Improving the intonation of your string students through sight, sound, and touch
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Pitch accuracy is one of the most important aspects of a quality musical performance and especially critical to string students. This session will discuss some problems in and causes of poor string instrument intonation and provide teachers with practical teaching strategies along with a variety of resources that will help students make progress in improving their intonation.

1. Philosophy
   a. Importance of intonation on performance
   b. Misconceptions of intonation problems
   c. Teaching aural skills from day one
   d. The teacher determines the expectation for intonation
   e. What research has shown us

2. Causes of intonation problems and strategies to correct
   a. Aural
      i. Inability to “audiate” (Gordon, 1993)
         1. “Say” (sing) note names
         2. Listening for what is right & wrong
      ii. Beat elimination
      iii. Reference pitches
         1. Drones
            a. Scales
            b. Tunes
            c. Improvisation
      iv. Detune the violin open strings for scales/simple tunes
      v. Using and finding appropriate accompaniments
         1. Put things in harmonic context
         2. Show EEi, accompaniments with different harmonic analysis
      vi. Instrument harmony
         1. Double stops with open strings
         2. Partner Double Stops
         3. Listening for sympathetic vibrations
      vii. Tuning in groups
         1. Build chords
         2. Chorales
      viii. Theory training
         1. Intervals
            a. Higher/Lower
            b. Half/whole steps
      ix. Have students warm-up before tuning, simulate listening
   b. Technical Set-Up
      i. Instrument position
         1. “The Frankenstein” – too far forward
         2. “The sagger” – instrument not paralell
      ii. Left hand position
         1. Violin/viola
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a. Left hand shape
   i. First finger square
   ii. Fingernail hover
b. Left arm position
   i. Swing under, maintain hand shape

2. Cello
   a. Left hand shape, 1st finger placement
   b. Left elbow height

3. Bass
   a. Left hand shape, “Inhale and hold”
   b. Left elbow height, grab a Coke

iii. Finger Tapes (Finger Placement Markers)
   1. Yes or no?
   2. How many?
   3. How long?
   4. What to avoid

iv. Right hand technique
   1. The right hand effects intonation too!
   2. Speed/Weight/Placement considerations to maintain constant tone & pitch

v. Mechanics of open string tuning
   1. Fine Tuners
   2. Pegs
   3. False Strings
   4. Environmental Factors

c. Physical
   i. Students must understand how to physically adjust a pitch
   ii. Pitch matching exercises/games
      1. Hands together
      2. Eyes closed
      3. Play softer
   iii. One finger scales
   iv. Block vs. Independent fingerings
      1. Finger pattern diagrams
   v. Exercises for block fingering

3. Technology
   a. Tuners
      i. Good for initial steps
      ii. Reliance - compare to calculators from math class
   b. Intonia (Mac/PC) - http://www.intonia.com
      i. Visually displays pitch live
      ii. Allows students to analyze recordings
   c. Tartini in Tune (iOS)
      i. Available on the app store
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References


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www.charleslaux.com
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