



Violin/Viola

Instrumental Updates - 2

Hello again! Each half term, we will be sending you some hints and tips to keep you motivated in your practice. There'll be different areas to focus on, plus links and resources for you to have a look at. If you have any questions about your practice, you can email the Musica office and they will pass it on. I will do my best to answer them. We would love to see how you are getting on, so if you would like to send us a video of your playing, you can send an email to hello@musicakirklees.org or hashtag your videos with #musicakirkleesathome.



VIRTUAL BENEDETTI SESSIONS

Many of the resources from the virtual sessions are still available to browse at your leisure on YouTube or on the Benedetti Foundation website. Furthermore, the foundation are now offering "live lessons with tutors" and "after school sessions", available each week on Facebook Live, or to catch up anytime on the website.

<https://www.benedettifoundation.org/copy-of-resources>

<https://www.benedettifoundation.org/after-school-sessions>

For the older students, the "With Nicky" series on YouTube is well worth delving into. From vibrato to equipment, there are various videos containing great advice and exercises to try.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpKffHOzsdGYzjkUF4NplQpeXTToy9qsgl>

Through the summer months, the foundation is running a number of Mini Virtual Sessions – short focussed workshops on a wide variety of topics. Unlike the original Virtual Sessions, however, there is an admin fee attached.

<https://www.benedettifoundation.org/mini-sessions>

FOCUS 2 – LEFT HAND



A good left hand shape and technique will help you to move around notes more quickly and accurately and with better intonation (tuning). Below are a few things to remember and some exercises to try depending on your level.

- Keep the wrist straight
- Keep the fingers curved
- Try not to grip with the thumb

Beginners

Below is a link to a useful video on how to create a good left hand shape, with things to watch out for.

<https://youtu.be/bSNYat43hvg>

Intermediates

- Dangle your left hand down by your side and gently shake out your hand
- Look at the shape of your hand when it is dangling – there should be a natural curve to your fingers
- Bring your hand back up to your instrument – can you keep the same loose, curved shape?

Seniors

A fun little exercise to focus on the feeling of not clamping with the thumb...

- Choose a scale (keep it to one or two octaves)
- Whilst playing the scale slowly, draw slow circles with your left thumb (it's a bit like rubbing your tummy and patting your head to begin with!)

LISTENING

A lot of the time in our practice, we focus on learning the pitch, the rhythm, and the bowing, and elements such as tone, dynamics, phrasing and vibrato can be easily forgotten. Listening is important at any level of playing and below are some ideas of how listening can help you develop your playing of a piece.



Beginners

- Try listening to the CD if your book comes with one
- Follow your music through with your finger as you listen
- Can you spot any extra things – dynamics (changes in volume), smooth or detached notes, any changes of tempo (speed)?

Seniors

- Try to find a variety of recordings by different artists in order to compare their interpretation of the piece you are playing
- Listen to their articulation, phrasing, use of vibrato, rubato etc.
- Which elements of which recordings do you prefer?

Intermediates

- Try to find a recording of the piece you are playing
- Listen to the recording whilst following through your part
- Can you hear how the player distinguishes the phrases (musical sentences), or what articulation they play with? Some of it may be printed in your part, others will be interpretations

Remember! Don't just copy what you hear. Every player is different and has their own interpretation. You are looking for inspiration and ideas rather than copying exactly what another player has done.

TIPS FOR A PRODUCTIVE PRACTICE SESSION



The best practice sessions are not always the longer ones. Short, focussed practices can sometimes be the most productive. Here are a few hints and tips to try to keep your practices worthwhile:

1. Try to get rid of any **distractions** – switch off the TV, put your phone out of reach (and on silent!) and find a nice, quiet room to work in.
2. **Plan** your practice – how long are you going to spend on your warm up, your scales, a specific section of a piece? What is your **goal** for today? (This doesn't have to be anything huge or monumental!)
3. Practice **mindfully** – don't just play through a scale or a piece repeatedly but listen to every sound you are creating, think about how your bow hold or left hand shape is.
4. Try to figure out what is making a certain thing difficult – is it the rhythm, the bowing, a difficult shift? Can you **isolate the problem** and then work out ways to practise it?
5. Finally, if you find yourself getting frustrated, **take a break** and come back to it later. Be easy on yourself, learning new things takes time; it won't necessarily go right the first, second, or even third time you try it.

Have fun and keep playing!

