

To L. H. F.

FUNDAMENTAL TECHNICAL STUDIES

ON A SCIENTIFIC BASIS

FOR THE YOUNG VIOLINIST

BY

D. C. DOUNIS

- I. CULTIVATING THE FEELING OF BALANCE BETWEEN
THE FINGERS OF THE LEFT HAND.
- II. PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE OF THE FINGERS THROUGH
THEIR LATERAL MOVEMENT.
- III. DEVELOPING SMOOTHNESS OF ACTION AND
EVENNESS OF TONE IN CROSSING
STRINGS WITH THE BOW.

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Foreword

For the wide and ever - increasing number of teachers who want to impart to their pupils the elementary technical principles of violin playing in a more scientific and rational way, this work has been especially written.

The material contained herein is presented not only with this view in mind, but is also in such manner arranged as to enable the young violinist to lay a solid technical foundation in order to meet successfully, later on, the exigencies of modern music.

As already stated in my method "The Artist's Technique of Violin Playing," technique does not consist merely in training the fingers and the arm but, principally, in training the brain and the memory. Technique should be a process of mental training. The student should be accustomed from the very beginning of his studies to think each movement *before* making it; he must have a distinct picture of each physical movement reflected in the brain before he makes it actual, spontaneously, through will power. Technique should be nothing else but a series of brain-reflected movements.

Scientific analysis along psycho - physiological lines shows that in the execution of any physical act three factors have to be considered: the mental factor which conceives the movement, the nervous factor which transmits the movement to the muscles, and the muscular factor which performs the movement. The purpose of practice is to co - ordinate the mental, the nervous, and the muscular factors to such a degree of swift responsiveness as to develop the whole process into a reflex action. Here the difference between mechanical and intelligently guided and controlled - practice must be pointed out:

The result of mechanical practice is uncontrolled reflex action.

The result of mentally directed practice is controlled reflex action.

One of the principal aids for the higher development of technique should now be mentioned, namely, the control of speed. Paradoxical as it may seem,

it must be stated that active interference of the brain during the execution of a rapid passage acts as a brake and hinders velocity. In other words, it is impossible for the player to control each note of the passage when playing it at a fast tempo. The explanation is that in a rapid passage, individual reflex actions become so swift as to be automatic-involuntary - because even the swiftest mind, on account of the great speed, cannot control each one of them. The secret of controlling these involuntary, swift reflex actions - control of speed - lies in the ability of the mind to analyse them in detail by dividing them into groups.* The control of these groups of reflex actions - and not of each reflex action separately - makes for absolute certainty and freedom in technique, whenever rapidity is the aim.

The much prevailing habit and belief among violin players of repeating every day blindly and unintelligently scales, arpeggios, etc., in the hope that this will, in some magic way, solve all technical difficulties, cannot be too strongly condemned. Under this come also all those so-called discoveries of secret systems to acquire technical proficiency on the violin and which have been offered to the violin world from time to time by teachers whose good will is beyond doubt, but, unfortunately, without Paganini's permission for the use of his famous name.

The student should never be allowed to perform a movement in a mechanical way without thinking first. Such practice is useless. The mechanical repetition of a passage does not produce results, except fatigue. On the contrary, by a patient, persistent and above all, intelligent practice along scientific lines not only certain and permanent results will be obtained, but the student will save himself time and nervous energy, two prerequisites for the success of a professional career at the present time. "Obtain the maximum of results with a minimum of time and toil" should be the motto of every student; this is also the motto of the present work.

D. C. DOUNIS.

* I have adopted this method for developing the staccato bowing. See my Op. 21: "The Staccato."

Directions for Practising

(To be strictly observed)

1. Try to keep the back of the knuckle joints of the four fingers of the left hand parallel to the strings.
2. Remember to vibrate on every note as freely as possible; contrary to general belief, this is of paramount importance for a correct technical foundation of the left hand.
3. The playing finger should be placed on the string firmly, with a decided, non-quivering, independent and vigorous finger action. Keep all other non-playing fingers relaxed; the fingers preceding the playing one should touch lightly, relaxed, the string on their respective tones. But do not forget to use the playing finger as vigorously as possible.
4. Raise the fingers in their entirety, retaining their natural curved state; the finger away from the string should have the same curved shape as when on the string.
5. Cultivate the feeling of raising the finger from the string and letting it drop on it, dropping the finger in order to play an ascending tone, raising it for a descending one.
6. Avoid any "breaks" in the continuous flow of tone.
7. When crossing strings with the bow, approach the new string gradually and by a co-ordinated, elastic movement of the arm, hand and fingers obtain a perfect binding of the tone during the change of string level.
8. Let your elbow describe a round line following the curve of the bridge.
9. Imagine that you are moving the bow on a round surface.
10. Once again: think before playing. Visualize the correct movement required to play the desired tone and then, and only then, proceed to the actual playing of it.

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Fundamental Technical Studies

ON A SCIENTIFIC BASIS

For the Young Violinist

D. C. DOUNIS, Op. 23

I

CULTIVATING THE FEELING OF BALANCE BETWEEN THE FINGERS OF THE LEFT HAND

The main objective of the young violinist, as far as the left hand is concerned, should be to acquire the "feeling of balance" between the fingers. We know that the third and fourth fingers are by nature weaker than the first and second. No amount of finger exercises for strengthening the weak third and fourth fingers will achieve the desired result if the student does not constantly bear in mind that what should be aimed

at is not the development of strength but the cultivation of balance between the fingers. To attain this purpose the following specific exercises are offered. Their sole aim is to divide the natural power and strength of the fingers equally between the four fingers, thereby enabling the student to acquire the feeling of balance in his hand and between the fingers.

The musical score consists of two exercises, labeled 1 and 2, each presented on three staves. Exercise 1 is in 3/4 time and begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of rhythmic patterns with slurs and fingerings (indicated by the number 4) for the third and fourth fingers. Exercise 2 is also in 3/4 time and begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It follows a similar structure to Exercise 1, with rhythmic patterns and fingerings for the third and fourth fingers. The notation includes various note values, slurs, and repeat signs.

The image displays a musical score for three systems. Each system consists of two staves. The first staff of each system is marked with a large number (3, 4, or 3) and a treble clef, indicating the measure count and clef. The second staff of each system is also in treble clef. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped with slurs and fingerings (indicated by the number 4). Repeat signs with first and second endings are used throughout the score. The first system is in 3/4 time, the second in 4/4 time, and the third in 3/4 time.

5

6

The ability to space the fingers at will, i.e., the formation of tones, semitones, etc., between them, is of primary importance not only for developing the intonation, but also for developing flexibility

in the setting of the fingers on the strings. Following are three groups of different spacings of the fingers in the natural first position.

Group I- TWO TONES AND ONE SEMITONE

G string

a) b) c)

D string

a) b) c)

A string

a) b) c)

E string

a) b) c)

Detailed description: This section contains four staves of musical notation, one for each string (G, D, A, E). Each staff is divided into three measures labeled a), b), and c). Each measure contains a sequence of four notes with a slur over them, representing a specific fingering pattern for the interval of two tones and one semitone. The notes are: a) G2, A2, B2, C3; b) G2, A2, B2, C3; c) G2, A2, B2, C3. The notation uses a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Group II- WHOLE TONES

G string D string A string E string

Detailed description: This section contains a single staff of musical notation with four measures, one for each string (G, D, A, E). Each measure contains a sequence of four notes with a slur over them, representing a specific fingering pattern for the interval of whole tones. The notes are: G2, A2, B2, C3. The notation uses a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Group III- TWO SEMITONES AND ONE TONE AND A HALF

G string
a) $\text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2$
b) $\text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2, \text{C}_2$
c) $\text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2, \text{C}_2, \text{B}_1$

D string
a) $\text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2$
b) $\text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2, \text{G}_2$
c) $\text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2, \text{G}_2, \text{F}_2$

A string
a) $\text{A}_2, \text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2$
b) $\text{A}_2, \text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2$
c) $\text{A}_2, \text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2, \text{C}_2$

E string
a) $\text{E}_3, \text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2$
b) $\text{E}_3, \text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2$
c) $\text{E}_3, \text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2, \text{G}_2$

The exercises 1) to 6) should be practised in the different spacings of the fingers, as exemplified in the above three groups.

Each position on the violin has three forms: the natural, the lower and the higher. The lower and higher forms are often called intermediate positions. The lower form of the first position is

called half-position. The exercises 1) to 6) should also be practised in all three forms of the first position, as this will greatly aid the student to acquire a correct mental picture of the relative position of the tones in the first position in any key. Following is an illustration of the three forms of the first position.

Example a) of Group I is used as illustration:

LOWER POSITION	NATURAL POSITION	HIGHER POSITION
----------------	------------------	-----------------

G string
a) $\text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2$ | $\text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2, \text{C}_2$ | $\text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2, \text{C}_2, \text{B}_1$

D string
a) $\text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2$ | $\text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2, \text{G}_2$ | $\text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2, \text{G}_2, \text{F}_2$

A string
a) $\text{A}_2, \text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2$ | $\text{A}_2, \text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2$ | $\text{A}_2, \text{G}_2, \text{F}_2, \text{E}_2, \text{D}_2, \text{C}_2$

E string
a) $\text{E}_3, \text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2$ | $\text{E}_3, \text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2$ | $\text{E}_3, \text{D}_3, \text{C}_3, \text{B}_2, \text{A}_2, \text{G}_2$

II

PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE OF THE FINGERS
THROUGH THEIR LATERAL MOVEMENT

As I have pointed out in my "Artist's Technique of Violin Playing," the lateral or horizontal movement of the fingers, i. e., the one used in executing stretches or chromatic passages, is the best means to promote independence of the fingers. It is this movement that imparts to the fingers the

feeling of "individuality" and freedom. The following exercises should be practised with the utmost rhythmical precision and with utmost expression. It is absolutely essential to vibrate on every note as freely as possible.

The image displays two musical exercises, labeled 1 and 2, each consisting of four staves of music. Exercise 1 is in G major and Exercise 2 is in D minor. Both exercises feature chromatic passages with fingerings (4, 4, 4, 4, 4) and slurs. Exercise 1 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. Exercise 2 also starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The music is written for a single melodic line, likely for violin.

This musical score is for guitar and is divided into two main sections: 3/4 and 4/4. The 3/4 section consists of the first four systems of music. The 4/4 section consists of the remaining four systems. The notation includes treble clefs, a common time signature (C), and various fretting techniques indicated by numbers 0, 4, and 5 above the notes. Slurs and repeat signs are used throughout the piece to indicate phrasing and structure. The 3/4 section features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the 4/4 section includes more complex rhythmic patterns with frequent sixteenth notes.

This musical score consists of two systems, labeled '5' and '6' at the beginning of their respective staves. Each system contains four staves of music. The notation is for guitar, featuring treble clefs, a common time signature (C), and various fret numbers (0, 4) above the notes. The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and the use of slurs and ties to connect notes across measures. The first system (labeled '5') shows a sequence of chords and melodic lines, with a double bar line and repeat signs. The second system (labeled '6') continues the piece with similar complex rhythmic structures. The overall style is technical and intricate, typical of advanced guitar repertoire.

7

4 1 - 1 4 2 - 2 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 2 - 2 4 1 - 1 4

0 4 1 - 1 4 2 - 2 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 2 - 2 4 1 - 1 4

0 4 1 - 1 4 2 - 2 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 2 - 2 4 1 - 1 4

0 1 - 1 2 - 2 3 - 3 3 - 3 3 - 3 2 - 2 1 - 1

0 1 - 1 2 - 2 3 - 3 3 - 3 3 - 3 2 - 2 1 - 1

4 1 - 1 4 2 - 2 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 2 - 2 4 1 - 1 4

4 1 - 1 4 2 - 2 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 2 - 2 4 1 - 1 4

1 1 - 1 4 2 - 2 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 3 - 3 4 2 - 2 4 1 - 1 4

III

DEVELOPING SMOOTHNESS OF ACTION AND EVENNESS OF TONE
IN CROSSING STRINGS WITH THE BOW

String crossing is one of the greatest difficulties of bow technique. Each string has its own straight line in which the bow moves, i. e., the position of the right arm and the bow in relation to each string is a different one. Accordingly, each string constitutes a level which determines the position of the arm and the bow.

Change of string is nothing else but a change of the plane on which the bow moves. Smoothness and evenness are required for an effective change of string. To accomplish this, the new string should be approached gradually and not abruptly, i. e., the angle at which the bow is held should be altered gradually to that required for the string it is approaching; from the flexibility of the shoulder joint depends largely the smooth transfer of strings.

In changing string the right hand plays the same part that the thumb of the left hand plays in shifting:

a) in changing from a lower to a higher string the hand simply, without any jerk, precedes the movement of the arm by a downward bending movement at the wrist;

b) in changing from a higher to a lower string the hand quietly follows the raising of the arm to the new level.

The fingers of the right hand should be supple enough in order not to offer any resistance to the movements of the wrist and the arm, but, on the contrary, to help keep the bow, through compensating movements, in the same correct re-

lation to the arm as before the changing of string.

A very important thing to observe in connection with string crossing is the principle of economy of movement. The arm and hand movement for changing string level should never be greater in extent than necessary. Here, the following fact should be noted: the amplitude of the movement of the arm and the hand in changing string varies according to the part of the bow at which the change is made. At the frog, the amplitude of the movement is minimum; at the point it is maximum and at the middle is medium. In an alternate change of string with the same bow-stroke, the amplitude of the movement widens gradually during the down-bow as the point is approached, while during the up-bow, the amplitude of the movement narrows as the frog is approached. The non-observance of the above fact, regarding the amplitude of the movement, has deceived many a pedagogue in believing that the change of string is effected in a different manner according to the part of the bow at which it takes place. As in the case of the change of direction of the bow-stroke, to effect an ideal transition from one string to another, i. e., to be able to maintain a continuously even and uninterrupted line of tone during the string transfer, at any part of the bow and in any tempo, from the most rapid to the slowest, the co-operation of the entire arm is a sine-qua-non requisite; this is the reason why the flexibility of the shoulder joint is of such importance for a smooth and even string crossing.

2

4 4 0 0 4 0

0 4 4 0 0 4 0

0 4 4 0 0 4 0

0 4 0 4 0

0 0 4 0 4 0

0 0 4 0 4

3

4 4 4 0 0 4 4

4 4 4 0 0 4 4

4 4 4 0 0 4 4

4 0 4 0

0 4 0 4 0

0 4 0 4 0

4

The first staff shows two measures of music. The first measure has fingerings 0, 0, 0, 0, 4. The second measure has fingerings 0, 0, 4. The second staff also has two measures. The first measure has fingerings 4, 0, 4, 0, 4, 0. The second measure has fingerings 4, 0. The third staff has two measures. The first measure has fingerings 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 4, 0, 0, 0. The second measure is empty.

The preceding exercises 1) to 4) should be practised according to the following variants. The first measure of exercise 1) is given as illustration.

a) Whole Bow.
Also at the Frog, Middle and Point.

The notation shows a single measure in treble clef with a common time signature. It contains six eighth notes with fingerings 0, 0, 4, 4, 0, 4. A bowing mark (a vertical line with a downward-pointing arrow) is placed above the first note.

b) Whole Bow Point Whole Bow Frog

The notation shows a single measure in treble clef with a common time signature. It contains six eighth notes with fingerings 0, 0, 4, 4, 0, 4. The notes are grouped into two pairs, each with a slur underneath.

c) Frog Whole Bow Point Whole Bow

The notation shows a single measure in treble clef with a common time signature. It contains six eighth notes with fingerings 0, 0, 4, 4, 0, 4. The notes are grouped into two pairs, each with a slur underneath.

d) Whole Bow

The notation shows a single measure in treble clef with a common time signature. It contains six eighth notes with fingerings 0, 0, 4, 4, 0, 4. A bowing mark (a vertical line with a downward-pointing arrow) is placed above each note. The notes are grouped into two pairs, each with a slur underneath.

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