

Lower Strings Practice Tips



Hello Cellists and Double Bass Players. Here are some hints and tips to keep you motivated in your practice and focusing on tuning and intonation. Feel free to get in touch via the Musica Holme Valley Facebook page @MusicaHolmeValley #musicakirkleesathome.

TUNING YOUR CELLO

- It's worth downloading a digital tuner such as: Master Violoncello Tuner App
- If your cello is only slightly out of tune use your fine tuners
- If your cello is very out of tune you're going to need to adjust the pegs but **BE CAREFUL!** Please get an adult to help you. I've broken many strings in my time which has cost me a lot of money. Have a look at this video, it's long (28mins) but might save you breaking a string, and is worth watching to the end:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KFBMqUrnEg>
- Double bass tuning is slightly easier as you don't have to push the pegs in to the wooden scroll:
<https://www.connollymusic.com/stringovation/double-bass-tuning-tips>

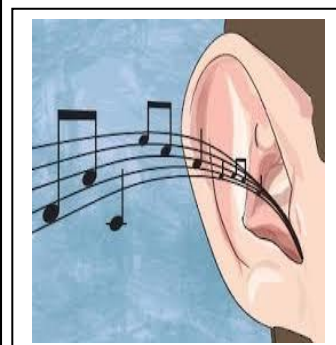
WARM UPS

It can be hard to pick up your instrument and start practising, particularly if you've had a break from playing. That's true at every level. It can seem such an effort and it's easy to put it off until tomorrow. Warm ups should be used every time you start to practise and can be used for a variety of things but if you're feeling unmotivated, try doing a warm up as an incentive. Hear the sound you want to produce in your head before you play and begin by playing a few long smooth open strings focusing on the sound. Here's one I made earlier!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cu7BC7MYI5A> This warm up uses the open, 1st and 4th fingers and is based on the pentatonic scale. For those who haven't used the 4th finger yet, it can be successfully adapted without the 4th finger.

FOCUS ON TUNING AND INTONATION

For any string player, intonation or tuning is always an issue. It's not uncommon to hear even an international soloist having some issue here, although they won't let it get in the way of their performance. It's important to hear the pitch in your head before you play it, listen on YouTube or play it on the piano or try to sing it. If it's a shift from one position to another, take that out of context, and pause on the 'new' note and if possible check it with open strings. Try playing the new note with different fingers in order to focus on the intonation. Practise slowly.



NEW PIECES

As a teacher, it's important not to just give pupils three pieces from exam syllabuses but to have a balance of repertoire including technical studies and short exercises for practising a particular feature or technical aspect. The ABRSM and Trinity syllabuses are however a good place to start looking for new pieces. The ABRSM also offers a cello practice partner allowing the recordings they've made of exam pieces to be played at slower and faster speeds: <https://gb.abrsm.org/en/exam-support/apps-and-practice-tools/cello-practice-partner/>

Please don't hesitate to contact your teacher regarding new repertoire.

A good practice routine

When you decide to do some focused cello/double bass practice try to follow these steps:

1. Check your sitting position posture and bow hold. Have a look at this video that Mrs Worboys-Hodgson has made: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6LAFfOaUb4>
2. Start with some warm up exercises (see above)
3. Work on one of your pieces – try and avoid just playing through them, focus on the tricky sections first before you play the whole pieces. Work out ways of practising not just repeating sections
4. **HAVE FUN!!**

Online Opportunities

I'll try and keep you up to date with the online opportunities that are around for cellists and double bass players. Have a look at the cellist Matthew Sharpe's 6 part series of multimedia stories of the superhero Tommy Foggo for 7+ and their guardians:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34WPQZ6HMeo&list=UUnmz4PhNduZsS3FbTbpEGDQ&index=6>

Have a good week. Keep practising.

Mr Mace

