Chapter 29

Teaching Shifting and Vibrato

**Shifting Supplemental Materials**

Kristen Pellegrino and Erin M. Hansen

**Troubleshooting Common Shifting Problems**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Common Shifting Problems** | **Possible Root of Problem** | **Possible Remedies** |
| Not making it up to the note or going past the note | Not Audiating; not shifting in a musically rhythmic time; tension in your hand; cello/bass players fighting gravity | Audiate; shift rhythmically; plan where you are in the bow; use ghost tones; release tension; let gravity slide the left hand down the fingerboard. |
| Sounds too intense on top note | Too much emphasis on goal note and not on floating to the top. | Bottom note gold, top note silver (i.e. don’t rush the note before the shift); vibrate the note before the shift; shift rhythmically and slide, don’t jump |
| Hear the shift or too much of the shift | Bow not coordinating with left hand; wrong kind of shift; beginning on new note too soon | Plan how much time you spend on new note and coordinate with right hand (between bows, etc.) |
| Sounds nervous | Arriving too soon or shift too quickly. | Shift rhythmically and slowly;, plan where you are in the bow; Gold/silver; |

**Violin - Viola - Cello Shifting Positions**

using the Simandl label system

**String Names**

C

D

G

A

E

**1/2 position** OR **1st position** with lowered first finger

**1st position**

**4th position**

**2nd position**

**2nd position** OR **2.5 position**

**3rd position**

**3rd position** OR **3.5 position**

*“When your first finger is on the note \_\_\_\_\_\_, you are in \_\_\_\_\_\_ position.”*

**String Names**

E

D

A

G

**Bass Shifting Positions**

using the Rabbath and Simandl label systems

*“When your first finger is on the note \_\_\_\_\_\_, you are in \_\_\_\_\_\_ position.”*

**1/2 position**

**1st position**

**2nd position**

**2nd position** OR **2.5 position**

**3rd position**

**3rd position** OR **3.5 position**

**4th position**

**Simandl**

**Rabbath**

**1st position**

**2nd position**

**3rd position**

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**Vibrato Supplemental Materials**

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**WRIST VIBRATO CHECKLIST:**

° Imaginary super glue base of wrist to violin/viola ribs

° Push away

° One drop of imaginary super glue on middle finger

° Get the vibrato motion going

° Land bow silently half way between bridge and fingerboard

° Keep left hand motion going. Breath, exhale and pull bow.

° If successful, repeat steps with another finger

**Troubleshooting Common Vibrato Issues**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Common Vibrato Problems** | **Core of the Problem--Often** | **Possible Remedies** |
| Moving wrist back and forth instead of moving hand from wrist hinge | Hand squeezes fingerboard | Push-away (Vln, Vla)  Play without thumb |
| Moving fingers up and down | Not rolling on fingertips | Motion in crook of wrist/back of arm |
| Moving fingers only | Squeezing/tension or stuck thumb | Push-Away; buddies; play on back of arm; play w/o thumb |
| Sliding fingers on string | Not rolling on fingertips | Motion in crook of wrist/back of arm; feel weight of arm |
| Jittery sounding vibrato | Tension in thumb or incorrect motion | Release thumb; review pre-cursor exercises for motion (speed and width) |
| Pitch sounds flat | Hand pulls back; vib. up to pitch | Vibrato below & above pitch |

**Additional Advanced Vibrato Concepts**

* Baroque music, use vibrato sparingly, as an ornament
* Use vibrato as an expressive element
* Practice keeping consistent from vibrato from finger to finger (between notes)
* Some say vibrate up to the note but research shows that you should surround the note (e.g. Geringer et al., 2014).
* Blossoming notes, starting slower and increasing speed and width, etc. (use in phrasing)
* Vibrato the note before the most beautiful note!
* Combine violin and viola vibrato types (wrist, arm, finger)
* Have access to all and choose according to the music
* Combine broadening the timing with wider vibrato and/or perhaps faster vibrato to highlight musical climaxes

**Further Resources**

Benham, S. J., et al. (2021). *ASTA string curriculum 2021 edition*. Fairfax, VA: American String

Teachers Association.

Benham, S. (2018). *Yes, you can!: Survival guide for teaching strings*. Carl Fischer.

Fischbach, G. F., Frost, R. S. (1998). *Viva vibrato!* Kjos Music Company

Geringer, J. M., MacLeod, R. B., & Ellis, J. C. (2014). Two studies of pitch in string instrument

vibrato: Perception and pitch matching responses of university and high school string

players. *International Journal of Music Education*, *32*(1), 19–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761411433728>

Hamann, D. L., & Gillespie, R. (2018). *Strategies for teaching strings: Building a successful*

*string and orchestra program*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Hopkins, M. (2019). *The art of string teaching.* GIA Publications.

MacLeod, R. B. (2018). *Teaching strings in today’s classroom: A Guide for group instruction*.

Taylor and Francis.

Patterson, A. M. (2021). 1, 2, 3, Vibrato! *American String Teacher*, *71*(2), 61-64.