

E. Polo No. 3

MAIN DIFFICULTIES: Double stops
OTHER DIFFICULTIES: Bow balance, left hand shape
SIMILAR ETUDES: Polo double stops, Hermann Op. 20, No. 46

Understanding and improving the way we play double stops is essential in violin playing. If we think about it, we are constantly playing double stops, meaning how the left hand fingers need to relate one to another. Relationships, spacing among fingers and leaving fingers down to guide the next, form an essential aspect of left hand technique. Practicing double stops forces our left hand to behave correctly in many ways, therefore, the daily practice of double stops is of the most importance. This marvelous set of etudes by Enrico Polo is the perfect introduction to them!

Regarding the left hand: Think that the most important factor to maintain a good intonation throughout is a good hand shape. That means that no matter what the finger spacing/placement you need, make sure to step on the "good" part of the finger with a normal finger shape, as if you were playing single stops. Considering where your left elbow level is crucial to find said finger/hand shape. If your fingers are bended forward, most likely your elbow is too far out and vice versa. Keeping a light pressure is also very important to make it easier to move across the strings horizontally. Pay attention to the open strings and try to tune to them at all times.

For the bow you need to keep in mind that for the most part double stops require a slower bow to ring better. This implies slower/closer to bridge and faster/closer to fingerboard. For the beginning of bows allow the bow to be closer to the bridge then moving the bow faster in the middle. Of course, your ear will be the one determining what is necessary. In theory you will need to balance your bow more towards the shorter string, this means towards the highest number finger. Example: If you are playing a double stop with your 3rd and 2nd finger, your bow needs to be heavier at the 3rd finger string. Finding a good contact point for double stops is always challenging, but do not give up and strive to find a nice sound besides being in tune.