



# Total Tone Transformation: Creating a Beautiful String Sound

*Bob Phillips*

## 1. Finger Function

- Fingers serve different functions
- Hand shapes using 1<sup>st</sup> fingers and pencils
- Bow holds – vl, va, vc, db – French and German

## 2. Creating a Sound

- Holding the instrument
- Picking up the bow
- Placing the bow on the string
- Bow angles
- Moving the bow
- Levels of the bow

## 3. Bowing Lanes

- mf Lane – (starting bowing lane)
- F Lane – (basic lane)
- p Lane – (basic lane)
- mp Lane – (intermediate lane)
- pp Lane – (intermediate lane)
- FF Lane – (intermediate lane)

## 4. Bow Weight

- Medium-Heavy Bow Weight – (starting bow weight)
- Heavy Bow Weight – (basic weight)
- Light Bow Weight – (basic weight)
- Medium-Light Bow Weight – (intermediate weight)
- Very-Light Bow Weight– (intermediate weight)
- Very-Heavy Bow Weight– (intermediate weight)

## 6. Bow Speed

- Medium-Slow Bow Speed – (starting bow speed)
- Slow Bow Speed – (basic bow speed)
- Fast Bow Speed – (basic bow speed)
- Medium-Fast Bow Speed – (intermediate bow speed)
- Very-Fast Bow Speed – (intermediate bow speed)
- Very-Slow Bow Speed – (intermediate bow speed)

## 7. Parts of the Bow and Bow Crawling

## 8. Separated Bow Strokes

- Detaché, staccato, martelé, marcato, spiccato, tremolo, collé, sautillé, chop, ricochet, col legno
- Double stops and chords

## 9. Left Hand Skills That Affect Sound

- Vibrato
- Combining left and right hands



## Quotes:

**Valborg Leland**, The Dounis Principles of Violin Playing, p. 13-14.

1. The Balanced Hold

(a) First in importance is to find the central feeling of balance. This lies in the “centre of the hold” The centre of the hold must be between the thumb and the middle finger. They work together and are opposite each other on the bow. The two weaker fingers (third and fourth) at one side of the centre hold furnish a balance with the strong first finger on the other side (two against one). They must be strong, flexible, and always on the bow. . . . .

(b) Second in importance is to find the exact spot on the middle finger and thumb which contacts the bow. The right side of the thumb cushion holds the upper edge of the frog and should feel as though it is anchored there. The middle finger holds the stick somewhere near the tip cushion and never beyond the first joint. . . . .

2. The position of the other fingers on the bow. . . . .

(a) After you have found the centre hold, let the other three fingers drop on the stick wherever they fall naturally.

(b) Then tilt the hand in the direction of the tip of the bow until a firm contact of the first finger on the bow is established. This slanting position is the fundamental position for all bowing. It is your “normal hold” from which all other hand positions on the bow are derived.

3. Developing the clinging feeling of the fingers on the stick.

The fingers must cling firmly to the stick at their points of contact with it. The finger must feel rooted to the bow as though they are part of the stick. The clinging hold is an important requisite for a sonorous tone. The grip of the fingers on the bow is always a clinging one, firm but not tense.

Simon Fischer, Basics, p. 1-2.

Thumb counter pressure is sometimes very little, and at other times much more, depending on the amount of pressure into the string, and which part of the bow is used. . . . The thumb and second finger are the centre of the bow hold. The second finger needs to sit very slightly to the left of the thumb. . . . A bow hold with the thumb between the second and third fingers can cause tension in the base of the thumb.

**Ivan Galamian**, Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching, p.45-46.

The basic grip as given here permits the flexibility of the hand to develop rather quickly, because it is a natural position of the hand. This manner of holding the bow is designed chiefly to release the springs of the hand and fingers so that the bow can settle deeper into the strings. It is the best grip for the achievement of fullness and roundness of sound.

To set this basic position, take the bow in the left hand, pointing it vertically upward with the hair facing the player. With the right hand, form a circle by placing the tip of the thumb against the second finger. . . . Bring this circle over to the bow, not directly at right angles but from slightly above. . . . Open the circle a little and insert the bow-stick so that the thumb contacts the stick and the frog. . . . In doing all of this, the thumb should retain the same position in relation to the second finger that it had in the forming of the initial circle. This means that, above all, it has to retain its easy, natural, outward curve and has to keep the inner edge of its tip turned toward the second finger. . .

The second finger will be curved over the stick opposite the thumb and will contact the stick at the joint nearest the nail. The third finger reaches over the frog. . . .

The fourth finger is placed on the stick rather close to the third finger. The section of the stick immediately above the frog is always of octagonal construction, even when the stick itself is round. In placing the fourth finger, its tip rests not directly on top of the stick but instead on the inner side of the octagon, contacting the flat surface just next to the top. . . . The first finger is placed at a slight distance from the second finger and contacts the stick of the bow a little on the nail side of the middle joint. . . .

The correct bow grip must be a comfortable one: all fingers are curved in a natural, relaxed way: no single joint (knuckle) is stiffened; and the correctly resulting flexibility must allow all of the natural springs in the fingers and the hand to function easily and well.

## References

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