

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO COLLEGIATE
BEGINNER VIOLIN LESSONS:
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

When two of my non-musician acquaintances expressed interest in learning the violin, I accidentally stumbled across the idea of collaborative learning or dyad learning (Pace, 1978). Because of time constraints, I taught them together. This presented a number of challenges for me as a teacher, such as identifying who was out of tune, addressing multiple issues at the same time, and balancing their progress together. To circumvent some of these challenges, I experimented with having one person sit out, having one of them go to the next room to practice, and, alternately, by having them play together. The experiment lasted for four years until both achieved the level of concerto playing. This teaching experience has inspired me to research collaborative learning further and to develop this alternative approach to beginner violin lessons.

The purpose of this thesis is to present a new, collaborative approach to teaching and learning the violin. I will first analyze the traditional one-to-one lesson and its relevance to collegiate violin beginners. Secondly, I will outline the concept known as collaborative learning and its benefits while explore the existing collaborative learning techniques used in some music classes. Thirdly, I will explore the benefits of collaborative learning for collegiate students learning the violin. Finally, I will discuss the application of collaborative learning in violin lessons and provide a detailed lesson plan for using this alternative approach.

While collaborative learning is not a new concept in the academic realm, it is a novel approach to teaching the violin. For collegiate students, there is a dearth of research

in collaborative learning in the area of instrumental learning, especially the violin. Primarily, the focus of music education research has been on compulsory schooling, in which music is an academic requirement (Davis, 2009). Alternatively, this paper focuses on voluntary learning in which adult beginners are registering for violin lessons for personal reasons.

Traditionally, violin lessons are taught one-to-one; although this traditional approach is highly beneficial to students as it provides individual attention and personal learning, I wish to show how collaborative lessons with two students can augment studio learning in ways traditional lessons often cannot. Drawing inspiration from Robert Pace's approach of dyad lessons, my goal for future research is to have additional collegiate beginner violinists participate in collaborative learning. It is my hope that this collaborative approach can be adopted by institutions employing teaching assistants or adjunct faculty who teach adult beginners as a way of expanding enrollment, lowering course fees, and effectively increasing revenue.

CHAPTER II

Overview of the Traditional Studio Lesson

The traditional studio lesson is based on a master and apprentice (one-to-one) approach. Luff and Lebler describe the “traditional” lesson as one in which “the master is cast as the authoritative fount of knowledge and the dominant source of feedback” (2011, p.173). The one-to-one lesson in current instrumental education practice has been passed down for centuries. Early violin pedagogues such as Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762) and Leopold Mozart (1719-1787) both wrote treatises on how to play the violin, which provided more systematic approaches to teaching and learning the violin than the oral tradition of learning. In Geminiani’s treatise (1751), the exercises are to be studied alone with the exception of the pieces including bass-line accompaniments, which are likely to be played as duos with the teacher. Leopold Mozart stated that his treatise (1756) is intended to educate young people and to avoid poor teaching from the violin teacher. Mozart’s comment about saving students from bad teachers implies that this student-teacher set-up did exist. According to Stowell, in the 18th century, music students were usually the aristocrats who sponsored the musicians. The teacher designed literature on violin technique and performance practice as a part of the private student’s curriculum. (Stowell, 1985).

The rise of the middle class at the end of the 18th century carried on the master and pupil relationship, with an academic standard that was established by the first music conservatory, the *Conservatoire de Paris* in 1795. The Paris Conservatory employed influential violin pedagogues like Pierre Baillot, Rodolphe Kreutzer, and Pierre Rode

who created a standard curriculum for violinists who intended to pursue careers in music. Prior to the establishment of the conservatory, students only had access to material taught by their teachers, which greatly limited their breadth and scope of knowledge. However, with the establishment of the conservatory, students could now learn from experts in subjects as diverse as theory, history, etc. in a group class setting, creating a well-rounded musician (Bachmann, 1966).

There are many examples supporting the idea that one-to-one lessons continued well into the 19th and early 20th centuries. In Baillot's treatise (1835), *l'Art du violon*, he composed duets for the teacher and student. Similarly, composer-violinists such as Henryk Weinawski, Louis Spohr, and Pierre Baillot composed duets for the teaching of aural skills, rhythm, and harmony to their students. Many accounts of private lessons also emphasize the amount of demonstration that occurred. A pupil of Otakar Ševčík, Henry Joachim described typical lessons with his teacher as including much demonstration of Sevcik's special studies from his method book. (Joachim, 1931). The one-to-one lesson was also how the legendary violinist Eugene Ysaÿe taught his students, as one account proves: "After some encouraging words about [Gingold's] talent, [Ysaÿe] agreed to take him on as a pupil" (Strad, 2009, p. 7). All of these examples show the one-to-one tradition to be the mainstream of teaching and learning the violin.

There also appears to be exceptions to the traditional one-to-one teaching found in the methods of pianists Franz Liszt and Carl Tausig. Liszt's students documented him as teaching only in a master-class setting twice a week, with class sizes ranging from six to twenty students. Liszt's students would pile their music for him to choose randomly,

which suggests that students did not play for Liszt regularly (Loyd-Jones, 1961). Tausig was documented teaching in the similar fashion of giving private lesson in front of other students (Fay, 1880). While not fully collaborative in the sense of dyad lessons, these approaches did allow students to observe one another, a component that is typically absent from traditional lessons but is a key element in collaborative learning.

The increased popularity of instrumental music spread to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As a result of the growing demand for learning instruments, American academic institutions begin to offer music classes in high schools and colleges (Humphreys, 1995). Today, academic institutions still employ the traditional master and pupil learning structure. In addition, a weekly studio performance class, where students perform for colleagues in the studio, is commonly required as part of lessons in an institution. The traditional one-to-one lesson setting provides each student with individual attention and builds a personal relationship between the teacher and the student. The lineage of violin study is important to music traditions in regards to the master and pupil relationship.

The 20th century witnessed diverse approaches to instrumental education that nonetheless continued the tradition of one-to-one lessons. As Eales (1992) observed, Carl Flesch's and Ivan Galamian's treatises were designed for solo musicians, not teachers; Robert Gerle's and Robert Jacoby's texts focus on scientific and analysis of skills; the Kato Havas, Yehudi Menuhin, and Frederick Polnauer approaches work with *Gestalt* philosophy; and the Shinichi Suzuki and Paul Rolland methods are for class beginners.

The influence of Shinichi Suzuki's pedagogy and Paul Rolland's teaching method changed the teaching of private lessons and public school string classes. For private lessons, the Suzuki Method advocates a three-way relationship between the teacher, student, and the parent. The active involvement of the parental role is to model for their child. This triangular approach has been successful for young children in learning the violin.

As Adrian Eales (1992) states, "as the twentieth century draws to a close, violinists are faced with a bewildering range of teaching and playing styles" (p.92). Eales argues that the music profession lacks adequate formal training in teaching, and many players teach to supplement their income; as a result, lessons are unstructured (1992). However, Eales argument can be refuted as some schools' degree programs are offering teacher training and pedagogy as emphases for their course of study, such as Suzuki Training Programs or Music Pedagogy.

The traditional one-to-one lesson model has been the standard for teaching instrumental lessons in the universities, and colleges. Davidson & Jordan (2007), as well as Gaunt (2011), found that, "in higher music education, one-to-one tuition is considered to be the most powerful mode for instrumental and vocal training" (as cited by Latukefu & Verenikina, 2013, p. 101). However, the learning model for the traditional one-to-one lesson is often "transmission of technical and musical skills, largely through teacher-led reflection-in-action" (Gaunt, 2007, p.180). Gaunt's observation of the traditional lesson model can also be argued to show the lack of development of self-directed, and life-long learning skills, and according to David Nicol (2010), "the development of self-directed,

and life-long learning is a key element of academic excellence- a desirable graduate attribute of a modern tertiary institution” (as cited by Latukefu & Verenikina, 2013, p.101).

Research in music education provides new insights for looking at teaching and learning. My approach to the collaborative learning model draws a similar concept from Robert Pace’s dyad learning and Suzuki’s triangle learning relationship. This approach focuses on peer learning strengths that are absent from the traditional one-to-one method, such as self-directed learning and the opportunity to observe the actual learning process and not just the end result.

The following sections highlight three areas that could be positively affected by a collaborative approach to instrumental learning: social experience, observational learning, and institutional budget.

1. Social Experience

In the current traditional violin lesson model, social experience, group playing experience, and observational learning are missing for students. Students are often playing alone and only rarely do they play with an accompanist or other musicians in their lessons. Music major students have other classes including ensembles and chamber music in addition to their private lessons, which provides the social experience in learning for the students. For the non-music major beginners, the social experience is not available for them. The addition of a social learning experience – such as, watching

others play, learning from others, playing in a group, listening to others, or collaborating with peers – can, enhance the way students learn (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

In a traditional violin lesson, the relationship between the teacher and the student is like the master and the apprentice. The teacher decides what the student will learn and what the student needs to know. The learning material is tailored individually by the teacher based on the student's level. As Latukefu and Verinikina found, “[a] teacher’s knowledge and division of labor was mainly one-way communication from the teacher to the student” (2013, p.103). Because of the unequal roles there can be lack of two-way communication and, perhaps more importantly, a lack of social interaction. A dearth of either can factor into students losing interest, missing classes, lacking motivation to practice, or even quitting altogether (Brookfield, 1986 p.11). Ernest and Emmons (1992) found “group instruction provides the important socialization factor and makes the cost of participation more affordable. Most people do not want to learn an instrument unless they can also play in a group” (p.34).

2. Observational Learning

Albert Bandura defines observational learning as, “all learning phenomena resulting from direct experience can occur vicariously by observing other people’s behavior and its consequences for them” (Bandura, 1986 p. 19). In a traditional one-to-one lesson, students can learn by observing their teacher who demonstrates. Another example of observational learning in music is the traditional master class. A master class is normally in a big room or hall and involves a master teacher who gives an individual lesson to a student while others are watching. Research shows students enjoy the master class

opportunities to perform and network with other musicians, in addition, experienced students reported greater development of meta-cognitive skills such as self-regulation from the master class than the less experienced students (Long, Hallam, Creech, Gaunt & Robertson, 2011). Each audience member may take home different ideas from the class. When the “master” addresses a technical or musical problem, the musicians in the audience are given the opportunity to draw parallel associations with their own pieces of music. Students can then strive to apply the master’s concepts to their own work. Long’s research (2013) found that “a close encounter with master musicians can promote collaborative learning among students, expressing ‘expansive cycles’ in analytical and reflective thinking around group work” (p. 148). The proposed collaborative learning model, which shares similarities with the master class, is suitable for collegiate learners because it encourages critical thinking and personal evaluation. This effective learning style is not possible with traditional one-to-one lessons, because the teacher models the end result but not the learning process.

3. Institutional Budget

A traditional one-to-one lesson can be very costly for a music department, teacher, and student. As a result, many departments have limited the number of private lessons they offer for non-music major students. The University of Texas Austin only offers private lessons to non-music major students with prior violin experience. Students who cannot read music are required to take basic note-reading class before registering for beginner violin group class. Limited private lessons are also found in the piano department at the University of Oregon, where graduating music major students have

priority over non-graduating and non-music major students. For the piano department, the supply does not meet the demand. The reason behind the low supply is the low budget the school can provide for individual instrumental lessons. My proposed collaborative-learning approach allows for two students to register for the same lesson, effectively doubling the music department's income per class. Hopefully with the double income, music departments can offer students more availability and choices.

Method Books on the Market

There are many violin method books in the US market, but not all are suitable for institutional adult beginners. Most of these method books are designed for children, and contain big notes, pictures, children's tunes, rhymes, and CDs. For adult students, choosing a method book is a crucial step towards achieving their personal goals and continuing their education. When a student chooses a method book, he often looks for interesting or recognizable pieces. A beginning student might not understand the difficulty of the pieces, despite having a goal of what he or she wants to play eventually. In today's connected world, people have come to expect fast results, and any method book that promises minimal effort is often the first choice. A keynote presenter for the Desert Skies Symposium on Research in Music Education, Dr. Mark Fonder, expressed his concerns about music education method books in the following way:

Edwin Gordon is one of our pre-eminent researchers on how people learn music. He developed, over the course of several years, a research-based approach to teaching music. According to him, his research validates it is the best way to teach music. Going from sound to symbol, organizing a hierarchy of intervals and

rhythms and teaching them in a sequence, critics aside, it is an impressive body of work by standards of both breadth and depth. There have been numerous publications in book form and monographs describing the process. The method book *Individualized Instructor* gave way to *Do It!* and then eventually *Jump Right In* as a student method book that represents the approach. It's all in place and research suggests it really, really works. So where is it? I spoke with Tim Lautzenheiser, Bruce Bush, who represents the largest music distributor in the country and asked them: What are the five best selling band method books out there? Well, they mentioned *Essential Elements 2000*, *Accent on Achievement*, *Best in Class*, etc. I asked well, where is *Jump Right In*. Their response was a headshake – “it's not even on the radar.” The question remains why would method books with no research base whatsoever way outsell one with data showing positive learning correlations? The answer is that *Jump Right In* involves more lesson time, more teacher preparation time, more home time and more student time than is available in today's over-scheduled lives. It is research-based assistance based on an unreal environment (Fonder, 2007, p. 34).

This anecdote shows that teachers and students have a preference towards using method books that promise good results in the shortest amount of time. As with any instrument, learning the violin requires practice. If the student lacks practice at an early stage, the foundation that provides future musical enjoyment will not be technically sound. Any book that promises fast results with minimal effort may have students performing basic pieces relatively quickly, but might not be a good choice for long-term proficiency. The

habit of diligent practice must be established from the beginning or students will become discouraged once more practice is required for them to advance.

When teachers chooses a method book for their students, they should acknowledge a student's interest in varying types of music, such as fiddling, classical, musicals, country, jazz, or popular songs. Research has found a positive effect in learning when the fundamental interests of undergraduate students are met (Bye, Pushkar & Conway, 2007). When dealing with students of higher education, the teacher should try to satisfy the intrinsic interests of the students. Often, teachers like to teach what they are familiar with, and it is natural to do so because it is that specific material the teacher knows best. Not all method books are suitable for adult beginners, and no one book is ideal for every possible student.

In order to choose a proper method book, it is important to understand the nature of how one learns the violin. Learning the violin is like learning a new sport: it requires much physical training and practice. It is not the same as learning other subjects where physical skills are not required. The biggest difference between training and education is that "training focuses on building skills whereas education focuses on building the mind" (Brookfield, 1986, p.17). Transitioning from understanding the concept of how to play the violin to actually being able to play the violin can take longer than people expect. As Duke (2011) stated, "For skillful student of any discipline, knowledge is almost always readily accessible. The acquisition of skill, on the other hand, requires consistent, deliberate practice over time" (p.31). The beginning stages include plenty of skill building with very little education about the violin itself; it requires a great deal of

practice to reinforce the basics. Understanding the differences between learning the violin and another subject can help students to approach learning with a different perspective and attitude.

I have provided a list of violin method books for the beginning violinist (Appendix A). The list includes popular modern method books such as the *Suzuki Method*, *Essential Elements*, and the *O'Connor Method*, as well as older traditional method books such as the *Doflein Method*, *Maia Bang*, and *Eta Cohen*. The inclusion of the variety of methods is for students and teachers to have more choices when it comes to learning the violin. Some of the out-of-print method books listed can be found online at the International Music Score Library Project, but most of them are available in print. Teachers can use the list provided as a resource for exploring new possibilities for their students or comparing methodological ideas. The description for each book is based on my study of the material. I am only including information about the first volume of each method, which is intended for beginners with little or no previous musical background in their first year of the study.

CHAPTER III

What is Collaborative Learning?

Dillenbourg (1999) defines collaborative learning as “a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together” (p.2). Kenneth Bruffee (1999) defines it more specifically as, coordinating efforts together to solve a problem, saying, “an educational activity in which human relationships are the key to welfare, achievement and mastery... helping students learn by working together on substantive issues” (p.83). Bruffee’s definition is further supported by Barbara Smith’s and Jean MacGregor’s (1992) idea of building a community with collaborative learning:

Collaborative learning encourages students to acquire an active voice in shaping their ideas and values and a sensitive ear in hearing others. Dialogue, deliberation and consensus-building out of differences are strong threads in the fabric of collaborative learning, and in civic life as wells. (p.14)

In a collaborative learning environment, students are required to interact, and cooperate with each other. In *Collaborative Learning in Higher Music Education*, Gaunt and Westerlund (2013) state that “collaborative music learning may require its participants to act, think, talk, and judge in certain ways; and the participants may have to perceive these demands and comply with them if they are to fit the frame” (p.81). Although collaborative learners are still individually accountable and responsible for their own learning, they also receive feedback from, and contribute their findings to, a

community. As a result of their collaboration, a direct link is formed between individual action and group results (Christophersen, 2013).

The mainstay of a truly collaborative learning style is the application of social cognitive theory where students learn from observing and reciprocate information with each other. Albert Bandura believes “all learning phenomena resulting from direct experience can occur vicariously by observing other people’s behavior and its consequences for them” (Bandura, 1986 p.19). The observers can acquire and generate rules of the behavior patterns without actual trial and error. Research has shown that peer involvement and assessment provide information to teachers about how much students have absorbed, and these elements also allow learners to utilize their understanding (Falchikov, 2007). In the traditional one-to-one lesson model, the teachers adjust his or her teaching styles and strategies according to individual learning ability (Koornhof, 2001). However, in collaborative learning, the “Zone of Proximal Development,” or ZPD – the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978) – can be guided by either the teacher or the partner’s support, which in turn expands one’s learning ZPD.

According to Cooper et al., (2013), benefits of collaborative learning in higher education include, “development of higher-level thinking skills, oral communication skills, social skills and self-esteem, as well as positive effects on student learning generally, including retention, student satisfaction and attitudes” (as cited by Lebler, 2013

p.111). Furthermore, research by Hammond, Bithell, Jones, and Bidgood (2010) suggests that “students value the social aspects of peer learning such as obtaining other people’s perspectives, learning with others and the opportunity to air concerns away from teaching staff, all of which contributes to their positive evaluation of collaborative learning” (p.208).

The social connection in learning becomes the main motivation for music learners to continue or even begin learning music later in life, as expressed by Roy Ernest and Scott Emmons (1992) in the *New Horizons for Senior Adults*, “the band meets its goals of socialization in positive ways. Most members come early to talk over a cup of coffee. The band replaces workplace as a source of making new friends and gives a feeling of attachment to a group that is important to a person’s well-being” (p.32). Mantie (2012) also found social interaction to be an important factor for adult recreational learners. Ensemble music making is an example of collaborative learning in music that requires interaction and communication among participants.

Robert Pace, a piano pedagogue and music educator at the Teacher’s College of Columbia University adapted collaborative learning in his dyad, or paired, piano lessons. In Fisher’s *Teaching Piano in Groups* (2010), he describes dyad or partner lessons as “involving two students who are instructed simultaneously” (p.20). Pace and Fisher observed that dyad lessons improved the attitudes of both students, reduced excuses about practice conflicts, increased motivation, and resulted in students who were more prepared for lessons (Pace, 1978; Fisher, 2010). The dyad lesson allows peer feedback

and encourages students to assume the role of the teacher, which in turn provides accountability, cooperation, and peer encouragement for the student (Fisher, 2010).

CHAPTER IV

New Approach to Violin Lesson Structure:

Collaborative Learning

How does My Collaborative Approach Differ from the Traditional Method?

There are few things that are different in my approach from the traditional setting: number of students, lesson setting, learning process, note reading, structure of practice sessions, and learning progression. My approach to collaborative learning is intended specifically for two adult students partaking in the same lesson. Having two students allows the collaborative approach to emphasize ensemble playing from the beginning, whereas the traditional approach emphasizes solo playing. Building the ensemble skills from the beginning is beneficial because research suggests that most adult instrumental learners would eventually prefer to join community music groups and use their skills for active involvement in the community (Rothenbuhler, Mullen, DeLaurell, & Ryu, 1996). Part of the collaborative learning process is also observing and reflecting on a partner's demonstration and also on the teacher's demonstration. Traditional learners often play alone during class and are limited to the observing only the teacher, confining themselves to the role of passive learners. Collaborative learners, on the other hand, have the opportunity to practice active learning by assuming the role of the teacher when assisting a colleague. Research has found that this type of learning leads to deeper engagement and understanding (Kapur & Bielaczyc, 2012; Singelis, 2006; Kember, 2008). Duke (2011) stated, "the more active their [student's] learning experiences, the more opportunities

they have to practice the application of skills as they are learning, the more they [student] will develop the ways of perceiving and thinking and behaving that are the core of expertise” (p.14). It is through the act of teaching that a student acquires an in depth understanding of his knowledge (Ramaswamy, Harris, & Tschirner, 2001).

For adult learners, note-reading skills are introduced at the beginning for comprehensive understanding of music and for building skills for self-directed learning. Duke (2011) states, “a student must learn to do things beyond repeating what he’s read or been told or been shown” (p.13). Mozart (1787) espouses the idea that students must learn to read music first before he can begin to learn the violin, because musical notation provides necessary information for the performer. Introducing note reading at the beginning is crucial for adult learners because it provides students with a skill necessary for self-directed, life-long learning. Bass (2012) also supports the idea of self-directed learning, “if schools create learning environments that encourage self-directed learning, learners will also be transformed into lifelong learners” (p.388).

In my approach to collaborative learning, students are required to practice both individually and together. The purpose of practicing together is for students to learn and exchange results from individual practice. In addition, group activities are included during lessons to reinforce learning through collaboration. Collegiate students are experienced learners, and often have the ability to correct their mistakes or problems during the collaborative practice sessions. As a result, their learning progress will be faster than that of less experienced, younger learners. The rapid progression means that a teacher will need to choose appropriate materials to satisfy students’ needs.

Difficulties with Collaborative Learning

In collaborative learning, there arise different issues that are not commonly found in traditional learning. I have listed some of the issues that I have encountered over the years, and provided my approach to solving them with references to Dr. Robert Pace's dyad approach.

1. Different Progress

During the study of violin, collaborative students may show different degrees of progress within a pair. Reasons for this vary, but can include different musical backgrounds, amount of individual practice time, and understanding of assignments. When a difference in progression occurs, a teacher should evaluate the situation and uncover the reason behind it. Once the cause is identified, the teacher can address it individually or collaboratively. Dr. Pace suggests that teachers should not hasten to regroup students because the issue may be temporary and part of the learning process. Issues only arise if one is consistently capable of moving faster than the other (n.d., Do's and Don'ts on Regrouping Dyads section).

Students from different musical backgrounds may approach assignments differently, making it challenging to achieve group goals. To cope with such differences, the teacher should advise the more advanced student to help his or her colleague to achieve the group goals during a collaborative practice session, and the teacher should also add additional exercises for the student who is behind in progress. For students who do not have outside time to practice or do not know how to practice alone effectively, the

teacher can help to build a routine for practice sessions. Teachers should aim to maintain the same pace to ensure balanced learning. Moving too quickly for the slower learner before reaching the group's objective standard can distress future learning. However, raising the standard for the more advanced student can refine his or her technique and tone. In this case, the advanced student can also serve as an assistant to help his or her colleague achieve their goals, while the less advanced student will observe the more advanced one's skills, and progress towards that goal as well. This collaboration between the students develops problem solving skills which are crucial for sustainable learning.

2. Criticisms or Praise in a Group Setting

Finding the balance between criticism and praise is an art in itself, especially in a group setting. When criticizing or praising in the collaborative setting, the teacher needs to be more sensitive to a student's personality and feelings. For example, an adult student understands suggestive criticism whereas children may take it negatively. For adult students, criticism can be replaced with suggestive action. For example, replace saying "out of tune" to "listen," or "crooked bow" to "watch your bow, push out more at the tip." If a suggestion is given by the teacher to student "A," then the teacher could ask student "B" to collaborate with more suggestions, providing an opportunity for active learning. If the teacher builds an encouraging environment during lessons, the students will tend to have more positive attitude towards collaboration. Building a collegial learning atmosphere during lessons helps to set a model for group practice.

Dr. Pace describes his approach to criticism as follows:

Since harsh criticism has a negative effect and noncommittal half-statements are of little value, help students learn how to be both positive and accurate in their criticism of self and others. Students should identify the good things in a performance as well as point out the problems. Building on good points tends to minimize the problems (n.d., Special Points to Consider section, para.4).

A teacher's praise should be sincere and encouraging because adult learners are sensitive and cautious. When adult students hear the difference in their playing arising from the teacher's suggestions, they appreciate it very much, which in turn motivates learning.

3. Limitation of Collaborative Learning on the Violin

Collaborative learning is most useful for students just beginning the violin. While reaching the proficiency needed to learn concerti, collaborative learning becomes more difficult. In Pace's approach, dyad learning can be applied to advanced levels since it develops problem-solving techniques which allow students to become more perceptive learners (n.d., Some Frequent Misconceptions section, para. 1). However, the technical differences between learning the piano and the violin become the issue for making collaborative learning less applicable after a certain level. The biggest factor is intonation, as it becomes more difficult to identify between the two students. A transition from collaborative to traditional learning should take place before concerto pieces are introduced. During the transition, the teacher should prepare students both technically and musically to play in chamber groups. The chamber setting allows students to continue their collaborative learning in a different manner.

Collaborative Learning in Action

1. Lesson Structure

The collaborative approach for violin lessons is based on the institutional system where one half-hour lesson is given to a group of two students. Grouping students is required at the beginning of the term. Meeting with individuals or hosting an introductory session can help both the teacher and the students find a collaborative partner to study with. I have found it helpful to group students according to their major of study, because they will have more common interests, as well as shared applicable knowledge which can be transferred to violin playing. The group of students may stay together or change at the end of each school term. Like forming a chamber ensemble, the longer people stay in the same group, the better understanding they will have of each other. However, students can also benefit from switching collaborative partners, since every learner offers a different learning style.

Each student will register for the same number of credits as they would for a private lesson. For the purpose of fulfilling institutional grading requirements, students should have the option of pass or no pass when taking violin lessons. Class requirements should be set by both students and the teacher because the class is aimed to fulfill the students' interests. If their interests are not satisfied in class, then their learning progress will stall and attendance will be low. As Knowles (1970) expressed in his discussion of teaching for adults, "teachers of adults who do all their planning for their students, who come into the classroom and impose preplanned activities on them, typically experience apathy, resentment and probably withdrawal" (p.42). Although this is significantly

different than the standards of college teaching, it addresses how teachers should value the intrinsic interest and not the extrinsic grades of a learner. The objective of collaborative learning is for both students to reach the same level of proficiency as an individual would in music theory, general knowledge of the violin, and playing level. Our goal is also to establish a love of life-long learning in the student.

In a non-collegiate situation where there are no juries, deadlines, or requirements to fulfill, the teacher and students can decide on their progress together. They can meet more than once a week or have longer lessons if necessary. Meeting half an hour per week is the standard lesson structure, however, it helps to meet twice a week at the beginning stage to reinforce basic posture. Preventing bad habits is easier than erasing bad habits.

Each individual learner is expected to have their own copy of the music. Although both students are playing together, they are using their own music while playing. Personal notes such as fingering, bowing, intonation, or progress can be marked on their own music. With separate books, student can have a sense of personal learning.

2. Curriculum Progress

As discussed in a previous chapter, there are many method book choices for beginner adult students. The collaborative approach offers opportunities to reinforce theory concepts and violin techniques as a group. In the enclosed curriculum, group activities and group exercises are provided with a chosen method book for introducing

pieces. Choosing a method book that is compatible for both students is crucial, and the most important point is to choose a method book that the students are interested in.

The proposed curriculum is organized in a progression that supports collaborative learning. There are two required steps for collaborative students in learning the violin. The first step involves getting to know the instrument and learning to read notes. The second step involves establishing a comfortable posture. After these two steps, students can then begin to play pieces. In the beginning, learners will play in unison, because it will train their listening skills. Unison playing is the easiest way for beginners to identify any mistakes aurally and visually in their playing. Teachers should explain to students what it means and how it should sound like to play together and in unison. Teachers will also need to teach how to cue the beginning and ending of pieces as both learners will take turns practicing this during lessons. As the students establish basic ensemble skills and become comfortable playing in unison, the teacher may join in to play the accompaniment part on the piano or violin so the students can hear a different harmony, timbre, or melody line. The addition of an accompaniment part to the group will enhance the learning experience, boost motivation, and provide greater satisfaction for the students.

When new material is introduced, the teacher should demonstrate it and point out the challenging spots, verbally explaining the required physical action for accomplishing the task. Most adult learners like to watch and learn first before they try something physically, so the more description the better. For the assurance of correct learning, students are to demonstrate new skills individually. Expressing personal judgment on the

observed individual demonstration can increase students' understanding of the new material since students may have different perceptions of the new skills than the teacher describes.

As the students' progress in their ensemble playing skills and listening skills, the teacher may introduce duet playing. Duet playing will be the stepping-stone used to prepare the students for future ensemble playing in community orchestras, chamber ensembles, and more. If duet playing is introduced too early, students can have a hard time comprehending the complexity of the sound. It can be very difficult to hear the harmony in duet playing, especially for non-musically trained students. Therefore, unison playing must first be established before duet playing. Duet playing offers development of a keen ear for individual and ensemble playing. Using review pieces and previously learned pieces to introduce two part duet playing will give students a new perspective on the old pieces, as well as a chance to review old pieces.

By the end of first term, standard goals for collegiate students are to acquire basic knowledge of music notation, know the parts of the violin, understand basic rhythm, achieve fluency in a legato bow stroke and develop the skills for ensemble playing. The reason for beginning with legato bow strokes, as opposed to short bow strokes, is based on both *Gestalt* philosophy and my own experience. The short martelé bow stroke is fast in speed, which can be difficult for students starting to establish their bow holds, and it isolates forearm and elbow movements, which is against the *Gestalt* philosophy of whole-body movement. On the other hand, the legato stroke requires students to practice the coordination of wrist, forearm, elbow, upper arm, and shoulder movements.

The collaborative approach can be applied to any materials or method books, as long as students are working and learning together. Teachers may add or change the materials according to students' level and performance. For my collaborative curriculum for applied violin beginners, I have chosen the pieces from the Suzuki Method Book because of the progressive techniques each piece introduces. However, I have transposed the pieces to the key of D major, so students can play on D and A strings instead of A and E strings. The reason for the change is for students to form a more balanced left hand frame. I have also altered the order of pieces in which students will learn. For beginners, they will start in progression of *Twinkle Theme*, *Lightly Row*, *Go Tell Aunt Rhody*, and *Long Long Ago*. The change in progression is to emphasize legato bow strokes within similar musical styles.

3. Practice

Practicing together is required for collaborative learning. Students are required to meet once a week for collaborative practice sessions. The length of the collaborative practice session depends on the students. The purpose of the session is to go through materials covered during lessons, establish a tempo for each piece, and play together. The session is to work on their ensemble skills, as well as checking each other for any mistakes or wrong notes. It is during collaborative practice sessions that students can exchange their personal ideas, problems, discoveries, and solutions to difficulties they encounter while playing. Students will also learn to give constructive criticism to each other as well as correct any bad posture. In this intimate setting, students might not feel comfortable at first, but gradually, they will learn to practice collaboratively through

observation and teaching of each other. The best way to learn new material is to teach it by using examples that are comprehensible to one's partner, and collaborative practice will provide students with the opportunity to teach. For example, when explaining a half note, the analogy of fifty-cents works for adults but not necessarily for children. For children, drawing half of a pie will work better than explaining fifty-cents. Knowledge and skill solidifies when it is transferred into accessible and familiar personal meaning.

How to practice will need to be addressed during lessons. The teacher and learners should set some clear goals for each week's practice. Specific goals, like "straight bow in the last line", "intonation of the second finger", "rhythm in the half notes", or "leave the bow on the string during rests", can help students to minimize their work and maximize their results. In the beginning stage of practice, the teacher is the one setting the standard for what to achieve. If the teacher lets bad intonation or a crooked bow slide during lessons the students will come to think that what they are doing is correct. Therefore, asking reflective questions like, "why did I stop you?" or "was that last note too high or too low?" will force the student to be more attentive and active in their learning. Lessons also correct mistakes made during practice.

Individual practice sessions of fifteen minutes to half an hour a day are strongly suggested to build one's personal practice habits. When helping an adult student to set a practice schedule, make sure not to interfere with other priorities in their life. An easy way to find appropriate practice time is to have the student list all of their activities for one day, and put them in order from most important to least important. Once the schedule is clear, and priority is established, then the student can implement a practice routine

accordingly. Building good practice habits and concentration is valuable for learning the violin, and one should keep in mind that fifteen minutes a day is better than half an hour every other day. Students should practice individually first before meeting together for their collaborative practice sessions; in these sessions they can then exchange their own practice views on obstacles, success, techniques, and experiences. For example, a Thursday lesson could mean individual practice from Friday to Monday, group practice on Tuesday, and individual practice once again on Wednesday.

It is important to make the students' learning experience as close to the professionals' experience as possible. The collaborative practice session is equivalent to chamber music rehearsals in the professional world. As leading music educator and researcher Robert Duke states, "Learning efficiency is maximized when all of the elements of the skills are introduced and practiced in contexts that are as much like the final goal as possible" (2011, p. 109). The collaborative learning experience offers such an environment for learning.

4. Social Interaction

Collaborative learning provides a more socially intimate learning style compared to a big group or individual learning. Learners have to be responsible for themselves as well as for their colleague. The responsibility to practice individually is important for successful collaborative learning. In addition, social interaction is a strong motivation for adult learners. Adults enjoy social activities where they can collaborate with others and make friends. Playing the violin offers opportunities for social interaction in community orchestras, community chamber groups, or collaborative concerts where adults can meet

people with similar interests. The collaborative session offers the opportunity for adult learners to expand the breadth of their social interactions. Having strong motivation gives a reason to learn, and act upon it.

CHAPTER V

Curriculum

The inclusion of association standards is for teachers who wish to use them as guidelines for what is commonly expected of beginning students by two leading organizations: the Royal Conservatory of Music and the American String Teachers Association. My curriculum is constructed in order to achieve the following standards.

Association Standards

The Royal Conservatory of Music: Introductory Grade

- A and D Major, one octave at 60/beat, quarter note per bow
- Reference to Suzuki Book 1: *Long Long Ago*, *Go Tell Aunt Rhody*, *Song of the Wind*, *O Come, Little Children* or *Allegro*
- Play from memory
- Techniques: legato bow strokes or detaché bow strokes, string cross, crescendo and decrescendo.
- Ear training: Rhythm and Playback

Cited from The Royal Conservatory of Music (2006).

The American String Teachers Association: String Curriculum

The ASTA String Curriculum is designed for K-12 String programs with standards, and learning sequences for essential skills and knowledge. The standard of learning is graded from *Baseline* to *Developing* to *Proficient* and to *Advanced* level. The curriculum is

organized according to the progression of learned skills. Provided below is the requirement of the *Baseline* standard or the equivalent of a beginner from the ASTA String Curriculum 2011 Edition.

ASTA: Baseline Standard for string beginners

- Executive Skills and Knowledge
 - Body Format: establish sitting and standing postures; basic playing position
 - Left Hand Skills and Knowledge: initial left hand finger placement; initial finger pattern; lateral finger movement; vertical technique
 - Right Hand Skills and Knowledge: perform pizzicato in guitar position; perform pizzicato in playing position; establishing initial bow hold; perform pre-bowing exercise; perform with simple detaché bow strokes; perform with simple staccato bow strokes; direction changes; short slurs; string crossings; basic bow distribution; introduction to weight, angle, speed, and contact point of the bow.
- Musicianship Skills and Knowledge
 - Tonal Aural Skills and Ear Training: identify major and minor chord or melody; dictate given melodic pattern, identify two performed melodic tonal pattern are the same or different; identify direction of the melodies, students improvised melodic tonal pattern,
 - Rhythmic Aural Skills and Ear Training: maintain steady pulse while playing, sense of meter while playing, perform rhythm pattern with rests,

perform rhythm pattern with ties, perform rhythm pattern with upbeats, improvise rhythm pattern.

- Creative Musicianship: students derive rhythm patterns from speech and environmental sounds and link them with the motion of the bow-hand; students create one-note solos against a class-generated accompaniment; students reproduce sound effects from their environment on their instrument; students invent scoring techniques based on common objectives; students invent their own physical language for conducting
- Music Literacy: students correctly identify and perform basic music notation and symbols associated with the learned skills and understandings to each corresponding curricular level; students sight-read basic music notation and symbols; students understand chord symbols (root only); students correctly identify C, G, D and F major with their relative minors; students correctly identify accidentals, students correctly identify binary and rounded binary forms.
- Ensemble Skills: students match pulse and rhythm to stay together as an ensemble; students adjust pitch within the ensemble; demonstrates self-discipline by working cooperatively with peers to produce a quality musical performance; display appropriate etiquette for style and venue of musical performance; demonstrates well-disciplined personal demeanor during rehearsals and performance.

- Artist Skills and Knowledge

- Expressive Elements: students shape phrases with simple dynamic variation; students alter tone by modifying bow techniques; students perform with articulations corresponding to baseline-level right-hand technical skills.
- Historical and Cultural Elements: students listen to selected music from diverse cultures and musical eras; students identify, describe and compare distinguishing characteristics of composers and styles from selected repertoire; students perform music from diverse styles.
- Evaluation of Music and Musical Performance: students evaluate individual and group performance using established criteria; students describe personal preference in music listening and group performance.

Syllabus

Collaborative Approach to Violin Lessons

Course Description: This course is designed for students to learn the basic techniques of the violin, music notation, basic music theory, and general musical knowledge. The course provides a collaborative learning environment for learning with a colleague. This course will cover basic techniques, ensemble skills, practice techniques, music theory, and musicianship.

Required Material: Course packet of instructor's transcriptions (Appendix B), cleaning cloth, and folder for handouts.

Course Structure: This class meets once a week for 30 minutes and requires an additional group practice once per week outside of class time. The course will be taught in a private setting with two students.

Individual Practice Expectation: Students are expected to practice every day for 30 minutes and meet with their colleague once during the week for group practice.

Group Practice Expectation: Students will meet once per week for group practice which can replace the individual practice of the day. Students are to work on ensemble skills, and demonstrate their individual practice results for each other.

Grading: Pass/No Pass based on criteria listed below

- Attendance; students are allowed one make-up lesson per semester

- Weekly assessment of student's progress, including attendance, understanding, and performance
- Final Performance: students are required to perform a polished piece

Prerequisites: None

Objectives: Students finishing this class will have acquired sufficient violin technique to play simple pieces and have achieved general musical knowledge. A life-long interest in music can hopefully be cultivated from this class.

Tentative Curriculum Schedule: The tentative schedule is based on the progression of Suzuki Violin Method Book I and is to be used as a general guideline for students. Other methods (see Appendix A) could be used to substitute for the Suzuki Method Book as long as the basic standards of techniques and musical knowledge are achieved at the end of the term. Students must be proficient in their weekly material before they can move on to new material.

Week One	Syllabus
	Student Assessment
	Introduction of the violin, the bow, and accessories
	Violin maintenance
	Theory: Whole, Half, and Quarter Notes
Week Two	Review parts of the violin, bow, and rhythm

Introduce playing and resting positions

Introduce violin hold

Introduce pizzicato

Tape instrument

Theory: combine rhythm with notes for pizzicato

Week Three

Review pizzicato, violin hold, and posture

Introduce bow hold and exercises

Introduce left hand fingers on D string

Theory: combination of rhythm

Week Four

Review bow hold, violin hold, pizzicato and left hand fingers

RH: bowing open D and A strings

LH: walk the fingers on D and A

Theory: note reading for open strings

Week Five

Review open D and A strings and LH fingers

RH: string cross between D and A using $\frac{3}{4}$ of the bow

LH: walk the fingers with note reading

Theory: introduce steps in note reading and pizzicato DM Scale

	First pizzicato piece, <i>Skips and Steps</i>
Week Six	Review left hand frame and right bow arm
	Combine LH and RH coordination
	Play Scale in D Major with bow
Week Seven	First playing piece, <i>Twinkle Theme in D</i>
	Scale Variation for different bow speed
	Theory: musical markings
Week Eight	Review <i>Twinkle Theme in D</i>
	Scale in canonic thirds
	Musical structure of a piece and ensemble skills
	Introduce <i>Lightly Row in D</i>
	Theory: sequence
	Choose a piece for performance
Week Nine	Perform first piece
	Scale with different rhythms
	Review second piece and identify trouble spots
	Introduce <i>Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D</i>

Techniques: bow division, faster bow strokes, fast string crossings

Work on performance piece

Week Ten

Perform *Lightly Row*

Review *Go Tell Aunt Rhody*

Play the performance piece with piano

Discuss performance etiquette

Summary of accomplished skills

Finals

Perform the chosen piece with your partner

ADD ON FOR SEMESTER CURRICULUM

Week Ten

Introduce *Long Long Ago*

Techniques: retakes and G String

Week Eleven

Perform *Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D*

Review *Long Long Ago*

Introduce *May Song in D*

Techniques: varied bow speed and dotted rhythm

Week Twelve

Perform *Long Long Ago*

Review *May Song in D*

Introduce *O Come, Little Children in D*

Techniques: up-bow pick up, consecutive up-bows, phrasing, bow division, and repeats

Week Thirteen

Perform *May Song in D*

Review *O Come, Little Children in D*

Introduce *Song of the Wind*

Techniques: fast retakes, martelé, and fast bow speed

Choose one piece for final performance

Week Fourteen

Perform *O Come, little children in D*

Review *Song of the Wind in D*

Refine final performance piece with piano

Discuss performance etiquette

Summary of accomplished skills

Week Fifteen

Final performance

Weekly Lesson Plan Outline

Objectives – New material to be covered in the lesson

Review Assignment – Students demonstrate progress of previously learned material

Introduce material – Teacher introduces new material

Group Activity – Exercise or activity to be learned during class and is also practiced as part of the weekly group assignment

Theory – Introduces basic theoretical knowledge for note reading

Assignment – Individual practice goals for the week

Group Assignment – Goals and activities for the group practice session

Student Outcomes – Expected accomplishments for the week

WEEK ONE

Group Introduction

Objectives

1. Meet students who will also be learning the violin
2. Learn parts of the violin, bow and basic theory
3. Find a collaborative partner

Class Setting

The first class is the only group class which includes all beginner violin students.

This class is for students to meet with each other and for teacher to meet all of the students before forming the collaborative group.

Syllabus

Explain the class structure, requirements, materials, participation and expectations of a student.

Student Assessments

For the first meeting, the teacher needs to assess each student's musical background through the provided basic survey. The purpose of this survey is to help the teacher to group compatible students together based on their musical backgrounds and interests. A sample of the basic survey is provided below.

Introduction of the Violin and Bow

The parts of the violin and bow are taught in the first class to a group of violin students. Students will be given a hand out of violin parts and bow parts.

Accessories and maintenance

The teacher will explain the use of shoulder rest and other similar support pads, the use of rosin, the care of the violin in different weather conditions, and the routine for cleaning the violin after each practice.

Theory

Introduce whole notes, half notes, and quarter notes.

Assignments

1. Memorize all parts of the violin and bow
2. Understand the rhythmic relationship between whole, half and quarter notes

Survey of Student's Musical Background

Name:

Year in school:

Major:

What is your musical background?

Do you play any instruments?

If yes, for how many years?

Can you read music?

Interests:

Dislikes:

Why do you want to learn the violin?

What would you like to accomplish in this course?

WEEK TWO

Setting the Violin

Objectives

1. Learn to hold the violin and pizzicato open strings
2. Learn resting and playing postures

Review Assignments

Review parts of the violin and bow

Introduce violin playing position

Students are expected to stand for the duration of class time. Explain and demonstrate resting position and playing position. Students should stand opposite one another to ensuring visibility of each other (see picture below).

Collaborative practice set up



Introduce violin hold

Demonstrate how to hold the violin and explain that the button of the violin needs to be in contact with the neck while the lower bout of the violin contacts the collarbone.

A well-balanced posture includes a flexible rotation of the head and an open and relaxed left elbow. The height of the scroll should be level with the mouth so that the student can look easily down the fingerboard. Shoulders should be of equal height, level, and relaxed. It is important that the student guard against bringing

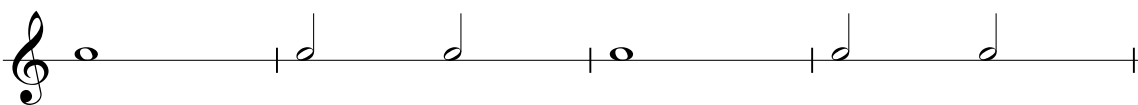
the left shoulder up to secure the violin, instead, allow the weight of the jaw to secure the instrument.

Group Activity: Students demonstrate for each other, and the observer goes through the checklist below for a balanced posture from different angles.

1. Flexible rotation of the head
2. Open and relaxed left elbow
3. Scroll at same height as the mouth
4. Ability to look down fingerboard
5. Even shoulder height from the back
6. Relaxed holding of the instrument with only jaw weight

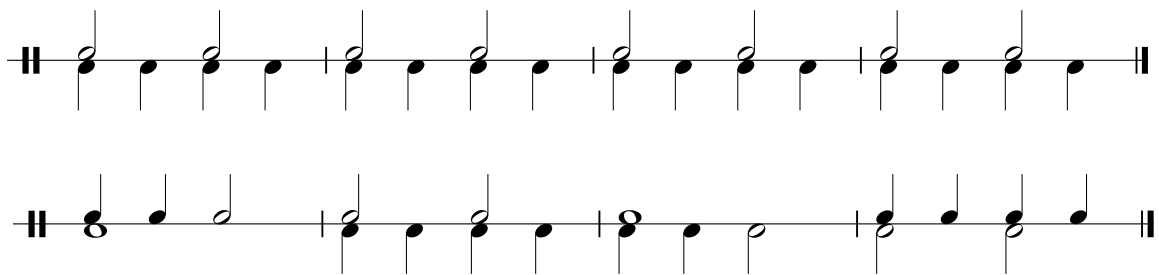
Theory

Review whole, half and quarter notes from last week. Students clap to demonstrate their understanding of rhythm and count the beats out loud.



Group Activity: Both students clap together with one person counting out loud one empty measure of four beats to set up the tempo. Students choose either the top or bottom line to clap.

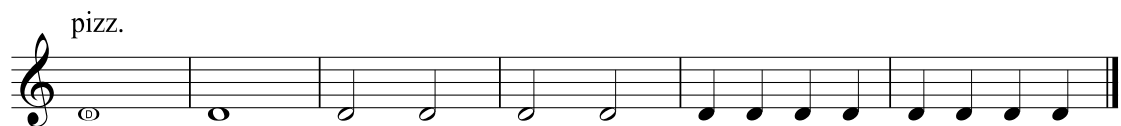




Introduce Pizzicato Technique

Teacher will first explain the word pizzicato and then demonstrate how to execute the technique. Placement of the thumb is important for producing quality tone. A good pizzicato has a ringing quality and is executed cleanly. Exercises for pizzicato are combined with note reading provided below.

Pizzicato rhythm combined with note names



Taping the fingerboard

Tape only the first and third finger placements on the violin fingerboard. The reason for not taping the second finger is to encourage the student to associate the placement of the second finger as being either near the first or third finger. If tape is provided for the second finger, students may associate the finger with that tape, and not fully grasp the concept of an independently high or low second finger.

Assignments

1. Practice holding the violin without the support of left hand for a few minutes, increasing the duration over the week of practice
2. Practice going from rest position to playing position
3. Practice right hand pizzicato exercise

Group Assignments

1. Demonstrate violin holds for each other and have colleagues check the checklist for good posture
2. Clap the two part rhythm assignments together while counting
3. Practice pizzicato exercises together while maintaining good standing posture

Student Outcomes

Students can go from rest position to playing position in ten seconds or less.

Students can walk around freely with the violin on the shoulder and without the support of the left hand.

WEEK THREE

Holding the Bow

Objectives

Learn to hold the bow

Review Assignments

Check postures for the violin in resting and playing positions

Review pizzicato technique with note reading exercise

Introduce bow hold

Demonstrate how to hold the bow, using any tactile aids to keep the bow hold in place. Provide exercises to strengthen the finger muscles, such as, windshield wipers (use forearm rotation to mimic the motion of windshield wipers), see-sawing (applying pressure with the pinky to move the tip of the bow upwards and release pressure to bring the tip back down), creeping crawlers (fingers maintain bow hold while crawling from frog to tip), or simply using a squeeze ball to develop finger strength.

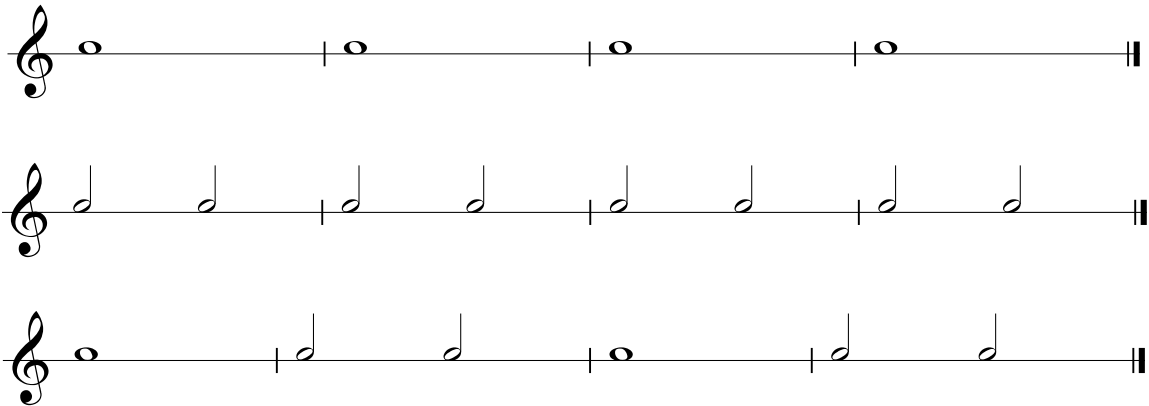
Group Activity: Students demonstrate for each other, and the observer goes through the checklist below for a well-balanced bow hold.

1. A bend thumb to oppose the force of the middle fingers
2. A curved pinky for balancing bow weight

3. Flat and flexible wrist
4. Visible knuckles
5. Firm hold of the bow

Exercise for guided full bows: first, tuck a paper tube under the strings in between the bridge and the fingerboard. The bow will be placed inside the tube for slow bow strokes. The goal is to keep a straight bow and use as much bow as one can. This exercise is to mimic actual violin playing with a similar bow and arm angles while providing student the concentration and slow speed for control of the bow hold.

Group Activity: While one student practices the guided full bow exercise explained above, the other can assist with keeping the right elbow in position by guiding the elbow movement. The goal is to have a straight bow.



Group Activity: Have one student play an open string while the other places their bow above the string, parallel to the player's bow. The bow in the air provides a visual guidance for the player, helping him or her to achieve a straight bow.

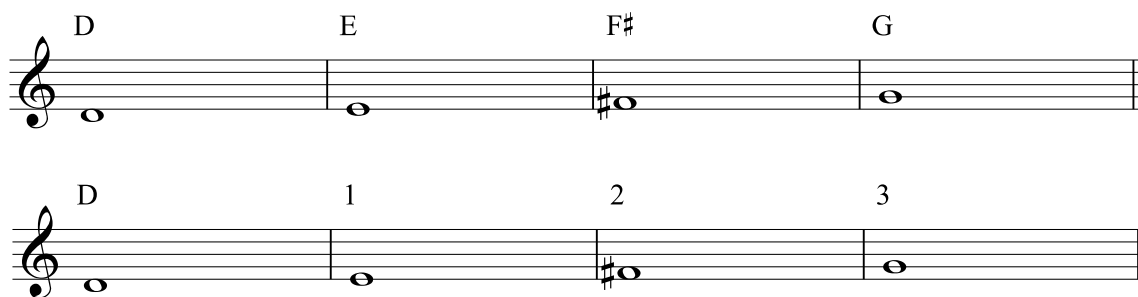
Group Activity: Students demonstrate for each other and compare bow holds. Students face each other while holding their bows and form an X with the bows. With the bow hairs touching, they exert force against the other person's bow. If they do not have a secure bow hold, they will not be able to exert force against their colleague's bow.

Reinforce pizzicato

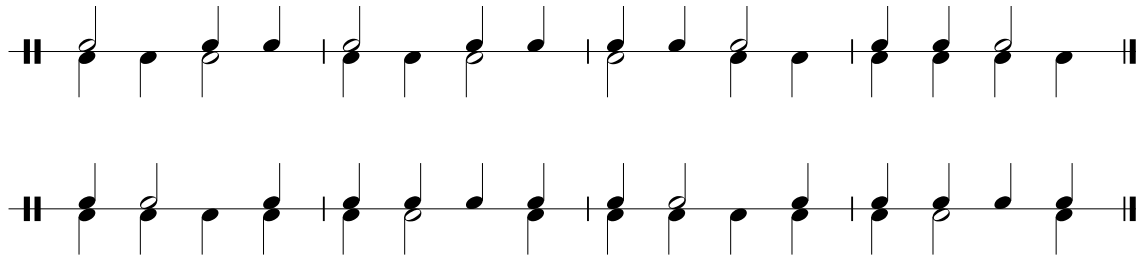


Theory

Note reading, stepwise notes



Group Activity: Rhythmic clapping exercises with one student on each line.



Assignments

1. Bow hold exercises without the violin
2. Assisted full bow exercise with the tube under the violin strings
3. Pizzicato exercise for note reading and rhythm

Group Assignments

1. Students demonstrate bow holds for each other to go through the bow hold checklist
2. Students take turns helping each other keep the bow straight by guiding the elbow movement
3. Students clap the two part rhythmic exercises together
4. One student calls out note names while the other places the corresponding finger

Student Outcomes

Students are able to demonstrate a controlled bow hold with the given exercises.

Students develop a fluency in pizzicato note reading.

WEEK FOUR

Play the Violin

Objectives

1. Play open strings
2. Combine note reading with playing the violin

Review Assignments

Review left hand fingers on D string

Check posture for the violin and the bow and review the theory assignments

Playing the open strings

Demonstrate a good tone quality on open strings and explain how bow pressure needs to vary during the length of the bow in order to maintain consistent volume.

Students will begin with a slow bow on the D and A strings. The goal is to have a straight bow with consistent volume and good tone. Bowing exercises in whole, half and quarter notes will be practiced with open strings. The different note lengths will provide exercises for different bow speeds with the same bow length. This activity encourages students to relate note reading in context with playing the violin.



Group Activity: Students can practice individually in front of the mirror or demonstrate straight bow for their colleague in group practice –the observer is looking for the following:

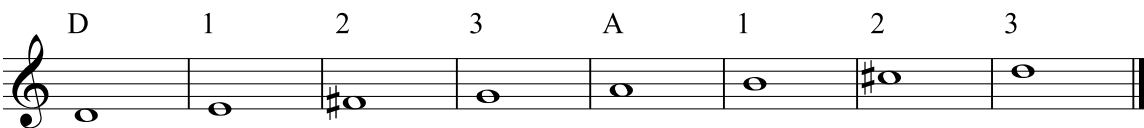
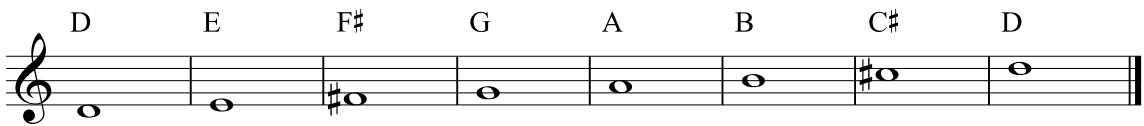
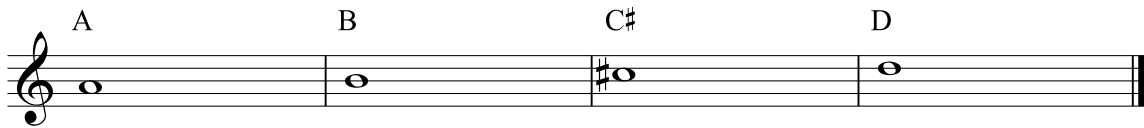
1. relaxed right shoulder
2. coordination in shoulder, elbow, and wrist
3. even tone quality
4. straight bows with a perpendicular angle to the strings

Left hand fingers

Introduce left hand fingers on the A string. The goal is to have a balanced hand frame with each finger above the fingerboard. A checklist for balance hand frame is provided below.

1. a relaxed wrist
2. supporting thumb
3. all fingers above the strings
4. poised and curled fingers
5. a relaxed left elbow

With the balanced hand frame, students can begin to strengthen their fingers.



Place each finger with control while keeping the balanced hand shape. This is a left hand only exercise, but one can add pizzicato for evenness and coordination.



Group Activity: Call out a fingering number for the colleague to lift and drop as fast as he or she can. This activity familiarizes violin fingerings and trains finger independence.

Assignments

1. Practice holding the bow with control from each finger
2. Draw straight bows in front of a mirror with a big sound on A and D strings
3. Set up balanced hand frame on the A string and practice pressing fingers on the tape

Group Assignments

1. Review checklist for violin hold and bow hold for each other

2. One student calls out note names on D and A strings while the other places the correct finger
3. One student calls out the fingering while the other lifts and drops as fast as he can
4. Check straight bows for each other in open string exercises

Student Outcomes

Students are able to draw straight bows with a clean tone, execute correct rhythm, and accurately lift and drop the fingers of the left hand onto the tape at will.

WEEK FIVE

String Crossings

Objectives

1. Coordinate left hand set up with the bow arm
2. Build a habit of keeping left hand fingers down
3. Introduce string crossings

Review Assignments

Straight bow exercises

Left hand setup and finger exercise

Introduce Scales

Keep the left hand frame by keeping fingers down



Note reading: playing scales with the notated rhythm

String Crossings

Students will learn to find the right arm angle for each string without raising the right shoulder. The goal is to have a clean string crossing on both down- and up-bows with a straight bow.

Group Activity: One student claps the rhythm while the other plays with the violin. This exercise works on maintaining the same rhythmic pulse with a colleague and also allows the clapper to watch for a straight bow.

String cross on down bows



String cross on up and down bows

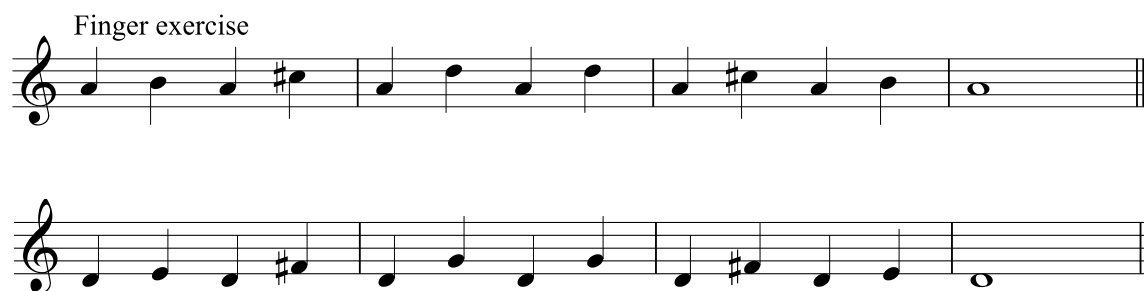




Pizzicato First Piece



Left hand finger exercises for strengthening individual finger control (add pizzicato after achieving fluency)



Assignments

1. Review left hand fingers without bow
2. Practice clean string crossings between A and D strings with the given rhythm
3. Practice *Skips and Steps*
4. Open strings with a straight bow
5. Practice the given exercises on D and A strings

Group Assignments

1. One student claps the assignment while the other plays
2. Practice the string crossing exercises together
3. Practice *Skips and Steps* together with correct fingerings
4. One student names a note while the other places correct finger

Student Outcomes

1. Acquired independent finger movement within a balanced hand frame
2. Develop the ability to use different bow speeds and understand the concept of bow division in addition to maintaining a straight bow
3. Establish self-imposed standards for intonation, tone quality, and a clean sound
4. Clean string crossings with different bow arm angles

WEEK SIX

Left and Right Coordination

Objectives

1. Coordinate left and Right hands
2. Develop a concept of intonation

Review

String crossings on D and A string

Pizzicato of D major scale

Pizzicato finger exercise

Pizzicato *Skips and Steps*

Scale

Play a D major scale with attention to tone and a straight bow



Group Activity: Unison playing of D major scale. This is essentially the first ensemble playing experience. Students should decide on a tempo together, perhaps count out loud and listen for matching intonation.

What is intonation?

Play with a student to demonstrate what out-of-tune sounds like. Explain what in-tune and out-of-tune sounds like using open strings for comparison. Discuss how to correct and adjust the finger placement when it is out of tune. Use the scale exercise to develop awareness and a concept of intonation.

Coordination Exercise

This exercise trains the coordination between left hand fingers and bow changes. Using the slow full bow allows time for the fingers to prepare for the next note before the bow. The goal is to develop a habit of leading with the fingers, keep a balanced hand frame, sustained a good tone quality, and listen for intonation.



Assignments

1. Practice a D major scale

2. Coordination exercise for left hand fingers and bow changes
3. Review pizzicato *Skips and Steps*

Group Assignments

1. Practice D major scale together for unison pitch
2. Review *Skips and Steps* for ensemble skills
3. One student goes through the checklist of violin and bow hold posture while the other is playing
4. Students take turns being the observer for straight bows

Student Outcomes

1. Students acquire coordination between left and right hands.
2. Demonstrate clean string crossings.
3. Students demonstrate understanding of good intonation.

WEEK SEVEN

First Piece

Objectives

1. Learn the process of how to approach a new piece
2. Develop a practice routine for warm up, exercises, and pieces

Prior Knowledge and Skill

Students have the ability to read and play a D major scale

Review

D major scale

Coordination exercises

Pizzicato Skips and Steps

Scale with Variation

This D major scale combines different rhythms and string crossings for students to practice different coordination patterns.



Group Activity: Students may play the two scale patterns together to create suspensions, which are resolved at each down beat with a unison note.

Introduce *Twinkle Theme in D*

Teachers should develop a routine of how they want to introduce a new piece.

Teachers can choose to first demonstrate how the piece should sound, and then have students sight-read together, or students can sight-read first before the

teacher demonstrates. The first approach shows students how the piece sounds, making imitation easier. The second approach lets the students explore a piece with the teacher's guidance and compares their own understanding to the teacher's demonstration. For either approach, discussing musical form and finding musical patterns or structures in a piece can help with memorization.

Group Activity: Assign each student either the A or B section and have both students collaborate to complete the piece.

Theory

Discuss relevant musical markings, such as key signature, time signature, bar line, double bar line, and tempo markings

Assignments

1. Practice *Twinkle Theme* with correct bowings, notes and rhythm
2. Build a daily practice routine
3. D major scale with variation

Group Assignments

1. Students practice *Twinkle Theme* together to achieve unison playing
2. Students play the same scale variation together, and listen for the unison pitch
3. Students play the different variations together and listen for suspensions and resolutions in each down beat

4. Students collaborate to complete *Twinkle Theme* by assigning each other different sections and playing only during their assigned section

Student Outcomes

Students demonstrate a balanced playing posture.

Students demonstrate ability to transfer notation into violin playing.

Students can play *Twinkle Theme* with correct rhythm, notes, and bowings.

WEEK EIGHT

Sequences in Music

Objectives

1. Identify sequences in *Lightly Row*
2. Maintain a comfortable posture

Review

D major scale with variation rhythm

Twinkle Theme

Discuss individual daily practice routine

Introduce Scale in Canonic Thirds

Teacher demonstrates with a student how to play scales in canonic thirds. The student who begins the scale will repeat the tonic note at the end. This exercise trains ensemble playing and introduces harmony.

Group Activity: Students play D major scales in canonic thirds. The goal is to demonstrate good ensemble skills by changing bows and notes together.

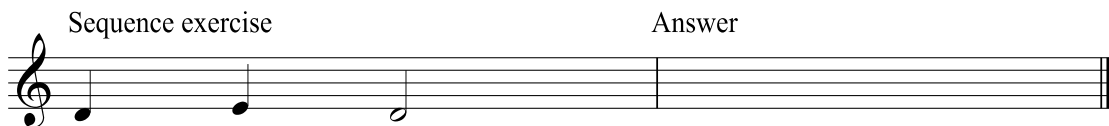


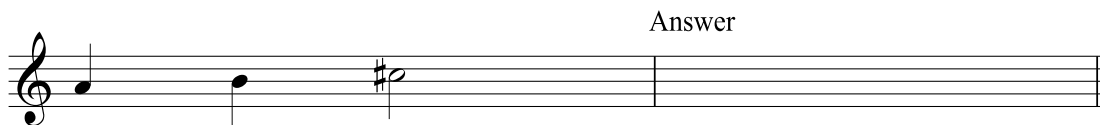
Introduce *Lightly Row in D*

Discuss the sequential patterns in this piece and the musical form. *Lightly Row* is longer than *Twinkle Theme*, and it reinforces all the skills in *Twinkle Theme*.

Sight-reading: Have both students sight-read *Lightly Row* together, while the teacher assesses the students' individual learning.

Group Activity: One student plays a three note melodic pattern and the other student replies in sequence by repeating the interval pattern beginning with a different pitch. Use the beginning of *Lightly Row* as an example.





Assignments

1. Memorize *Twinkle Theme*
2. Practice scales in unison and thirds
3. Practice *Lightly Row* and find sequential patterns

Group Assignments

1. Practice D major scales in canonic thirds together
2. Practice sequencing a three note melodic pattern with each other
3. Review *Twinkle Theme* together
4. Practice *Lightly Row* together to ensure correct bowings and notes

Choose a piece for final performance

Discuss with students what piece they want to perform for the final performance.

Students should have *Skips and Steps* and *Twinkle Theme* for review and should be working on *Lightly Row*. It is ideal for students to play their review pieces for the performance because they will be more comfortable. However, some students would prefer the challenge of performing their working piece in two weeks. The goal of the performance is for students to realize how much they have improved since the beginning of the term.

Student Outcomes

Students play with correct rhythm, notes, and bowings for *Lightly Row* and show understanding of melodic sequences in the piece.

WEEK NINE

Bow Division and Dynamics I

Objectives

1. Learn bow distribution
2. Understand dynamics

Review

Perform *Twinkle Theme* from memory

Scale in canonic thirds

Play *Lightly Row*

Play the chosen concert piece

Scale

Scale with different rhythmic patterns to train left hand and right hand coordination

Scale with rhythm pattern

Scale variation

Theory

The teacher introduces eighth notes in relation to quarter and half notes through demonstration by clapping and/or playing.

Group activity: Clap through the piece together before playing.

Eighth note rhythm

Introduce *Go Tell Aunt Rhody*

Teacher demonstrates the bow division of one whole-bow followed by two half-bows corresponding to first three notes in *Go Tell Aunt Rhody*. This piece is similar to *Twinkle Theme* and *Lightly Row* in tempo, meter, and bow strokes.

However, it introduces faster string crossings and requires independent left hand fingers. The teacher should explain the dynamic markings in the middle section and how to create different dynamics by applying different weights and bow speeds.

Group Activity: One student plays a particular dynamic while the other student tries to guess the dynamic.

Assignments

1. Memorize *Lightly Row*
2. Practice *Go Tell Aunt Rhody* with attention to bow distribution
3. Exercise for clapping rhythms
4. Practice scales in different rhythms

Group Assignments

1. Students play for each other to guess what dynamic they are playing
2. One student claps rhythmic exercises while the other plays it on open strings
3. Students play scales with eighth note rhythmic variations together
4. Review concert piece

Student Outcomes

1. Students demonstrate planned bow distributions and understanding of dynamic markings.
2. Student plays *Go Tell Aunt Rhody* with correct notes, rhythm, and bowings.

3. Students understand rhythms in relation to each other.

WEEK TEN

Final Performance Review

Objectives

Reinforce the concept of bow division, rhythm, and dynamics

Review

Play the A major scale with whole, half and quarter notes

Play *Lightly Row* and *Go Tell Aunt Rhody*

Perform chosen concert piece with the piano

Performance Etiquette

Discuss with students basic performance etiquette such as bowing, dressing up, and continuing to play when mistakes are made. Students will stand facing the audience for the performance instead of facing each other.

Group Assignments

Review D major scales together

Practice performance piece together in the new standing posture

Class Overview

Discuss with students what they have learned and accomplished in one term.

Briefly introduce some of the new techniques and pieces for the next term to give the students some idea of what to expect and keep them interested.

END OF TERM CURRICULUM

Appendix A. Resources of Violin Method Books

The list is a compilation of available method books for beginner violin students.

The description is based on my observation and it describes the methodological differences between each book.

Title	Adult/Child	Description on Volume I
A Tune A Day (1933)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce basic music theory• Uses hymns and folk songs• Lessons have one teaching point• Provides progressive quizzes on musical knowledge• Emphasizes open strings for first half of the book while the second half of the book introduced left hand fingers with high second finger
All for Strings (1985)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Theory exercises are integrated as part of learning the violin• Each exercise introduces a new idea• Materials are introduced at a slower rate in comparison to Suzuki Materials
ABC's Of Violin For The Absolute Beginner (2000)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intended to help beginners read the music at the same time as learning the instrument• Warm-ups are included in the early songs to build the habit• Students are encouraged to memorize the songs• Begins with high second finger before low second finger• Easy duets in the back• Accompaniment CD is available
Abracadabra Violin (2002)	Both, child friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduces pizzicato on open strings with note reading at first, follow by long full bows• Left hand introduces each finger (all four) gradually on the D string and then on the A string• Introduces specific tasks per lesson• Note reading and theory are emphasized throughout the book• It includes a CD and teacher's violin accompaniment part to play with the student

Adventures in Violin Land (1993)	Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustration and pictures help children enjoy the book • Early focus on rhythm, pizzicato, and sound of the violin • Uses <i>solfège</i> and songs to help children learn
Essentials Elements for String 2000 (2001)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pizzicato with left hand on D-string, then on A-string then G-string • Start bow hold at the balance point • Low and high second finger introduced along with fourth finger • Music theory is integrated as part of learning the violin
Eta Cohen Violin Method Books (1974)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercises and songs begin on D-string • Banjo position is recommended in the beginning to separate coordination issues • Book divides into thirty teaching points based on technique or theory • Second violin part and piano accompaniment come in separate volumes
Maia Bang Violin Method (1919, 1937)	Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercises separate bow and left-hand fingers • Basic note reading and rhythms are introduced • Left hand set-up with low second finger • Duet parts with teacher
Mel Bay's Modern Violin Method (2008)	Adult or Teens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each lesson is designed for specific technique along with description, pictures, exercises, and songs • CD includes tracks for playing along, ear training, theory, and exercise demonstrations • Techniques introduced are similar to the Suzuki Method
Müller Rusch (1961)	Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaches Rhythm and fingerings without the staff • Students begin on D-string with three fingers, then A-string and then G-string • Low second finger is used to introduce the E-string, as well as low first finger • Fourth finger is introduced by left hand pizzicato • Slurs, eighth notes, and duet pieces are at the end

Shinozaki Violin Method Translated (2005)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left and right hands are to be practice separately in the beginning • Emphasizes C major by introducing low second finger on the D and A string, high second finger on the G string and low first finger on the E string • Goal for each exercise is described in detail • Emphasizes full bows before short bows • This book is intended to help the teacher to teach more systematically • The book originated in Japan at about same time as Suzuki Method. Translated edition is recently available in the US
O'Connor Method (2009)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to play the violin with traditional folk songs of America • Each song introduces new techniques or music theory • Left hand set-up starts with second finger and third finger on A-string • One of the songs is reused throughout the book to introduce different techniques • Open string double-stops are introduce • Each song is supplemented with historical background and pictures for artistic development • Includes teacher duet part and CD
The Doflein Method Books (1932, translated in 1957)	Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourth finger and D-string are introduced at beginning to ensure correct left hand shape • Note reading, theory, and ear training are reinforced throughout the book • Use of <i>solfège</i> is encouraged for training musicianship • Each song is prepared by specific exercises • Some songs are by contemporary composers such as Hindemith, Bartók, and Orff
The Sassmannshaus Tradition (2008)	Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorful book with words to the songs • Long bows are introduced early and all four strings are played at the beginning • Student learn to read the music through the graded song progression

Suzuki Method (Revised edition in 2007)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suzuki method does not require note reading • Students are required to listen to CD and learn the song aurally • Pieces are progressively graded and include folk songs, classical pieces, and new compositions by Suzuki • Emphasizes short bows and a high second finger while mostly utilizing the top two strings • A play along and listening CD is included
Jazz Fiddle Wizard (2000)	Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This book is intended for people who can read music and have basic violin skills, most likely for second or third year students • It introduces basic jazz scales, rhythm and chords • A play along CD is included
Jazz Fiddle Wizard Junior (2002)	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The book is intended for people who can read music and have basic violin skills • There are three different parts to each song for the student to learn and choose which voicing they want to play • A play along CD is included • Great supplementary book for beginners who enjoy jazz
Violin Method by Frank Zucco (1978, 1980, 1992, 2006)	Adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers basic bow strokes, theory, note reading, and shifting • It is a good beginner book for students who can read music

Appendix B. Curriculum Music Scores

This section contains transposed Suzuki Method Book pieces, which are part of the curriculum.

Twinkle in D

The musical score for 'Twinkle in D' is written in 4/4 time on a single treble staff. It begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. A trill mark (V) is placed above the first A4 note. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Lightly Row in D Folk Song

The musical score for 'Lightly Row in D' is written in 4/4 time on a single treble staff. It begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. Trill marks (V) are placed above the first A4 and B4 notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Go Tell Aunt Rhody in D

Folk Song



Long Long Ago in D

T.H. Bayly



May Song in D

Folk Song

Three staves of music in treble clef, common time (C). The first staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a fermata over the first note. The second staff begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The third staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and ends with a double bar line.

O Come, Little Children in D

Folk Song

Four staves of music in treble clef, 2/4 time. The first staff begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The fourth staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Song of the Wind in D

Folk Song



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