

# TEEN STRINGS

TIP SHEET № 4

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

## ADVICE FROM THE MAESTRO: SOMETIMES LESS IS MORE

**O**ld joke: How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Answer: Practice, practice, practice. But according to educator and violin great Itzhak Perlman, that's exactly the wrong way to get to Juilliard or any other competitive school.

"Whenever a student asks me for my autograph," he claims, "I don't say, 'Best wishes.' I say, 'Practice slowly!' Practicing is really the main component in achieving something very satisfying when you play any stringed instrument, but the problem with practice is sometimes people put in the time, they've practiced four hours, five hours a day, and can't understand why it isn't getting any better.

"It comes down to listening. What are you listening for when you practice?"

"Here's my favorite example of how not to practice: You have a couple of notes that are out of tune, and you repeat them over and over



for 20 minutes and it's not working, and while you were doing that, the bow was going in all bad directions because you weren't paying attention to your bow because you were only paying attention to your left hand. So your left hand is not working well yet, and you've practiced for 20 minutes with the bow wrong.

### Quality Time

"Sheer time is not necessarily good; what's good is the quality of the practicing," says Perlman. "If somebody's really serious, five hours a day is almost too much; no more than that. After five hours, the body doesn't absorb any more. When I was growing up, I didn't practice more than three hours a day. And when you practice, it's got to be 50-minute hours, with 10 minutes of rest."

"So now you have to undo that, but you're not paying attention to the intonation, so you've practiced for 20 minutes out of tune.

"So just reduce it to small increments, two or three bars, and try to get a hold of everything at the same time. It's difficult to concentrate on everything. You can accomplish a lot more in less time. Practicing slowly is extremely important. Then you can figure out what's going on.

"Nothing escapes you." —James Reel

## YOUTH ORCHESTRAS OFFER TEENS OPPORTUNITY TO EXCEL

**Y**outh orchestras offer teens the opportunity to study and flourish outside of a school environment, and garner a look into the real-world of orchestra life post-high school.

The Florida Youth Orchestra (FYO), which has served more than 20,000 students since

its founding in 1988, offers teen musicians that very chance, all while promoting the significance of music education.

The orchestra boasts a roster of 400 young musicians, aged five to 19, who play instruments that run the gamut from the violin to the French horn. Shiri Abramson, a 13-year-old

violinist living in Hollywood, continues to return each season, seemingly captivated by the FYO's five-concert performance extravaganza.

"This is my third year with the FYO and the experience has made me play the violin better and it is fun to hear the applause from the audience," Abramson told the *Florida Jewish Journal*.

"Not only do I play classical music, but I also play country and popular music on the violin."



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# STRINGS



## 3 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE



### 1. REAL IMPRESSIONS

Don't give the impression that playing your instrument well is more important to you than your classes. Although you may not realize it at the time, it is the collective efforts of all our teachers and coaches that shape us into the musicians we become.

### 2. REAL BALANCING ACT

It's not easy juggling a concert schedule and a full school load! The stress of performing well onstage coupled with the stress of performing well in school is a lot for any student to handle—especially if you are living away from home for the first time as well. Even if you're insanely busy, there are some keys to leading a healthy, balanced life. Topping the "must do" list

are eating right, getting enough sleep, exercising, having a support system, and remembering to have fun. The power of a healthy lifestyle and creative team that is there for you and personally invested in your success cannot be overemphasized.

### 3. REAL EXPERIENCE

Don't get too comfortable within the confines of the conservatory bubble or you may never build the tools necessary to break out. Use the time while you're still in school to make important musical contacts, gain performance experience, get used to traveling, learn how to work well with conductors and other professional musicians, and develop a concert-day routine that works for you.

—Lindsay Deutsch

## How to . . . Clean a Violin or Viola



### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Soft cotton cloth or a microfiber cleaning cloth
- Chamois to clean the strings and chin rest (or alcohol wipes for the chin rest)

**1. Wipe off the strings, fingerboard, and rosin** under the strings where you bow, but don't forget the harder-to-reach areas under the fingerboard, tailpiece, and chin rest.

**2. Wipe off the rest of your instrument.** You might be surprised at some of the places your hands wander. A gray scum builds up that is not just your sweat or your hand lotion, but is also decomposing varnish.

**4. Clean the chin rest,** which collects sweat and dirt. You can wipe it with the cloth or chamois, or clean it with an individually wrapped alcohol wipe sold at the drug store.

**5. Inspect the whole instrument before putting it away and closing the case.** This is your opportunity to look for wear and tear, open seams (between the ribs and the top or back), or a bridge out of place.

—James N. McKean

### Did You Know?

Composer **Arnold Schoenberg** had a fear of the number 13, also known as triskaidekaphobia.

Schoenberg lived his life in fear (and consulting astrologers) that he would die during a year that was a multiple of 13. As fate would have it, Schoenberg was born on September 13, 1874

and died on July 13, 1951. He is revered, among many other reasons, for his development of the 12-tone period, which is a method of composing with 12 tones that are related only with one another.

No wonder he didn't go for the 13-tone method.

