

TEEN STRINGS

TIP SHEET No 1

IDEAS, NEWS & FUN FOR STUDENTS OF VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO, BASS & FIDDLE

OCTOBER 2014

'Teen Strings' Tip Sheet is sponsored by **SPiRiT!** strings, new from Thomastik-Infeld

3 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR INTONATION

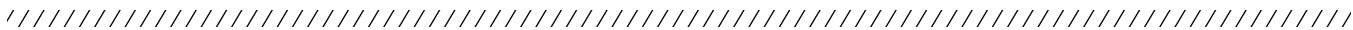
Good intonation is something you can work on almost from Day One. **“Good intonation comes primarily from inside the player’s head,”** says Michael E. Martin, who teaches in the elementary and middle schools of Havertown, Pennsylvania, and is a coauthor of *Jump Right In: The Instrumental Series—for Strings* (GIA Publications, 2004). “If the player isn’t hearing—the word we use is ‘audiating’—good intonation in their mind, it’s really not going to come out of the instrument. So hearing the notes before you play is the first step toward good intonation. It’s part of a process that Michael Slechta, who teaches in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, schools, calls “[taking] ownership of [the] sounds and pitches.”



1 Sing everything before you play. Martin can trace this idea back to 1920s method books. “One of the instructions to teachers,” he points out, “is that students at any time should be able to stop playing and continue singing the melody; if they can’t do that, their attention is too much on the physical aspect of playing and not on the sound. If you can sing a passage and then play it, you’ll see immediate improvement in intonation.”

2 Audiate the harmonic context of the music (resting tone, bass line, and harmonic functions). “Every song has one special note that the music seems to gravitate toward,” says Martin. “That’s one of the foundations of where good intonation comes from. Intonation is based on relationships from one pitch to another, and everything is tuned to the resting tone.” You should be able to stop playing at any time and sing the resting tone. “If you can’t do that,” says Martin, “chances are the intonation hasn’t been very good.”

3 Always audiate what you’re going to perform before you perform it. You want to hear the music in your head before you play—until you get into the habit of audiating, sing the piece out loud.



SELF-CRITICIZE . . . WITH SELF CONFIDENCE

“Striking a balance between criticism and confidence is essential to being a successful player,” says violinist Geoff Nuttall of the St. Lawrence String Quartet, quartet-in-residence at Stanford University. “Players need to be able to know what they’ve done well and praise themselves for those successes, while never losing sight of where they might improve. **Without self-criticism it’s hard to improve, but without self-confidence it’s difficult to function.** In other words, don’t beat yourself up for every missed note or chord, but don’t gloat for days on end when something goes right.”



Did You Know?

Jascha Heifetz, one of the finest classical violinists of his day, performed mess-hall jazz for soldiers at Allied camps across Europe during the Second World War. Under the alias Jim Hoyl, he wrote a hit song, “When You Make Love to Me (Don’t Make Believe),” which was sung by crooner Bing Crosby. Learn more about his amazing life in the captivating 2011 film documentary *God’s Fiddler: Jascha Heifetz*.



SPARK YOUR SPIRIT!

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A TEEN ON THE RISE



Player Chad Hoopes, violin

Age 19

Claim to Fame First prize at the Young Artists Division of the 2008 Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition; 2010 Meck-Pomm Audience Award, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; former artist-in-residence at Classical Minnesota Public Radio; performed with numerous orchestras and in recitals.

The Spin Recently, Hoopes released a well-received recording of the Mendelssohn and

John Adams violin concertos on the Naïve label.

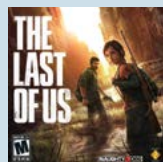
Player Tip "You can't just play how it looks on the page," Hoopes says. "I feel like when I was first learning [the Adams Violin Concerto], I was just playing the notes on the page. It was more like an exercise for me rather than feeling the music and making it come alive. "Finally, after I had this 'aha' moment, it began to take life. With this music especially, you have to *do* something with it."

How to . . . Protect Your Bow

What do a violin and a lawsuit have in common? Everyone is happy when the case is closed . . . No joke: most damage to bows comes from being careless. Never leave your bow lying across the violin in an open case—the lid can and often does fall. The bow almost certainly will end up with serious damage, and it can also injure the instrument in the process. Securing the bow and closing the case is an excellent idea, anyway. Bows have an alarming ability to disappear—they are easily transportable and to any but the practiced eye, they all look the same. Zip the case while you're at it—you might forget that you haven't and pick it up, and then the instrument will come tumbling out.

Get Your Game On!

Ready for a cyberhunt assignment? What famous Cremonese violin maker has a matching quartet of stringed instruments in the Smithsonian? What is their distinctive unifying feature? And is that feature authentic in every case? Visit www.si.edu



A YouTube Video 'Teen Strings' Loves

Taylor Davis delivers a stunning solo-violin performance of "The Theme from the Last of Us," from her new CD *The Anime & Game Collection*. PlayStation and string music. What could be better?

STRINGS

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