I. VIBRATO READINESS

Vibrato is a balanced, rocking movement. It is much like waving hello, knocking on a door, salting your food, or patting a dog. When you are balanced, the vibrato rocks easily; vibrato "just happens." When you are out of balance, muscles tighten, parts of you squeeze and pinch, and vibrato is difficult.

Before we actually begin vibrato exercises, let's run through a Vibrato Readiness Checklist.

Vibrato Readiness Checklist

☑ **Body.** Does your body swing easily backward and forward, from left to right, and around in small circles? Of course it does! You've been an expert at those motions since long before you learned to play. Try these gentle movements and notice how easily you move.

Now place your instrument in playing position. Again, move left to right, back and forward, and in small circles. Are you still moving as easily? If so, good; you have successfully included your instrument into your balanced body system. If not, ask your teacher if you are holding (balancing) your instrument correctly.

☑ **Arm.** Put your left hand in playing position. Does your elbow swing freely? If not, you are tense in the shoulder, and you may also be squeezing the neck of your instrument with your hand. Reach over and hold the viola up with your right hand. Can you now release some left arm tension that perhaps you didn't even know you had? Swing your left elbow again.

Now it's time for our first **Swingercise!**

Swingercise

#1: SWINGPLOP

1. With your instrument in playing position, use your right hand to hold it steady and secure. Let your left arm hang by your side. Now swing your left arm in a lazy arc, forward and backward.
2. After a few lazy swings, use a forward *swing* to toss the hand up to the neck, then drop the arm so that the fingers *plop* on the fingerboard. Let the fingers "spring" a little on the fingerboard. See *Photo #1*.
3. Do Swingplop three to five times.

Photo #1

☑ **Hand.** In playing position, does your hand balance easily on the end of your forearm? Does it move freely from the wrist? Check the line from fingers through hand and forearm to elbow: there should be no unusual bends or kinks. See *Photo #2*.

Photo #2

SAMPLE

Swingercise

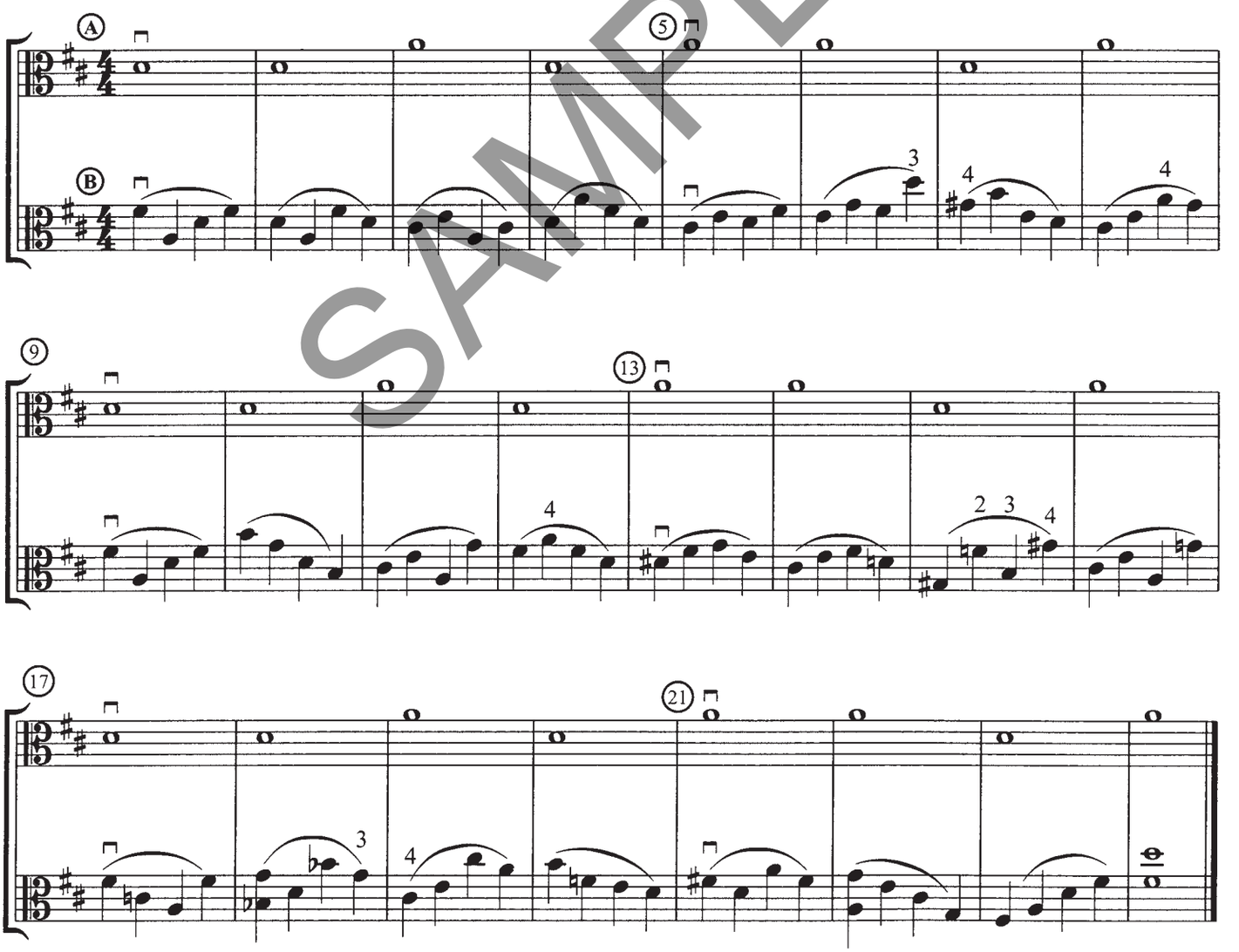
#7: THE WAVE

1. With your instrument in playing position, bring your left hand up to about fourth position. Open the hand so that the palm is facing you. Now wave to yourself!
2. Pick up your bow. Play long, slow strokes on the D string. Wave to yourself again. Listen to your pretty vibrato! See *Photo #10*.
3. Play your Wave Vibrato on other strings.
4. Play *Wave Duet* using your Wave Vibrato on Part A, which should be played entirely using open strings. Play Part B using smooth string crossing waves.

Photo #10

1. Wave Duet ♩ = 96

Hermann Op. 20, no. 2



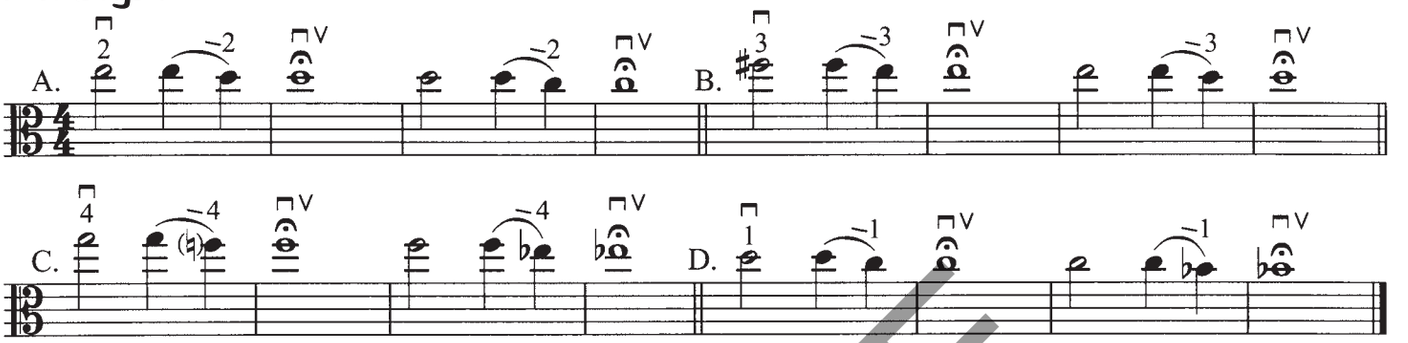
SAMPLE

Swingercise

#14: WIGGLEDOWN

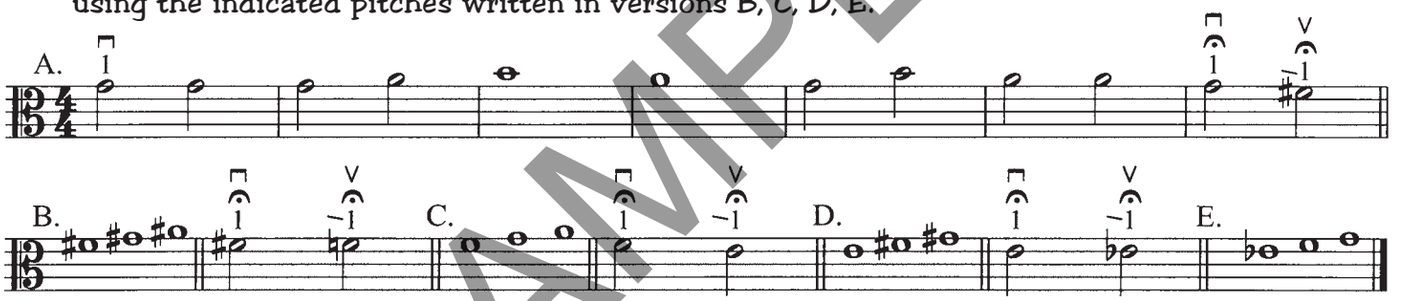
A new vibrato that works well in 3rd position sometimes is confused at first in the lower positions. "Play" Song #24 *Sigh!* first without the bow. From measure 2, place one, two, or three right hand fingers between the heel of your left hand and the viola rib. Your right fingers will serve as a temporary "rib extension," providing support for the left arm. When the vibrato is swinging smoothly, take away your right fingers. Put them back if the vibrato gets confused again.

24. Sigh!



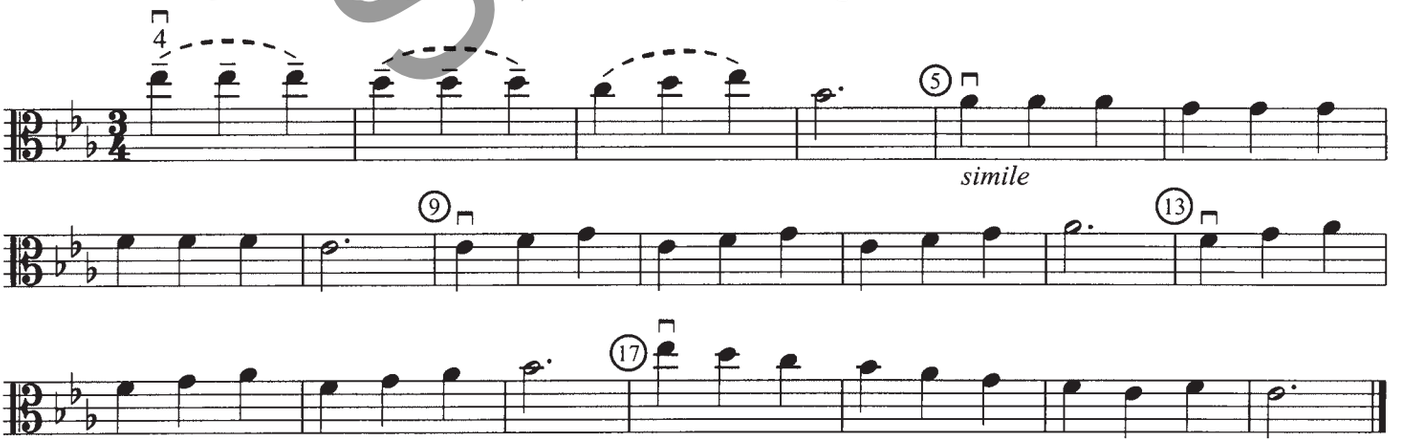
25. Pierrot's Basement Door ♩ = 76 French Folk Song

Slowly play the first phrase of *Pierrot's Basement Door* (A). Create a wide, easy vibrato on each note. In the fermata measures, move your hand back a half step, and play Pierrot again, using the indicated pitches written in versions B, C, D, E.

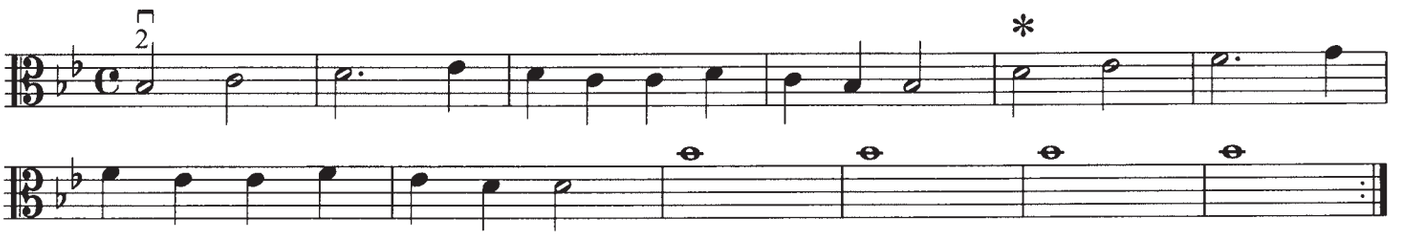


26. Cellar Stairs ♩ = 76 French Folk Song

Play this piece using separate bows and also observing the dashed slurs.



27. Where is John? (Round) ♩ = 92 – 100 Smetana



SAMPLE