

The Art of Violin Playing

General Outline of Topics (Volume One and Volume Two)

The art of playing the violin demands the mastery of three areas which are closely interwoven.

I. General technique (Volume One)

I consider this term to mean the education and development of the "mechanics" of both arms to fullest possible degree achievable for the purpose of producing all that is possible on the violin in a faultlessly reliable manner. One could summarize: violin playing as a craft.

II. Applied technique (Volume One)

When we utilize these acquired abilities to execute and overcome the specific technical difficulties which are contained in a musical work, we are dealing with applied technique: violin playing as a science.

III. Artistic realization (Volume Two)

Only if one has command of a perfect technique, and is able to use it successfully and appropriately, can one achieve the freedom of spirit and soul to abandon oneself to the music and to let musical expression predominate over the technical aspect which then serves the musical and artistic ends. To summarize: violin playing as an art.

The theoretical basis of general technique and applied technique constitutes the contents of the first volume of the present work. The second volume deals with artistic realization and pedagogy of teaching.

Before we deal with the very basic foundations of violinistic ability, the question needs to be raised as to whether there are any "unshakable and immutable" principles connected with our art, principles which would defy change and the passage of time. In an overall sense, this question has to be answered in the negative. There are no miraculous formulas in our art, but just as there are "many roads that lead to Rome", there are nevertheless roads by which one can get to Rome more speedily, effortlessly and efficiently. Even so, there is a fundamental requirement which could be considered to be a basic rule. This rule would state that a complete technique would mean the ability to produce all musical notes cleanly, with beautiful tone quality, with the required dynamic, and in the correct rhythm. Any technical shortcoming will, without exception, be an infringement of this fundamental rule. This is the ideal which we are pursuing by our study of violinistic technique. Even if ideals are not totally attainable, we must attempt to come as close to them as possible.

Volume 1

I. GENERAL TECHNIQUE

A. The Instrument

In the course of time "Italian Violin" and good violin have become synonymous. It is undeniable that good instruments are to a very large extent of Italian origin. It is, however, in no way true that all Italian instruments are of satisfactory quality, while it is a fact that violins of other origin can also be of excellent quality. Many years of experience and a certain natural sensitivity to sound are necessary to

judge the tonal properties of a violin. The principal properties of a good instrument are easy response, carrying power, evenness of tone across the four strings and a pleasant and appealing tone color. These attributes are dependent on the construction, the wood, and the condition or preservation of the instrument.

The fact that we are still so dependent on the Italian instruments of the 17th and 18th century, and that we have so