



KASTA Newsletter

Fall 2017, Vol 16(3)

In this Issue:

*Finding Your Better Half: The Search for a Comprehensive
Half-Position Method*

Making an Inexpensive Bow Rack

All-State Excerpt Information and so much more!

President's Corner



Dear KASTA Members,

Greetings! I hope the start of the new school year finds you striving for excellence. Thank you for the hours you spend encouraging and challenging your students!

In June, the KASTA Summer Workshop with Dr. Robert Gillespie welcomed 38 attendees from Kansas, Missouri, and even Sydney, Australia to the Wichita State University campus! Thank you to all who attended and to Dr. Gillespie for the time spent refining our craft. I sincerely hope everyone went home inspired and equipped for growth. I also hope you plan to attend again in 2018. More details to come!

The KASTA Executive Board made the decision to host the KASTA Solo Competition again this year at the annual Kansas Music Educators Association In-service Workshop in February 2018. Our hope is an annual event will encourage more entries. Please consider your students for this competition. Entry information is already available on the [KASTA website](#). Winners receive CASH PRIZES!

The Kansas Intercollegiate Orchestra will also meet this year. If you are a collegiate level instructor, please encourage your students to attend. Dr. David Littrell, Kansas State University Distinguished Professor, is conducting this year. David is retiring at the end of this academic year, and we felt this would be a fitting send-off for his years of dedication and service to string education in Kansas. Further details are available on the [KASTA website](#).

Thank you to Dr. Jacob Dakon for administering our recent survey. KASTA will recommend to KMEA the common set of scales for all of the instruments and shortening of the cello excerpts. Thank you to Rachel Dirks and Joel Martin for their suggestions. The updates to the Bylaws were also approved.

Finally, if you watched any of the recent accounts of the damage caused by Hurricane Harvey in the Houston, TX area, you have likely counted your blessings in regards to your own home and family. In addition to the personal losses, many school music programs have lost entire music libraries, entire instrument inventories, as well as suffered damage to rehearsal and teaching facilities. The loss is staggering, but in the end, I truly believe these communities will return stronger than ever. If you are looking for a way to help, please visit <https://help.goarts.org>. The Texas Orchestra Director's Association is helping coordinate efforts to "bring back the arts". Luck's Music (<https://www.lucksmusic.com>) has also organized a recovery effort. If you have any suggestions for ways KASTA can further support our colleagues, please contact me.

Thank you,

Henry O. Littich

President, KASTA
Director of Orchestras
Smoky Valley USD 400

KASTA Newsletter

Fall 2017 Edition | Volume 16, Issue 3

Jacob M. Dakon, editor

KASTA.org

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Newton Mid-Kansas

2017-18 Season

The Newton Mid-Kansas Symphony Orchestra presents its 61st year of music, taking you on a journey across the world, in a season we are calling, “Musical Passports.” The orchestra will perform a Fall Concert, Winter Classics Concert, and a Spring Concert. The season will conclude with a Summer Chamber Music Concert. Our journey begins with the Fall Classics Concert, on Oct. 1, at 4 pm in Bethel College’s Memorial Hall. Thomas W. Douglas conducts the orchestra on this musical “Voyage through the United Kingdom.” The concert opener, “Hebrides Overture” by Felix Mendelssohn, takes us to “Fingal’s Cave” in Scotland. The “Concerto Grosso No. 3, Op. 3” by George Frederick Händel features soloists from the orchestra.

The full orchestra also plays the Irish Reel “Molly on the Shore” by Percy Aldridge Grainger, and “Enigma Variations,” by British composer Sir Edward Elgar.

The second concert of the season will be the Winter Classics and will feature the winners of the 10th Annual Young Soloist competition. The orchestra will also perform Der Rosenkavalier Suite by Richard Strauss and Suppe’s Morning, Noon, and Night in Vienna. The concert will take place on January 28, at 4pm in the Richert Auditorium at the Tabor College Shari Flaming Center for the Arts.

The Spring Concert will be a special event with guest artist Berta Rojas, a Latin Grammy award winning



Symphony Orchestra

“Musical Passports”

guitarist. This concert is presented in collaboration with Hesston Bethel Performing Arts Series and the Kansas Paraguay Partners. Among the selections being performed will be Concerto de Aranjuez by Juaquin Rodrigo. This concert will take place on Sunday, April 8, at 4pm in Bethel College’s Memorial Hall.

Maeswttro Douglas, now in his seventh season as NMKSO’s Music Director, is also well known as music director of Music Theatre Wichita. He is on the faculty at the Carnegie Mellon School of Music, and is Artistic Director and Conductor of the Bach Choir, in Pittsburgh, PA. Douglas has conducted symphony, opera, and theater productions throughout the United States and in Europe, including guest

appearances with the Edgewood (PA) Symphony, Pittsburgh (PA) Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony Chorus, and the Wichita Symphony Orchestra.

Tickets for the fall and winter concerts may be purchased at the NMKSO office, 120 W. 6th St., Newton, and online at nmkso.org. Prices are: Adults \$13 advance/\$15 at the door, Students \$6 advance, \$7 at the door, children under 12 free with a ticketed adult. A reception will be hosted by the NMKSO Board of Directors immediately following each concert. For more information contact:

info@nmkso.org
316-772-3265



WANT HELP WITH ALL-STATE EXCERPTS?

JOIN THE KU STRING FACULTY

Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2017 - 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Hosted by Blue Valley High School



VÉRONIQUE MATHIEU
Assistant Professor
Director, Division of Strings
Violin



BORIS VANYER
Lecturer
Viola



RICHARD RYAN
Lecturer
Double Bass



HANNAH COLLINS
Assistant Professor
Cello

Free Admission but RSVP Required. Free Pizza provided.
Registration is fast and easy.

To register:

Click on this link: <http://bit.ly/2dyomzp>

Or

Scan the QR Code and complete the registration form



Visit <https://music.ku.edu/ku-all-state-excerpt-night> for more information and directions to Blue Valley High School.

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VIOLIN/VIOLA
[HTTP://WWW.KSTATE.EDU/MUSIC/STUDIOS/
STRING/VIOLINVIOLA/INDEX.HTML](http://www.kstate.edu/music/studios/string/violinviola/index.html)

2018

*All-State Excerpts
Recordings and Edited Parts*

CELLO/BASS
[HTTP://WWW.K-STATE.EDU/MUSIC/STUDIOS/
STRING/CELLOBASS/INDEX.HTML](http://www.k-state.edu/music/studios/string/cellobass/index.html)

**AUDITIONS FOR
MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS
AND STUDIO ACCEPTANCE
MUSIC MAJORS, MINORS, AND
NON-MUSIC MAJORS**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2017
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2018

MORE INFORMATION AT [HTTP://WWW.K-
STATE.EDU/ORCHESTRA/SCHOLARSHIP-
AUDITIONS.HTML](http://www.k-state.edu/orchestra/scholarship-auditions.html)





Kansas American String Teachers Association State Solo Competition

Century II Convention Center Rooms 101 and 201
Wichita, Kansas
February 22, 2018 from 5-7pm
Application Deadline: February 1, 2018

Prizes

- 1st Place, 2nd Place, and 3rd place winners will be selected from each division, and will be announced immediately upon the completion of judging deliberation by the competition chairman
- The Senior Division 1st place award winner will receive a \$500 award, and the Junior Division 1st place award winner will receive a \$300 award.
- Both 2nd place winners each receive a \$75 prize
- Both 3rd place winners each receive a \$50 prize.
- Both 1st place winners are required to perform at the KASTA awards luncheon at 12pm on Friday, February 21, 2018 located at the Century II Convention Center. The same accompanist must be used for both the audition and the luncheon, and music must be played in their entirety (no cuts).



Information about competition requirements at <http://kasta.org/honor-groups/competition/>



Wichita State University Orchestra and String Events Fall 2017

Thursday, September 28/Miller Concert Hall Betul Soykan, violin
Webern: Passacaglia
John Corigliano: Chaconne from The Red Violin
Brahms: Symphony No. 2 in D Major

Thursday, October 19/Miller Concert Hall Carmen Lemoine, flute
Berlioz: Roman Carnival Overture
Guillaume Connesson: Pour Sortir au Jour
Beethoven: Symphony No. 7 in A Major

November 9, 11/Miller Concert Hall WSU Opera Theatre
Donizetti: L'Elisir d'Amore

Tuesday, November 28/Miller Concert Hall Film Music Concert
Korngold: King's Row Fanfare
Goldsmith: Hoosiers Suite
Alan Silvestri: Back to the Future Suite
John Williams: Raiders of the Lost Ark March
Carl Davis: The General (Buster Keaton silent comedy with live orchestral accompaniment)

The WSU string faculty are proud to present Polish and Pizza, the annual district orchestra audition workshop, Sunday, October 22, 5:15-6:30pm, in the Duerksen Fine Arts Center. The event begins with free pizza in the Miller Concert Hall lobby, followed by instrument-specific clinics on each of the district audition excerpts. Bring your instrument! Registration deadline is October 19; contact Dr. Mark Laycock, Director of Orchestras (mark.laycock@wichita.edu).

The WSU School of Music announces three audition dates for students enrolling in the 2018-19 academic year: November 18, 2017; February 10, 2018; and April 7, 2018. These auditions are for incoming music majors and are also required for scholarship consideration. For priority consideration, auditioning in November or February is encouraged. The online audition request form may be found at www.wichita.edu/music/scholarships.

Making an Inexpensive Bow Rack

By Lauren E. Rigby

Are you looking for a more organized way to store your program's extra bows and the bows awaiting repair? You need a bow rack. Using materials that may already be in your garage, making a bow rack is fun, easy, and most importantly, cost-effective. Here are the materials you will need and some easy-to-follow instructions.

Required Materials:

- 1x3 board (preferably hardwood)
- Oak dowel rod
- Drill
- Drill bit (same diameter as dowel)
- Measuring Tape
- Wood glue
- Sanding block or orbital sander
- Saw
- Pencil
- Screws for mounting

Optional Materials:

- Blue painter's tape
- Stain + polyurethane
- Soft, lint-free rag
- Awl

Step 1: Plan your measurements.

Decide on the length you want your bow rack to be. This measurement depends on how many bow holders you want on the rack. I like to space the holders 3" apart, so a bow rack with 10 bow holders would require a 33" long board (3" from the end of the board to the first bow holder on each end, plus 3" between bow holders).

Each bow holder should be 3" long. Make your bow holders from oak dowel, given the sturdiness and durability of oak. The diameter of the dowel rod is up to you, but I prefer 5/16". To determine how many dowel rods you will need to purchase, calculate how many bow holders you want on your rack at 3" per dowel. For example, to make 10 bow holders, I would need 30" of dowel.

Step 2: Cut the board and dowels to length.

Most home improvement stores cut boards for you upon request. This saves you the time of cutting the board yourself. You will need to cut the dowels yourself. This can easily be done using either a handsaw, miter saw,





or chop saw. To save myself time measuring dowels, I measure out 3" from my saw blade and then mark that point with a piece of blue painter's tape. This way, you don't need to measure the length of each dowel; just line the dowel up with your mark, and you have pre-measured 3" lengths of dowel.

Step 3: Sand the board and dowels.

Using a sanding block or orbital sander, sand down the cut edges of the dowels and the primary board. This way everything is smooth and bow hairs won't catch on the end of the bow holder dowels. I put my orbital sander on the counter upside-down and roll the ends of the dowel rods along the edge of the sanding pad.

Step 4: Mark the location of bow holder slots in the primary board.

Using a pencil, mark a straight line down the center of the length of the board. Use your measuring tape to mark 3" increments along this line. These marks indicate the locations of your bow holders.



Step 5: Prepare to drill.

Chuck your drill bit into the drill. Make sure the bit size is the same diameter as your dowel rod.

To ensure the drill does not break through the backside of the board, I put the drill vertically against the end of the board. Then I tape off the end of the drill bit closest to the chuck with blue painter's tape. This way, I know to stop drilling down when I reach the edge of the tape. I use the awl to punch a small divot in the board at the location of each bow holder. This will help the drill bite better when you first start drilling. Then I cover the divot with blue painter's tape and rub it smooth. The tape keeps the board from splintering.

Step 6: Drill the bow holder slots.

Decide which side of the board will be the top of the rack. Place the drill at a slight angle, so that the dowel rods will tilt up towards the top of the rack when inserted into the holes, and drill each bow holder slot. Stop drilling when you reach the tape mark on your drill bit. If you do happen to drill through to the other side of the board, that's okay. The back of the board will be against the wall, so nobody will see it.



Step 7: Glue in the dowel rods.

Pour some wood glue into each bow holder slot. Insert the dowel into the hole and tap the end of the dowel into the hole using a piece of scrap wood or a soft rubber mallet. Wipe away excess glue before it dries.

You have now finished building the basic bow rack. You can skip to step 9 if you do not want to stain and seal the rack.

Step 8: Stain and seal the bow rack.

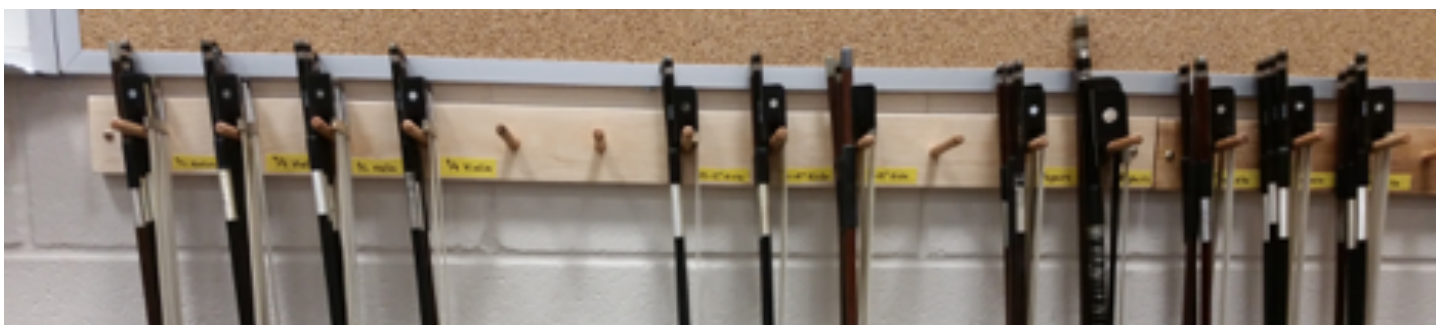
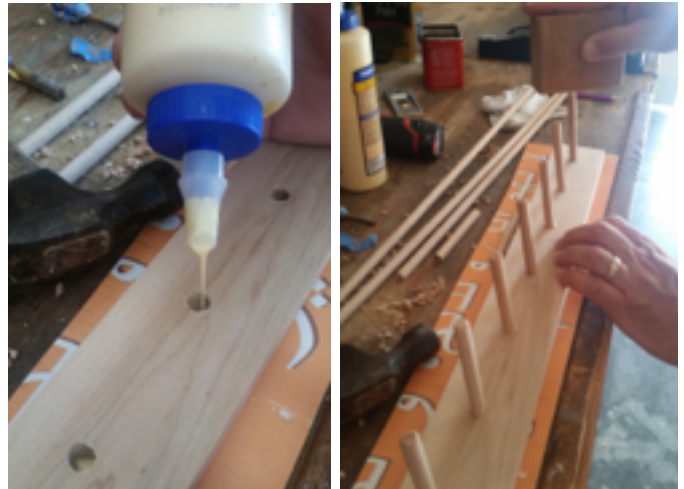
Once the glue has dried, it is time to stain and seal the bow rack. This will protect the wood from damage and give it an attractive finish. I like using a combination stain + polyurethane sealant, because it is quicker than doing the stain and polyurethane separately. For this rack, I used an extra can of stain + poly that I already had in the garage.

Using a soft lint-free rag, wipe the stain + poly onto the dowels and board. Apply generously. Wipe away the excess.

Step 9: Mount the bow rack to the wall.

Mark a spot on the end of the rack where you will mount it to the wall. Drill a screw through the board first, then affix the rack to the wall and drive the screw through into the wall. In this example, I was drilling into a cinderblock wall, so I first had to place a wall anchor into the cinderblock. If you are working with drywall, I would advise mounting the rack to a wall stud.

Congratulations! You have now finished your bow rack. The finished product should be a sturdy and practical rack that helps you organize the bows in your classroom.





Lauren E. Rigby is the orchestra director at South Middle School in Lawrence, Kansas, and a recent graduate of the University of Kansas where she earned her Masters in Music Education.

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VIOLIN WEEK NOV 2-9, 2017

Thursday, Nov. 2

7:30 pm Kirmser Hall

Cooper Studio Recital

Violin and Viola Music by
American and British
Composers

Saturday, Nov. 4

2:00 pm Kirmser Hall

Tinglan Chen, violin
Nathan Buckner, piano
Music by American Composers

Wednesday, Nov. 8

7:30 pm Kirmser Hall

British Music Master Class
with Madeleine Mitchell
Students of Cora Cooper
assisted by Alicia Willard, piano

Thursday, Nov. 9

7:30 pm, All Faiths Chapel

Madeleine Mitchell, violin
Amanda Arrington, piano
Music by British Composers
assisted by Cora Cooper, violin

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS *SCHOOL OF MUSIC*



ADMISSION & SCHOLARSHIP AUDITION DATES:
SATURDAY, FEB. 10, 2018
SATURDAY, FEB. 17, 2018
application and scholarship deadline: Nov. 1, 2017



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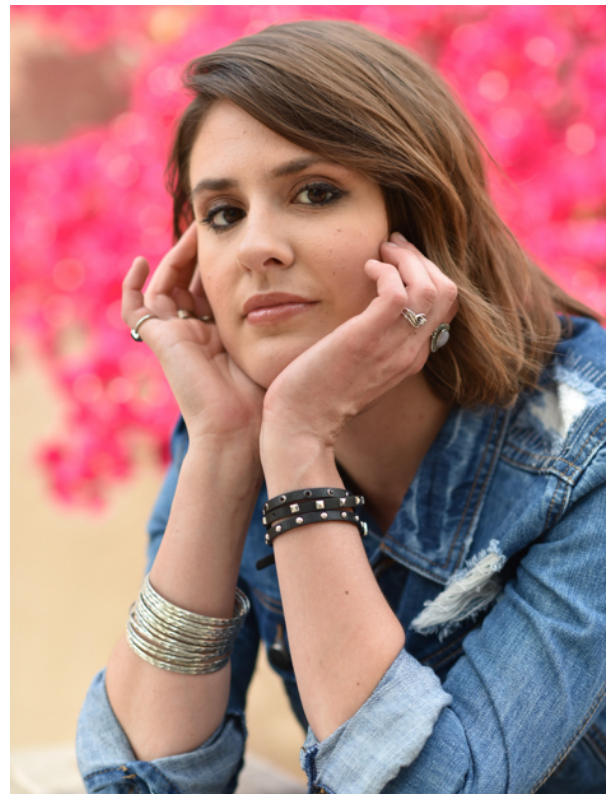
10122 West 119th Street
Overland Park, KS 66213
913-491-6636

North Kansas City

6312-14 NW Barry Rd.
Kansas City, MO 64154
816-746-0500

Elizabeth Anne Mall Celebrates 20 Years of the Community Chamber Orchestra

Elizabeth Anne Mall celebrates Community Chamber Orchestra's 20th Year during Clay Center's Piotique Festival Sat., Sept. 30, 2017. All ages are invited to enjoy a free outdoor concert from 1:00-2:00 pm on the lawn of the Clay County Courthouse's west side, during Clay Center's Piotique Festival on Sat., Sept. 30, 2017. The program will continue to celebrate the 20th year of Community Chamber Orchestra (kansasmusic.net), with its unique mix of youth and adult musicians, joined by singer/songwriter Elizabeth Anne Mall of Street Lamp Records (see ElizabethAnneMall.com). Fun and entertaining pops songs by American 20th century composer LeRoy Anderson will also include Gary Beck on trumpet solo during "Trumpeter's Lullaby." Mall will sing other favorites "Summertime" by Gershwin and "Feeling Good" by Anthony Newley with the Orchestra. These will be performed in new arrangements by Joe Hasper created for this concert. She will also premiere her own arrangements of two original songs she has written in 2017. Mall grew up in Morganville and participated in Community Chamber Orchestra as a cellist and vocalist from elementary school onward. In 2011-2012 she co-wrote music with her mother Dr. Anne Clark for the Orchestra's original children's musical Ducktails, based on Janette Oke's children's book, and also participated in the performance on live keyboard playing and prerecorded voice of Mother Duck speaking and singing. Mall holds a bachelor degree in Music Ministry from College of the Ozarks. While pursuing a career as a singer/songwriter she teaches studio piano, voice, and composing at the Kroc Salvation Army Center near Vacaville, California, and also directs the contemporary worship service there for a local Lutheran Church. Her husband Scott Mall is a pilot with the Air Force. Immediately following the concert Mall will sing the National Anthem to open



the 2017 Piotique Parade. The audience can visit with Mall and the other musicians, possibly purchase her original CD's and get them autographed, and make donations directly to her for her performance. There will also be a 1/2 price sale of the Orchestra's large collection of donated new and used sheet music and music items available before and after the concert. The sale will include music for piano, guitar, choir, children's singing, vocal/piano/guitar, organ, and some band instruments. There are also old hymn books and vintage music good for crafting. In early fall, what's not to like about this small town event in beautiful North Central Kansas? Don't forget to bring a blanket or folding chairs for seating on the Courthouse lawn, between 5th and 6th streets, near the intersection of HWY 24 and HWY 15.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
FUTURE MUSIC EDUCATORS
AND
CAREERS IN MUSIC DAY

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2017

[FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS]

8:45 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

ALL FAITHS CHAPEL AND MCCAIN AUDITORIUM

HOSTED BY THE DIVISION OF MUSIC EDUCATION
SPONSORED BY K-STATE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE,
AND DANCE

FOLLOWED BY:

GUEST ARTIST RECITAL
MADELEINE MITCHELL, VIOLIN
ASSISTED BY AMANDA ARRINGTON, PIANO
CORA COOPER, VIOLIN
7:30 PM, ALL FAITHS CHAPEL

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STUDENTS/FMED/](http://www.k-state.edu/musiceducation/prospective-students/fmed/)



Finding Your Better Half: The Search for a Comprehensive Half-Position Method

By Katherine Okesson

Half-position is one of the least studied aspects of violin playing. It has been largely ignored in modern string education and there are virtually no comprehensive method books introducing the subject to violin students. In fact, most method books don't even offer technical exercises in half-position. Many players are ill equipped to sight-read it and the average violinist may have difficulty playing in tune or shifting correctly into and out of the position. The purpose of this paper is to examine the half-position, to evaluate common method books, and to suggest exercises which may be adapted by teachers for educational use.

Before an in-depth look at some musical examples, one must understand the value of half-position training. Half-position facility is needed in most advanced literature and is a regular requirement of orchestral violin playing. In addition, many of the world's most famous pedagogues appreciated its significance. Carl Flesch, in his groundbreaking book, *The Art of Violin Playing*, mentioned how important it is for students to study every position:

Not all methods for beginners agree as to whether the second or third position should follow the study of the first position. Without giving too great an importance to this question, I would favor third position, because it is less difficult. Much more important seems the question of "equality" for second and fourth position, and especially also half position, this stepchild in the family of positions.¹

Somewhat ironically, Carl Flesch did not provide an in-depth discussion of the technical demands of half-position, although his acknowledgement of the need to study it is proof enough of its consequence.

A better series of arguments can be found in Galamian's work, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, which provides compelling evidence about

the need for half-position study. In consideration of the position of the left wrist and hand, Galamian wrote:

The wrist can influence the placement of the fingers on the string. It should not allow any sideways curve in the hand, either to the left or right, and should be held in such a way that there is approximately a straight alignment of the hand with the forearm, *except in the half-position*.²

Understanding that half-position requires a different shape of the left wrist reinforces the importance of studying it in addition to the other positions. Students who struggle with half-position may simply be trying to use an incorrect wrist position. In addition, problems shifting to and from half-position could easily be caused by a faulty understanding of the left wrist configuration. Perhaps some teachers do not teach that half-position is a different shape of the left wrist, but just a slight extension of the hand toward the nut.

Galamian's examination of finger angles also justifies half-position study. While he makes no overt claim that half-position requires a significant finger shape difference, he refers to the fact that fingers extended backwards (or into a closer position to the scroll) require angle changes from those of the first position. Galamian also notes that the fingertips in half-position have a slightly different contact point with the string (especially the first finger). Although these finger angles may be different when the thumb is solidly in the half-position, rapid changes between half and first position require a more flexible understanding of the finger angles needed.

In terms of shifting, the half-step shift is one of the most fundamental type of shifts that Galamian advocates. "A shift by a whole tone (with one finger) can not [sic] be made so that it is entirely unnoticeable, and, therefore, it will always add to a passage a certain amount of sliding

that might be musically undesirable. If, instead, a half-step interval is used for the change of position, then the sound of shifting can be practically eliminated.”³ While Galamian’s idea of half-step shifting is used by many when teaching higher position shifting, it may be used when teaching shifts between first and half-position. Instead of teaching backward extensions, half-position may also be taught as a full-hand shift, in order to accommodate the change in finger and wrist placement. This increased time spent shifting backwards may significantly benefit students who later learn to shift in higher positions.

To further interpret Galamian in the light of half-position, chromatic fingerings may be made easier for more advanced students. He mentions that “the chromatic fingering of the older schools is awkward to play and is unsatisfactory in sound, because it uses too many slides. The modern fingering is both easier and better in sound. It uses the half-shift technique. For going up and down on one string, chromatically, the traditional 1-2, 1-2 sequence is now almost entirely replaced by 1-2-3 or 1-2-3-4.” Galamian uses two examples from the violin literature, including measures from Wieniawski’s *Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 22* and Tchaikovsky’s *Concerto in D Major, Op. 35*.⁴



Wieniawski Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 22, 1st movt., mm. 137-138



Tchaikovsky Concerto in D Major, Op. 35, 3rd movt., mm. 299-302

Fluidity in half-step chromatic fingering may definitely be obtained through half-position study, particularly in shifts that require downward motion.

Finally, Galamian’s discussion of finger extensions and “creeping shifts” seems to support the need to appropriately present half-position to students. Galamian states that “extensions outside the frame have always been a part of the violinistic equipment, but in recent times many novel types of extensions have been added, and, in general, their use has become more frequent as well as more varied... [Modern] extensions

are preferred either because they make for smoother technical functioning or for a better musical effect (such as the elimination of slides with a correspondingly clearer articulation of the passage).”⁵ Shifting using extensions is what Galamian refers to as “creeping fingering.” He goes on to state that it is “a change-of-position technique which eliminates the shift and is based on extensions - occasionally on contractions - followed by a readjustment of the hand.” This kind of shifting may be found in the following example (where the circled notes denote an extension followed by a contraction of the hand into a higher position):⁶



The techniques of finger extension (used in performing octaves, fingered octaves, and tenths by extension of the hand backwards) and of “creeping fingering” shifts are advanced skills. They can, nevertheless, be introduced with great success by early exposure to proper half-position study.

With a solid understanding of the importance of half-position study, we can now examine some of the method books and supplies currently available to teachers. I do not attempt to place these method books in any order according to their popularity or importance. Rather, I examine them in alphabetical order to help the reader find their preferred pedagogical material and see whether a method of interest has information to help their own studios. Obviously, an exhaustive examination of available materials is not possible within the parameters of this paper; however, I have included books that I frequently use in my own studio and ones that I have personally learned from.

For advanced students, the *Eleven Books of Studies for the Violin* by Demetrius Constantine Dounis, provide numerous opportunities for half-position exploration. Dounis is described as a pedagogue concerned with “the proper ergonomics of violin playing, the horizontal and vertical movements of the left hand, the importance of muscular development and relaxation, the development of finger strength and independence in the left hand, and proper means for gripping the bow in the right hand.”⁷ His books provide countless examples of shifting,

double stops, trill studies, and harmonics, which may all be practiced in half-position. Obviously meant for the advanced student, Dounis studies provide collegiate students with remedial work in flexibility between the positions. In limited doses, these studies also provide left-hand fluency, strength, and coordination.

The books of Louis Kievan (*Practicing the Violin Mentally-Physically and Virtuoso Violin Technique*) have several good exercises that may be adapted for half-position, including the chromatic motion etudes for finger and wrist.⁸ These may be used for gaining mobility in shifting near the nut and may be practiced with either a static thumb or a thumb that moves between first and half-position.

Similarly, the *Violin Studies for the Development of the Left Hand* by Charles Martin Loeffler, contain exercises that enable students to move between the two positions. The technical studies of diagonal crossings may be of the most use. An example is as follows:⁹



These Loeffler exercises train students to move from first to half-position without keeping fingers down. Proper motion between the two positions is established, while eliminating the possibility of squeezing with the left hand. Students will be able to concentrate on forming appropriate hand and wrist shapes, while moving freely backandforth. Like many of the other examples I mention from other authors, these exercises may also be used with a static thumb or with moving the thumb to and fro (dependent on the skills the instructor wishes to train).

The Loeffler manual contains the most material that can be adjusted for half-position on the market. In addition to the above diagonal crossing exercises, Loeffler has studies for “aiming and hitting”, “sliding and changing positions”, “one finger/one string shifts,” and many chromatic fingering exercises that would be usable to explore Galamian’s chromatic fingerings suggestions. Many of the pieces are already printed to include lower hand positions, so teachers would have to spend less time adapting the material to their students. Private instructors looking for a wealth of half-position material would be well-advised to keep a copy of the Loeffler studies on their shelf.

Technical exercises abound in the works of Henry Schradieck and Otakar Ševčík. The most particular ones of interest are in Otakar Ševčík’s Op.1. While they are usually labeled as exercises for the first position, many of them may be played with the thumb set in a lower position. Also, extended key signatures (including multiple sharps and flats) will help students become more comfortable reading notes that are more common in half-position. Using the materials will again take considerable effort on the part of the teacher, unfortunately. Instructors will need to mark exercises that are usable and transferrable to the half-position. Ideally, pertinent studies would be gathered into one book so that instructors would not spend so much time having to look for good examples for their students. Beneficial half-position examples from these books can be seen below:^{10,11}



Hans Sitt, also known as Jan Hanuš Sitt, wrote a comprehensive set of five books on shifting and position playing. Published collectively as his Opus 32, they include 100 etudes, technical exercises, and scale studies in the first seven positions. They also include shifting exercises and double stops. A separate scale method book was written to accompany the Opus 32 position studies, and the *Fifty Daily Exercises, Op. 98*, was written to be used for daily facility across the length of the fingerboard. While the books of Hans Sitt are useful to teachers looking for materials in extended positions (particularly in positions not as frequently studied, like the 6th position), his materials offer very little in the half-position. The first book includes some low first-finger passages, but these are offered within first position etudes and are understood as such. Also, the forays into low first-finger and low fourth-finger happen only briefly, in some cases only a measure at a time:¹²



The problem with this brief use of low one and low four, is that students do not technically move their hands into the posture used for half-position. Their left thumb remains in first position and they extend backwards, never allowing their hands to fully rest in the half-position shape. Teachers who wish to use Sitt's books for half-position study will have to pick and choose measures for their students to study, isolate those measures, and have them play the pieces with a half-position left hand position. One of the best pieces that can be used for this is his etude number 90, found in the fifth book of Op. 32:¹³



This etude is a great way of introducing half-position and encouraging players to move between first and half-position quickly. It can be used as a way of introducing shifting from one position to the other, instead of merely as a tool for extending backwards. Teachers looking for 1/2-1st position shifting etudes can encourage their students to move their entire left hand backwards for the lower double stops. While not encouraged for actual performance, this can be used as a kind of theoretical exercise for advanced pupils needing to feel the difference between the two positions. As it can be confusing to younger students, it should not be utilized until the first position is solidly learned with backwards extensions.

Countless other methods may be examined and used for half-position work. Teachers interested in exploring technique through the use of fingering patterns are recommended to explore the books of George Bornoff, Egon and Kurt Sassmannshaus, and Barbara Barber. Further technical studies can be found in the works of Auguste De Beriot, Roland Vamos, and Gaylord Yost. Shifting and intonation studies are included in the materials by Samuel Flor, Yaakov Geringas, Henryk Heller, and Sho-mei Pelletier. However, no discussion of half-position method materials would be complete without mention of the works of Harvey S. Whistler.

Probably the only method book to include in-depth and technically specific information related to the half-position is Whistler's book, *Introducing the Positions*

for Viola Volume I: *Third and Half Positions*.¹⁴ The importance of half-position for viola is obvious, due to the size of the instrument and difficulties for the left hand in playing extensions in other positions. Teachers for the viola have used Whistler's book for many years, with great success and have produced well-rounded players who can play all over the instrument.

The most exciting thing about Whistler's half-position book is that the materials do not need to be adapted for the viola student. He includes a fingering chart specifically for half-position¹⁵ and specific shifting studies that require students to alternate between half and first positions.¹⁶ Finally, orchestral excerpts, etudes, and a number of small musical pieces round out Whistler's position introduction. The only thing one could wish for is that he had increased the number of pieces dedicated to the half-position (as the book only contains ten pages). Also, the greatest disappointment is that the material has not been adapted for the violin. As they are some of the only technical exercises written specifically for half-position study, it is crucial that these pieces are transcribed for the benefit of all violin students.

In terms of literature, half-position fingering can be found at an elementary level, as well as at a very advanced level. There is a section in *Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64* that lies well in half-position:¹⁷



The above measures typically cause problems for violin students, including faulty shifting, intonation problems, coordination and speed issues, and left wrist placement errors. By studying the half-position from an early period of training, this passage (and ones similar to it) will no longer be problematic for students.

Literature in the half-position can also be enhanced musically by use of the half-position. Portions of Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas* work very well in the position, and one of the most beautiful and unique editions of the Bach violin works are by Henryk Szeryng.¹⁸ An advocate for the use of half-position, Szeryng utilizes the position for ease of motion and, more importantly, for unique musical reasons. Unfortunately, his edition is not accessible to most violinists because of their

limitations in playing half-position passages. It is a shame that one of the most creative editions of solo Bach is perhaps so neglected, due to an overwhelming lack of experience in half-position. Players and teachers should be encouraged to play through Szeryng's version of the Bach *Partita No. 1 in B minor*. Doing this will not only point out personal limitations of half-position technique, but will help to reiterate the importance of half-position musical language.

Finally, students preparing orchestral excerpts or sight-reading for auditions and solo competitions will find that the half-position is almost as important as the first, second, third, fifth, and seventh positions. The number of excerpts that require facility in half-position are too numerous to mention. However, the most important thing for teachers to remember is that students wishing to succeed as orchestral players will need fluency in half-position.

As can be seen, the half-position is incredibly important to the violin pedagogy. It requires unique technical skills, including a different left hand position, wrist shape, finger angle, and finger placement. It can be utilized in extensions, half-shifts, the "creeping shift,"¹⁹ and in advanced double stops. More importantly, it is required in almost all literature, from the most basic to the most advanced. Violinists wishing to succeed at any level will require half-position technical capabilities.

The teaching literature available primarily has to be adapted by teachers, which causes significant problems and a lack of interest in addressing half-position skills. Ideally, the materials available would be transcribed, adapted, and written in a new format. Pieces, including folk melodies, extended etudes, and orchestral excerpts would be included in a new series of method books to address students' needs. I am certain that once these materials are created and printed, a new generation will emerge with greater technical fluency and physical capabilities.

Furthermore, a series of comprehensive method books would address this missing pedagogical need and help violinists gain greater flexibility and stretch (particularly useful for developing ease for double stopped octaves, fingered octaves, tenths, double trills, left-hand pizzicato, and shifting).

Half-position is no longer something that violinists can ignore. In order to become great players, teachers, and musicians we need to make sure to have solid technique all over the fingerboard from the beginning stages of education. In the words of Aristotle, "Well Begun is Half Done."²⁰

Endnotes

- ¹ Carl Flesch, *The Art of Violin Playing, Book One*, Translated and Edited by Eric Rosenblith (New York: Carl Fischer, 2000), 12.
- ² Ivan Galamian, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, 3rd ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Shar Products Company, 1985), 14-15.
- ³ *Ibid*, 32.
- ⁴ *Ibid*, 32-33.
- ⁵ *Ibid*, 33.
- ⁶ *Ibid*, 34.
- ⁷ Demetrius Constantine Dounis, *The Dounis Collection: Eleven Books of Studies for the Violin; Op. 12, 15 (two books), 16 (two books), 18, 20, 21, 27, 29, 30* (New York: Carl Fischer, 2005), 4.
- ⁸ Louis Kievman, *Practicing the Violin Mentally-Physically*, 2nd ed. (New York: Kelton Publications, 1974), 6-7.
- ⁹ Charles Martin Loeffler, *Violin Studies for the Development of the Left Hand* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1936), 4.
- ¹⁰ Otakar Ševčík, *The School of Violin Technics, Complete Parts I-IV, Op.1*, Rev. ed. (New York: G. Schirmer, 2011), 10.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, 36.
- ¹² Hans Sitt, *Studies for Violin: Part 1 - Twenty Studies in the First Position, Op. 32*, Rev. ed. (New York: Carl Fischer, 1945), 19.
- ¹³ Hans Sitt, *Studies for Violin: Part 5 - Twenty Studies in Double Stopping, Op. 32*. New ed. (New York: Carl Fischer), 12.
- ¹⁴ Harvey S. Whistler, *Introducing the Positions for Viola Volume I: Third and Half Positions* (Chicago, Illinois: Rubank, Inc., 1953).
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, 39.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, 40.
- ¹⁷ Felix Mendelssohn, *Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*, Ed. by Leopold Auer (New York: Carl Fischer, n.d.), mm. 25-27.
- ¹⁸ Johann Sebastian Bach, *Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo*, Edited by Henryk Szeryng (Germany: Schott, 1981), 30-39.
- ¹⁹ Galamian, 32-33.
- ²⁰ Aristotle, *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, Translated by William Ellis, MA (London: Routledge, 1895).



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Composer	Book	Etude or Exercise	Transposition/Transcription required?	Uses/Skills Addressed
Barber, Barbara	<i>String Class Fingerboard Geography: An Introduction, Note-Reading, Theory, Shifting System.</i>	“Low 1st Finger Marches” and “Mixed 1st Finger Marches”	Suggested to transpose all 1st finger patterns into 1/2 position	Establishing finger patterns
Bornoff, George	<i>Finger Patterns for Violin</i>	Use fingering patterns #4 and #5; pp. 24-27, 38, 40, 42-43, 45, 47-48, 50, 54, 56-57, 59-60, 62-63	No	Establishing finger patterns
Bornoff, George	<i>Bornoff's String Education: Patterns in Position, Book 1</i>	Various; continuation of finger patterns #4 and #5 from <i>Finger Patterns for Violin</i>	Some require transposition	Establishing finger patterns; double-stops and octaves
de Beriot, Auguste	<i>Methode de Violin Complet: Partie I, II, III</i>	Various	Some require transposition; entire first section on 1st position may be transposed	Various
Dounis, Demetrius Constantine	<i>The Dounis Collection: Eleven Books of Studies for the Violin; Op. 12, 15 (two books), 16 (two books), 18, 20, 21, 27, 29, 30</i>	Various	Some require transposition	Shifting, double-stops, left-hand pizzicato; useful for advanced players
Flor, Samuel	<i>The Positions for Violin: Technique, Melodies, Scales</i>	Various	All require transposition	Various; primarily for scales and establishing finger patterns
Geringas, Yaakov	<i>Shifting: Thirty Progressive Studies for Violinists</i>	Various	Some require transposition	For shifting to and from low 1st finger in 1/2 position

Heller, Henryk	<i>System of Harmonics for Violin</i>	Various; assign harmonics which may be found in 1/2 position	No	Harmonics
Kievman, Louis	<i>Practicing the Violin Mentally-Physically</i>	Esp. for "Chromatic Motion Etudes for Finger and Wrist"; No. 1-5, 10-18	All require transposition	Various for both hands; trills, pizzicato, vibrato, variety of bow techniques
Kievman, Louis	<i>Virtuoso Violin Technique</i>	No. 1, 3-13, 17	All require transposition	Various for both hands; trills, extensions, vibrato, shifting, double-stops, variety of bow techniques
Loeffler, Charles Martin	<i>Violin Studies for the Development of the Left Hand</i>	For diagonal crossings, "Aiming and Hitting", "Sliding and Changing Positions", "One Finger/One String Shifts," and many chromatic fingering exercises; select sections from No. 1-2, 4-6, 7, 9-10	No	Left hand dexterity, shifting, intonation, various left hand skills
Sassmannshaus, Egon and Kurt	<i>Bärenreiter's The Sassmannshaus Tradition: Early Start on the Violin, Volumes 2-4</i>	Vol. 2 - pp. 39-53, 56-64; Vol. 3-4 - various	A few require transposition	Establishing finger patterns
Schradieck, Henry	<i>The School of Violin Technics Complete Books 1-3 and Scale Studies</i>	Various; includes "Exercises for Promoting Dexterity in the Various Positions" and exercises on one through four strings; various bowing exercises may be adapted for 1/2 position work; some useful scales in one position	Some require transposition	Various for both hands
Ševčík, Otakar	<i>The School of Violin Technics, Complete Parts I-IV, Op. 1</i>	Various	Some require transposition	Various left hand skills; left hand dexterity, double-stops, chords

Sitt, Hans (also known as Jan Hanuš Sitt)	<i>Fifty Daily Exercises, Op. 98. 2nd ed.</i>	Various	Some require transposition	Left hand dexterity
Sitt, Hans	<i>Studies for Violin: Paris 1-5, 100 Studies, Op. 32.</i>	Various; No. 4, 7, 9-10, 16, 41-42, 51, 53, 55-59, 73-74, 77, 81-82, 88, 90, 92, 95, 97, 100	No, but may assign only pertinent measures if preferred	Establishing finger patterns; Shifting from 1/2 position to higher positions, double-stops
Vamos, Roland	<i>Exercises for the Violin in Various Combinations of Double-Stops</i>	Various	Some require transposition	Includes double-stops of all kinds; useful for advanced players
Whistler, Harvey S.	<i>Introducing the Positions for Viola, Volume I: Third and Half Positions</i>	pp. 39-48	Yes - must be transcribed for violin	Specific half-position pieces; etudes, shifting, excerpts, establishing finger patterns, duets, solo pieces
Whistler, Harvey S.	<i>Introducing the Positions for Violin, Volumes I and II</i>	Various	No, but may assign only pertinent measures if preferred	Various for both hands; bow techniques; trills; shifting; double-stops; chords
Whistler, Harvey S.	<i>Preparing for Kreutzer; Volumes I and 2</i>	Various	No, but may assign only pertinent measures if preferred	Various for both hands; bow techniques; trills; shifting; double-stops; chords
Yost, Gaylord	<i>The Key to the Mastery of Bowing</i>	All exercises may be adapted for notes in 1/2 position	N/A	All bow techniques; left-hand skills as assigned by teacher

Resources

- Barber, Barbara. *String Class Fingerboard Geography: An Intonation, Note-Reading, Theory, Shifting System*. Estes Park, Colorado: Preludio Music, Inc., 2008.
- Bornoff, George. *Bornoff's String Education: Patterns in Position, Book 1*. Newton Highlands, Massachusetts: Foundation for the Advancement of String Education, 1984.
- De Beriot, Charles-Auguste. *Methode de Violin Complet: Partie I, II, III*. France: Edition Fleury, 2013.
- Flor, Samuel. *The Positions for Violin: Technique, Melodies, Scales*. Rev. ed. Boston, Massachusetts: The Boston Music Company, 1982.
- Geringas, Yaakov. *Shifting: Thirty Progressive Studies for Violinists*. Canada: The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, 2008.
- Heller, Henryk. *System of Harmonics for Violin*. Rev. ed by Adam Heller. London, England: N. Simrock, 1971.
- Pelletier, Sho-mei. *Perfect Intonation in 60 Minutes*. Dallas, Texas: Sho-mei Pelletier, Inc., 2014.
- Sassmannshaus, Egon and Kurt Sassmannshaus. *Bärenreiter's The Sassmannshaus Tradition: Early Start on the Violin, Volume 1*. 4th ed. Kassel, Germany: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2014.
- _____. *Bärenreiter's The Sassmannshaus Tradition: Early Start on the Violin, Volume 2*. 3rd ed. Kassel, Germany: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2012.
- _____. *Bärenreiter's The Sassmannshaus Tradition: Early Start on the Violin, Volume 3*. 3rd ed. Kassel, Germany: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2014.
- _____. *Bärenreiter's The Sassmannshaus Tradition: Early Start on the Violin, Volume 4*. Kassel, Germany: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2008.
- Sitt, Hans. *Fifty Daily Exercises, Op. 98*. 2nd ed. Frankfurt, Germany: C. F. Peters, 1945.
- _____. *Scale-Studies for the Violin: Appendix to Schradieck's Scales*. Rev. ed. New York: G. Schirmer, 1940.
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- _____. *Studies for Violin: Part 2 - Twenty Studies in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Positions, Op. 32*. New York: Carl Fischer, 1899.
- _____. *Studies for Violin: Part 3 - Twenty Studies, Changing of Positions, Op. 32*. Rev. ed. New York: Carl Fischer, 1945.
- _____. *Studies for Violin: Part 4 - Twenty Studies in the 6th and 7th Positions and for Position Changes, Op. 32*. Rev. ed. New York: Carl Fischer, 1948.
- _____. *Studies for Violin: Part 5 - Twenty Studies in Double Stopping, Op. 32*. New ed. New York: Carl Fischer, 1949.
- Vamos, Roland. *Exercises for the Violin in Various Combinations of Double-Stops*. New York: Carl Fischer, 2012.
- Whistler, Harvey S. *Introducing the Positions for Violin, Volume I: Third and Fifth Positions*. Chicago, Illinois: Rubank, Inc., 1944.
- _____. *Introducing the Positions for Violin, Volume II: Second, Fourth, Sixth, and Seventh Positions*. Chicago, Illinois: Rubank, Inc., 1946.
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