

BOW STYLE BY STYLE PERIOD

Teaching the secondary school string player to play Baroque, Classical, and Romantic music with authentic bow style

Presenter: Dr. Robert G. Hasty
Associate Director of Orchestras, Henry and Leigh Bienen School of Music,
Northwestern University
Music Director, Kenosha Symphony Orchestra

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING AUTHENTIC BOW STYLE
How important is the concept of achieving the sound of the composer's era?

"And since everyone knows about the violin family, it is unnecessary to indicate or write anything further about it." Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, 1619

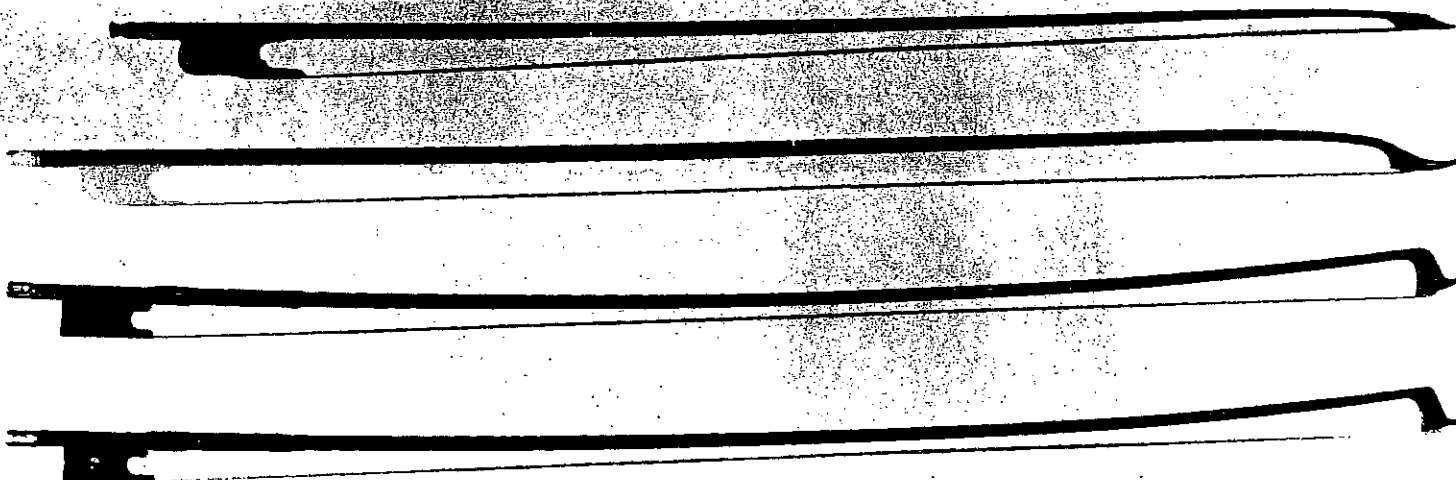
"A formula for the correct rendering of everything, which can become a universal law, applicable to every case – no, there is not such a thing, though many people assume there is." Wilhelm Furtwängler, in a BBC interview

"Vivaldi was performed by Karajan in much the same way as Mozart or Tchaikovsky. A best-selling album of popular baroque pieces amounts to a hilarious travesty, like plainchant sung by a pop group." Norman Lebrecht, author of *The Maestro Myth*

"Blessed are those works that don't need interpreters; they cannot be vitriolized by histrionic mountebanks as happens very often to the divine art of music." Arturo Toscanini, as inscribed in a child's autograph book

"I cannot myself escape a feeling of responsibility to the past and to the intentions of the composer." David D. Boyden, author of *The History of Violin Playing from its Origins to 1761*

"Students identify and describe the stylistic features of a given musical work that serve to define its aesthetic tradition and its historical or cultural context." Content Standard number nine (Understanding music in relation to history and culture), *National standards for Arts Education*



Stages in the evolution of the bow stick, head, and nut, 1694–c. 1800 (numbering from the top to the bottom):

- (a) Bow dated 1694 (detail given in Plate 29d).
- (b) Bow by Thomas Smith (d. 1789), probably made between 1760 and 1770.
- (c) Bow by Tourte père, c. 1770–80.
- (d) Bow by François Tourte, c. 1800.



(a) Frontispiece of Leopold Mozart's *Violinschule* (1756).



(b) Leopold Mozart playing the violin under his chin (*Violinschule*, Fig. II).

Pre-Tourte Era (Seventeenth Century to late Eighteenth Century)

"Every tone, even the strongest attack, has a small, even if barely audible, softness at the beginning of the stroke; for it would otherwise be no tone but only an unpleasant and unintelligible noise. This same softness must be heard also at the end of each stroke." Leopold Mozart, author of *Versuch einer Gründlichen Violinschule* (A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing), 1756.

Concepts that students should know:

- The music composed before 1750 was performed with a different bow; one that is convex instead of concave and generally shorter than the modern bow. This bow did not allow for an attack and the bow hair had much more "give" (i.e. quadruple stops could be played simultaneously). Before the bow of François Tourte (late 18th century), there was no uniformity to bows.
- The old bow's physical properties caused a crescendo/decrescendo with each note (a.k.a. *messa di voce*). On the modern bow: begin the note with a yielding of the bow, pressure into the string, and yielding again. In rapid succession this resembles a "string of pearls" where there is clear separation, but without sounding completely "stopped".
- The bow doesn't leave the string. Staccato and spiccato are generally synonymous and only indicate separation between notes. Any lifting of the bow would be a "controlled" lift (usually in slower tempi).

Classroom applications:

- LISTENING: Students should always listen to examples of style. Incorporate the listening with analysis through verbal and written responses. Students can respond to such inquiries as: "Describe the articulation that you hear", "How would you imitate this sound on your instrument", etc.
- Use words to describe the sound (i.e. "wow", "hah", be creative). Avoid using the word "marcato"! Beware of publisher markings!
- Try having students hold the bow three to four inches up the stick away from the frog. It's harder to attack the note this way and resembles the "feel" of the old bows.
- Bow speed on quarter notes should still be quick after the soft attack.
- Stay in the upper half or upper 2/3 in order to keep the sound light and transparent.

The Era of Standardization of Tourte Bow Usage (Late Eighteenth Century to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century)

The range of bow styles increased with the advent of the Tourte bow, allowing the bow to leave the string, and the beginning of strong tone with long, unbroken bow strokes as exemplified in the playing of contemporary violinists Spohr, Viotti, and Kreutzer.

CLASSICAL STYLE PERIOD

Concepts that students should know:

- The modern bow was more widely used, but elements of the Baroque still remain.
 1. Separation of bow strokes was still in practice for any notes not slurred.
Example: If Mozart's G minor (40) Symphony was played with the incorrect bow style (without separation); it would sound as if the second and third notes of the main theme are tied.
 2. Notes rarely receive a hard attack or accent. Accents are more of a "lean" into the note with a burst of bow speed and pressure.
Sforzandos and rinforzandos do not receive the modern attack.
- The bow leaves the string for most staccato notes (i.e. at fast tempos) for a spiccato effect, BUT this is a brush stroke where the bow lands smoothly and leaves smoothly. There is still a horizontal motion.
- The ends of phrases end beautifully and mostly with a brief perceived diminuendo.

Classroom applications:

- **LISTENING:** This is always the best way. If you play a string instrument, demonstrate, or bring someone in who can. Direct the listening for student analysis.
- Find the balance point for spiccato: balance the bow on the finger and place the bow on the string at that point. Students will find that they can control the bow better.
- Practice landing the bow on the string at the balance point like an "airplane" and immediately "taking off". Landing and taking off like a helicopter is a no-no. Avoid using the word "bounce"! Beware of publisher markings!
- Describe phrase shaping in both literal and graphical forms for melody.

ROMANTIC AND LATER:

"All music by composers from Beethoven on should be interpreted literally and not be altered in any way." Gunther Schuller, at a conducting master class in 1995

Concepts that students should know:

- By this time, the Tourte bow was standardized and hasn't changed since around 1800.
- The previously ordinary manner (non-legato) was gradually changing (according to taste) to a more expressive and vocal style ("Singing sound quality" - *Versuch...*). Bow changes now could sound imperceptible.
- Most of the modern bow effects used today (i.e. sforzando, martelé, sautillé (flying spiccato), etc.) are in full use in the Romantic period.
- Classical elements still remain:
 1. Softer accents still remain in the music of Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and their contemporaries.
 2. The brush stroke also is used in the music by the above composers.
- Most composers are much more literal and specific in their markings and indications (i.e. Mahler would write entire sentences to describe bow style).
- Because of the clear instructions given by composers, music is much more simpler to interpret since the Romantic period.

Classroom applications:

- LISTENING: Just press the play button and watch the magic. Articulation is the focus point here. There are a lot more effects to listen for in this style period. Compare and contrast Romantic composers such as Berlioz and Tchaikovsky to Beethoven and Brahms. Point out the differences in articulation (i.e. accents).
- The application of bow pressure at the beginning of the note. Martelé, marcato, and accents: wiggle the string without making a sound, then draw the bow quickly.
- Use graphic representations of articulation to illustrate the sound produced.

A Style and Articulation Summary (remember, nothing is absolute, this sheet is only an over-simplified guide for your own interpretation, each piece will require its own analysis)

Articulation:	<u>Baroque</u>	<u>Classical</u>	<u>Romantic and Later</u>
General	Messa di voce: Every note begins softly followed immediately with a crescendo then ending with a diminuendo.	Bow changes should be noticeable, not smooth.	Follow the music exactly as printed; smooth bow changes are the norm.
Staccato	The bow stays on the string. Stay in upper half or 2/3 of bow with quick bow speed. Try "choking" up on the bow about 3-4 inches	Staccato means to separate, do not play the note "short". Notes should still begin and end softly in the upper 2/3 of the bow.	Early Romantics (i.e. Beethoven): continue classical elements. Late Romantics: Play exactly as printed.
Spiccato	Same as staccato. Only lift the bow in slow tempos; however, this must be a "controlled" lift near the frog.	A controlled brush stroke at the balance point of the bow. Avoid using the word "bounce".	Literal interpretation is important. Uncontrolled spiccato is now allowed ("flying spiccato").
Legato	Continue the messa di voce style. Vibrato changes according to the loudness.	Less messa di voce, more détaché with smoother (but still noticeable) bow changes.	Smooth bow changes.
Accents	Play the note with more emphasis, but don't "attack" the beginning of the note.	Accents are played with more bow speed, still no "attack" at the beginning of the note.	After Beethoven (and contemporaries), the beginning of the note may be attacked with abruptness according to accent style.