

This method is most appropriate in fast passages, for it minimizes the audible shifting of the same finger.

## VIOLA

*Viola (It.); Alto (Fr.); Bratsche (Ger.)*

The viola is the alto voice of the string orchestra and its playing technique is similar to that of the violin. There are some issues to keep in mind when writing for viola. The most obvious is the size of the instrument. It is quite a bit larger than the violin, sometimes as much as three to four inches, and this means that the hand must stretch more to get the intervals in tune. The tension on the left hand is also greater, especially in the higher positions. There are variations in the size of violas, and experts do not agree on the ideal size for the most beautiful, characteristically dark-hued tone quality. Today, violists pick their instrument in proportion to the size of their left hand.

GEORGE TAYLOR,  
VIOLA



Of all the bowed strings, the viola has been the slowest to emerge into the consciousness of composers. Even though trills, bowings, harmonics, arpeggios, double, triple, and quadruple stops are just as successful on the viola as on the violin, this instrument has been undeservedly neglected by many great masters of the past. There may be two principal reasons for this:

1. The eighteenth-century masters rarely wrote for four independent string voices.
2. For a long time, most violists were converted violinists and did not always enjoy the full trust of composers.

Although Bach, Stamitz, and Mozart wrote occasional solo or concertante works for the viola, Berlioz was the first to give it a truly independent voice in orchestral writing.

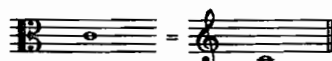
## Tuning, Range, and Fingering

EXAMPLE 3-28. Tuning



Viola music is usually notated in the alto clef, but to avoid ledger lines, the upper notes are sometimes written in treble clef.

EXAMPLE 3-29. Viola Notation



EXAMPLE 3-30. Range



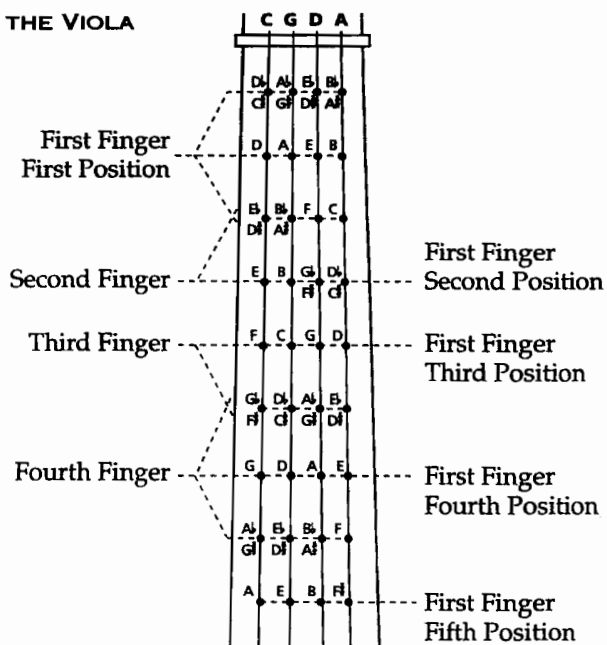
Let us observe some differences between the viola and the violin, which should help define its function in the orchestra.

1. The viola bow is slightly heavier than that for the violin.
2. The strings are thicker and more resistant to the bow, which necessitates a firmer stroke to produce a full sound. Lighter bowings are also possible but are more difficult to produce.
3. Harmonics are easier to play because the thicker strings produce them more reliably.

CD-ROM  
CD-1  
FINGERING/  
SHIFTING  
ON THE VIOLA

### Fingering

#### FINGERING ON THE VIOLA



The fingering system is identical to that of the violin, and the same multiple-stop patterns are available on the viola, but lie a fifth lower. Similarly, all the points already discussed for the violin about half positions, chromatic fingerings, pizzicato, and other coloristic effects (pp. 63–65) apply equally to the viola.

## Passages Performed Exclusively on a Single String

### The C String

The only string of the four viola strings not found on the violin, it is considered to have the most characteristic viola sound. It has been described by the nineteenth-century Belgian musicologist-composer François Gevaert as “somber, austere, and sometimes even forbidding.”

EXAMPLE 3-31. Hindemith, Sonata, Op. 11, No. 4, first movement, mm. 15–16

CD-1/TR. 61

### The G and D Strings

Emitting the least characteristic viola sound, these two strings may be called the “accompaniment strings” because on these the violist performs the many accompanying figures composers have traditionally given this instrument. But they can also be exploited for their dark quality, as in the following passage:

EXAMPLE 3-32. Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra, fourth movement, mm. 42–51

CD-1/TR. 62

### The A String

While not as brilliant as the E string on the violin, the A string is quite piercing and nasal in quality. It combines beautifully with woodwind instruments and, in some cases, doubles well with soft trumpets and trombones. Because of its carrying power, it has been used a great deal in solo viola passages.

CD-1/TR. 63

EXAMPLE 3-33. Hindemith, *Der Schwanendreher*, first movement, mm. 48–59

**Bewegt**

Vla. **mf** **f**

## Multiple Stops

Examples 3-34 through 3-36 give a partial list of double, triple, and quadruple stops possible on the viola. Multiple stops can be performed *divisi* by the viola section of the orchestra, similar to those written for violin.

EXAMPLE 3-34. Double Stops

**C and G strings**

Examples of double stops on the G and D strings, as well as on the D and A strings, can be similarly constructed.

### EXAMPLE 3-35. Triple Stops



Triple stops on the G, D, and A strings can be tabulated in the same manner as those on the C, G, and D strings. These triple stops are all played in first position.

### EXAMPLE 3-36. Quadruple Stops



### Representative Passages from the Literature

Here are some characteristic passages illustrating the sound of harmonics, pizzicato, double stops, and other coloristic effects on the viola. A passage that demonstrates the use of the viola as the bass of the string section occurs in Example 3-37; one that is typical of the many filler passages so common in the orchestral literature occurs in Example 3-38. An example that couples violins and violas in octaves is found in Example 3-39, and one that successfully couples violas and cellos in Example 3-40.

CD-1/TR. 64

EXAMPLE 3-37. Mendelssohn, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Overture, mm. 45-49

Fast

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Via.

45

48

div.

pizz.

arco

unis.

CD-1/TR. 65

EXAMPLE 3-38. Wagner, *Lohengrin*, Act III, "In fernen Land," mm. 12-19

Fast

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Via.

12

16

div.

sempre f

f

EXAMPLE 3-39. Berlioz, *Symphonie fantastique*, first movement, mm. 155–159

CD-1/TR. 66

**Allegro**

155

Vln. I

Vla.

EXAMPLE 3-40. Beethoven, *Symphony No. 5*, second movement, mm. 1–10

CD-1/TR. 67

**Andante**

Vla.

Vlc.

6

#### ■ ADDITIONAL PASSAGES FOR STUDY

Hindemith, *Der Schwanendreher*, first movement, mm. 1–11Stravinsky, *Le Sacre du printemps*, Part II, mm. 56–62Tchaikovsky, *Romeo and Juliet*, mm. 114–116

## The Solo Viola

The Baroque masters wrote many concertos for the viola, and some pre-Classical composers followed their lead. However, after that period, except for the *Sinfonia concertante* of Mozart for violin and viola (K. 364) and the solo part in Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, little significant solo viola music appeared until Wagner and Strauss in the late nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, however, the viola achieved an almost equal status with its relatives in the bowed string group. Works such as Debussy's *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp*, Bartók's and Walton's viola concertos, Hindemith's *Der Schwanendreher*, and Vaughan Williams's *Flos Campi* offer proof. Some wonderful examples of solo or concertante viola passages from the orchestral literature are the following:

EXAMPLE 3-41. Scriabin, *Poem of Ecstasy*, mm. 22–25

CD-1/TR. 68

**Slowly**

22

Vla. solo

*p espr.* *poco cresc.* *dim.*

CD-1/TR. 69

EXAMPLE 3-42. R. Strauss, *Don Quixote*, Variation 2, Vivace, mm. 1-19

1 Rather free

Vla. solo

*mf* 3

3 *pp*

7 lebhaft *espr.* *p* 3 3

11 *mf*

15 *p* 3 3 3 3 *pp*

CD-1/TR. 70

EXAMPLE 3-43. Stravinsky, *Le Sacre du printemps*, "Cercles mystérieux des adolescentes," at [91]

Andante con moto ( $\text{♩} = 60$ )

6 Vla. soli

*molto cant. ma non f*

*molto cant. ma non f*

*molto cant. ma non f*

## ADDITIONAL PASSAGES FOR STUDY

Berg, *Wozzeck*, Act I, Scene 1Berlioz, *Harold in Italy*, first movement, mm. 38-68Wagner, *Die Meistersinger*, Act II, Scenes 3 and 7, and Act III, Scene 5



## Viola d'amore (It.)

*Viole d'amour* (FR.); *Liebesgeige* (GER.)

The viola d'amore has never been a regular member of the orchestra. There is continuing interest in using its characteristic sound in solo and chamber music, as well as in soloistic passages in larger works such as Bach's *St. John Passion* ("Erwäge, erwäge," measures 1–5) and several of his cantatas, Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (Example 3-51), Massenet's *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, Pfitzner's *Palestrina*, and Loeffler's *La Mort de Tintagiles*. A viola d'amore accompanies the women's offstage chorus in Act II of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

EXAMPLE 3-44. Usual Tuning



The principle on which the sound of this instrument is based is sympathetic vibration. Besides the seven strings that are bowed and fingered, seven sympathetic strings, made of steel wire, lie just above the belly of the instrument and directly below each of the bowed strings. The sympathetic strings are generally tuned in unison with the bowed strings.

In order to allow the sound of these sympathetic strings to be heard freely in keys other than D major, alternative tunings have been used. The most common alteration is to lower the F# string to F, thus producing a D-minor tuning.

EXAMPLE 3-45. D-minor Tuning



Hindemith used two different tunings in his works for viola d'amore:

EXAMPLE 3-46. Tuning for Hindemith, *Sonata for Viola d'amore and Piano*, Op. 25, No. 4



EXAMPLE 3-47. Tuning for Hindemith, *Kammermusik No. 6 for Viola d'amore and Orchestra*, Op. 46, No. 1



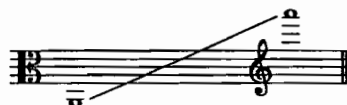
Vivaldi used the following tunings on six-string viola d'amores in his concertos:

EXAMPLE 3-48. Tuning for Vivaldi Concertos



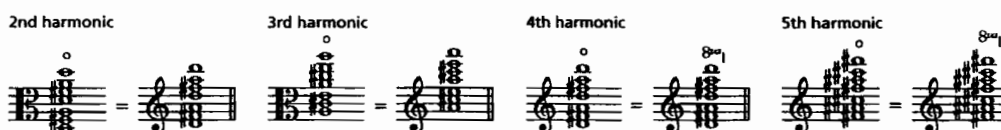
Viola d'amore music is written today in the alto and treble clefs, although in the past, music for the lower strings was often notated in the bass clef, sounding an octave higher.

EXAMPLE 3-49. Range



The instrument is slightly larger than the modern violin. Chords and arpeggios are easy to play, especially in keys related to the tuning used. Natural harmonics are also easily obtained up to the fifth harmonic. Here are the resulting harmonics in the usual D-major tuning:

EXAMPLE 3-50. Viola d'amore Harmonics



Artificial harmonics are also possible, the most successful being those produced by the "touch fourth" method. All other violin techniques of fingering, bowing, and obtaining coloristic effects can also be executed on the viola d'amore.

Two passages from the literature for viola d'amore are the following. In the first, the voice is not recorded on the CD:

CD-1/TR. 71

EXAMPLE 3-51. Meyerbeer, *Les Huguenots*, Act I, "Ah! quel spectacle," mm. 1-19

**Andante**

Viola d'amore

RAOUL

*Recit.*

Ah! quel spec - tacle en-chan - teur

**8**

Viola d'amore

RAOUL

*Recit.*

vient s'of - frir à mes yeux!

**15**

Viola d'amore

RAOUL

*Flageolettone.*

*riten.*

EXAMPLE 3-52. Hindemith, *Kleine Sonate*, second movement, mm. 14-37

CD-1/TR. 72

14 *Sehr langsam*

Viola d'amore

18

23

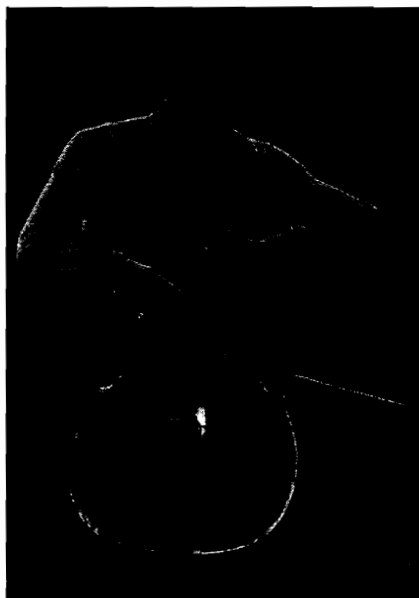
28

33

## VIOLONCELLO OR CELLO

*Violoncello* (It.); *Violoncelle* (Fr.); *Violoncell* (Ger.)

The cello is both the tenor and the bass of the string section. Whereas the violin and viola rest on the left shoulder and are supported by the chin, the cello, because of its larger size, is held between the knees while the player sits; additional support is provided by an adjustable peg that slides out of the bottom of the instrument and reaches to the floor. The neck of the cello points over the player's left shoulder.

ROBERT SYLVESTER,  
CELLO