

TEEN STRINGS

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

TIP SHEET № 10

3 Tips from **LINDSEY STIRLING** on Movement and Playing

BE PATIENT:

“ At first it felt so impossible and I was like, ‘there’s a reason no one’s done this before—because it’s impossible!’

START SIMPLE:

“ My first movements incorporated in a performance were stepping on this beat, looking at the audience and winking on this beat, and everything was so pre-rehearsed, even the simplest movements.”

KNOW THE PIECE BACK & FORTH:

“ I have to know the piece like the back of my hand. I have to know it so well that I don’t even have to think about it before I can even consider adding any sort of movement to it. And I actually learn the movement separately so it becomes muscle memory and then I combine the two.”



4 TIPS ON APPROACHING FRENCH BAROQUE MUSIC



1. DOWNBEAT? DOWN BOW

The shape of the Baroque bow makes for a stronger down bow than up bow, and, according to Lully's contemporary Georg Muffat, “Lullists” played the first note of every measure on a down bow, with less emphasis on the ensuing up bow.

To keep the downbeat on a down bow, you can either take another down at the bar line or take two ups within the bar. In a slow triple-time piece, try >>>

INFLUENCED BY THE STAGE

“ I have discovered that performing as a soloist eight times a week not only has a great effect on my playing, but also focuses the way I prepare, which is already pretty detail-oriented. This even-more focused preparation elevates my other repertoire. I returned from playing a concert at Carnegie Hall one night recently and noticed an enhanced clarity, ring, and fluency in my playing. I also feel my natural affinity for the *Fiddler* flavor increasing with each show; it is definitely enlivening my approach to similarly themed solo music. And of course, that’s how I approach everything—nothing is just ‘what it is,’ it is also what you make it.”

—Violinist *Kelly Hall-Tompkins*
on how performing live in Broadway’s *Fiddler on the Roof*
has influenced the way she performs other music





5 Step Approach to the Perfect Violin or Viola Bow Grip

As the foundation of your bow technique—literally how you and your bow connect—your bow hold can either support your technique or hinder it. A good bow hold feels so natural you hardly notice it and rarely think about it. It balances the elements of both flexibility and strength, facilitating complete command over the bow as a tool to produce a variety of tone colors, strokes, and dynamics.



FIG. 1: Turn your hand over so the palm faces up. Let your thumb curl inward.



FIG. 2: Turn your hand back over, but keep your thumb curling inward. That's your natural hold.



FIG. 3: Place your bent right thumb so that half of its tip rests on the lip of the frog and half of it rests on the bow stick.



FIG. 4: Allow the part of the thumb above the nail to lean against the hair.

1. Rest your right arm at your side. Notice how your fingers curl slightly. Keeping this relaxation in your fingers, and your wrist floppy, bend your elbow and bring your hand up to shoulder height. Notice the spread of your top four fingers. Even if your thumb is already curling in toward the other fingers, turn your hand over so the palm faces up

and let your thumb curl inward, most likely to touch the middle finger at the joint closest to the middle finger's tip (*Fig. 1*).

2. Now turn your hand back over, but keep your thumb curling inward (*Fig. 2*). That's your natural bow hold.

3. Now add the bow. Hold the bow stick in the left hand, hair facing you. Place your bent right thumb so that half of its tip rests on the lip of the frog and half of it rests on the bow stick (*Fig. 3*).

4. The thumb should be slightly angled rather than vertical to the stick. Allow the part of the thumb above the nail to lean against the hair (*Fig. 4*). This provides support and security. The thumb will likely rest here except when playing near the tip of the bow.

5. Keeping this position, rest the upper half of the bow on your left shoulder, hair down, bow stick parallel to the floor. Balance the bow between your shoulder and the right thumb tip. Keep your thumb bent down to the hair or the bow might roll away from you. Without upsetting the balance, lightly lower your fingers to the stick as the fingers fall naturally—the first three over, the pinkie tip on top. Your forearm will likely rotate inward. That should be a light, relaxed bow hold. — *Laurel Thomsen*

down-up-down within a measure, retaking for a down on the next measure, which the French preferred to play down-up-up.

2. GET A GRIP

The French Baroque bow was shorter than its Italian counterpart and made wonderfully clear articulations—perfect for quick dance movements. “Hold your modern bow well away from the frog to get a feel for the smaller, lighter bow,” Handel and Haydn Society cellist Reinmar Seidler suggests. “Also, the French bow hold was quite unusual—the thumb was placed under that short bow, pressing on the hair at the frog, with the fingers on top.

3. STRONG & WEAK BEATS

If you have a series of conjunct notes of similar value, play the strong, down-bow notes slightly longer than the up bows that follow—this is known as notes inégales—which gives the passage, as Mealy puts it a smooth, swung, flexible jazzy inflection of the rhythm.

4. ORNAMENTS & TRILLS

French music is often filled with an array of trills and other ornaments, but don't let them make you lose sight of the music! Get a sense of the musical line without the ornaments first before putting them in. Mealy says: “Trills should be expressive. The longer the trill, the slower the beginning of the trill—it should never sound like a doorbell.”

—*Sarah Freiberg*

DID YOU KNOW?

The **London Symphony Orchestra** was booked to travel on the RMS Titanic's maiden voyage for the symphony's first US tour, ultimately changed liners at the last minute due to scheduling, and narrowly avoided a grim fate.

