

Masterworks for Violin

THE ART OF BOWING

for Violin and Piano
GIUSEPPE TARTINI

Edited by Endre Granat

Violin

SAMPLE



LETTER FROM TARTINI TO SIGNORA MADDALENA LOMBARDINI

Published as an Important Lesson to Performers on the Violin

Padua, Italy, March 5, 1760. Translated by Charles Burney, 1779 (revised)

DEAR MADDALENA,

Your principal practice and study should, at present, be confined to the use and power of the bow, in order to make yourself entirely mistress in the execution and expression of whatever can be played or sung, within the compass and ability of your instrument. Your first study, therefore, should be the true manner of holding, balancing and pressing the bow lightly, but steadily, upon the strings; in such a manner as that it shall seem to breathe the first tone it gives, which must proceed from the friction of the string, and not from percussion, as by a blow given with a hammer upon it. This depends on laying the bow lightly upon the strings, at the first contact, and on gently pressing it afterwards, which, if done gradually, can scarce have too much force given to it, because, if the tone is begun with delicacy, there is little danger of rendering it afterwards either coarse or harsh.

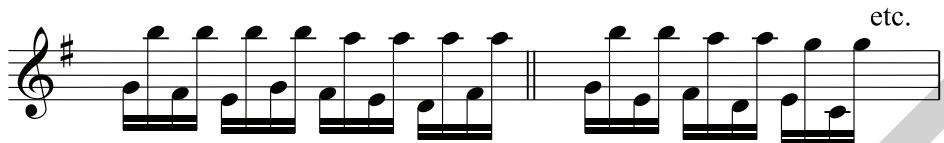
Of this first contact, and delicate manner of beginning a tone, you should make yourself a perfect mistress in every situation and part of the bow, as well in the middle as at the extremities; and in moving it up as well as in drawing it down. To unite all these laborious particulars into one lesson, my advice is that you first exercise yourself in a swell upon an open string, for example, upon the A string that you begin *pianissimo*, and increase the tone by slow degrees to its *fortissimo*; and this study should be equally made, with up and down bow, in which exercise you should spend at least an hour every day, though at different times, a little in the morning, and a little in the evening; having constantly in mind, that this practice is, of all others, the most difficult, and the most essential to playing well on the violin. When you are a perfect mistress of this part of a good performer, a crescendo will be very easy to you; beginning with the most minute softness, increasing the tone to its loudest degree and diminishing it to the same point of softness with which you began, and all this in the same stroke of the bow. Every degree of pressure upon the string, which the expression of a note or passage shall require, will by this means be easy and certain; and you will be able to execute with your bow whatever you please. After this, in order to acquire that light pulsation and play of the wrist, from whence velocity in bowing arises, it will be best for you to practise every day, one of the *allegros*, of which there are three in Corelli's solos, which entirely move in 16th notes. The first is in D, in playing which you should accelerate the motion a little each time until you arrive at the greatest degree of swiftness possible: but two precautions are necessary in this exercise. The first is, that you play the notes *staccato*, that is, separate and detached, with a little space between every two: for though they are written thus:



they should be played as if there was a rest after every note, in this manner:



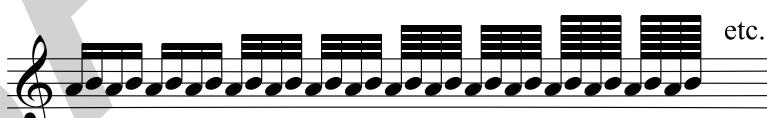
The second precaution is, that you first play with the point of the bow; and when that becomes easy to you that you use that part of it which is between the point and the middle; and when you are likewise mistress of this part of the bow, that you practise in the same manner with the middle of the bow; and above all, you must remember in these studies to begin the *allegros* sometimes with an up-bow, and sometimes with a down-bow, carefully avoiding the habit of constantly practising one way. In order to acquire a greater facility of executing swift passages in a light and neat manner, it will be of great use if you accustom yourself to skip over a string between two quick notes in divisions, like these :



Of such divisions you may play extempore as many as you please, and in every key, which will be both useful and necessary.

With regard to the finger-board, or carriage of the left hand, I have one thing strongly to recommend to you, which will suffice for all, and that is, the taking a violin part, either the first or second of a concerto, sonata or song, anything will serve the purpose, and playing it upon the second position, that is, with the first finger upon G on the E string, and constantly keeping this position, playing the whole piece without moving the hand from this situation, unless A on the G string be wanted, or D upon the E string; but in that case you should afterwards return again to the second position, without ever moving the hand down to the natural position. This practice should be continued until you can execute with facility upon the second position, any violin part, not intended as a solo, at sight. After this, advance the hand on the finger-board to the third position, with the first finger upon A, on the E string, and accustom yourself to this position until you can execute everything upon the third position with as much ease as when the hand is in its natural situation; and when certain of this, advance to the fourth position, with the first finger upon B, on the E string; and when sure of that likewise, pass to the fifth position of the hand, making C with the first finger upon the E string; and indeed this is a scale in which, when you are firm, you may be said to be mistress of the fingerboard. This study is so necessary, that I most earnestly recommend it to your attention.

I now pass to the third essential part of a good performer on the violin, which is the making a good trill, and I would have you practice it slow, moderately fast and quick; that is, with the two notes succeeding each other in these three degrees of *adagio*, *andante* and *presto*; and in practice you have great occasion for these different kinds of trills; for the same trill will not serve with equal propriety for a slow movement as for a quick one; but to acquire both at once with the same trouble, begin with an open string, either the E or A string, it will be equally useful; sustain the note in a crescendo, and begin the trill very slow, increasing in quickness, by insensible degrees, until it becomes rapid, in the manner following:



but you must not rigorously move immediately from 16th notes to 32nd notes as in this example, or from these to the next in degree, that would be doubling the velocity of the shake all at once, which would be a skip, not a gradation; but you can imagine between a semiquaver and a demisemiquaver intermediate degrees of rapidity, quicker than the one, but slower than the other of these characters, you are therefore to increase in velocity, by the same degrees in practising the trill, as in loudness, when you make a crescendo. You must attentively and assiduously persevere in the practice of this embellishment, and begin at first with an open string, upon which, if you are once able to make a good trill with the first finger, you will with the greater facility acquire one with the second, the third and the fourth or little finger, with which you must practise in a particular manner, as weaker than the rest of its brethren. I shall, at present, propose no other studies to your application, what I have already said is more than sufficient, if your zeal is equal to my wishes for your improvement. I hope you will sincerely inform me, whether I have explained myself clearly thus far.

Sincerely,
GIUSEPPE TARTINI

The Art of Bowing

L'Arte del Arco

Edited by
ENDRE GRANAT

GIUSEPPE TARTINI

THEME

Andante

f

VAR. 1

p

tr

VAR. 2

p

Violin

VAR. 3

VAR. 4

Sheet music for piano, 4 staves, dynamic *p*, measure 11-15. The music consists of four staves of musical notation with various dynamics and performance instructions.