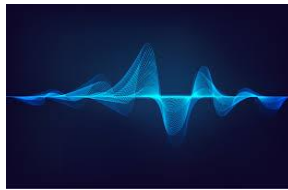


# Lower Strings Practice Tips



Hello Cellists and Double Bass Players. Here's our next newsletter with some hints and tips to get you motivated in your practices and focusing on phrasing and shaping the music. It can be really hard to get practising without having exams, concerts or other goals and like keeping fit or other practical work, it can be hard to keep it up. Feel free to get in touch via the Musica Holme Valley Facebook page @MusicaHolmeValley #musicakirkleesathome.

## Shaping and Phrasing the Music Don't just play the notes, play the Music



Playing the right notes with the right rhythm and dynamics is the start of the journey. Playing the music without thinking about the shape and phrasing is a bit like reading in public, but not putting feeling or emotion into your voice. It would be like speaking like a robot. It's important to know how the notes should be played. Where are the full stops or commas in the music? Imagine you were singing the music, where would you breathe? Where is the phrase heading? Is there a note that it's heading to and then away from? Have a look through one of your pieces without your instrument and see if you work out where the phrase is going, then try it with your instrument. Where is the height of the piece, where is the whole piece heading? This might be the loudest part of the piece although not always. It's often two thirds through the piece. There may be more than one way to phrase and shape the music. Listen to different recordings on YouTube. Have a look at this short clip on phrasing, see how the teacher encourages the pupil to play a repeated phrase differently the second time.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1OBoBvIE64&list=RDAWq\\_lbsZpT0&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1OBoBvIE64&list=RDAWq_lbsZpT0&index=1)

Scales too can be phrased as you go towards the tonic (the home note), give them some shape rather than see them as robotic exercises that we have to do for exams. Staccato notes don't necessary mean short and are rarely aggressive. Sometimes staccato can mean a longer note but just detached from the notes around it. There is often still a general shape and phrase to the music even if the notes are all staccato.

## Online Opportunities

### Warm Ups

The Benedetti Foundation has some great videos with some really good warm ups, including some great physical warm ups with stretches of all the muscles you use when playing the cello as well as getting your blood flowing. There also some good bowing patterns and left hand exercises:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7UGJZ1csw>

This video has a good exercise for string crossings as well as some good ideas for practising scales focussing on different technical issues:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIBkdbOu2U8&t=56s>

More advanced players may be interested in this video of warm ups, including a bowing exercise to develop flexible fingers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3g6gfYrSxI>

This bowing exercise is great for bowing distribution:

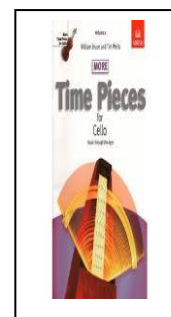
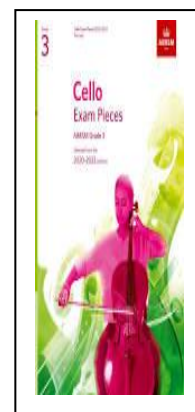
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Npj1PbdqPyA>



### Practice Routine Continued

As we said in the last newsletter, it can be very hard to start practising when you've had a break. If you've got out of the habit of practising, start by doing a little and try and build it up each day.

- 1) Warm Ups- Try and do some warm ups to get you body and mind focussed in to playing. This may include some improvising. See the videos in the 'Online Opportunities' section above.
- 2) Scales- Use scales to practise lots of different aspects of your playing: bow contact; arm weight; bow speed; intonation (see last newsletter); vibrato; shifting etc
- 3) Pieces- This is the bit we all want to get to in our practice. Look at the tricky section. Don't necessarily start at the beginning. Look for ways of practising and invent exercises to overcome technical difficulties. This will probably be very different than when you perform the pieces. Try playing without vibrato to check your intonation then put the vibrato back in. Think about the shape and phrasing of the music (see above). Have a look at the music away from the instrument and do some thinking about the phrase and shape. Sometimes practise very quietly as this focuses your mind on the technical and musical issues. Try memorising sections or whole pieces, not for its own sake but to make you listen more critically and this will also mean your entire mind is focussed on the playing and not reading the notes.
- 4) Set yourselves goals
- 5) Have fun and enjoy the music



## Specifically Double Bass

These warm up videos from the Benedetti foundation are excellent with some brilliant stretches and exercises: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OelqzDX1xSQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZgewtq8nmw>

This video has some great ideas for string crossing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzXQUh8ATQ8&t=187s>

Alice Kent suggests some good exercises for string crossing and semitone intonation (tuning)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5qUjQD2VIs>



Have a great summer and keep practising.

Mr Mace