



Viola Book 0

Auditive Phase

Prepare yourself for (the first part of) a viola method book by developing your ear and viola basic technique.

The result is that you play freely on the viola with a relaxed technique, beautiful tone, creativity and musicality.

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Introduction

This book serves as a preparation for other viola method books. That's why the name is 'Viola Book 0': it's a preparation to the first part of several method books like Suzuki or Sassmanshaus.

Problem

I often see beginner violists bent over their music stands. They play scratchy and play note after note.

They hardly have a basic technique, don't know how to create a beautiful tone, have no idea what they do musically and are overwhelmed by the many things they have to learn at the same time.

This phase takes very long, sometimes years. In these years many wannabe violists quit.

Luckily there is a way to get results faster and have more fun.

Auditive Phase

All auditive phase means is 'without sheet music'.

First you learn the basic technique: viola hold, bow hold and bowing with a beautiful tone. This needs to be automated, before you can proceed to learn other things. It's a condition before you take any new steps.

Only if you have a good basic technique, you can start playing with fingers on the strings. You will learn the fingers one by one.

To maintain the student's focus on the basic technique and the listening, the teacher demonstrates the pieces the student has to learn.

Playing 'note by note' doesn't happen in this way, as the piece as a smooth musical whole to the student.

Goal

After 10 to 20 weeks of lessons the auditive phase comes to an end.

At the end of the auditive phase the student as to be able to do the following:

- To have a relaxed, flexible and correct viola and bow hold whilst having a healthy body posture.
- To possess a basic bowing technique, being: moving the fingers of the right hand while bowing, bowing smoothly, being able to do some bow division and being able to play different tempi effortlessly.

- To be able to intonate: the student corrects the place of the fingers on the string by ear.
- To play simple tunes on the viola by ear with a beautiful tone and in tune.
- The student has a musical experience in the lessons and during practice time. The student is motivated.

De length of the auditive phase depends on the student's progress, talent and effort.

After this auditive phase the student can proceed to a regular viola method book. In this book the student starts over again on open strings, learning the fingers one by one.

The basic technique is taught twice: once in the auditive phase with this book and once with a regular method book while reading notes. Perhaps this seems like a longer journey, but in reality it's a shorter journey. Besides that the student will play the pieces in the method book more musically, with a more beautiful tone and with better intonation.

Viola hold



In steps

- Hold the viola in front of you with the scroll to the left
- Lift the viola above your head
- Point the scroll to the front left
- Slide the viola with the chinrest side along your cheek
- Put the viola on your shoulder
- Let the viola rest in balance on your collarbone/chest

Please note...

- Don't have the scroll too high like you are shooting on birds in the air
- Don't have the scroll too low like you are shooting on mice on the ground
- The viola rests 50% on your collar bone and 50% in your left hand. You shouldn't squeeze your viola with your chin and shoulder. The risk of injury is very high. Besides that it's better for your intonation (playing in tune) if your viola rests partially in your left hand.
- In this stage you place your left hand against the sound box, your wrist is straight and your fingers are above the strings like an umbrella. In this way your left hand hold is already preparing itself to finger placement, vibrato and position play.
- Your left wrist is straight and your left elbow points to the floor. Your left arm is relaxed and dangles under the viola.
- Experiment with different chinrests, shoulder rests, cushions or nothing at all to discover what is best for you. There's no one stop solution for everybody.

Strings



Guess
the string

The teacher
turns
around and
bows on an
open string.

The student
names the
string.



Exercises with the bow



Bow hold

- all fingers round
- wrist and knuckles low

Hold the bow at the balance point. As you train yourself in the exercises, hold the bow more and more to the frog until you reach the frog (see picture).

When you are not playing, keep the bow up straight, so you don't strain your hand and fingers.

Tip: Use a fake bow for the exercises

Instead of doing these exercises with the bow, you can also use a thin round wooden stick. These are for sale at various DIY shops.

If you buy one, please mind that the width, weight and length are somewhat similar to your real bow. To make this fake bow even more realistic you can make one of the ends a little heavier to simulate the frog.

The advantage of using a fake bow is that you won't fear to drop it and you can experiment and relax more. This is good for your right hand technique. Besides that the hair of the bow doesn't get in the way of the exercises you perform at the balance point.

Build the bow hold

1. Hold your bow with your left hand in the middle of the bow without touching the hair.
2. Throw your fingers (right hand) relaxed over the bow with a gummy bear feeling in your hand and fingers. Your thumb should not be locked. Your thumb nail should point in the direction of the tip of the bow. The side of your thumb touches the bow between the leather and the frog. Don't put your thumb INTO the frog!
3. Hold your wrist and knuckles low on the same height as the bow itself.
4. Place the tip of your pinky on the bow. The pinky is curved. The other fingers hang loosely over the bow.

5. Slowly let go of the left hand and hold the bow with your right hand only.

Window whiper



Do the following exercise holding the bow at the balance point and move slowly to the frog as you get more trained and experienced.

Take the bow in the bow hold and move the bow like a window whiper by pivoting your wrist.

By giving your bow a push with your pinky, the bow swings to the right.

By giving your bow a push with your index finger, the bow swings back to the left to the starting position.

Experience the 'ping pong'-ing between your pinky and index finger.

During the whole exercise the bow hold stays intact.

Bridge



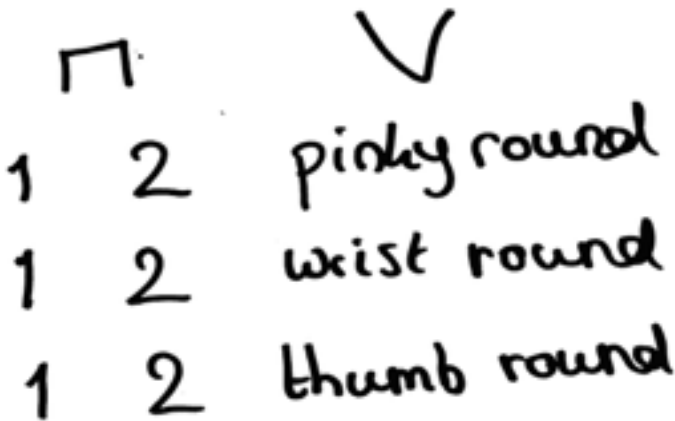
Do the following exercise holding the bow at the balance point and move slowly to the frog as you get more trained and experienced.

In this exercise only your pinky is allowed to move (bend and stretch). If your other fingers, your hand or your wrist move along, grasp the palm of your hand and hold it during the exercise.

By bending and stretching (never overstretch and/or lock your pinky), the tip of the bow slowly moves up and down.

Dry bowing

In this exercise you bow with the whole bow and watch your pinky, thumb OR wrist. Only watch one thing at a time. On down bow say out loud '1 2' and on up bow say out loud 'pinky/thumb/wrist round'. Do this rhythmically and evenly in speed, pressure and sound.



The first symbol above (the square without bottom) is the symbol for down bow. This symbol resembles the frog. Down bow is a bow stroke that moves from frog to tip.

The second symbol above (the V) is the symbol for up bow. This symbol resembles the tip of your bow. Up bow is a bow stroke that moves from tip to frog.

There are 5 ways to do the above three exercises:

- 1) Have your left arm in viola hold, bow through your elbow (have a cloth in your elbow to bow on).
- 2) Through your elbow over a cloth while holding the viola with your left arm in viola hold (so you bow under the viola).
- 3) Hold a toilet roll on your left shoulder with your left hand and bow through the toilet roll.
- 4) Take your viola on your shoulder in viola hold. Observe where you normally bow (between fingerboard and bridge). Remember this spot, put the viola away and hold a toilet roll on this place/height with your left hand. Bow through the toilet roll, simulating bowing on your viola.
- 5) Play the exercises on the viola on each string separately.



Bowing exercises on open strings

Do these exercises on all strings separately. Do these exercises rhythmically. Try to practice as many times on each string. Don't practice more on a certain string you like better. If you have more difficulty bowing on one specific string, you can consider practicing on that string more often. For most students this is the G-string or the D-string.

Use the middle 50% of the bow. To be aware of the place of the bow, put stickers on a quarter of the bow from the frog and a quarter of the bow from the tip. Bow between the stickers. For short notes (from sticker to the middle of the bow) you can consider putting a third sticker on the middle of the bow.

Down Up Rest Rest
Ap-ple

Down Up Down Up Rest Rest
Ap-ple Ap-ple

Long Long (count for the first note '1 2' and for the second note '3 4')
Pear Pear

Long (count for this note '1 2 3 4')
Or-ange-ap-ple

In these exercises the duration of one bow stroke is doubled and then doubled again. The idea is that you are using the same 50% of the bow for each bow stroke. For

the last very long bow strong you can use more bow if necessary. Play these exercises in different tempi.

Bow Division

The long notes are from sticker to sticker, so on the middle 50% of the bow. The short notes are from sticker to the middle of the bow at the frog or at the tip.

Long Long Short Short Short Short
Pan-cakes ma-ple- sy-rop

Short Short Short Short Long Long
Ma-ple- sy-rop pan-cakes

Long Short Short Long Short Short
Straw-ber-ry Straw-ber-ry

Short Short Long Short Short Long
Cin-na-mon Cin-na-mon
At the frog at the tip

'Keep up' bowing

Long Short Long Short Long Short
Short Long Short Long Short Long

Use the same bow length for the long and short notes.

Doing this think about shooting an arrow with a bow: slowly tighten it and shoot it away!

Explore your bow

Move your fingers while bowing like a swimming jellyfish. Knead with your fingers, keep your wrist flexible and keep your upper and lower arm almost steady. This might take some weeks or months to master and will improve the fluency of your bowing and your tone.

Down bow -> fingers stretch

Up bow -> fingers bend

Start in the middle of the bow with bowing short notes with little bow... move (while bowing short notes) slowly to the tip until you reach the 'extreme tip'. Now (while bowing short notes) move back to the middle of the bow and move to the frog until you reach the 'extreme frog'. After this move back slowly to the middle.

Super Slow

Make the longest bow you possibly can bowing with whole bow. It should take as long as possible. Play around with weight and speed to be able to keep a beautiful tone. Do this exercise up bow and down bow. Take care that the bow is rosined sufficiently.

Silent string changes

Let the bow rest on the string (slightly above the middle of the bow) and change from the G-string to the D-string, to the A-string, to the E-string and back again. Let the bow rest on the string with weight and without making a sound.

String change exercises

Do the string change separately from the bowing, so:
bow - change - bow

Take a break to be able to perform the string change very controlled.

Important in string changes:

- make the movement of the string change as small as possible
- do the string changes with your upper arm, bow mainly with your lower arm
- don't make noises like scratch, squeak etc
- don't bow and change at the same time: make the string change during the bow change (between up bow and down bow)
- always make a beautiful tone

Perform the exercises on the next page with lots of repeats and in different tempi.

Always begin down bow. Every character is one bow stroke. The color and the letter indicate the string you should be on. Read from left to right and from top to bottom.

CCGG
GGCC
GGDD
DDGG
DDAA
AADD

CGCG
GCGC
GDGD
DGDG
DADA
ADAD

1st Finger



- Have your index finger against the neck of the viola. With the side of your index finger you should feel the edge at the beginning of the fingerboard.
- Your left thumb should be somewhat in front of your first finger (index finger).
- Put your finger down firmly and confidently.

- Your index finger should be round when placed on the string, so your finger tip touches the string. Your knuckles shouldn't collapse.
- Listen to yourself... are you playing in tune?
- Keep your left wrist straight.
- The other fingers are dangling above the string like an umbrella.

Pizz (pluck the string) the exercises before you bow in guitar hold and after that in viola hold.

In the following exercises there is no string color, which means you have to perform these exercises on each string. 0 Means open string and 1 means first finger.

Variate in tempo and rhythm. Repeat the exercises.

0011

1100

0101

1010

Twinkle twinkle (part of it) in 3 ways

0000110

0000110

0000110

Exercises

Recognize the color of the string. 0 Means open string and 1 means first finger.

00110

001111010

1110011110

0011111101

0101010

101010

110101001

101010101010

111100111100

000011000011

001111

Improvise with the 1st finger and make your own music!



2nd Finger



Pizz the exercises before you bow.

Do the exercises on each string.

Variate in tempo and rhythm.

Repeat the exercises.

Do Re Mi

012 210 201 120

On each string.

Exercises

0120 0120 0120

0120

0121210

0121020

021012120

02020210

Mary has a little lamb

2101222 111 222

2101222 11 210

Mary

22210 00111120

22210 0011210

Improvise with the 1st and 2nd finger and make your own music!

3rd Finger



Place the 3rd finger tightly against the 2nd finger.

Double stops

To be able to properly check the 3rd finger, one should be able to play two strings at the same time. These are double stops. Practice them first on two open strings.

Tips when playing on two open strings at the same time:

- Don't look at your viola, bow or strings
- Listen if you hear both strings sounding at the same time and preferably equally loud
- Distribute the weight of your bow over the two strings
- Make long and slow bow strokes and keep correcting yourself along the way
- Play in the string with a large tone, don't bow to cautiously

Check the 3rd finger with an open string
listening to the octave

0123 0

0123 0

0123 0

Major scales

0123 0123
3210 3210

0123 0123
3210 3210

0123 0123
3210 3210

Exercises

01233210

Play this exercise on each string and check the 3rd finger with the open string.

012121232323212
121010

0123 03030303
21020202 1012
30303 21010101
2020202 3030

Father Jacob

0120 0120

230 230

010 320 010 320

010 010

Jumps

0213 3120

Improvise with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd finger and make your own music!

4th Finger



Check the 4th finger with an open string

01234 0

01234 0

01234 0

'Boer er ligt een kip in 't water' (song)

012343210

Exercises

012343210

012343210

Slurred bowing (two notes on one bow)

012343210

012343210

Pinky training

012 34 34 34 3210

Scales with the 4th finger

01234 123

3210 3210

01234 123

3210 3210

01234 123

3210 3210

Scales with broken thirds

021324310213243
42312013423120

021324310213243
42312013423120

021324310213243
42312013423120

Jumps

0123 4343 2424

32 131313 242424

141414 040404

141414 242424

343434 34321

01234 32123 4343

210

021324 423120

Improvise with all four fingers and make your own music!



A cake of notes

Imagine you have bought a delicious cake:



You invite three friends and with the four of you you eat the whole cake.

The cake is now cut in four equal pieces:

1 2 3 4

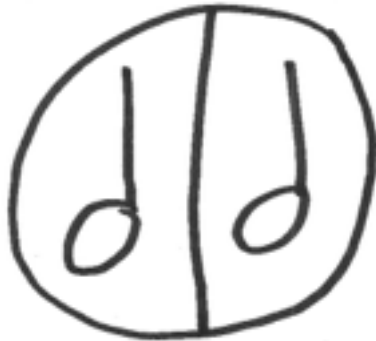
Every piece of cake is one count.

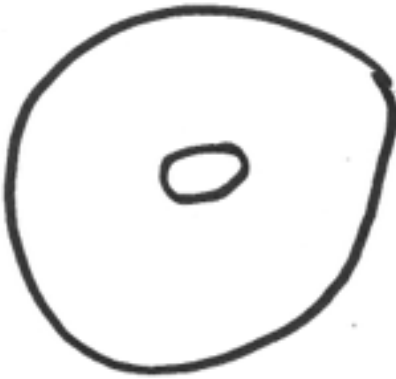
You meet one friend and you are both very hungry.

The cake is now cut into two halves:

1 2 3 4

Every note is two counts.





You are alone and very very hungry.

You eat the whole cake yourself!

1234
Every note is 4 counts.

You throw a party and you invite seven friends. You are with eight people in total.

The cake will be cut into eight pieces.

1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and

Every note is a half count.



Instructions for the use of your viola and bow

Bow

- When you are not playing or when you have a pause, it's important to loosen the bow, so the hair is loose and there is no tension on the bow;
- When you play it's important that there is not too much tension on the bow: the bow needs to keep his normal curve always and should not be straight or bend the other way. In this middle of the bow the hair should be closer to the wood (distance is about the thickness of a pencil) than at the tip and at the frog;
- Don't rosin your bow too much;
- Take care that the grease of your skin doesn't get on the hair of your bow: don't touch the bow hair.
- The bow can lose (one or a couple of) hairs. Loosing several hairs should stop after a while when the bow is new. If it doesn't, contact the shop where you bought the bow.

Viola

- Only use cleaning fluids that are made for stringed instruments;
- Don't tune your viola too high, the strings can snap (if you doubt, tune lower);
- Watch that the bridge is standing straight on the soundboard en not 'on his toes or heels';
- Keep the instrument free from dust and rosin by polishing it regularly with a soft dry cloth;
- Wood can 'work', certainly when the viola you have is relatively new. The viola has to be tuned more often if this is the case;
- When you have a new instrument, it will sound better if you play on it a lot;



For teachers

Play after me

In the auditive phase you do 'play after me' games with your student in every lesson. You play short pieces slowly and the student plays after you.

This can take up quite some time and it's important that the student learns to look up the notes in the viola her/hissself.

In this way the tunes in this book can be taught, but the teacher can also make up songs her/hissself.

The intention of this book is not that the student reads music. This book is only a little help when the student is practicing at home and forgets a tune.

Improvisation

During improvisation the ears of the student are open. Have the student apply the concepts learned in tunes he/she makes up her/hissself.

Discover the mistake

Play a piece wrong and right. The student should recognize and point out which tune is wrong and what the mistake is exactly. This can be pitch, rhythm, intonation and bowing.

Play the teacher

Reverse the exercises. The student plays an existing tune or an improvisation and the teacher plays after her/him. The student should correct the teacher when he/she makes a (deliberate) mistake.

It's also good to have the student explain concepts. This is very suitable for group lessons.

Lesson plan

The intention of this book and method is that a qualified teacher can handle it creatively and adjust it to his/her own preferences and the student in question.

This lesson plan is just to give an idea of an individual lesson of 30 minutes:

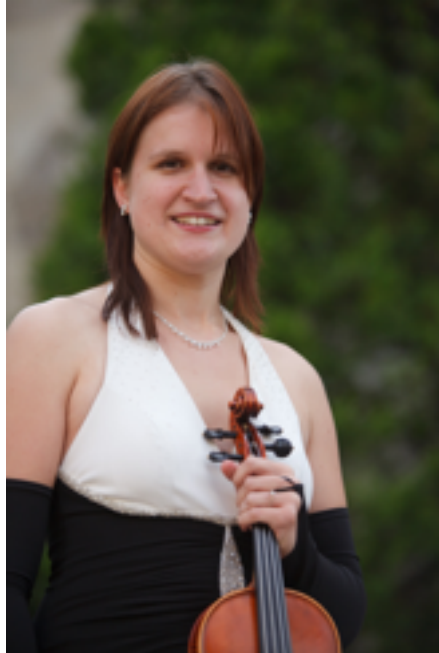
Duration	Activity
5 mins	Evaluate homework and practicing
5 mins	Technical exercises while the teacher plays along with the student or accompanies the student
8 mins	Learn a new technique
10 mins	Play after me exercises including the newly learned technique
2 mins	Write down and run through the homework and give instructions for practicing

About the author

Czech-Dutch Zlata Brouwer MSc Bmus (1985) is a professional violinist and musical entrepreneur living in Holland.

She is graduated as a classical violinist at the Schumann Akademie (BMus) and the Utrecht Conservatory.

She owns a teaching studio and violin shop with which she won the Entrepreneur of the Year award by the Dutch chamber of commerce.



As a violinist she is 1st violinist in the professional string orchestra Vegas Strings, is 1st violinist in her string quartet en her main interest goes to chamber music.

As a teacher she's exploring innovative ways to teach classical violin and viola playing to a large audience by founding Violin & Viola TV (a channel with over 200 episodes, making a new one available each week, free to watch at www.violinviola.tv) and the Violin & Viola Academy (www.violinviolaacademy.com), where she pours all she knows about the violin in video courses.

Gift



Free workshop and free weekly video lessons

Go to www.violinviola.tv to subscribe for the free workshop 'Weight vs Pressure' you can follow online in your own time. In this workshop you learn to play the violin and viola effortlessly with a beautiful tone.

Besides that you get a free weekly video lesson from the author of this book in your mailbox.

Violin & Viola Academy



This book is part of the Violin & Viola Academy. This is an online academy where violinists and violists worldwide can meet each other.

The Academy is filled with video lessons especially for this book and more.

Would you like to learn to apply this book to your playing or teaching?

Read all about it here: www.violinviolaacademy.com