

## AUSTA, 2022, Fintan Murphy

### Developing rhythm in solo playing and string ensembles

Convincing rhythm depends on fluent, coordinated string playing, good musicianship and aural skills.

Set rhythm in context

#### Musical Character

- Engaging rhythm is rarely metronomic- *'A metronomic performance is certainly tiresome and nonsensical; time and rhythm must be adapted to and identified with the melody, the harmony, the accent and the poetry'* Liszt
- A dance will often have a strong rhythmic character, find this to begin
- listen to good/engaging rhythm as much as accurate rhythm,

### Movement, the body is our primary instrument

Just like a resonant sound, strong rhythm comes from fluid movements throughout the whole body.

Practice rhythm away from the instrument

- program before playing, can the student sing the rhythm?
  - Clap and sing
  - Sing and conduct

Know where to find the problem

- Silent playing, left hand alone?
- Tightening and skidding,
  - Open strings
  - Alternate bow holds, the variables of bow control, friction, speed, amount of bow
  - Losing pulse, ability to move is important
- Walk and play, bending the knees or swaying while playing.

### Subdivision, focus the mind

- The brain focusses well on smaller units,
  - Look for the fastest notes,
  - Inner hearing- sing and silently finger then play
  - practice 'bowing out' long notes with rhythm of shortest notes
  - mentally (inner humming) while playing

### Use technical work to develop rhythmic awareness

#### Scales

For solo and ensemble use

Develop independence of left and right arms- bow and pulse are dominant

Get 3 players to play a Galamian rhythm, one to choose (no fives or sevens),

Put patterns from the repertoire into your scales and arpeggios

Use practice breaks for scales,

### Solo violin/viola, technical repertoire/duets

#### Etudes/Caprices

Any Kreutzer with rhythms from Galamian or Wronski

Kreutzer no. 31

Rode: Lyric Adagios from numbers 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 24 or all of numbers 5, 7, 13, 16, 20, 21  
concentrate on rhythm and articulation

Sevcik opus 3, *40 Variations*  
 Essek, P. 30 *Spezial-Etuden*, (Hug and co.)  
 Martinu, *Rhythmic etudes*  
 Feigerl, P. 24 *Violin-Ubungen*, (EMB)  
 Bartok, *Duos*

### **Standard Practice**

#### **Kreutzer 31**

Syncopation, articulation, ties, trills and turns

- Use metronome
  - Practice pizz
  - Practice separate bows
  - Also put in 'meeting points', points to aim for and practice breaks

#### **Retakes**

- Good bow technique helps good rhythm and vice versa!

### **Change the Articulation**

Rhythmic issues can be often clarified by changing the articulation,

Bowing out

Use pizzicato

**Ask**, Is it the bow arm, the left hand or both?

#### **How to practice rhythmic issues involving the left hand**

Trills and turns

Ornamentation

Shifting time for shift comes from old note

Silent practice, left hand alone

- think lifting of fingers in descending passages, especially crossing strings downwards and coordination with bow

Left hand independence

- cycle of late left leads to unsure right and then to bad rhythm

Classical concertos are primers in rhythmic training, start a new piece with an exploration of the Rhythm

- Work out the bowing and articulation and phrasing desired before beginning, different options will need different solutions.

### **Haydn concerto G major, 1st movement**

#### **Sing and conduct**

- conduct with/without metronome
  - Singing
  - Silent with inner hearing
- work on up beats
- Exaggerate/emphasise:

Working away from the instrument, bowing in the air with a pencil

Work on open strings

Break ties

Break slurs

Reverse bowing

The image displays two pages of handwritten musical notation for a violin solo. The top page contains measures 15 through 27, and the bottom page contains measures 29 through 41. The notation is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Handwritten annotations include 'Solo' at measure 21, 'V' for vibrato, 'tr' for trills, and '6' for sixteenth notes. The bottom page is labeled 'Violine' and 'Tutti' at measure 41. The page number '3' is visible in the top right corner of the bottom page.

**Ensemble playing**  
**how do we play rhythmically together?**  
**Practice sight-reading**

- both solo and in ensembles

## The ensemble rehearsal room

### Change seating arrangements

- Divide the group into quartets/quintets and get them to sit in this formation- rotate players especially leaders
- All violinists also to play viola
- Students to conduct

### Challenge ways of listening

- Eyes closed.
- Face away
- Just the front and back desks to play a passage
- get similar lines in different instruments to play in turn

### Find patterns

### Use differing articulations

### Tchaikovsky Serenade-Elegy

- Lower strings rushing and 1<sup>st</sup> violins dragging
- Practice with another part's notation, Swap arco and pizz.

23 *Poco piu animato* *molto cantabile*

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

27

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

### Place the rhythm in a musical context

#### Vaughan Williams, Thomas Tallis

- Advantages of the whole ensemble (almost) playing the same rhythm-
  - Call and response-conductor to initially direct, e.g. sing 1 bar direct which ensemble to answer
  - Put in breathing marks (the sniff is effective) for instance before the second eighth note

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis

Vaughan Williams

### To begin study the score

- Divide into quartets/quintets. Set questions on a score of a piece that is new to them—preferably a Baroque/classical work in an original edition without many markings.