
Analysis of the Curricular Requirements to be Fulfilled and Areal Skills to be Developed by Violin Department Students at Conservatory

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ABSTRACT

Searching the curriculum designed for the freshman students at the Conservatory Violin Department and the skills they have to improve by the end of the first year.

This paper studies the least target level of a student with no prior training at the end of the first year education of violin training. Methods used and criteria taken into consideration throughout the first year training and the exams by 10 violin instructors at Anadolu University, State Conservatory Music Department have been searched and the process the learners are to follow to reach the target level has been observed. The study was conducted in two terms, each of which takes 4 months.

In addition to these, the first year of the student was also seen as an adaptation period considering the predisposition of the student to the instrument, his/ her studying discipline, and adaptation to the instructor. The paper has been supported with photos to clarify what is done in the first year.

KEY WORDS: *Violin, education, classical music, violin student, violin instructor.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In our country, conservatories are institutions, which aim to educate musicians professionally. Instrument training at Anadolu University, State Conservatory, Music Department, which was founded in 1989 consists of twelve years of education, and comprises four years of primary, four years of high school and four years of university education.

The first school year of Anadolu University, State Conservatory, and Violin Department consists of two semesters and each semester takes four months. There are two exams at the end of both semesters. The first one called mid-term and the second one called the final exam. By means of the mid-term, done at the end of the first semester, students' progress of the first four months, and by the final exams, which the students take at the end of the second semester, the progress of the whole year is evaluated. In these exams, the curriculum which is designed by the faculty of Anadolu University State Conservatory Violin Department is taken into account.

A student, who takes violin education, takes solfeggio and secondary piano courses as well. At the end of the first year, students take the exams of solfeggio and secondary piano, which are the major area courses, besides the violin exam. A violin students' education in conservatory starts with his or her violin instructor's choosing the right violin and the right

bow for him or her by considering the students' physical characteristics. Every year, by keeping track of the student's progress, if necessary, a bigger violin and strings may be switched with the previous ones.

2. ANALYSIS IN TERMS OF THE SEMESTERS-FIRST SEMESTER, THE FIRST MONTH, STANCE AND HOLD

To reach the appropriate technical level for playing violin, first of all, the right hold should be maintained and the right size of the violin should be chosen. The most important factor that should be paid attention to is the comfort of the body. While holding the violin, one should stand up very straight and the posture should be extremely comfortable. To place body weight evenly, the feet should be positioned apart in shoulder width and they should stand in a firm way. By resting the violin on the left shoulder under the chin, the violin is positioned horizontal. Not gripping it too hard with your left shoulder and chin is especially very important.

Since the students cannot develop their control mechanism in terms of the right violin hold entirely in their first year, they should always be under the supervision of their teachers in the lessons. For gaining the habit of holding the violin right, it is appropriate to practice in front of the mirror. The student who meets the violin for the first time learns the parts which constitute violin and their functions. Primary, the correct hold of the violin are important. By taking the student's physical properties into account, shoulder rest can be used if found necessary.



Figure 1. Posture

3. RIGHT HAND: HOLD OF THE BOW

It is important not to squeeze the fingers or the wrist. First, by the teachers' positioning the student's fingers on the strings one by one, the right hand is put into a flexible position. For the acquisition of the right hand technique, the hold position should frequently be repeated in the first lessons. In the right hand position, it is important to move all the muscles and joints, from the shoulder to the fingers, in the right order and by doing the movements without squeezing them.



Figure 2. Right hand position

With the help of the teacher, the first open string practices start with re (D) and la (A) strings. By relieving the right arm, open string practices on mi (E) and sol (G) strings are also done.

While doing the open string and bow practices, it will be appropriate to hold the shoulder of the violin. Since the weight of the bow is not felt entirely at the beginning, avoiding using the upper or lower parts of the bow will be more applicable. Some instrument instructors, section the parts by putting signs on the wooden part of the bow.

At the beginning, the first bow practices should be done with the middle section of the bow. These practices, which may lack rhythm, being done with durations, without accent and being done properly is extremely important. The wrist should be relaxed and the bow should be parallel to the ground. The student should use the bow by having full control over it. After getting used to use the middle section of the bow, practices can be done, first, on the upper half of the bow, next on the lower half of the bow, and last, on each section of the bow. During these practices the teacher goes on helping the student to control the bow.

After starting to produce proper, coordinated and high-quality sounds comfortably in the bow exercises done in two beats and four beats rhythmic values and with durations, the durations should be shortened, and later, doing up bow and down bow should be practiced without any duration until getting used to it. While doing these practices, the right arm should be positioned by taking the string that is being played on into account; thus, the arm should be in the same level with the string in question.

After the student is confident enough with playing on one string, he or she can go on with string-switching practices. While moving from one string to another, not taking the bow off the strings and keeping the arm in the string level should be taken into consideration. The open string practices done with a single string can be done as double-stopping by playing two strings. While the student is performing a double stop, the unnecessary pressure of the right arm on the string should be avoided, and for producing soft and smooth sounds the weight of the arm should not be felt. Besides the open string bow practices done in two beats and four beats rhythmic values, practicing to play pizzicato (plucking the strings with the fingers) and press strings with the left hand can be started.

4. LEFT HAND POSITION

The left arm, wrist and fingers determine the left hand position. While holding the violin, the wrist should be relaxed and it should be positioned in the way that it faces the violin. The fingertips should press the strings upright but by not putting too much pressure on them.



Figure 3..Left hand position

After holding the violin in the right position, pressing by fingers practices are started. These practices first start with pizzicato. The aim is to have the students practice playing on all strings with the second finger and to have them gets accustomed to the correct left hand position.

On the finger board, the place where the second finger should be placed can be tagged with a colorful paper. By doing this, the student can focus on getting used to the right position instead of finding and playing the right sounds. Positioning the second finger beforehand, and not taking it off the string unless it is necessary is appropriate. After the practicing with the second finger, pressing with the fourth finger should be started.

Playing the sound that is required, first, open string before playing it with the fourth finger is better since it can provide the student with the chance to control the sound. First finger practices start after the student gets accustomed to the left hand position.

Last, by doing pressing with the third finger practices, the student is able to use all the fingers. Different styles of finger pressing exercises can be seen in beginning violin books. Whichever finger the student starts practicing with; the most important issue to be taken into account is that the left hand should be in the right position.

5. THE SECOND MONTH - THE COORDINATION OF THE RIGHT AND LEFT HANDS

After gaining some confidence with the pizzicato, plucking the strings, practices, the right and left hand can be combined. These practices, mainly, start with practicing two beats and four beats rhythmic values on D, A and E strings. While practicing on the G string, more care should be taken since the right arm rises because of the holding position and this can cause some problems.

The right bow and violin hold practices, which were done in the first month, are kept on. In the first months, for having the student use the bow comfortably and correctly, the instrument teacher's instruction in the lessons is extremely important. After doing different bow practices on open strings, practices go on with two beats and four beats rhythmic values by using the upper half, lower half and middle of the bow. If the student has gained the certain habits, the bow practices should be done by not stopping the bow movements and in a certain rhythmic discipline. The doing up and down bow practices, which have been done so far, should be continued with practicing songs which require only doing down bow. The aim of practicing these songs is providing a relaxed wrist.

6. THE THIRD MONTH

In the third month, the student becomes capable of using all the strings and four fingers. Smooth and high quality voices have been started to produce. For intonation, the voice should be checked with the third finger on the upper string and with the fourth finger on the string below. Gaining the habit of doing this checking will be the greatest helper of the student to produce correct and clean voices. By playing on a single string or playing songs which require switching strings, the left hand position of all fingers should be internalized. For producing right and clean voices, a lot of string pressing practice should be done. Replaying the songs many times is quite important for the left hand position.

Not to confront a situation where the student shows the tendency of playing quickly and carelessly, the discipline of playing should be under the control of the instructor. The student should be counseled by the instructor for being conscious of playing the songs carefully, attentively and by having control over them. In the open string bow practices, besides the previous practices, songs which require playing notes with the middle, top and end parts of the bow in eight beats rhythmic values with durations are started to practice. The bow practices which are short and with durations done on open strings are replaced with practices done with left hand on a single string and by switching strings. In these practices, for the student, in terms of perceiving the right arm movements correctly, starting the practices with the instrument instructor is appropriate. After being capable of playing by controlling all the fingers, one-octave G major, D major and A major scale practices are started to be done. The student is warned about the troubles a false treble clef will cause, and that these troubles will be influential all along the song.

In terms of enabling the student to play calmly, carefully and in a controlled manner, the two octave scale practices are started with two and four rhythmic values. Especially, while doing the scale practices, the student should be attentive to use all parts of the bow. While practicing using the whole violin bow, the instrument teacher helps the student to use the bow in a controlled way by holding his or her right arm. After playing by using the middle, upper half and lower half of the bow in two, four and eight rhythmic values, the two and four-ligatured bow practices on the same string by using the same part of the bow are started.

7. THE FOURTH MONTH

In the instrument lessons, in the fourth month, pieces which provide students with practicing the rhythmic values, bow use, switching string, and finger practices trained so far are played.

The pieces should be played carefully, especially, by being careful that the bow, right and left wrists are in the right position. For the student to focus just on the technical details, playing the songs by reciting the notes will be more beneficial.

In terms of the curriculum of Anadolu University, Department of Violin, there is the mid-term of the first semester at the end of the fourth month. The aims of the exam are seeing and evaluating the progress of the student he or she achieved during the first semester. In terms of the test content, a violin student is required to play a one or two-octave scale and an etude from memory. The instrument instructor should announce the first mid-term program about 15 days before the mid-term by taking the students' preparation time into account. In the test content, there should be pieces which are played separately in one or two-octave scales and by using four and eight rhythmic values. In the test content, there should be one or two-octave pieces which are played separately by using four and eight rhythmic values, and two and four ligatures. The etude which comprises various rhythmic values and bow styles should be chosen by taking the level of the student into account.

So far, the violin program has been demonstrated by taking the lowest level students into consideration. The instrument instructor should evaluate the student's exam result, and talk about the second term studies with the student, who has experienced the exam for the first time.

8. SECOND TERM-THE FIFTH MONTH

After the mid-term done at the end of the first semester, during the two weeks of spring break, the student needs to practice the skills he or she learned during the first semester. The pieces in which all fingers are used to press all strings should be practiced carefully. The student starts to do practices in different tones and pressing styles, and it is emphasized that by pressing forward and backward switching tones is possible. Pupil's acquisition of the finger pressing styles on the left hand, and not taking the fingers off the strings unless it is necessary are important issues that the student should be careful about.

Before starting to play, deciding on the point of the starting voice by taking the intonation (clarity of the voice) and checking on the open strings will be helpful. First, the double-stopping practices start by playing on D and A strings. The double-stop which is intended to play, first, should be played one by one by using different ligatures, and then, produced as a double stop. By these practices the student can hear the voices clearly, correct his or her mistakes and position his or her right arm correctly to play the double stop. After the two, four and eight rhythmic values, practices with the sixteen rhythmic values start by using the middle of the bow, at the very beginning of the practices. Later, the other parts of bow are also used. Scales of various tones and exercises are practiced.

9. THE SIXTH MONTH

Along with practices in which two, four and eight rhythmic values and different pressing styles are played together, small melodic pieces appropriate for the level of the student are started to practice. Apart from playing solo, pieces accompanied with the piano are started to practice for the first time. Although the student, who is used to play single, may have

difficulties at the beginning since it is the first time he or she plays accompanied with the piano, he or she will gain the habit in a certain degree by doing practice continually.

By avoiding rhythmical challenges in the pieces where different pressing styles are used, the student should be provided with becoming skilled in topics, such as left hand hold, producing clear voice and bow arrangement. It is observed that children and folk songs along with some dance music raise the students' wish to play. The difficulty level of the pieces that the students play may show differences according to their personal skills and work discipline.

Along with the small pieces, concertos, again by taking the student's level into account, which he or she can play accompanied with the piano are started to practice. These concertos are more difficult than the small pieces in terms of their technical and musical systems. The student should be led to play the musical structures in an expressive way. To get used to focusing on correct bow use, producing the right voices and rhythm, the student needs to practice frequently on his or her own and by being accompanied with the piano.

Playing the songs by heart after a while is beneficial in terms of developing self-esteem while playing and so that the student can feel safer. Pieces which comprise of two violin parts and are suitable for the student's level in terms of their technical and musical structures can also be played. These musical pieces provide student with scales and technical practices along with the opportunity to play with the instrument teacher. The feeling of playing together increases the students' motivation.

For music students, their success in the musical careers both as a student and at later times as a professional, depend on how well-prepared they are for the rehearsals and the concerts and how professionally they act. These factors can also be taken as the criteria to assess a musician.

Taking these issues seriously in consideration, students will be well- prepared for a chamber music course and for their whole professional life. Being ready for a course which are for a group will make the students get some professional habits to be used throughout a musical path.

10. THE SEVENTH MONTH

The violin lessons go on with practicing pieces in different scales and with various challenges which consist of different tones, note values and bow diversification. In a musical piece, signs called "nuance" are used to add meaning to the musical expression. These signs, which show how high or low the voice should be, are explained to the student. While practicing a piece, the student is informed about where to use the nuances in question and encouraged to use them.

In the seventh semester, at Anadolu University, State Conservatory, Department of String Instruments, department concerts, which comprise all the primary school string instrument students, are arranged. In these concerts, the student produces small music pieces which are appropriate to his or her level by being accompanied with the piano. Some violin teachers arrange class concerts with their own lessons besides the department concert. Stage performances are extremely important when the presentation of the production is taken into account. Each concert is a different experience for the student. These concerts are also very

beneficial since they provide students with the opportunity to practice for the violin exam which is done at the end of the school year.

11. THE EIGHTH MONTH

In the curriculum of Anadolu University, State Conservatory, Department of Violin, at the end of the first year, mostly, practices related with the first position of the violin are done. There are also instrument teachers who train some students in the second and third positions by considering the students' interest to the instrument, talent and work discipline.

Learning the basic pressing styles in the first position, producing clear and right voices and frequently done fingers pressing practices are quite important for the acquisition of the technic to use the bow accurately. After learning the first position effectively, going on with the other positions is advantageous for the student.

According to the curriculum of Anadolu University, State Conservatory, String Instruments, Violin Department, the final exam is at the end of the eighth month. The jury in the exam consists of the teachers from String Instrument Department. By means of this exam, it is decided whether the students can continue their education in conservatory or not. The assessment is done by considering the students performance in the exam and the report submitted by the instrument teacher to the jury which states his or her observations about the student.

12. CURRICULUM

The syllabi present the methods that will be used and materials that are suggested during the education period. During the conservatory education, the curricula are developed by considering the physical and mental qualifications that are essential to play the violin and by thinking how these qualifications can be developed, and the syllabi are designed accordingly.

The instrument teacher needs to consider the syllabus besides maintaining the training by taking his or her own experiences and observations into account. Another responsibility of the instrument instructor is to evaluate his or her student's weak and strong sides and direct the lessons accordingly.

13. CONCLUSION

At the end of the first year, the targeted achievement level of a student studying in the Department of Violin at Anadolu University, State Conservatory analysed. Each semester is analysed by being classified into four-month periods. Students who achieve the target level by means of the applied methods continue their education in the next grade. The curriculum developed by the Department of Violin illustrates the minimum level. If the student cannot reach the minimum level at the end of the first year, he or she is expelled from the school. The progress of the student in the instrument education process shows differences caused by the students' interest to music, personal and mental skills, getting accustomed to the school and the teacher and his or her talent to play the instrument. The instrument teacher can follow

a higher-level violin syllabus with a student who is capable of learning easier, and who has interest and work discipline. In this process, the teacher's observations are very important.

Every student has personal differences. For having peaceful and supportive one-on-one instrument lessons, the relationship between the teacher and the student are extremely important. The student needs to be supported by the instrument teacher in terms of knowledge, cognition, acquisition, and realization. To play an instrument successfully, the student needs to be informed about the underlying details and specifics of music that should be realized, comprehended, and acquired. For getting working habits, a student needs to be consulted by his or her instrument teacher from the first year of his or her education process. The student's ability to express his or her thoughts, feeling, etc. should be developed and by means of technical practices, playing musical structures expressively should be encouraged. Via pieces which are chosen correctly and are appropriate for the student's level, the student's musical identity should be started to be formed. Having the student to get the habit of listening to music, informing about the benefits of watching concerts of symphony and opera orchestras, and again informing about the resources which can provide him or her with information that he or she can use in his or her musical development process are especially essential when the student's progress is taken into account.

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