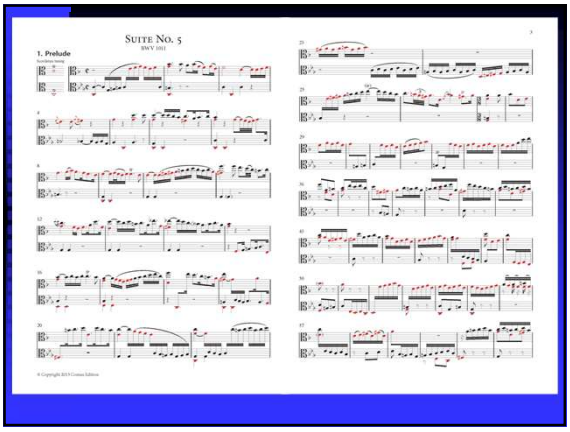


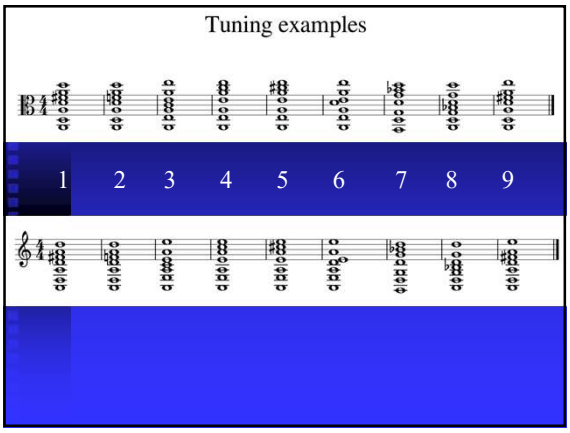
Color coded voice implications



Notation for double scordatura






Tuning examples
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9