

EXCERPT: FROM THE INTRODUCTION, SURE START, BOOK 1

WHY THE WHOLE STRING?

What does it mean to be musical? Certainly there are language parallels. When our language communicates, our speaking efforts continue. Quite simply: that is my musical goal. Edwin Gordon presents audiation as a foil to decoding. Decoding has nothing to do with sound. It really is playing by numbers. Partnered with fingerboard tapes it presents no aural learning, only visual. Michael Martin's JUMP RIGHT IN, Books and CDs, Pub., GIA, are the only audiation-based materials that I have found. Since I use the transposing aspects of JRI to move around the violin, I designed materials that begin by using the whole string. Musicians need an awareness of Gordon's Music Learning Theory. String players need to add Roland and Mutschler's THE TEACHING OF ACTION IN STRING PLAYING. SURE START materials are extensions and complements, not substitutes. I include whole-string actions in the initial stages of study because they open the range and color of each string; and, they also offer an effortless left-arm function so that students may then support their instruments with a maximum of freedom and stability. Both the violin and the viola demand balance and flexibility, supported by muscles well-toned and strengthened. Whole String actions facilitate our search for a comfortable, efficient posture. An added bonus for the teacher is that students then always view the whole string as accessible. Tapping (P.12,14) and Polishing (P.14) both prepare the left hand for this skill as well as for vibrato. Hand-walking and line-gliding extend this action.

ABOUT TEACHING

I see teaching as complex challenge. Experience shows that technical and musical aspects fall into place as the teacher understands the importance of this essential differentiation. Nurturing the student's development requires an awareness of each person's musical foundation as well as the individual's aptitude. An ideal pre-instrument, informal training, bringing children to the competencies of audiating and improvising, rarely occurs, leaving this essential development to the string teacher. While each piece in this book implies its own musical substrate, the tonal and rhythmic sections of the JUMP RIGHT IN books and CDs represent necessary levels of security for all early stage musicians.

Although SURE START presents a structured sequence, each piece will benefit from the skills required by the repertoire that follows, so that a cyclical approach is best. As the shaded areas in the Practice Record suggest, there are long-term aspects that require daily attention. Starting with SWAYING, however, I advise introducing each new piece at an initial lesson as a Coming Attraction, reviewing and assigning it at the following lesson, but quite often then, "resting" the piece as a second work is assigned.