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# TEEN STRINGS

ASTA SPECIAL EDITION

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

TIP SHEET № 3

## JOSHUA BELL SAYS . . . THINK BIG!

**T**hink about the Big Picture: “You see students in some of these big music schools who go through their entire tenure without ever thinking about chamber music or orchestral excerpts, choosing instead to think only about playing concertos and being a soloist,” says concert violinist, conductor, and educator **JOSHUA BELL**.

“It’s always dangerous to offer advice because you don’t



want to tone down someone’s enthusiasm for that, but at the same time I’ve heard of famous violinists going into a classroom and saying, ‘I’ll tell you right now that none of you are ever going to make it as a soloist.’

“It may be drastic to say something like that, but it is important to emphasize the need to learn as much as possible about playing in an orchestra and playing chamber music.”

## PLAYING HEALTHY

**L**ISA BRITSCH has seen it happen for years. Back when she was teaching high-school orchestra, she had one student who would come in every Tuesday and say, “I can’t play. It hurts ever since I played in youth symphony last night.”

Britsch was puzzled. “I knew the youth symphony director, and he didn’t let kids play in pain,” she says. “There had to be something else going on.”

That student inspired her to look into ways to help teen musicians avoid chronic pain, or at least get help for it.

She decided to pursue graduate studies in the music-education program at Michigan State University.

“Playing in pain is *not* OK,” she warns. “If something hurts, something’s wrong.” Britsch

says that one big cause of trouble is failing to warm up properly before practice or performance. Another, especially among college students, is practicing too much. “Injuries happen when there’s a sudden increase of practice.

“Students don’t work their way into it and [instead] just plunge into practice before a recital,” she says. So what can *you* do?

“The first thing you have to do to avoid injury is develop healthy habits overall,” says **JUDITH PALAC**, Michigan State University professor.

“Some musical kids tend to be bookish and don’t get out and do sports, but sports can be



great for musicians. “Swimming is best, because it’s not only a cardiovascular exercise, it also increases strength and flexibility by stretching. “It’s also a tension reducer, and it’s about the least dangerous

sport. You can’t really hurt

yourself swimming, unless you drown. Fencing, ballroom dancing, anything that gets the heart rate up and gets you toned up is helpful.”

Avoid volleyball, though; that’s dangerous to the fingers. Weight lifting isn’t the best idea, either, she says, especially if it’s done for bodybuilding rather than general toning.



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# STRINGS



## HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR TONE

To understand tone production, **EMLYN NGAI** of the Hartt School says, players should learn a bit about the physics and physiology involved in playing a stringed instrument.

Applying the bow to the string, for instance, most players know that motion and weight produce sound.

But only uninhibited motion and a natural amount of weight—not pressure—produce *good* tone.

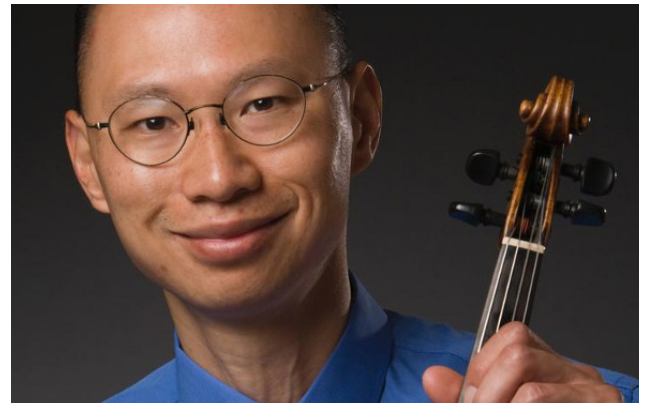
Once you grasp the physical

aspects of playing, it's time to think about putting your warm-up sessions to better use.

In your search for your own great sound, it might be helpful to keep this thought from **Ida Kavafian** in mind: "In terms of sound, your imagination is the most important component.

"Keep an open mind and explore every possibility.

"A person's imagination is his or her biggest asset."



## MIXED MEDIA

### Who Knew?



**SOFIA ANNUNZIATA**, more commonly known by her alias Potter Cat, is a teen reporter for the *Bleeding Cool* blogsite, whose recent coverage included the Comic-Con 2014. According to the blogsite bio, "she spends

her free time fan-girling and is a proud member of many fandoms.

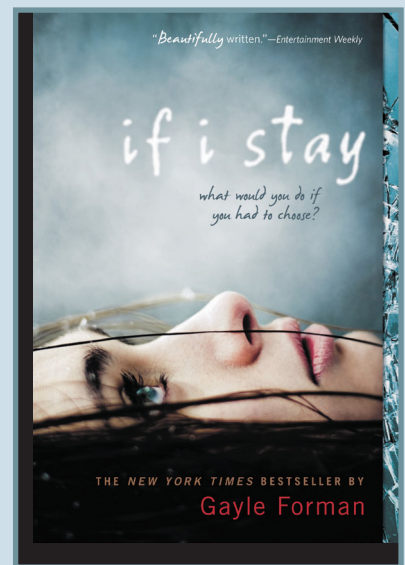
"She is also an avid animal advocate and violinist, alternating between her hobbies of kitten juggling and her new-found addiction to musical theatre."

## Good Reads

**GAYLE FORMAN**'s 2009 young-adult book *If I Stay*, about a cellist who falls into a coma, shot to the top of the *New York Times*' young-adult best-seller list

in August 2014 as trailers for the movie hit theaters. "When a book is being made into a movie, it definitely makes the book more popular," Samantha "Sami" Linssen, an eighth-grader at Highland Park Middle School, told the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. "People say, 'I have to read that book.' I know a lot of people who don't constantly read like me, but if

something is being made into a movie, they'll read the book to get the gist of what it's about." What about you? Have you read *If I Stay*?



### Did You Know?

Nineteenth-century violinist **NICCOLO PAGANINI** played with such fury that audience members sometimes swore that they saw the devil standing over his shoulder and guiding his hands.

The truth is that after years of heavy teen



drinking, at age 19, Paganini spent three years studying obsessively only to reemerge at 22 clean and sober and destined to become the first solo superstar. The devil made him do it? No, it was *discipline!*