

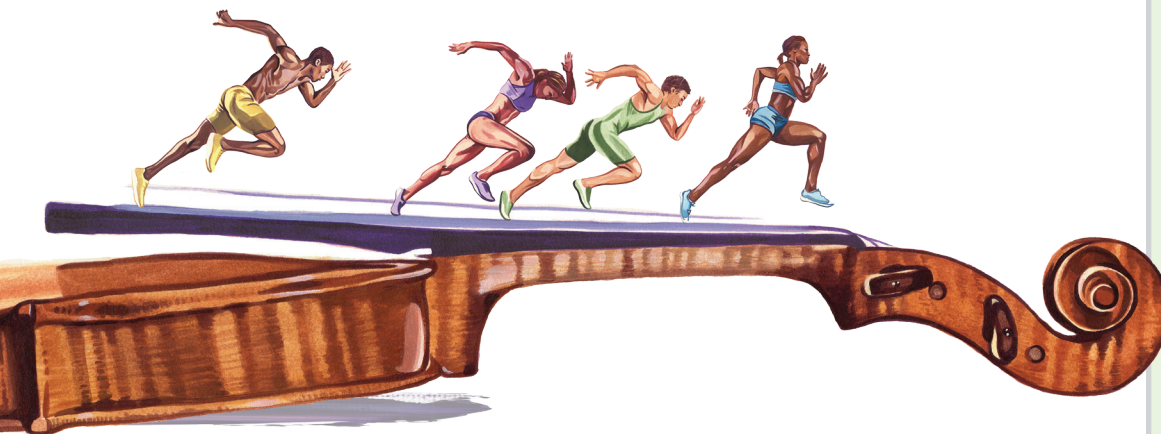


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TEEN STRINGS

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

TIP SHEET No 16



5 Keys to a Musician's Training Regimen

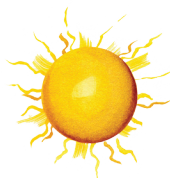


1. SPEED UP

Students learning Schradieck's first étude, which includes repeated patterns of sixteenth notes, often aim to play it with a sautillé bow stroke at 144 beats per minute. (Scott likens it to maintaining the pace of a six-minute mile for four miles.) Mikylah McTeer, associate professor of violin at West Virginia University and former co-captain of the Oberlin College women's soccer team, has found that her students frequently start at a tempo of 60 beats a minute, progress up to about 136 and then hit a wall, struggling to overcome the final hurdle to reach the goal of 144.

McTeer advises trying something akin to the runner's interval training. Just as the runner trains for short periods of time at a speed exceeding his goal, the string player building tempo in that Schradieck étude might jump right to practicing it at 148 or even slightly faster—playing in “chunks,” or a bar at a time and resting for ten to 20 seconds in between. “The purpose is to stimulate a new response, after which you need time to recover,” says Sydney Scott,

McTeer's student, a violin-performance major, and winner of Academic All-Big 12 First Team Honors in cross-country running.



2. WARM UP

Most runners include both static stretching and dynamic warm-ups, which incorporate momentum and movement, such as series of quick-stepping motions. Likewise, players should vary their warm-up routine. Many players play slow scales and études and literally stretch their arms and shoulders to loosen muscles. But those warm-ups may not help if you need to play in a fast and powerful way, says McTeer. So try the equivalent of the runner's quick steps: Play scales or other sequences quickly and lightly to warm up both hands. “It's best to include a lot of moving in a warm-up,” she says.



3. DRILL & SCRIMMAGE

Soccer players routinely alternate between drills and scrimmage. In drills, they repeat single exercises designed to improve a particular skill, such as passing or dribbling. In a scrimmage, they play a full game informally, perhaps against another unit of their own team, to build endurance and use skills acquired during drills.

String players can use the same strategy. Drill time is for practicing passages or chunks of passages, or to



DREAM JOBS:

3 TIPS ON LIVING A MUSICAL LIFE—AT SEA

1. GETTING THE GIG

Most cruise operators use agents to find musicians. Audition procedures vary, but generally, agents require that you submit a bio and a video with a sampling of your playing. Cellist Cori Lint, who several years ago performed on cruises with her quartet, included on the demo video some familiar classical pieces such as *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* as well as some Gershwin and Broadway tunes. Guests on cruises often want to hear a variety of music, so it's best to show that you can play in a wide range of genres.

2. PERFORMING AT SEA

Most cruise musicians will perform at least a few times a day, likely in the dining area at lunch and dinner and in a lobby or lounge during cocktail hour. Over time, opportunities can grow. When violinist Amy Lee began performing on cruise ships, she played in a violin-and-piano duo as a lounge act. Now, Lee is a main headline act, performing shows in a theater with a band as her backup.

Lee says she performs one or two headline shows per week and, unlike lounge-act players who typically stay on one ship for several months, frequently flies from ship to ship. “That's the most exhausting part,” she says.





work in depth on a particular shift or bow stroke. But you need scrimmage time, too, to play through the entire piece or movement and put the skills you've learned through drills into practice.



4. BUILD MENTAL ENDURANCE

Instead of dwelling on a “three-mile” or an “hourlong” run, distance runners might focus on specific physical landmarks and milestones that distract them from the length of the run. Players, too, can use a similar technique, whether they're faced with a five-minute movement or an entire 35-minute concerto. Think of musical phrases and landmarks within the

piece—where phrases peak or where they begin or end. That's less overwhelming and more mentally manageable than thinking of the entire piece as a whole.



5. KNOW YOUR BODY

Athletes use their entire bodies and know how they react to training, and when it's time to rest. Musicians might not be sprinting a four-minute mile, but they, too, should be aware of their bodies and their physical limits—in particular when they're tired or when they've practiced for too long and need a rest.

—Louise Lee



Jazz Violinist Christian Howes' Creative Strings Workshop Offers Professional Insight

For Minnie Jordan, former Creative Strings Workshop attendee, Christian Howes' workshop led to a more accurate understanding of the life of a working musician. “Intense ensemble experiences”—like learning and arranging a song in the morning, and playing it for a live audience in the afternoon—offer

valuable insights into the road ahead. “It's also the only string camp I've been to that gives the students the opportunity to study not only with some of the best string players in the country, but also with other great instrumentalists,” Jordan says. “Last year, I was in an ensemble led by a percussionist, and I feel like I came away with a completely different understanding of time and groove than I would have studying with a string player.”

Throughout the week, Creative Strings divides the attendees up into ensembles and has them perform at various venues around Columbus. Attendees also dive into varied topics deeper than just exploring new genres of music. The workshop incorporates tips and discussions on bandleading, booking, communicating effectively, dealing with creative blocks, avoiding injury, and much more. After being exposed to hard-bop during her first camp, Jordan made the decision to delve into jazz.

“[I] saw the role a violinist could play in that style—hearing and seeing that opened my ears.

“Overall, I think that Chris' approach to teaching varies a lot depending on the individual student,” she says. “For me, I think that Chris' focus on honesty in life and music has been really important. Honesty is important to me personally, and focusing on approaching music in a completely honest way can be both difficult and helpful.”

—Karen Peterson

Lee describes her life outside of performing, rehearsing, and traveling between ships as “basically on vacation.” Performing on a cruise lets players see the world, she says. Lint, too, recalls having plenty of time for working out in the gym and enjoying meals. She and her quartetmates took full advantage of sightseeing opportunities during port time. “That's probably the best part of the job,” says Lint, who has visited locales ranging from New Zealand to Norway. “We got a little spoiled.”

3. LIFE ON THE SHIP

Gigging on a cruise ship is like being on a long tour; you'll be away from home and might miss important events with family or friends, warns Lee, adding that internet access on the ship can be expensive and slow. Contracts usually extend for four to six months, so you could be on a ship for more than a month at a time. Rooms can be small, and some operators will put two musicians in one cabin. And it can be difficult to find a suitable area to practice. (Lint and her colleagues rehearsed in the crew bar.)

And what about dreaded seasickness? It happens, so ships have doctors on board and distribute plenty of seasickness bags. However, Lee says, “Most cruise ships are so big that you don't really notice the movement most days.”

—LL

BEYOND WORDS

“In the first installment of Prague Summer Nights, we performed *Suor Angelica* by Giacomo Puccini. James Burton (now Tanglewood's festival chorus director) had a way of pulling every musician into the intensity of Puccini's story. At the end of the opera, when Suor drifts off to heaven, it was the most magical musical experience I had ever been a part of. There was not a dry eye in the building, and most of the audience didn't even speak the language of the opera. It was a moment of universal peace that I'll never forget.”

—Harrison Dilthey on *Prague Summer Nights: Young Artists Music Festival*

