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Dear Violist:

It is my pleasure to bring out my *77 Variations on Suzuki Melodies* for viola, a work that has been requested by a number of my violist friends who teach viola to ever-increasing classes of enthusiastic young violists.

The variations in this book, and the accompanying instructional material, were written to help with students' needs: the need for specific guidance, the need for learning to be in attainable steps, and the need for learning to be joyful! My goal was for each brief variation to have only one technical challenge, and that to be repeated many times.

Although William Primrose, world-famous viola soloist, believed that the viola was, by its nature, less suited for the exhibition of virtuoso pyrotechnical display than the violin, Primrose himself had a prodigious technique and performed Paganini Caprices on the viola. Emanuel Vardi, viola virtuoso, recorded all of the Paganini Caprices transcribed for viola! And so, I have included all of the virtuoso variations at the end of this book, including Variation Z, for aspiring violists who yearn for virtuosity.

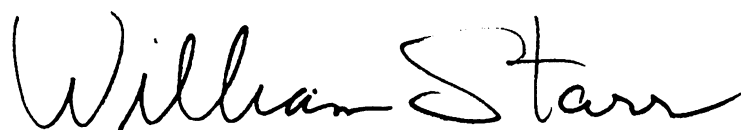
Still, it is the rich sound of the viola that is its most noteworthy trademark. It is hoped that the vibrato variations will help the student develop that wonderful sound. Primrose, formerly a violinist, wrote, "I chose the viola because it is a medium of expression that I like, suited to the interpretation of deep musical thought and poignant tonal beauty that cannot be as fully captured on the violin." And Milton Katims, celebrated violist and conductor, said, "In the hands of a capable artist, the viola has a richness, depth, and individual tonal beauty completely and captivatingly its own."

Paul Doktor, Viennese violist, felt that Mozart must have loved the viola a great deal. "One of the finest pieces Mozart wrote was his *Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola*, actually a double concerto. He also displayed his love for the viola in his two duets for violin and viola, and in his *Trio for Viola, Clarinet and Piano*."

Raphael Hillyer, violist with the Juilliard Quartet, believed that Mozart was an excellent viola player. "Mozart played the viola in the premiere performance of his six late quartets!"

Violists should be delighted to know that Paganini himself, at the height of his career as a virtuoso violinist, considered giving up the violin for the viola!

I hope as your skills develop, you enjoy playing these variations, solo or in a group, with piano accompaniment or as duets with a friend playing the Suzuki melodies.



STUDY GUIDE FOR VIBRATO

The acquisition of a beautiful expressive vibrato, subject to the artistic interpretation of the player, should be the goal of every string player. It has been said that the vibrato is an intensely personal thing, an expression or extension of the soul or personality of the player.

Vibrato has a long history in violin playing. One of the earliest known references to violin vibrato dates back to 1636, in which the French monk, Marin Marsenne, in his *Harmonie Universelle*, writes of the violin: “The beautiful and charming harmonies which may be evoked from the violin are so numerous that one may well prefer it to all other instruments. The strokes of its bow, especially when they are mingled with quiverings and gentle motions of the left hand, constrain listeners to admit that the violin is the King of Instruments.”

In 1751 Geminiani used the term *close shake* in referring to the vibrato. He also wrote, “The art of playing the violin consists in giving that instrument a tone that shall in a manner rival the most perfect human voice.”

In 1756 we find Leopold Mozart writing: “The tremolo (vibrato) is an embellishment which arises from nature itself, and which can be employed artistically in long notes not only by good instrumentalists but also by skillful singers.”

At the present time, the desirability, importance, and necessity of the violin vibrato is no longer questioned, but up until the early twentieth century, its constant use was deplored by famous pedagogues.

Leopold Auer (1921), the famous instructor of Heifetz, Elman, and Milstein, wrote: “Only the most sparing use of vibrato is desirable. The excessive vibrato is a habit for which I have no tolerance, and I always fight against it when I observe it in my pupils—though often, I admit, without success.”

Carl Flesch (1924) wrote: “The great violinists of the middle of the last century, Joachim, Sivori, and Sarasate, to name a few, were opposed to uninterrupted vibrato.” Flesch, however, did not denigrate the importance of vibrato, writing: “A faulty vibrato will always remain an unbridgeable obstacle to the attainment of higher artistic aims.”

The first violinist to introduce the constant use of vibrato, even in passage-work, was Fritz Kreisler, and to conservative ears in his early career, this new kind of playing in which every note was alive and meaningful, was indeed strange, but quickly became immensely popular. (Roth, 1982)

Kreisler actually used a vibrato with notes as short as a quarter of a second, and in a recording of Ravel’s “Tzigane,” Yehudi Menuhin was found to use a pitch pulsation on notes with as little duration as one-tenth of a second! An analysis of a recording of the first movement of Lalo’s *Symphonie Espagnole* by Henryk Szeryng found that the eminent Polish virtuoso vibrated to some degree on every single note except the open strings!

Lionel Tertis, world-famous violist, and a contemporary of Fritz Kreisler, wrote, “The vibrato should be vital in the sense that it should be continuous. There should be no break whatever in it, particularly when going from one note to another, even when changing strings or when changing positions.”

In line with the generally accepted notion that vibrato is an intensely personal means of expression, some artists have felt that it could not be taught. Heifetz stated that it was his conviction that vibrato was part of each individual’s musical personality that one was born

with, which came more or less naturally, expressing one's temperament.

Pedagogues involved in working with vibrato development regard it as a motor skill that can be taught as successfully as other skills. How it is used is up to the discretion of the performer. "Take the Beethoven sonatas, for example," stated Pinchas Zuckerman in an interview with Samuel Applebaum. "I carefully look for different tone colors for various themes and passages, with a vibrato for each. The study is to determine what type of vibrato to apply to get a certain tone color."

"Too often the development of vibrato is neglected. I believe the vibrato should come largely from the hand itself. Never practice anything, even scales, without vibrato. Whenever a difficult passage is taken apart and practiced separately, this analytical work should be done with the use of vibrato. When practicing scales with vibrato, the whole hand is kept free and vibrant and alive," said William Primrose.

The comments above represent only a small fraction of the many statements made by artists and teachers about the importance of the aspiring string player's acquiring control of a vibrato of many colors. It is the author's belief, after working on vibrato development with thousands of young players over the last forty years, that anyone can acquire a beautiful vibrato, provided that proper vibrato-nurturing procedures be followed with sufficient, careful practice.

Although acquiring a fine vibrato may take a long time, the student should be convinced (as should the teacher) that he/she *can* acquire a fine vibrato. Vibrato study should be spread over a number of years as needed. It should be taught slowly and carefully along with other material. It is perhaps best for young students to practice preliminary exercises for only five minutes a day for a period of months. Students in a hurry to get a vibrato NOW are often crippled by tension as they force what should be a relaxed, flowing motion.

Even after a good vibrato is acquired, the student should continue to work on its further development every day. The goal is to possess the most expressive vibrato possible. This means developing the ability to control it, its width, its speed, and its use. The vibrato should not move automatically without being controlled by the performer. "You must control your vibrato. It must not control you," said Pablo Casals.

Listening objectively to one's vibrato is of paramount importance in the acquisition of a fine vibrato. If the student does not develop a discriminating ear, all physical exercises for vibrato production will be of little merit. This power of discrimination can be developed through careful focusing of attention on the aural characteristics of vibrato.

The dictionary describes vibrato as a pulsating or tremulous effect imparted to a musical tone by slight rapid variations in pitch. Current musical taste puts limits on the width and speed of these variations in pitch, but there remains within these limits a great deal of room for self-expression depending on the style of the music to be performed. Listening to recordings of great artists to see how they implement the vibrato for expressive performances of different literature is helpful. It is difficult, however, to isolate the characteristics of vibrato since it is a natural habit to listen to "music" rather than to focus on the width and speed of periodic pulsations.

THREE AURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF VIBRATO: REGULARITY, WIDTH, and SPEED

REGULARITY

Artists maintain a consistent regularity in the oscillation of the vibrato, an evenness of motion from the top pitch to the flatted pitch, although varying considerably the width and

speed of the oscillations. An irregularity, or “wobble,” in the vibrato is too common among students and amateurs and is generally considered unpleasant even by the untrained listener.

WIDTH

From analysis, Seashore (1932) found that students and amateurs had a narrower range of pitch change than artists. Hollinshead (1930) found the average width of vibrato for eleven artists studied to be .26 of a tone, with the average width of the vibrato of nine students to be .19 of a tone.

“The viola vibrato should be slightly slower and wider than on the violin, but naturally as one goes into higher registers the vibrato becomes faster and narrower.”— Milton Katims

“In the viola, a wider vibrato is more desirable than on the violin.”— William Primrose

SPEED

Among the artists’ recordings studied (Seashore, 1932), the vibrato speed varied from 4.4 to 11 cycles per second. Kreisler had an average rate of 7.4. The average rate for all the violinists was about 7 cycles per second. The average rate for violists and cellists was about 6 cycles per second. Both Lionel Tertis, violist, and Pablo Casals, cellist, were recorded with an average rate of 6 cycles per second.

Studies of vibrato rates reveal that the individual differences in average vibrato rates are relatively large and that artists have more than a mere tendency to play with a faster vibrato rate than do students and teachers. (Seashore, 1932)

“I speed up or slow down my vibrato as the music requires. The vibrato must be meticulously calculated, rather than left to pure instinct.”—Isaac Stern

“The speed of vibrato should be controlled largely by the emotional content of the music. Students should practice the vibrato at different speeds.”—William Primrose

SUMMARY ON AURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF VIBRATO

1. Artists maintain regularity of the oscillation from higher to lower pitch.
2. It is important that the vibrato go to the flatted side of the pitch. The ear catches more readily the highest pitch sounded. A vibrato that goes equally above and below the desired pitch makes the pitch sound too sharp. (Galamian, 1960)
3. In studies comparing artists’ vibratos with those of university students, the artists were found to vibrate wider and faster and use a greater range of width and speed more frequently.
4. It is common for contemporary artists since the time of Kreisler to use a continuous vibrato even with notes of very short duration.
5. In order for a violist to possess a “vibrato of many colors,” certain physical skills need to be developed.

THREE PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A FINE VIBRATO

PROPER SUPPORT OF THE VIOLA

1. Adequate, firm support, not excessive, that comes from holding the viola between chin and shoulder.
2. Additional support from the left thumb applying counterpressure equal to the pressure applied by the finger that is vibrating. The finger pressure should be only that necessary for a clear tone, nothing more.

AN EVEN, RELAXED HAND (OR ARM, WITH ARM VIBRATO) OSCILLATION

1. Repetitions of the vibrato oscillations should be made with a relaxed hand (or arm, with arm vibrato). As the speed of the vibrato is increased, the hand motion should remain relaxed. With proper practice, the muscles involved will become stronger and tension will be avoided.
2. Although varying rates of oscillation are used, the hand (or arm in an arm vibrato) moves evenly in each cycle from the highest to the lowest pitch.
3. With accented vibrato, there will be extra exertion that occurs only at the beginning of the note. Relaxation follows immediately.

FLEXIBILITY IN THE FINGER JOINTS

1. As the hand (or arm) moves back and forth and the finger remains in the same place on the string, the middle joint of the finger should flex easily and absorb the roll of the hand.
2. It is possible for the joint to flex stiffly with too much finger pressure. The finger pressure should be lessened until the flexing joint feels soft to the touch.
3. The amount of flexing of the joint will vary with the width of the vibrato and the placement of the finger. (Example: high on the C string, finger placed back on the cushion of the tip, narrow flex.)

PRELIMINARY EXERCISES FOR THE VIBRATO

These exercises may also be used for the development of an arm vibrato. The initiating movement would then come from the back of the arm rather than from the back of the hand. Eventually, for the greatest range of expression, both hand and arm vibratos should be acquired.

These exercises are designated for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd fingers but should be practiced with the 4th finger after facility has been established with the first three fingers. Many violists use arm vibrato with the 4th finger.

DEVELOPING A RELAXED, EVEN ROLL IN THE LEFT HAND

Exercise 1.

1. Place the viola in playing position and support the viola with the right hand.
2. Rest the neck of the viola on the ball joint of the thumb and the base joint of the first finger.
3. Keep the finger touching the side of the neck.
4. With the impulse coming from the back of the hand, move the hand back and forth with a relaxed, even roll. The first finger will brush the neck of the viola above its base joint.

Exercise 2.

1. Repeat Steps 1 and 2 from Exercise 1.
2. Place a small piece of tissue paper on the A string, and bring the 1st, or 2nd, or 3rd finger down lightly on the paper. (Experiment with each finger to find the finger easiest to use. Begin with that finger.)
3. With the impulse coming from the back of the hand, roll the hand back and forth about one inch with a slow, even motion. The finger on the string, and the tissue, will slide back and forth as if “wiping” the string. The first finger will brush the neck of the viola above its base joint.
4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 with the other two fingers.

Continue until the hand roll is effortless.

Exercise 3.

1. Repeat Exercise 2 with the scroll of the viola against the wall instead of the right-hand support.
2. Repeat Step 1 with the finger sliding along the string without the use of tissue paper.

Continue until the hand roll is effortless.

DEVELOPING FLEXIBILITY IN THE JOINTS OF THE FINGERS

Exercise 1.

1. Place the viola in playing position.
2. Place the chosen (easiest to work with) finger down lightly on the A string.
3. Supporting the body of the viola with the right hand, with the first finger of the right hand, point to and touch the finger on the A string.
4. With the impulse coming from the back of the hand, move the hand back and forth with a relaxed, even roll, with the right-hand finger keeping the vibrating finger in place. The finger, unable to slide, flexes as the hand rolls. Keep the finger in place. Apply very little weight on the tip. The first finger will continue to brush the neck of the viola above its base joint.
5. Repeat with the other two fingers.

Exercise 2.

1. Place the viola in playing position with the scroll of the viola against the wall for support.
2. Place the chosen (easiest to work with) finger down lightly on the A string.
3. With the impulse coming from the back of the hand, move the hand back and forth with a relaxed, VERY SLOW, even roll.
4. As the hand rolls, apply a little weight to the fingertip. Keep the finger in place, causing it to flex as the hand rolls. The first finger continues to brush the neck.
5. Repeat with the other two fingers.

COMBINING A RELAXED, EVEN HAND ROLL WITH FINGER FLEXIBILITY

Exercise 1.

1. Place the viola in playing position with the scroll against the wall for support.
2. Place a finger lightly on the A string on the note D.
3. Place the bow on the A string at the tip.
4. Draw a light, fast, up-bow stroke, at the same time rolling the hand back and forth with very little weight on the fingertip. The finger may slide a little at first, with the tone resembling that of a harmonic.
5. Repeat this up-bow stroke. Add a little weight to the fingertip. Keep the finger in place as the hand rolls back and forth.
6. Gradually add weight to the fingertip until a clear pitch is heard.
7. Draw four light, rapid bows in succession. A slow, heavy bow tends to cause tension in the left hand.
8. Repeat this exercise with the other two fingers. Play the same note, D, with each of the fingers and compare their vibratos.

COMBINING A RELAXED, EVEN HAND ROLL WITH FINGER FLEXIBILITY AND INDEPENDENT SUPPORT OF THE VIOLA

As fluency in the vibrato is acquired, prepare to move away from the wall and assume total support of the viola. Since there is a very strong tendency to clutch the neck of the viola when partial support of the viola is assumed by the left thumb, focus on the thumb's changing role as a support and the first finger's continual brushing of the neck as the hand rolls back and forth. The neck of the viola will be held between the vibrating finger and the ball joint of the thumb. The thumb may need to be brought slightly under the neck for this support.

Exercise 1.

1. Support the viola against the wall, but now hold the viola securely between chin and shoulder.
2. Place a finger on the note D on the A string. Start vibrating.
3. After starting the vibrato, move away from the wall a short distance, focusing on keeping the vibrato moving continuously at the same speed and width.
4. If the vibrato stops, or becomes irregular, move back to the wall support and repeat Steps 2 and 3, focusing on the supporting role of the thumb. Repeat these steps again and again until the vibrato is the same as that with wall support.
5. Draw four bows for each finger on the note D; then move the other strings.

If there is no progress noticeable, return to practicing the first exercises for the development of the hand roll and finger flexibility. It may be that these skills have not been sufficiently developed. Return to the use of the wall support, with careful positioning of the thumb to assume support of the viola.

It is important to practice the best finger the most so that its vibrato can become a good visual, aural, and kinesthetic model for the other fingers. It is also important to recognize the fact that excessive finger pressure will cause a similar counterforce to be applied by the thumb, thus tensing the whole hand. The pitch changes of the vibrato should be clearly audible and the vibrato a moderate, regular speed.

The preceding preliminary exercises should provide the student with a good, basic vibrato. This preparation should be adequate for Variations 1 through 12.

Following are three special uses of vibrato found in Variations 13, 14, 15, and 16. Instructional material will be found with the following variations:

1. Accented vibrato, see Variation 13.
2. Vibrato on notes of short duration, see Variation 14.
3. Vibrato on notes in high positions, see Variation 16.

VIBRATO

Unless indicated otherwise, the accompaniments are to be played as they appear in the Suzuki books.

Variation 1. Lightly Row

1. Focus on the relaxed, even hand roll and the flexible finger joints.
2. Listen to the width of the vibrato. Is the change of pitch audible?
3. Focus on the regularity of the oscillation.



Variation 2. Twinkle in D Major

1. Continue the observations asked for in Variation 1.
2. Focus on the continuous flow of the vibrato from one note to the next.
Does it stop near the end of a note or start late on the next note?
3. When it feels comfortable to do so, slur two notes on one bow.

Piano accompaniment: Twinkle Variation A, B, or C, or Theme. In the seventh measure, 3rd and 4th beats, an A7 chord should be played, as in the fifth measure.

