

## WARMING UP – STRINGS

What do all high level athletes do before they go out to play a game? What do all great singers do before they go on stage? How about public speakers? What do they do before they give a speech? Actors and actresses? Dancers? They all warm up! Yes, they all know they will perform better, much better, if they prepare themselves mentally and physically.

As instrumental musicians, we also need a good warm up routine if we want to play our best. We'll be much more confident in a performance but we'll also save a lot of frustration when we're practicing if we have everything working well before we start!

Every performer comes up with their own warm up routine. That routine changes a lot over time as their skills improve. The funny thing is, the more skilled they become, usually the more warm up they do! That's because they've seen how much it has helped them to improve at their skill.

Here are some basic ideas for warming up for musicians:

1. Simply producing a good sound comes first. We want what's known as good tone quality. We work on that by starting out with the simplest way we can produce sound on our instrument. String players do this by practicing their bowing. The correct bow hold is essential to a good sound. Playing in front of a mirror or videoing yourself are great ways to see if your bow hold is good; If the bow is moving where it should and if everything looks relaxed and flowing. Play **string crossings** as your 1<sup>st</sup> warm up to make sure you are playing nice, smooth, relaxed long notes. Several seconds long. Try to make it feel relaxed and effortless. Make sure the notes are long, smooth, not sputtery or bouncy or changing pitch. Have your elbow in the right front to back spot so the bow stays straight across the strings and doesn't slide up the fingering board or down to the bridge. Listen for a big, open sound. We call these string crossings **Long Tones**.
2. Next, get the bow articulation working. The way we bow is how we create feeling in our music. Bouncy, angry, sad, nervous, strong. So it needs lots of practice on all the different techniques to improve and to gain coordination. Bowing patterns over scales, arpeggios are a great way to warm up. Don't go faster than you can play cleanly but push yourself to improve the cleanness of the bowing pattern and the speed over time. Some things to practice are hooked bowing (loure)- 2 on a bow, 3, 4 on a bow; down up up, etc.. Slurring (also 2, 3, 4, 8 on a bow as well as combinations of straight (detache) and slurred. There are many other bowings to practice which we'll continue to talk about and learn!
3. Practice things to warm up fingers. Scales, scale patterns and arpeggios are great. Memorize different ones. As you start to learn a new scale, know what the fingering patterns are on each string. That will greatly improve your ability to learn the scale. As you add new scales and arpeggios, your warm up time will increase because, if you don't continue to practice them, you will lose ones you had memorized. Always play these patterns at the speed you can play them well. As you start to learn them, don't go faster that you can actually think of the next note **AND THE NOTES ARE IN TUNE!!!** Sing the scales as you play so you can tell if you're paying out of tune. Otherwise, you'll learn sloppy scales which means you'll always play them sloppy! Remember from our **Practice!** Sheet; perfect practice makes perfect performance.

All this above can be done in 5-7 minutes for a pretty new player. Professionals might spend 1, 2 even 3 hours a day warming up! Keep doing these warmups every time you practice and you'll be amazed at how fast you improve as a player!