

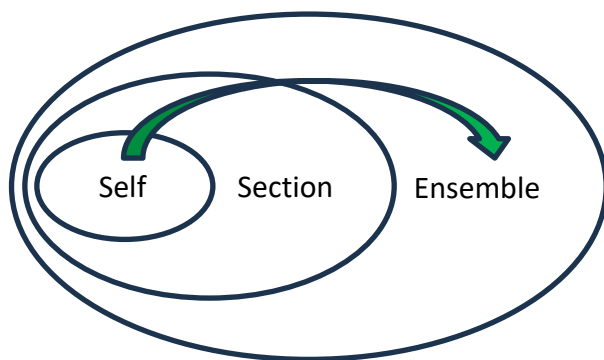
2024 Habits Summer Institute

The Right Hand for Teaching Tone, Articulation, Rhythm And Ensemble Skills

Christopher R. Selby

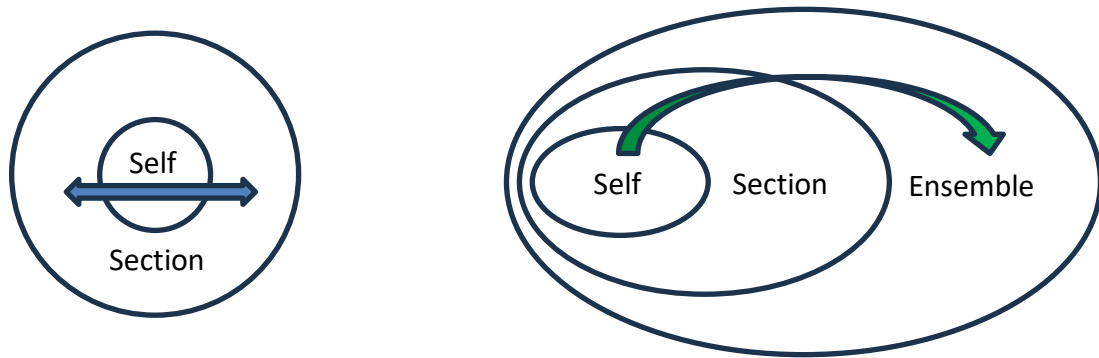
In this session, attendees will learn

- Strategies for teaching students to decipher and mark their music to help them perform rhythms accurately
- Strategies for teaching students to count—especially through long notes and rests—to help them accurately perform the rhythms they encounter in orchestra music
- How the language we use may contribute to rushing and ensemble problems, and how teaching students to listen across the ensemble may be the best way to control rushing



Rushing and Ensemble Awareness

Could we (teachers) be contributing to the problem of rushing? How does listening outside of the section impact rushing differently than listening to others within your section?



The Three Circles of Ensemble Awareness

Self: Where children naturally focus their attention

Young students tend to listen only to themselves; they do not automatically pay attention to the players in the other sections. They also tend to rush by playing chronically on the front of the beat, and in extreme cases, cutting long notes and rests short.

Section: Where teachers tell students to focus their attention

Once students learn to listen and wait for the other sections to play their parts, they will likely start to slow down the tempo and drag. They must be reminded and encouraged to play on the beat, and not behind it. They will tend to be a little late when coming in after a long note or rest and need to learn how to get going again after taking time at the end of the phrase.

Ensemble: Where musicians focus their attention when they want to play in tune and stay together as an ensemble,

At the highest levels, musicians have the musical maturity to hold their own tempo, and the ability to follow the conductor when he/she conducts faster, slower, or simply maintains a steady tempo. In large ensembles, they have the ability and awareness to look forward and listen backward to keep the group together.

Key Point:

For our students to listen and play together as an ensemble, Teachers must teach students to listen beyond their own section

To learn how their part fits together with other sections in the ensemble.

Which hand tends to get the most attention, and why?

- Do teachers focus too much on the left hand?
- The Right Hand controls tone, timbre, articulation, style, dynamics, phrasing, and most of the elements related to rhythm. These may be the most expressive elements in our music—the qualities that make music more human.

The Right Hand and Tone (and Articulation)

Tone! The most forgotten part of string education. The musical component that

- Is the quality we love most about our instruments.
- Is connected to intonation, rhythm, articulation and dynamics.
- Is not mentioned once in the new national standards.

Why we forget to teach tone

In addition to being controlled by the wrong hand, **Tone is not visibly depicted in notation.** We use our scores to help us figure out what to teach: notes, rhythms, bowings, dynamics, even tempo markings and musical words. But we forget what we cannot see.

PART 1: Right Hand Technique & Tone Production

1. Review Bow Hand technique often—Every day is bow hand day.

1. Rest Position. Let the bow rest in the hand with the hair up. Guide students to check the curvature and placement of their thumb and fingers.
2. “Go Fishing” to feel the weight of the bow in a relaxed and fluid right hand.
3. Practice taking the bow to the string without the pinky. This technique is especially important for students with pinky problems.

Golden Rule: The bow is held up by the *string*, and it is held *down* by the bow hand.

2. Explain how tone works on string instruments, and use all of the important “tone terms.”

- Quality instrument, strings, and bow with clean hair that has a good coat of rosin
- All parts of the bow: balance point, upper and lower half, frog and tip
- Triangle of tone production: Bow speed, weight and contact point (where on the string between the bridge and fingerboard.)
- Bow angle and rotation

3. Use Open Strings to teach basic tone production.

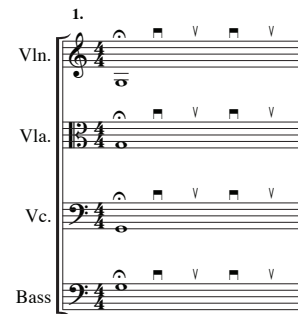
Even Tone - Frog to Tip

With a flawless bow hold, play the open string without counting or keeping time; pay attention to the bow's contact point, angle, weight, and speed.

Teacher Tips:

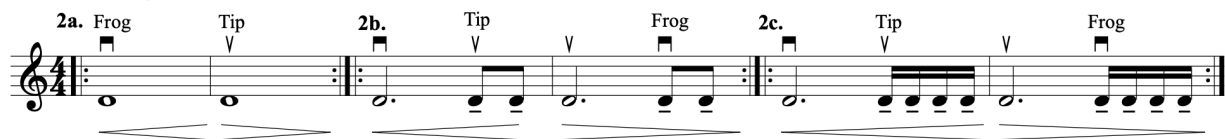
The purpose of this exercise is to study the following basic bowing components without thinking about fingers or counting.

- **Bow Hold:** A “flawless” bow hold has no visible problems or unnecessary tension; finger placement is correct; thumb and pinky are curved; knuckles are fluid.
- **Contact Point:** The bow is correctly placed on the string between the bridge and fingerboard
- **Bow Angle:** The bow is perpendicular to the string and the stick is directly over the hair or rotated slightly toward the scroll of the instrument.
- **Bow Placement:** The correct part of the bow for producing the desired articulation —frog, balance point, middle, tip—is over the string.
- **Bow weight and bow speed** are balanced and produce an excellent tone that projects well.



STUDENT PAGE I

2. More Weight at the Tip (♩ = 60)



Teacher Tips

- Students are to practice using the entire bow with a constant bow speed. Bow angles should be perpendicular to the string.
- Dig in more at the tip and less at the frog to compensate for the bow's tendency to be light at the tip.
- Move the bow closer to the bridge when digging in more, and closer to the finger board when digging in less.

Use Slurred 16th Notes to teach Bow Management

Slurred 16ths are good tool for teaching students to manage their bow speed. Students must pay attention to contact point, bow weight and speed to produce a good tone from the first note to the last.



This melodic exercise is great for teaching bow control and tone production.

4. **The Water Is Wide** (♩ = 68). Play the melody with full tone/vibrato, and harmony with blended tone/vil

Musical score for 'The Water Is Wide' in 4/4 time, key of D major. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 68. The score consists of two staves. The upper staff contains the melody, starting with a vibrato (v) over the first note. The lower staff contains the harmonic accompaniment. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. There are four-measure rests (4) in both staves.

There are different types of tone

1. Solo Tone (aka. "characteristic string tone, projected, melody, "espressivo")
2. Ensemble Tone (blended, harmony, tuning tone, "sotto voce")

Use Tuning Canons, Chords and Chorales teach students to listen, blend, and finely tune the notes and chords in each key. For overall balance, the lower instruments should be louder than the upper instruments, and no one should play so loudly that they cannot blend and finely tune their notes with the players around them. The tuning canon is a good way to begin class; as a warm up, students can focus on performing with good pitch and good tone

120. Tuning Canon

Musical score for 'Tuning Canon' in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. It consists of four measures, each starting with a different note: 1. B-flat, 2. A, 3. G, 4. F. The notes are held for the duration of the measure.

121. Tuning Chords

Musical score for 'Tuning Chords' in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. It consists of four measures, each showing a different chord: 1. B-flat major, 2. A minor, 3. G major, 4. F major. The chords are held for the duration of the measure.

223. Jesu Meine Freude (♩ = 68)

J. S. Bach

Musical score for 'Jesu Meine Freude' by J.S. Bach, in 4/4 time, key of D major. The score is for a string quartet: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Bass. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 68. Dynamics range from *mp* to *f*. The score includes fingering and bowing indications for the Bass line.

PART 2: The Right Hand and Articulation

Bowing Variations

Here are a number of tools and strategies we use to efficiently and effectively teach tone, articulation, and rhythm combinations. We use the following sequence most often:

1. Select a rhythm or bowing that the students need to learn or review, possibly from the menu of options below, or make up your own.
2. Establish a tempo from a concert piece with the rhythms the students are playing.
3. Use the introduction to model the rhythms or articulations students are to learn.
4. Students play the Theme immediately after the teacher, demonstrating the rhythm or articulation just modeled by the teacher or student leader.
5. Practice with and without the classroom metronome.

Introduction (teacher) Theme (student)

Basic Bow Strokes

5a. 5b. 5c. 5d. Middle to upper half

10. Spiccato Exercises

Keep thumb and pinky curved

10a. 10b. 10c.

10d. 10e. 10f.

10g. 10h. 10i.

11. Spiccato Etude and Variations



13. Triple Bowing Etude



14. Sautillé Bow Stroke



15. Sixteenth Note Bowing Etude



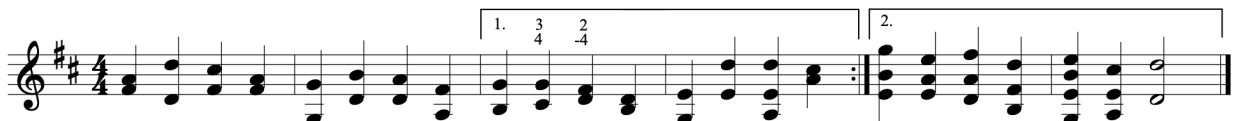
Trills and Double Stops—These skills are as much about tone as they are the left hand.

Students will need to use more weight on trills, and use less weight on double stops. And what students learn from these skills will transfer to other areas of music.

31. **Trill Drill.** Relax the thumb. Do not squeeze.



32. **Double Stops.** Use a lighter, faster bow to produce a good tone.



PART 3. The Right Hand for Teaching Students to Count and Perform Rhythms

The goal of teaching rhythm is to develop independent string musicians who can decipher, recall and perform written rhythms without the help of a teacher. We need to be careful how we respond to the most frequently asked question in music education: “How does this go?” If we are not careful, teachers can unintentionally create students that become rhythmically dependent upon the teacher or other players.

All rhythm has two components: the pulse and the rhythm that goes over the pulse. The teacher must develop both components for a student to properly understand and perform rhythms. Pulse should always be taught and established first; students need to learn that there can be a pulse without a rhythm, but there is no such thing as good rhythm without a pulse.

213a. and b.

Musical notation for exercise 213a and b, 4/4 time signature. The exercise consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody in the treble clef features eighth and quarter notes, some with ties, and eighth rests. The bass clef accompaniment consists of quarter and eighth notes.

For additional practice with ties, dotted quarter notes and eighth rest patterns, go to Part VIII Sight Reading Exercises 270–283.

221a. and b.

Musical notation for exercise 221a and b, 6/8 time signature. The exercise consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody in the treble clef features eighth and quarter notes, some with ties, and eighth rests. The bass clef accompaniment consists of quarter and eighth notes.

Additional Sight Reading Exercises

266.

Musical notation for exercise 266, 3/4 time signature. The exercise consists of one staff, treble clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody features eighth and quarter notes with dynamic markings: *mf*, *p*, *f*, and *p*. There are also accents and slurs.

286.

Musical notation for exercise 286, 2/4 time signature. The exercise consists of one staff, treble clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody features eighth and quarter notes with dynamic markings: *mf*, *f*, and *mp*. There are also accents and slurs.

Take Students Through a Series of Rhythm Exercises that are sequenced in increasing difficulty. Also, practice musical sight reading exercises that gradually challenge students to play harder rhythms, in more advanced keys, and in higher positions and alternate clefs.

Getting Started

1. Establish and model the tempo and counting style students are to use during the rhythmic example. Students are to count the pulse (not the rhythm of the music) out loud. After they demonstrate their ability to keep a steady pulse counting, they can begin performing the rhythm of the music with their bow hand while continuing to count *out loud*. Count using the smallest denomination used in the music; for example:
 - a. If the example is mostly quarters and half notes, count quarter notes (1, 2, 3, 4.)
 - b. If the example has dotted quarters and eighth-notes, count the pulse and division (1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &)
 - c. Dotted eighths and sixteenth-notes: 1 e & a, 2 e & a, 3 e & a, 4 e & a
2. While counting out loud, students perform the rhythm exercises with their bow.
 - a. Air bow first. Students can get a preliminary *feel* of the rhythm as they count the pulse out loud. Longer notes should be bowed with a slow, sustained motion. The Teacher can check to make sure students are counting and watch the bows to assess who is struggling most.
 - b. After students demonstrate success with air bowing, have them count and bow the rhythm on an open string. Watch students closely to make sure they continue counting as they play; the students who don't count will not know when to come in after long notes and rests.
 - c. When they are ready, have students look at the line with the pitches. Remind them to look at the key signature, and have them mentally practice (silently air bowing and putting fingers on the string) before the class plays together. This important step gives the non-readers with good ears a chance to practice reading without having the opportunity to listen to the person next to them.
 - d. Instruct students to perform the notes and rhythms on the second line with their bows. If they seem to need it, students may take the intermediate step of counting and playing pizzicato before playing the notes arco.

Counting Out Loud

To genuinely understand a rhythm pattern, students must perform the rhythm while simultaneously keeping a *consistent pulse* somewhere else in their body. The biggest benefit to this strategy is that students are counting while they perform through long or dotted notes and rests, which is the most important time to count. Students will find it easier to “count in their head” (and they will beg their teachers to let them do this) because in truth, they temporarily stop counting during the toughest rhythms; instead, they should count out loud, especially when the rhythms are difficult.

Modeling is encouraged, but avoid teaching rhythm through repetition. Hammering a rhythm over and over may clean up rhythmic inaccuracies, but the students are only learning to copy the teacher, and not learning to count and independently perform the rhythm. Each time a rhythm or exercise is repeated, the students with good ears and poor reading ability have less need to read. So, avoid repetition, and remember that the best time to teach rhythmic literacy is every time students are learning new exercises or music.

PART 4: The Right Hand and Rushing

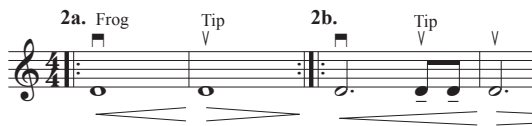
What are the Right Hand/Bowing/Articulation problems where students tend to rush?

There are several bowing issues that lead string players to rush, and the solution depends on each specific bowing issue.

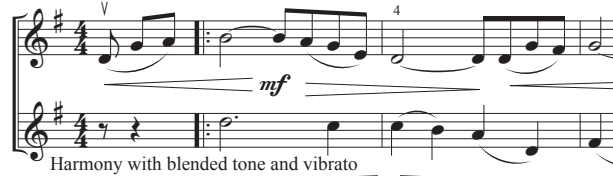
Bow Management and Fortes

When young string students play loudly, they often reach the end of their bow before the end of the note.....so, they change the note when they run out of bow. Use exercises (like the ones below) to teach students how to play closer to the bridge, so that they can save their bow on long forte notes.

2. More Weight at the Tip (♩ = 60)



4. The Water Is Wide (Melody with full tone and vibrato ♩ = 68)



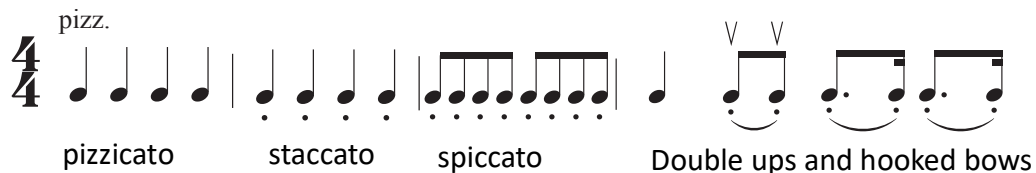
Uneven rhythms also require bow management practice or they will also rush.



Use rhythmic scales with bowing variations and a metronome to teach students to use a faster bow on shorter notes.

Staccato Articulations Naturally Tend to Rush (Don't we know it.)

Students rush staccato articulations because they do not leave enough time/space between the notes.



Strategies for Teaching Tempo Control with Staccato Articulations

Playing a piece at the same tempo every day does not help students learn to control their tempo; it may cause student ensemble awareness to atrophy.

#1. Isolate a staccato excerpt where the students rush, and play it at *different tempos*.

1. Play with a metronome at different tempos
2. Play with a conductor at different tempos
3. Play without a conductor at different tempos

11. Spiccato Etude and Variations

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The top staff contains a sequence of staccato eighth-note patterns. The bottom staff shows three variations: 11a. starts with a staccato eighth note followed by a dotted quarter note, with a 'V' (pizzicato) mark above the eighth note and 'off' below the dotted quarter; 11b. starts with a dotted quarter note followed by a staccato eighth note, with a 'V' above the eighth note and 'off' below the dotted quarter; 11c. starts with a dotted quarter note followed by a staccato eighth note, with a 'V' above the eighth note and 'off' below the dotted quarter.

#2. Teach students to play on the “back” of the beat, or “behind the beat.”

- Can you slow down through this section?
 - Teach students to slow down, ritardando, through passages that tend to rush.
- Can you play behind the conductor?
 - Teach students to control their tempo by playing after the conductor’s beat. “Play as late as you can without being late.” If they can’t do this arco first, try pizzicato.
 - For Advanced HS groups performing fast Mendelssohn or Mozart, the faster it is, the more players should aim for the back of the beat.
- Can you play behind another player? Another section?
 - Find a student with a strong sense of tempo, and have students play behind that leader.
 - Select a section (violas, cellos) who are solid and not rushing, and tell other students to play behind them.

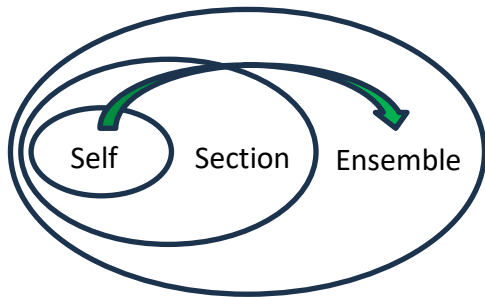
#3. Teach students to breathe during rests and between phrases.

- Take a breath here. Now, put a breath mark there.
- Create slightly extra space during rests, and between phrases

Final Thoughts

We know some students are prone to rush, no matter how much we address it. However, by teaching the rest of the orchestra to pay attention, breath, play behind, then you can address the rushing students in a more isolated way. And you can be the good cop, because when they rush, the students isolate themselves.

Teaching Students to Listen Across the Orchestra



The outer circle is where the tempo and rushing lessons really lie; this is where we need to focus our attention, and the attention of our students for them to learn how not to rush, but also how to play together in accelerandos and ritardandos. Stacking/pairing rhythms in combinations teaches students how to listen to a different section to play together as an ensemble.

Step 1: Use Michael Allen Warm-Ups or Habits Bowing Variations to teach rhythm patterns separately.

Bowing Variations

7. Introduction (teacher) Theme (student)

Basic Bow Strokes

7a. 7b. 7c. 7d. Middle to upper half

7e. 7f. 7g.

Step 2: Have sections play different combinations of rhythms

Younger students may start with the easier combinations (left below).

The harder combinations (right below) challenge students more, and force them to listen and match each other at higher levels.

Easy—Common denominator

Harder (but better for developing skills)

The Three Stages of Ensemble Awareness

Stage 1. Young students tend to listen only to themselves; they do not automatically pay attention to the players in the other sections. They also tend to rush by playing chronically on the front of the beat, and in extreme cases, cutting long notes and rests short.

Stage 2. Once students learn to listen and wait for the other sections to play their parts, they will likely start to slow down the tempo and drag. They must be reminded and encouraged to play on the beat, and not behind it. They will tend to be a little late when coming in after a long note or rest and need to learn how to get going again after taking time at the end of the phrase. They will also tend to drag when there are multiple rests or syncopated rhythms.

Stage 3. At the highest levels, musicians have the musical maturity to hold their own tempo, and the ability to follow the conductor when he/she conducts faster, slower, or simply maintains a steady tempo. In large ensembles, they have the ability and awareness to look forward and listen backward to keep the group together.

9. Rhythm Canon in 4 Parts (♩=70-90) An Articulation and Ensemble

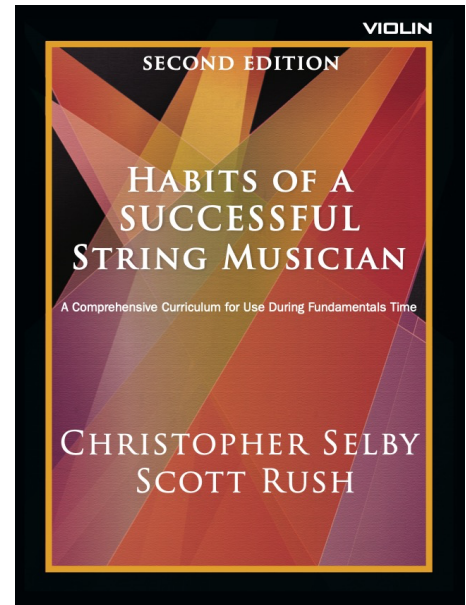
1 Only observe the fermatas when ending the canon.

The musical score consists of four staves, each representing a different part of the canon. The first staff (labeled 1) begins with a fermata and a dynamic marking of *f*. The second staff (labeled 2) features a complex rhythmic pattern with accents and slurs. The third staff (labeled 3) has a similar rhythmic pattern with slurs. The fourth staff (labeled 4) has a simpler rhythmic pattern with slurs. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4.

NEW This Spring: *Habits of a Successful String Musician, Second Edition* is a complete method of over 400 musical exercises for teaching upper-level string students the technical skills needed to play advanced orchestral music.

What's NEW in the Second Edition?

- **Part I. Tone and Articulation:** New melodic exercises for developing tone, blend, vibrato, spiccato, and sautillé, and a rhythm canon for combining various articulations.
- **Part II. Left Hand Patterns, Positions, and Shifting:** Left-hand exercises are now organized into a sequence of musical exercises and etudes that review middle level skills, extend up to the highest registers, and teach alternate clefs and thumb position.
- **Part III. Scales, Arpeggios, and Thirds:** The much-loved tuning canons and chords, dominant arpeggios, and thirds, as well as one-, two-, and three-octave scales and arpeggios in all twelve major and minor keys now include improved cello and bass fingerings and bass scales with C-extensions.
- **Part IV. Chorales:** There are now 50 percent more chorales in a greater variety of keys and from more diverse cultural backgrounds.
- **Parts V. Rhythm Study in a Musical Context and VI. Sight-Reading:** 185 completely new rhythm charts and sight-reading exercises with tempo markings for each exercise.
- **Part VII. Orchestral Excerpts:** Three pages of excerpts from frequently performed school and all-state repertoire. Sequenced from moderately difficult to expert, these excerpts are the perfect culmination of skills taught in this method and are ideal for auditions or final exams.
- **Additional Sectional Pages** in each student book focus on technique and alternate clef lessons unique to each instrument.



Dr. Christopher Selby is the author of *Habits of a Successful Orchestra Director*, *Music Theory for the Successful String Musician*, and the lead string author of the *Habits of a Successful String Musician* method book series published by GIA. He is an active clinician and conductor, and has presented sessions at numerous Midwest Clinics, American String Teacher Association (ASTA) National Conferences, and state conferences across America. Dr. Selby currently directs the high school orchestras at the School of the Arts in Charleston, SC. His orchestras have performed at the Midwest Clinic and have twice won the top award of Grand Champion at ASTA's National Orchestra Festival. Dr. Selby guest conducts Regional and All-State Orchestras across America. He earned a music education degree from the Hartt School of Music, and a Masters and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in Orchestral Conducting from the University of South Carolina.

NEW This Spring: *Habits of a Successful Young String Musician* is a field-tested and musical collection of 220 sequenced exercises for the beginning string student. The companion website (www.habitsstrings.com) features supplemental resources including accompaniment tracks, start-up clinic videos, and full performance videos for each exercise in the book. These cutting-edge online components are on MusicFirst (PracticeFirst) and MakeMusic Cloud (SmartMusic).

What makes *Habits of a Successful Young String Musician* unique?

Tone is at the heart of this method.

- Students begin using the bow earlier than other resources.
- The familiar melodies allow students to use their ears to develop good pitch and tone.
- Online videos allow students to see and hear professional string players modeling good tone and technique for each exercise.

Tonal literacy is a key focus of this book.

- All four open strings are introduced early.
- New notes are introduced with clear fingerboard diagrams and pictures next to the staff.
- New keys are taught by highlighting notes affected by the new key signature.

Rhythmic literacy exercises will have your students counting and reading independently.

- Long notes and rests are introduced early so students learn to count and subdivide.
- Melodies in $\frac{3}{4}$ appear early and often.
- Nine pages of sight-reading exercises develop stronger tonal and rhythmic literacy skills

Quality content

- High-quality photos of excellent hand positions help students develop great technique.
- Diverse repertoire of classical and folk melodies from around the world.
- Warm up pages in the back of the book include scales, arpeggios, thirds, tuning canons, and bowing variations great tools for introducing, teaching and reinforcing skills.

Online resources (www.habitsstrings.com) include instructional videos by professional string coaches to reinforce instrument position, left-hand set-up, bow hand technique, hooked bows, slurs, developing good tone, as well as shifting and positions in the lower strings.

Author Team

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