

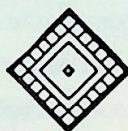
A. BLOCH

VIOLIN

BOWING

ALEXANDER BLOCH

*The Principles & Practice
of
Violin Bowing*



A method which reduces the usual difficulties for the
left hand, in order that undivided attention may
be concentrated upon the bow-arm.

G. SCHIRMER, INC., NEW YORK

(Translated from a letter from Leopold v. Auer)

Christiania, Norway, July 4, 1915.

My dear Mr. Bloch,

I have read your work, "The Principles of Bowing," with great interest, and was pleased to find that it gives such a clear and concise elucidation of the fundamental principles which I have applied during the extended period of my pedagogical experience. In Europe one may find various pamphlets, treatises and "Methods" dealing with this subject, written in choice literary style, and even accompanied by anatomical sketches, which nevertheless possess but slight interest for the youthful student because overladen with scientific and other superfluous material.

In the present work, you have attained what many others have unsuccessfully attempted. I am glad to be able to tell you this with full conviction. I trust that your admirable work may obtain the success which, in my opinion, it deserves, and that your native land may set apart a page for this useful book in the history of the national development in violin-teaching. It will also surely meet with favor in other countries.

With best wishes for your further success as artist and teacher, I remain,

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) LEOP. v. AUER.

Preface

It is my experience that most studies written for the development of bowing-technic are either too difficult for the left hand or too intricate musically. I have come to the conclusion that the student needs simple exercises which will enable him to concentrate his entire attention on the bow-arm.

With this idea in view, the following studies were compiled, using (wherever possible) the ordinary scale-form which may be practised in various keys; and with this same idea of simplification the open strings have been employed a great deal in the three- and four-part chord-exercises given in Part II.

In the various bowings exemplified I have tried to confine myself to those in actual use in violin literature, and have not included any theoretical or impractical difficulties.

In the instructions accompanying each section the French school has been followed, more particularly as taught by Professor Leopold von Auer.

Explanation of Signs

▮ = down-bow

∨ = up-bow

UH = upper half of bow } using a full half-bow
LH = lower half of bow }

in UH = between the middle and point of bow

in LH = between the nut and middle of bow

M = in the middle

Pt. = at the point

Nut = at the nut

WB = whole bow

Remark: The instructions given at the head of each section apply to all the exercises included in that section, unless otherwise specified.

Each exercise begins with down-bow, unless otherwise indicated.

The Principles and Practice of Bowing

Part One

No. Ia. The Détaché (English: detached)

This is the simplest form of bowing. It is called *détaché* because each note is played with a separate stroke of the bow. There is no pause between strokes and the bow remains continuously on the string.*

It is advisable to practise this bowing at first without trying to produce a big tone and without using any pressure, but simply with the weight of the bow resting on the string, until the necessary flexibility of arm and wrist is acquired.

U.H. With forearm and wrist (upper arm remains quiet). Accent the up-stroke, to counteract a tendency to play the down-stroke more strongly, owing to the fact that the latter occurs in the heavier part of the bow.

M. L.H. With entire arm and wrist. Practise *pianissimo* in L.H. to overcome a tendency to play roughly at the nut, where the bow is heaviest. Make the change from up- to down-bow as nearly imperceptible as possible. (See Note ** on page 4.)

W.B. With entire arm and wrist.

The *détaché* executed with a whole bow is sometimes termed "Grand *détaché*".

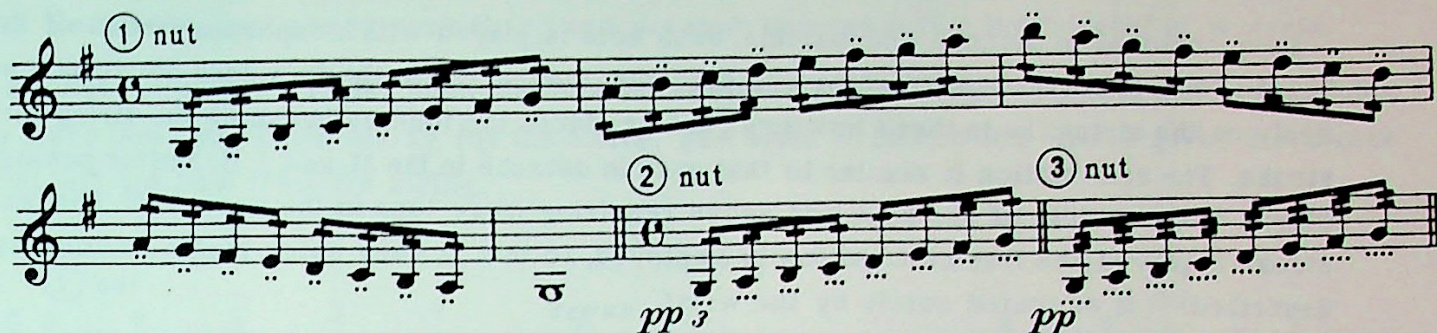
Nos. 2 to 5, inclusive, are especially useful for developing the up-stroke

* In contradistinction to the *détaché*, that style of bowing in which two or more notes are bound in one stroke is termed *legato* (English: bound). Thus, exercises Ia, Nos. 2 to 5 inclusive, are partly *legato*. The notes must be played in a smooth, connected manner without any break in tone. The change of bowing should not be noticeable; the effect should be one of absolute continuity.

Examples of this style of bowing will be found in Part II.

No. Ib. Détaché (at the nut)

Use little bow; execute with wrist alone; practise *pianissimo* to overcome a tendency to play roughly at the nut, where the bow is heaviest. The change from up-bow to down-bow must be as nearly imperceptible as possible.**



** The little finger plays an important rôle in changing the stroke at the nut. Its function is to keep the bow from weighing too heavily on the string and thus to make the transition from up- to down-stroke smoother.

It may be found a useful exercise to practise such bowings as occur at the nut and in the LH in the following manner: Hold the bow without the aid of the two middle fingers (i.e., with the thumb, index and little finger). This will develop strength in the little finger and will help the pupil to acquire better control of the bow.

No. II a. Preparatory Study for Martelé Bowing (Hammer-stroke) (See II b)

This exercise is useful for acquiring the attack and swift up-stroke necessary for martelé.

Place the point of the bow motionless on the string and attack each note, using no more bow than is necessary to give this attack. The stroke, however, is continued swiftly in the air the whole length of the bow. The attack must come from the *hand* alone and *not* from the arm or shoulder.



No. II b. Martelé (English: hammered)

In *martelé*, as in *détaché*, each note is played with a separate stroke, but is short and sharply attacked (accented, hammered) as in the preceding preparatory exercise. There is a pause between the notes, the bow remaining motionless on the string during the pause.

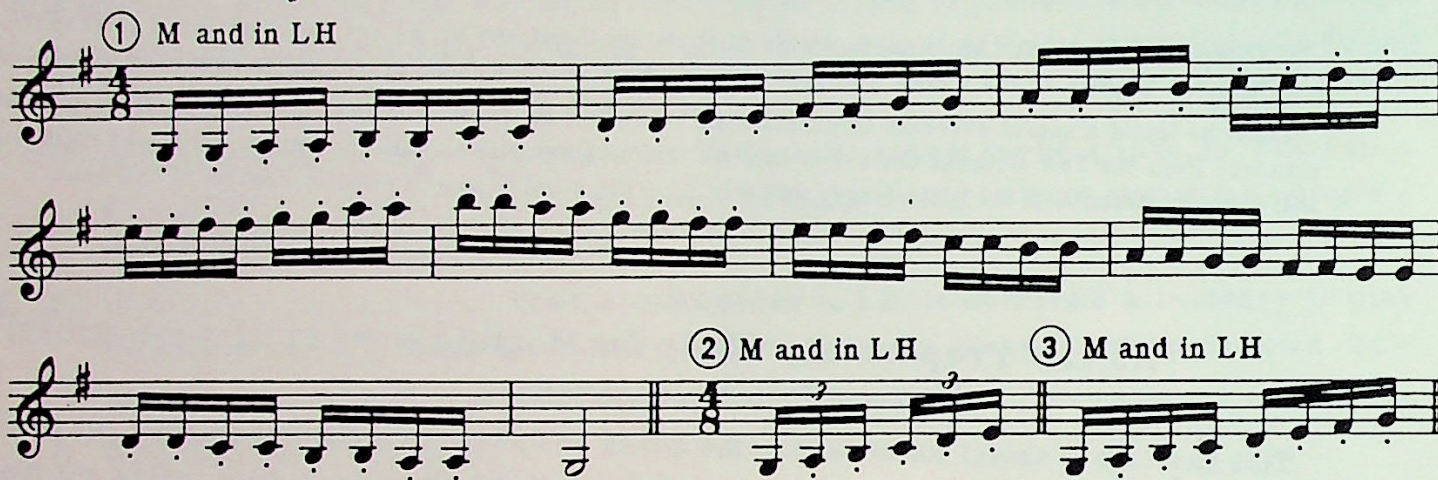
U.H. With forearm and wrist (upper arm remains quiet). Accent the up-stroke to counteract a tendency to play the down-stroke more strongly owing to the fact that the latter occurs in the heavier part of the bow. The attack given each note must come from the *hand* alone (as in the preceding exercise) and *not* from the arm or shoulder.





No. III. Spiccato

In spiccato, as in détaché and martelé, each note is played with a separate stroke of the bow; but the tone-quality is much lighter and brighter. Furthermore, the bow does not remain continuously on the string (as in these bowings), but produces the tone by brushing the string during the stroke. The arm-motion is similar to that used in détaché in the M and L H. Softer passages are played in the middle of the bow, and those requiring more tone in the lower half. The faster the stroke is played, the less arm-motion is employed, so that in very quick tempo (sautillé, hereafter described) it is executed solely by the wrist.



No. IV. Sautillé (English: bouncing, springing)

The tone-quality is similar to spiccato, but the tempo is faster and the manner of execution different. In sautillé the bow is allowed to bounce (rebound) through its own elasticity.

Executed in the middle of the bow with the wrist; the bow must be held loosely enough to enable it to bounce readily, yet firmly enough to be controlled. It will bounce more readily if turned so that more hair touches the string than ordinarily. It should be noted that the turning of the bow is effected, *not* by changing the position of the wrist, but by slightly shifting the hold on the bow.

A good way to acquire this bowing is to start with a very short détaché in the middle, gradually increasing the speed and holding the bow more lightly until it bounces.

The motion of the hand is a trifle more vertical than in détaché bowing.



No. V. Piqué

The tone-quality of this style of bowing is perhaps best conveyed by a literal translation of the word *piqué*; this is a French term meaning pointed, sharply marked off, pricked, picked, etc. Each note must sound very sharp and pointed, somewhat like the "attack" in *martelé*.

Execute with wrist alone; place the bow motionless on the string and attack each note, using no more bow than is necessary for the attack. The same wrist-motion which gives the attack must lift the bow from the string.

① nut

segue

M V segue

② * M ③ M ④ M

⑤ M ⑥ M

* Note. Exercises No. V, 2 to 6 incl., when played in fast tempo, must be executed with flying staccato (hereafter described) instead of *piqué* bowing.

No. VI. Staccato

Music Library

Staccato is a style of bowing in which several notes are played in one bow; *not bound*, however, but abruptly and sharply separated from each other.

Staccato is of two kinds, "firm" and "flying". In *firm* staccato the bow does not leave the string; the tone-quality is similar to a very quick succession of piqué or short martelé strokes. In *flying* staccato the bow leaves the string between the notes. Flying staccato is sometimes called "mezzo-staccato". The notes are less sharply marked than in firm staccato and have a tone-quality more like spiccato.

Staccato is the only exception to the fundamental principle that all bowings are to be executed with a relaxed arm.

(a) Staccato (up-bow)

Execute from the shoulder, with a stiff arm.

This exercise may be practised in both *firm* and *flying* staccato; *flying* staccato is executed in the same way as *firm* staccato, except that the bow is held more lightly.

① *Firm* staccato in UH.
Flying staccato M.



etc.

② *Firm staccato in UH*
Flying staccato M



③ *Firm staccato in UH*
Flying staccato M



(b) Staccato in UH (down-bow)

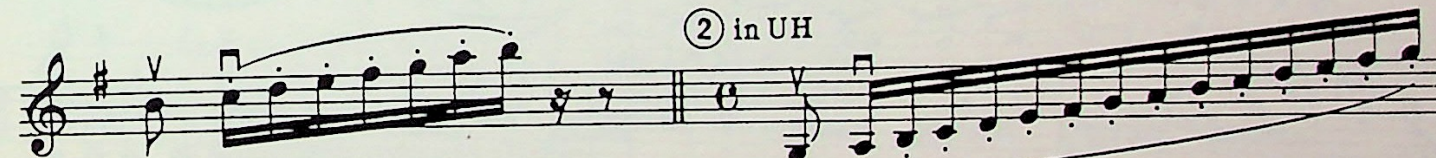
This bowing is most useful in ascending figures that cross the strings.

With a stiff arm as above, incline the stick a trifle toward the bridge by slightly changing the position of the wrist.

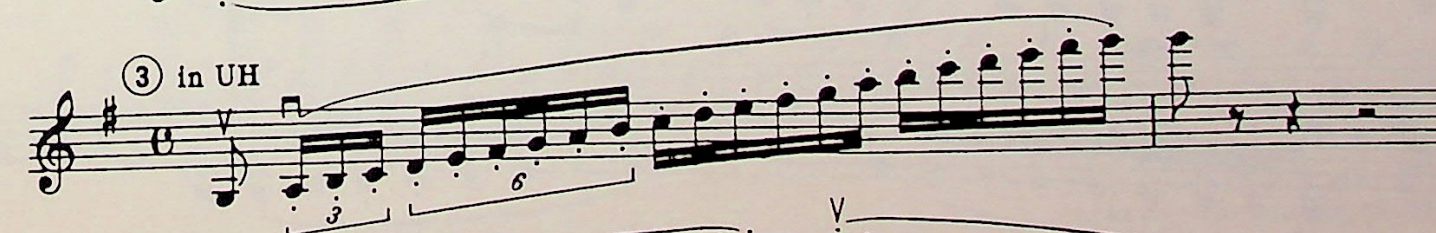
① in UH (*Firm staccato*)



② in UH



③ in UH



④



No.VII. Ricochet or Saltato

Ricochet (thrown) or Saltato (dancing) bowing sounds similar to sautillé, but somewhat lighter, as it is executed nearer the point. The bow is "thrown" or – more accurately – allowed to fall on the string and rebound, several equal notes being taken in one bow.

This bowing is most useful in down-bow. The bow must be held lightly enough to enable it to bounce, yet firmly enough to be controlled.

It will bounce more readily if turned so that more hair touches the string than ordinarily.

It should be noted that the turning of the bow is effected *not* by changing the position of the wrist, but by slightly shifting the hold on the bow.

① in UH

② in UH

③ in UH

④ in UH

⑤ in UH

⑥ in UH

⑦ in UH

⑧

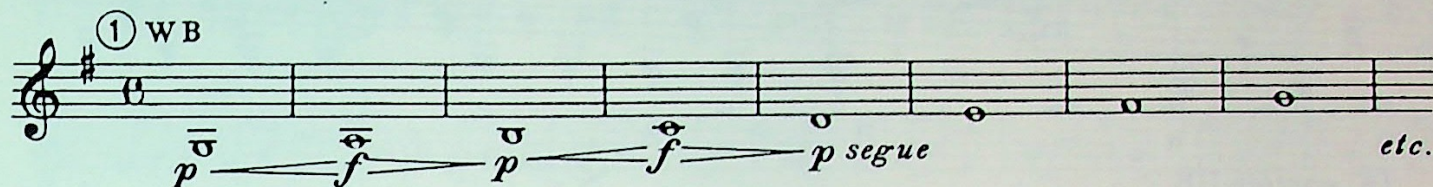
⑨ in UH

Part Two

No. VIII. Tone-Production

The purpose of this exercise is to counteract a tendency to play more *forte* in the lower than in the upper part of the bow, owing to the fact that the bow is so much heavier at the nut.

In making a *crescendo*, the pressure must come from the *hand* alone and *not* from the arm or shoulder, otherwise the tone will sound forced. The pressure bears a direct relation to the speed with which the bow travels; that is, the greater the pressure, the greater must be the speed.



No. IXa. Exercises Over Two Strings

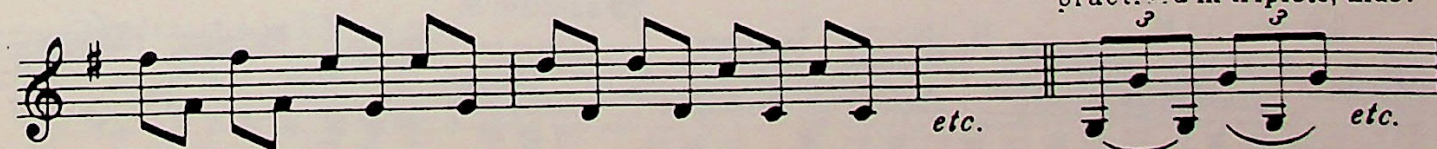
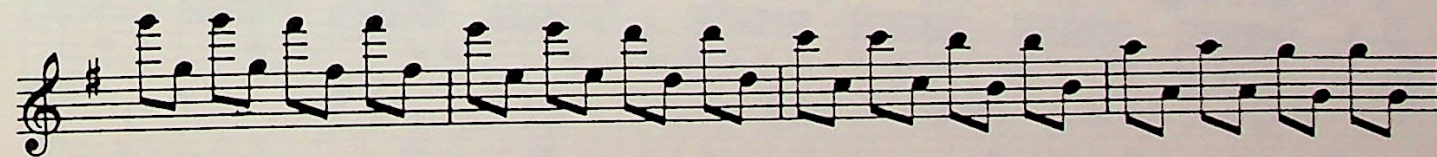
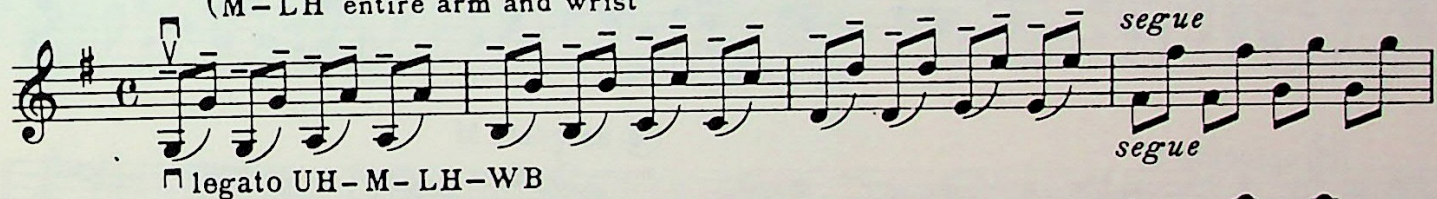
The following exercises are especially useful for developing flexibility of wrist.

This exercise may also be practised in thirds and sixths.

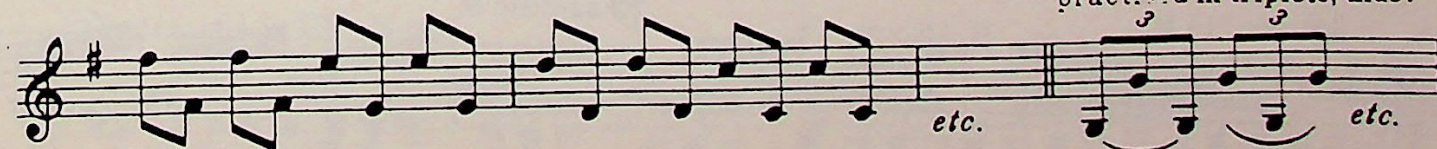
In crossing the strings use a great deal of wrist-motion.

Practise at first without trying to produce a big tone and without using any pressure, but simply with the weight of the bow resting on the string, until the necessary flexibility of arm and wrist is acquired. Particular care should be taken that the bow does not "kick" or jump in crossing the strings; the tone must always be smooth and without a break.

- ① Détaché { UH forearm and wrist
Pt. use little bow (with wrist alone)
M-LH entire arm and wrist



The above should also be practised in triplets, thus:



②*WB legato ③WB legato

④martelé UH ⑤martelé UH ⑥spiccato M ⑦spiccato M

⑧martelé UH ⑨martelé UH
UH-LH UH-LH

⑩UH-LH ⑪piqué M

⑫M piqué ⑬spiccato M ⑭spiccato M
détaché Pt. M détaché Pt. M

⑮spiccato M ⑯spiccato M
détaché Pt. M détaché Pt. M

⑰sautillé M ⑱sautillé M

⑲sautillé M ⑳sautillé M

* See Note * to Ia, Part I

② détaché in UH-M-nut
UH-LH-M

③ spiccato M

④ M (piqué) etc.

No. X. Exercises Over Three Strings

In three- or four-part chords, the notes must always be played in successive pairs, holding the two upper notes. This makes the chord sound fuller and rounder.

Example

3-part chord is played and not or 4-part chord is played

① W B

② détaché UH-M-LH ③ martelé UH

④ piqué nut segue piqué M

⑤ spiccato M legato M

⑥ M *(piqué or flying stacc)

⑦ M

⑧ M

⑨ M

⑩ sautillé M

⑪ spiccato M UH-LH

* Depending upon the tempo; see Note to No. V, 2.

⑫ M (piqué)

⑬ sautillé M

⑭ legato WB

⑮ spiccato M
legato WB

⑯ spiccato M UH-LH

⑰ spiccato M UH-LH

⑱ * nut

* With wrist and arm. Draw the bow toward the bridge to counteract a tendency in this stroke to play over the fingerboard. The bow must be held firmly and the wrist kept flexible. A firm hold of the stick without consequent stiffening of the arm and wrist muscles can be acquired only after careful practice.

No. XI. Exercises Over All Four Strings

(See directions to No. X)

No. XI. Exercises Over All Four Strings
(See directions to No. X)

① WB
② détaché UH-M-LH
③ piqué nut
④ spiccato M
⑤ M
⑥ M

martelé UH
{Pique* or fly-
ing staccato}

V piqué M
legato M

* Depending upon the tempo; see Note to No.V, 2

The Merry Widow

7 V M

8 M

9 sautillé M

10 spicc. M

11 spicc. M

12 * nut

legato W B

legato W B

* See Note to No. X. 18

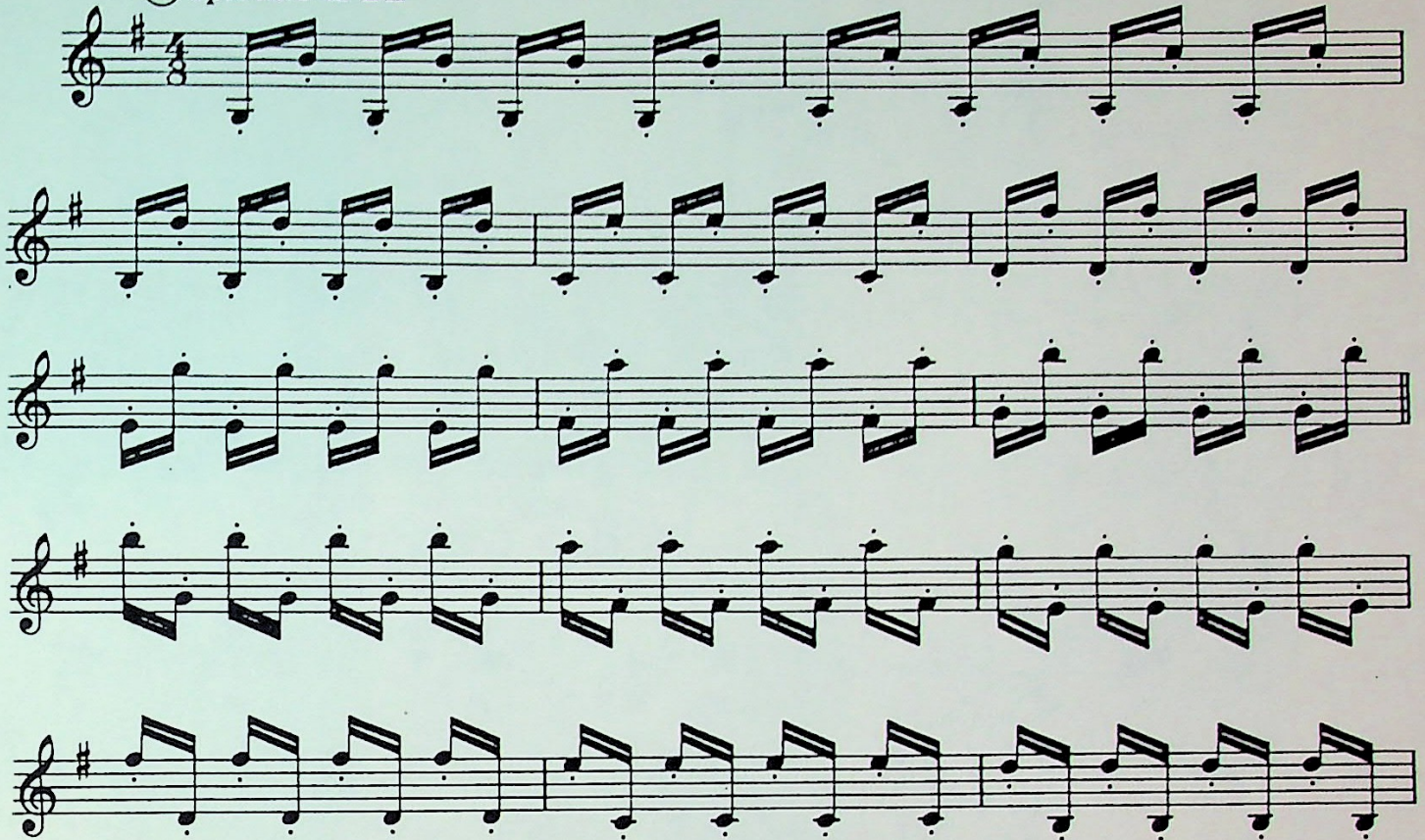
G. Schirmer, Inc.

* See Note to No. X, 18

No. XIIa. Exercises Skipping One String

Hold bow firmly and keep the wrist flexible

① spiccato in LH

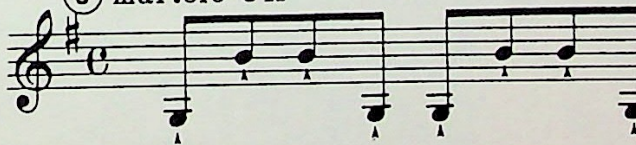


② martelé UH *



* The skip from one string to another is accomplished by raising or dropping the entire arm. The bow remains on the strings. Execute with forearm and wrist. Accent up-stroke especially. See No. II.

③ martelé UH



④ spiccato in LH



No. XIIb. Exercises Skipping One String (continued)

In the following exercises use the same chord-progression as in No. X

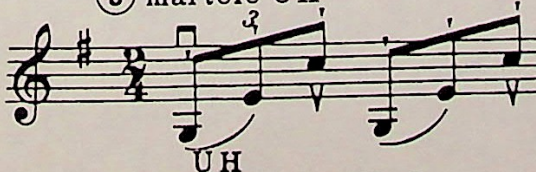
① spiccato in LH



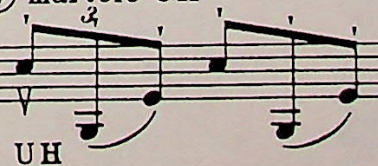
② spiccato in LH



③ martelé UH *



④ martelé UH



⑤ martelé UH



* See Note to No. XIIa, 2

No. XIIIa. Exercises Skipping Two Strings

Hold bow firmly and keep the wrist flexible

① spiccato in LH

② martelé (see Note to No. XIIa, 2)

③ spiccato in LH

④ martelé UH

No. XIIIb. Exercises Skipping Two Strings (continued)

In the following exercises use the same chord-progression as in No. XI

① spiccato in LH

② spiccato in LH

UH-LH

③ martelé UH

④ spiccato in LH

⑤ martelé UH

⑥ spiccato in LH

⑦ martelé UH

⑧ spiccato in LH

⑨ martelé UH

