Training String Players for Rhythmic Mastery American String Teachers Association National Conference, 2008 Albuquerque, NM

Presenters:

Daniel Mason, Professor of Violin University of Kentucky Lexington, KY 40506-0022 Ph. 859.257.3575 Email: <u>daniel.mason@uky.edu</u>

Mami Hayashida, Professor of Piano Georgetown College Georgetown, KY 40324 Ph. 502.863.7929 Email: <u>Mami Hayashida@georgetowncollege.edu</u>

Rhythmic Elements in Daily Routine

- With metronome at 40-60, count all subdivisions from 1 10 and back, 1 -4 times each.
- Practice scales with various rhythms as in Galamian
- Apply same subdivisions to scales.
- Practice scales with metronome in cross-rhythms (2 against 3; 3 against 2, 3 against 4, etc.)
- Practice rhythmic studies such as those in Carothers.
- Students in pairs play scales with cross rhythm (e.g. 2 against 3, etc.)
- Internalize beat by tapping, marching, dancing, etc.

Strategies for Rhythmic Problem Solving

- Conduct while speaking rhythms; using words (e.g. "opportunity" for quintuplets) imparts natural feel
- Eliminate slurs and ties
- Use one bow per rhythmic unit (depends on context)
- Using metronome, work from smallest common denominator for precision to larger beats for musical continuity.
- With *Dr. Beat* or similar metronome, gradually work toward less frequent beats, e.g. at 60 beats/minute and 4 beats/measure, internal beats turned off, the beats will sound every 4 seconds, permitting check of tempo consistency.
- Practice with metronome click off the beat to develop greater awareness of the interior of the beat
- For gradual tempo change (example from Webern, *Vier Stücke*) record a click track using a rotary dial metronome

• Ensemble problems often solved speaking rhythms together (especially with all conducting)

Unusual rhythmic challenges in repertoire can be used as rhythmic exercises. Some notable examples in violin/chamber music/orchestral repertoire: Copland, Sonata for Violin and Piano; Ives, Piano Trio; Dvorak, Serenade (last movement); Bartok, Duos for 2 Violins, 1st Sonata, Six String Quartets, Concerto for Orchestra; Webern, *Vier Stücke*; Strauss, Sonata for Violin and Piano (before coda of last movement); Sibelius, Violin Concerto (slow movement, 3 against 4 double stops); Haydn Violin Concerti (first movements of both have extensive use of subdivision); Lalo, Symphonie Espagnole (numerous occurrences of 3 against 2); Berio, Violin Duos (especially No. 2).

Martinu Rhythmic Etudes – composed 1932, scored for violin and (one staff) piano. One of two sets of pedagogical works (the other being *Arabesques*) for violinists, the etudes exist also as chamber orchestra work. The seven studies contain myriad rhythmic challenges, especially displaced emphases and cross rhythms. In the absence of a pianist, they can be studied solo and/or with metronome. Essential elements of the piano part are generally playable on a second stringed instrument for instructional purposes.

Resources:

Martinu, Bohuslav. *Rhythmische Etüden für Violine (und Klavier)*. Mainz: Schott (catalogue #VLB0046), 1932 (renewed 1960).

Hall, Anne Carothers. Studying Rhythm. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005.

Starer, Robert. Rhythmic Training. New York, NY: MCA, 1969.

Clark, Frances and Louise Goss. Keyboard Musician for the Adult Beginner. Alfred, 1980.

Galmian, Ivan and Frederick Neumann. Contemporary Violin Technique. Schirmer.

Wehner, Walter L. *Rhythmic Sightsinging*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979.

Stevenson, John R. and Marjorie Porterfield. *Rhythm and Pitch: An Integrated Approach to Sight Singing*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986.

Hindemith, Paul. *Elementary Training for Musicians*. 2nd ed., rev. New York, NY: Associated, 1949.

Ghezzo, Marta A. Solfege, *Ear Training, Rhythm, Dictation, and Music Theory: A Comprehensive Course*. University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980.

DeZeeuw, Anne Marie and Roger E. Foltz. *Sight-singing and Related Skills. Revised*. Manchaca, TX: Sterling Swift, 1975.

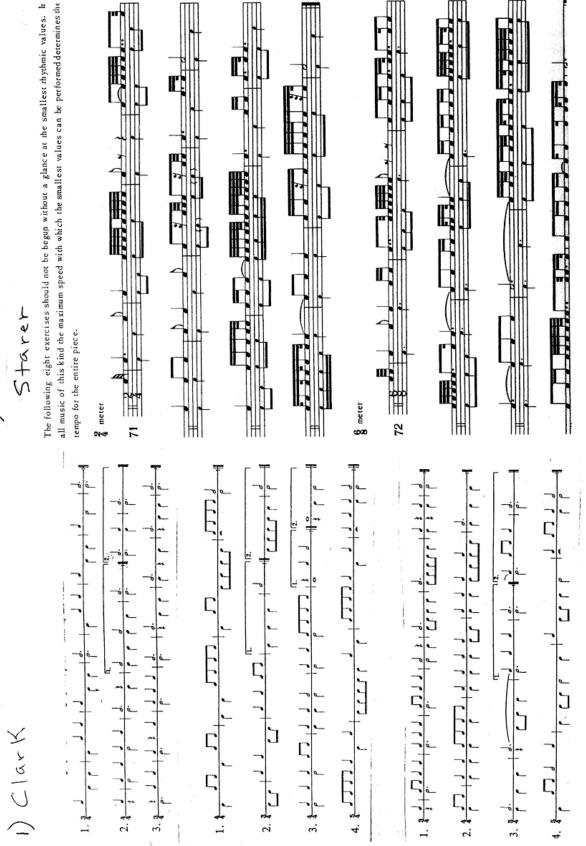
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The music of the past fifty years has presented string players with many musical and technical demands not addressed in their training. The task of developing a sound technique – playing in tune with a beautiful sound – often relegates real-world musical considerations to distant second place in the pedagogical agenda. One of the most neglected requisites for successful music-making is rhythmic training to prepare the student for the myriad difficulties found in the modern repertoire, including frequent meter and tempo changes, polyrhythmic ensemble writing, unfamiliar subdivisions of the beat and rhythms borrowed from other styles (jazz, folk-tradition, etc.).

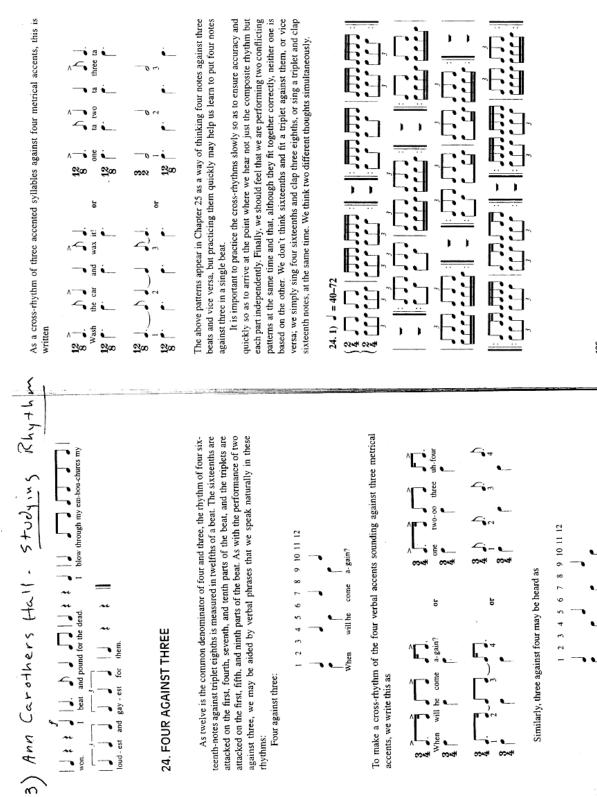
A staple in many studios is the application of a variety of rhythms to the scale or to a rhythmically homogeneous etude, an important and effective tactic for the development of mental facility and dexterity. This system has the strength and the shortcoming of predictability, whereas, in a complex work, a chief challenge rests in the need for abrupt conceptual changes.

This session will present suggestions for other approaches to the goal of providing a student with a secure rhythmic foundation for career-long confidence in facing challenging new works and using rhythmic flexibility to greater expressive effect in all repertoire. One of the resources presented for violinists will be the Bohuslav Martinu *Rhythmic Studies* (Edition Schott), which the presenter first encountered as a member of the Jascha Heifetz Master Class. Though scored for violin and piano, other string players will also find it of use. Selected etudes will be demonstrated, with pianist Mami Hayashida. Sub-division exercises, both with and without the instrument, will also be discussed, as will the use of some excerpts from chamber music, orchestral and solo repertoire as exercises.

Pedagogical works focusing on rhythm abound for wind players and percussionists. This session will seek to bring string players greater awareness of this important facet of musicianship.



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