

The Freemantle Violin Method

I. Foreword

This volume is an introduction to the fundamentals of violin playing. Over the years I have developed a method for introducing the violin to students of all ages. It is a step-by-step process and although alternative routes are possible to suit the temperaments of different students, the primary direction is the same for all. This single concept summarizes this direction:

***The violin is played with balance,
not sustained muscle pressure.***

Never let anyone tell you you do not have to use muscle tension to play music—you do—tensing is how muscles do their work. The spark of a chemico-electrical signal originates in your brain, travels down your nerve and triggers another chemico-electrical reaction: your nerve secretes an acidic kind of fluid that causes the muscle to contract or expand. This creates some tension—the muscle can't move anything like a finger or an arm without it.

The problem is that muscles often don't relax back to their original state after they have performed their designated task. This is especially so when the player's brain forgets to send the "Relax" signal back down to the working muscle to shut it off. When the brain tells the muscle to continue tensing after its job is done, the result is a build-up of the acid material in the muscle and sends us that slightly painful sensation of tiredness or lack of control. In order to get rid of that sensation and get the muscle back up to maximum operational potential the player must learn how to turn off the muscles when they are done doing their job, and learn to feel that sensation of relaxation as secure yet natural.

The Freemantle Violin Method is based on the idea that with proper positioning of the head, limbs, and digits, the need for any kind of sustained muscle tension is minimal if not completely absent in playing the violin.

My teaching philosophy differs from many music teaching methods in this way: I imagine every student I take, whatever age, as the best pro player they can possibly be somewhere in the future. I do not train kids to indulge in a light-weight activity.

Self-discipline is the most important lesson to be learned from music lessons.

Therefore the basic techniques I teach my students tend to be more forward-looking and consequently more difficult than the introductory lessons of most methods. This causes things to move slowly at first, but then almost always results in lightning fast progress after the basics are established.

Book One presents my method in a comprehensive week-by-week practice schedule. All exercises, scales, literature, music theory, and history concepts are put down in a progressive order. It will take a normal beginning student some 4-6 months to cover this material, by which time the student should have been introduced to music reading, bowing, fingering, shifting, vibrato, and interpretation.

It is never permissible to skip steps, but having begun, the student should not tarry on one step or another but continue to charge a head. This method is designed to make possible the accelerated learning of violin basics, which once mastered open up the possibility of more mature musical experiences.