
Unit 4 Shifting, Bowing Skills, and Beethoven

Unit Overview: This unit will introduce more difficult bowing skills such as the concepts of bow lifting and shadow bowing. The bass players will utilize shifting from third position to first position, as well as from first position to third position. Students will learn about the composer Ludwig van Beethoven and the time in which he lived.

Lesson 4-1: Day 1

Topics:

Shifting; D string notes

Objective(s): Students will demonstrate proficiency in plucking the notes of the D string. The bass players will learn the skill of shifting between first and third positions on their fingerboards.

Skills attained: Students will demonstrate their ability to pluck the notes of the D string while keeping a steady beat. Bass players will practice the skill of shifting between first and third position, with the shifts being executed during the quarter rests.

Vocabulary: Shifting

Procedure: The teacher should introduce the new warm-ups called Fingerboard Sliding and Fingerboard Tapping, found on page 16. These exercises will relax the left hand and facilitate shifting.

The students should clap and count exercise #33, observing the repeat sign. Next, they should pluck the exercise two measures at a time with a metronome to keep a steady beat. Basses have the most difficult left hand fingering, as they are required to shift from third to first position. Finally, the students should pluck the exercise with the accompaniment CD 1:33.

The students should clap and count exercise #34, pluck it with the metronome, and pluck it with the accompaniment CD 1:34.

The students should clap and count exercise #35, pluck it with the metronome, and pluck it with the accompaniment CD 1:35.

Materials list: Violin, viola, cello, or bass for each student, Orchestra Expressions book for appropriate instrument, music stands, metronome. Additionally, the teacher will need a CD player and the accompaniment CD #1.

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Description:

The teacher should introduce the new warm-ups called Fingerboard Sliding and Fingerboard Tapping, found on page 16. These exercises will relax the left hand and facilitate shifting. The left wrist should remain straight, not collapsed, to allow the hand to reach the upper positions of the instruments.

The students should clap and count exercise #33, observing the repeat sign. Next, they should pluck the exercise two measures at a time with a metronome to keep a steady beat. Basses have the most difficult left hand fingering, as they are required to shift from third to first position. The shifts should be done smoothly during the rests. Cello players should form a tunnel and keep the third finger F# down on the D string while playing the open A string in the third measure. Finally, the students should pluck the exercise with the accompaniment CD 1:33. Monitor the bass section and do not progress to the next exercise until the bass players can all shift smoothly. The Roman numerals should help the bass players to instantly know if they should be in first (I) or third position (III).

The students should clap and count exercise #34. Once successful, the students should pluck it with the metronome to keep the beat steady. Bass players should use only the first finger, and shift quickly and smoothly during the quarter rests. Once all students are successful, they should pluck it with the accompaniment CD 1:34.

The students should clap and count exercise #35. Next, they should pluck it with the metronome. Have the violin and viola players pay close attention to the intonation of the A on the D string. Bass players will be shifting from first to third position and back to first. Once the shifts are correct, students should pluck the exercise with the accompaniment CD 1:35.

Assessment: Observe the students as they pluck the exercises on page 16. Violin, viola, and cello students should be checking their left hand positions as they strive to match their pitches to the ones on the CD. Closely monitor the bass section as they work on shifting from one position to another.

Homework: Students should practice the warm-ups on page 16 to CD 1:8. Students should pluck exercises #33-35 with the accompaniment CD 1:33-35, keeping a steady beat and matching pitches with the CD.

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Lesson 4-2: Day 2

Topics:

Improvisation; Good King Wenceslas

Objective(s): Students will demonstrate proficiency in plucking the notes of the D string. The bass players will reinforce the skill of shifting between first and third positions on their fingerboards. Students will learn to pluck part of a well-known Christmas carol. Students will improvise using the notes D, E, and F#.

Skills attained: Students will demonstrate their ability to pluck the notes of the D string while keeping a steady beat. Bass players will use the skill of shifting between third and first position in exercise #36. Students will practice improvising on the notes D, E, and F# for the class.

Vocabulary: Improvising

Procedure: The teacher should choose a student to lead the warm-ups found on page 16. These exercises will relax the left hand and facilitate shifting.

The students should clap and count exercise #36, observing the repeat sign. Next, they should pluck the exercise two measures at a time with a metronome to keep a steady beat. Finally, the students should pluck the exercise with the accompaniment CD 1:36.

The bass players may begin their shifting as they play the open D in the second measure. The shift from first to third position in the third and fourth measures is the most difficult, as there is not a quarter rest between the F# and G. The bass players should play this exercise several times just as a section without the other instruments playing.

The teacher should remind the students that improvising is an important part of being a musician. Ask a student to volunteer to be the first to improvise a pattern of four quarter notes using only the notes D, E, and F#. Have the class echo this pattern keeping a steady beat after hearing it played by the first volunteer student.

Materials list: Violin, viola, cello, or bass for each student, Orchestra Expressions book for appropriate instrument, music stands, metronome. Additionally, the teacher will need a CD player and the accompaniment CD #1.

Description:

The teacher should choose a student to lead the warm-ups found on page 16. These exercises will relax the left hand and facilitate shifting.

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The students should clap and count exercise #36, observing the repeat sign. Next, they should pluck the exercise two measures at a time with a metronome to keep a steady beat. Finally, the students should pluck the exercise with the accompaniment CD 1:36. Some students will recognize that this is only the first half of “Good King Wenceslas” and they may try to complete the second half at home. The second half includes notes that have not been taught yet, so it would be quite a challenge.

The bass players may begin their shifting as they play the open D in the second measure. The shift from first to third position in the third and fourth measures is the most difficult, as there is not a quarter rest between the F# and G.

The teacher should remind the students that improvising is an important part of being a musician. Ask a student to volunteer to be the first to improvise a pattern of four quarter notes using only the notes D, E, and F#. Have the class echo this pattern after hearing it from the volunteer. As time permits, allow other students to improvise a pattern and have the class echo it. It is helpful to have the metronome on to keep a steady beat throughout the exercise.

Assessment: Observe the students as they pluck “Good King Wenceslas.” Violin and viola students should tune the fourth finger on the D string carefully to match the pitch of the open A string. Closely monitor the bass section as they work on shifting from one position to another. The shift from F# to G in measures three and four is the most difficult.

Homework: Students should practice the warm-ups on page 16 to CD 1:8. Students should pluck exercises #33-36 with the accompaniment CD 1:33-36, keeping a steady beat and matching pitches with the CD. Students may try to determine the second half of “Good King Wenceslas” if they want a challenge.

Lesson 4-3: Day 3

Topics:

Bow lift; shadow bowing

Objective(s): Students will be able to execute a bow lift when it is indicated in the music. Students will learn how to shadow bow in preparation for bowing an exercise for the first time.

Skills attained: Students will recognize a bow lift in their music and will be able to execute them properly. Students will practice the technique called shadow bowing and appreciate its use as a tool before actually bowing a piece of music.

Vocabulary: Bow lift, shadow bowing

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Procedure: The teacher should draw a bow lift on the board. A bow lift usually occurs over a quarter rest. Have the students read the definition of bow lift on page 17: to “raise the bow from the string and return it to the original starting point.” Students should practice making a bow hold on a pencil and perform the bow lift exercise as described in the right hand warm-ups on page 17.

Shadow bowing is another important technique in preparing to bow a piece of music for the first time. To shadow bow, the students turn their bows upside down and “bow” without making a sound. Violin and viola students bow in the crook of their left arms, and the cello and bass students bow across their laps or several inches over their strings. It is awkward to form the bow hold with the frog upside down, but most students will be able to do it.

The students should clap and count exercise #37, observing the repeat sign. Next, they should shadow bow the exercise, observing the bow lifts in measures two and four. Shadow bowing may be done with the accompaniment CD 1:37. Once successful, students should actually bow the exercise with the accompaniment.

Next, have the students follow the same procedure for exercise #38, clapping and counting the exercise, shadow bowing the exercise, and then playing the exercise with the accompaniment.

Materials list: Violin, viola, cello, or bass for each student, Orchestra Expressions book for appropriate instrument, music stands, metronome, an unsharpened pencil for each student. Additionally, the teacher will need a CD player and the accompaniment CD #1.

Description:

The teacher should explain what a bow lift is and draw an example on the board. A bow lift looks like an apostrophe symbol and usually is placed over a quarter rest. Have the students read the definition of bow lift on page 17: to “raise the bow from the string and return it to the original starting point.” Students should practice making a bow hold on a pencil and perform the bow lift exercise as described in the right hand warm-ups on page 17. The arch should not be very big as the right hand returns the pencil to the left shoulder.

Shadow bowing is another important technique in preparing to bow a piece of music for the first time. To shadow bow, the students turn their bows upside down and “bow” without making a sound. Violin and viola students bow in the crook of their left arms, and the cello and bass students bow across their laps or several inches over their strings. It is awkward to form the bow hold with the frog upside down, but most students will be able to do it. Having the bow upside down enables it to slide easily on the student’s lap or arm.

The students should clap and count exercise #37, observing the repeat sign. Next, they should shadow bow the exercise, observing the bow lifts in measures two and four. Shadow bowing may be done with the accompaniment CD 1:37. Once successful, students should

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actually bow the exercise on the open D string with the accompaniment. Students must place the bow on the string after the bow lift so it is ready for the next down bow. Observe this “setting” of the bow on the string so that the bow does not bounce or make a scratchy sound.

The students should clap and count exercise #38, observing the repeat sign. Next, the students should shadow bow the exercise. Point out that there is only one rest in which to complete the bow lift whereas in the previous exercise, there were three quarter rests. After successfully shadow bowing the exercise with the accompaniment CD 1:38, students should actually play the exercise on the open D and A strings.

Assessment: Observe the students as they perform the bow lift exercises with the pencils. The arch should not be very high as they return the pencil to the left shoulder. Monitor the bow lifting carefully on exercises #37 and #38 so that the bow is actually set on the string before the next down bow.

Observe the shadow bowing to be sure the bow hold is kept as accurate as possible even though the frog is inverted. This silent practice is very important to work on the proper bowing indications without actually playing the music.

Watch the students execute the bow lifts as they perform with the accompaniment CD. Have them play by section, such as just the cello section, while the other sections shadow bow along with them. This is very helpful in utilizing the rehearsal time while checking each instrument section for understanding before going further in the text.

Homework: Students should practice the warm-ups on page 16 and 17 to CD 1:8. Students should practice the bow lift exercises #37 and #38, being careful not to make a large arch as they return to the frog for the next down bow. Students should review the pizzicato exercises on page 16 with their accompaniment CD to practice keeping a steady beat.

Lesson 4-4: Day 4

Topics:

Bow lift; note names

Objective(s): Students will be able to execute a bow lift when it is indicated in the music. They will be able to correctly identify notes on a written exercise.

Skills attained: Students will recognize a bow lift in their music and will be able to perform it properly. Students will identify note names and put in their own bowing indications on a piece of music.

Vocabulary: Bow lift