

Nicolaus Laoureux
A Practical Method for Violin

Part I

REPORT OF PROFESSOR CÉSAR THOMSON

TO

M. F.-A. GEVAERT

DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL CONSERVATORY AT BRUSSELS

All Violin Methods hitherto published have the same fault: they proceed too rapidly, and do not explain with sufficient clearness.

Having examined the Method by M. Laoureux, I find that he has endeavored to correct these mistakes and has fully succeeded in doing so.

In his Preface, by means of a cleverly adapted series of movements, he teaches the pupil how to hold both bow and violin in a wholly correct manner. The first exercises with the bow are excellently graduated, and highly important to insure suppleness of the right arm and a fine quality of tone. For the left hand, M. Laoureux begins with the first finger and makes it practise a great variety of exercises; later he takes up the 2d, 3d and 4th fingers in the same way. Thus, while giving the pupil a thorough training, he avoids monotony in the exercises.

The same method is pursued throughout the course. New difficulties are always prepared by a series of practical exercises, and concluded by a Study containing a review of the technical points just practised. The various bowings are led up to by easy steps, and I am convinced that the pupil would understand the explanations even without the teacher's assistance.

Part II is devoted to the Positions. Beginners generally find them difficult to master, both on account of the different fingering and the changes of position. This difficulty, of which the other violin methods take no notice whatever, is forestalled by the author; from the first position he goes directly over to the third, and then comes back to the second, in which, lying as it does between the other two, the pupil soon feels at home. And in this way the author is enabled to in-

roduce immediately a good number of studies in shifting, and to emphasize the special use of each finger in manifold positions. In a word, the few pages devoted to these studies in shifting afford the pupil a complete view of the positions and the art of shifting. The progressive exercises, with similar fingerings in the first five positions, present the same advantages, and at the same time train the pupil's ear.

Double-stops receive special treatment in the Second Part. All the intervals are prepared, and the two tones are not played together until they have been exhaustively practised as melodic (broken) intervals. By this method the beginner's ear is not led astray, and he more readily acquires perfect precision of pitch.

This Violin Method is, in my opinion, the only one which so skilfully prepares the study of one of the chief difficulties of our instrument. Taken as a whole, this Method advances by very carefully considered gradations, and is, I think, the best adapted for its purpose of all the methods with which I am familiar, and calculated to do most excellent service in the cause of violin-teaching.

(Signed) CÉSAR THOMSON.

Supported by the opinion of such a renowned virtuoso and expert, I can only concur in the praise which he bestows on the author of this Violin Method, and approve and recommend the use of this extremely interesting work for instruction on the violin at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels.

(Signed) F.-A. GEVAERT.



Fig. I



Fig. II



Fig. III



Fig. IV



Fig. V



Fig. VI

INTRODUCTION

GENERAL ATTITUDE

HOW TO HOLD THE VIOLIN

Before allowing the pupil to set bow to string, he should be familiarized with every detail requisite for a correct attitude, and with a systematic regulation of all the movements.

In general, the correct posture of the violinist consists in throwing the weight of the body on to the left leg, which should form a straight line with the well-poised head. The right foot, slightly and easily advanced, maintains the equilibrium of the body.

Before setting the violin in position the pupil's left shoulder must be padded with a small cushion, so that he may not have to raise it, but can, on the contrary, draw it back a little while throwing out the chest. The above advice is of vital importance in the matter of the pupil's physical development. A chinrest is likewise indispensable.

We will now suppose the pupil to be standing easily with arms hanging down at either side.

First movement. The pupil takes the violin, with its back towards him, by the end of the neck next the scroll, between the first joint of the thumb and the third joint of the forefinger of the left hand.

Second movement. He raises the left forearm to the height of the shoulder.

Third movement. He throws the left elbow slightly forward, away from the body, so that the neck of the violin rests on the palm of the hand.

Fourth movement. He raises the violin with the help of the right hand, and sets it under the left side of the chin, without lowering his head or pressing on the tailpiece, so that the instrument is gripped between collarbone and jawbone; the position of the nose will be in line with the D- and A-strings.

The teacher will take care to press the palm of the

hand away from the neck of the violin, so that it may form a straight line with the forearm; and to turn it to the left, so that the fingers may come over the strings. (Fig. 1.)

This position enables the player to hold the violin by the weight of his head alone, and without effort.

The pupil must take care not to thrust his head forward, as this would tend rather to lower the violin than to keep it steadily horizontal.

The body of the violin should slant downward to the right, so that when the pupil sets the bow, at the nut, on the G-string, the down-bow will describe a horizontal line from nut to point. (Fig. 2.)

HOW TO HOLD THE BOW

Before taking up the bow, lay a pencil on a table, and pick it up with the thumb and middle finger. (Fig. 4.)

Now bring down the other three fingers gently upon the pencil.

The four fingers, at first curved naturally, are now advanced till nearly straight (the thumb retaining its position), with the forefinger further forward than the little finger; this throws the hand into a slightly oblique position, giving the precise shape for holding the bow properly. (Fig. 5.)

The teacher will hand the bow to the pupil so that the latter may grasp it as he held the pencil, between the thumb (which holds the stick at the nut) and middle finger. The pupil now brings the other fingers down upon the stick, without pressing too hard or stiffly; the forefinger is a trifle advanced, and he must take special care to keep the thumb slightly curved, so that it may not bend inward. (Fig. 6.)

The pupil has now to set his bow, at the nut, on the G-string. His right elbow should be close to his side; his wrist, gently curved upward, forms an

INTRODUCTION

almost straight line with his forearm. The entire breadth of the hair should rest on the string, and the bow must not be tilted sideways. (Fig. 3.)

The pupil is warned against that very common fault of beginners, the tilting of the stick toward the fingerboard with the hair *aslant* on the string. This position permits only a small portion of the hair to touch the string, and the slanting pull hurts the quality of the tone. It will readily be seen that a bow

set squarely on the string will bring all the hair into action, retain its balance, require less effort on the performer's part, and bring out a fuller, finer tone.

Our next move will be to get our first tone on the G-string. As we observed before, the pupil, in drawing his bow from nut to point, should describe a horizontal line, which is accomplished by letting the bow run deep in the waist (between the bouts), almost touching the edge of the violin.

Practical Method for the Violin

BY NICOLAS LAOUREUX

PART I

⌞ Down-bow, ∨ Up-bow

When the bow touches the string for the down-bow, at the nut, the wrist should be slightly raised, and gradually lowered as the bow travels towards the point; when the point is reached the wrist should be on a level with the forearm. (See Figs. III and II.)

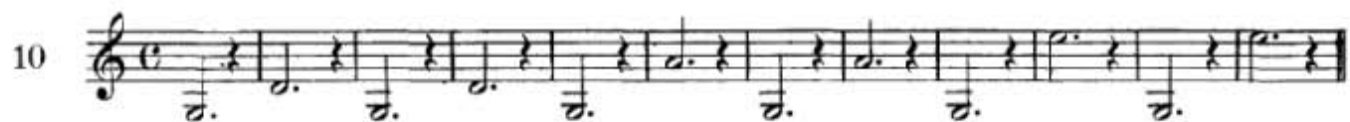
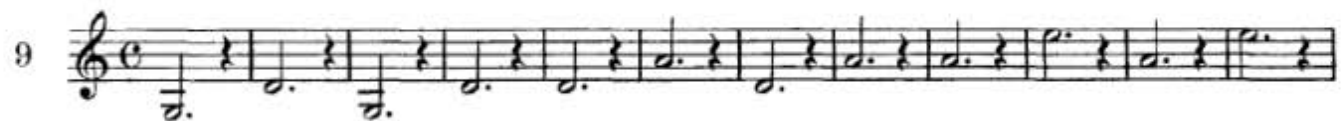
Exercise 1 consists of two staves of music. The first staff is marked with a treble clef and a common time signature 'C'. It begins with a down-bow stroke (⌞) and an up-bow stroke (∨). The notes are quarter notes on the G string (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4). The dynamic marking 'mf' is placed below the first note. The second staff is also marked with a treble clef and a common time signature 'C', with notes on the G string (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4). Both staves end with 'etc.'.

The teacher will have noticed during this exercise that the pupil tries to describe a horizontal line, but finds it difficult to draw his bow straight, that is to say, parallel to the bridge. It would be dangerous to allow the pupil to guide his bow unaided at the outset. The teacher should guide the bow by the screw, and lightly bear with his left hand upon the pupil's elbow, which will oblige the latter to play with his elbow close to his side, and to raise his wrist slightly on the up-bow.

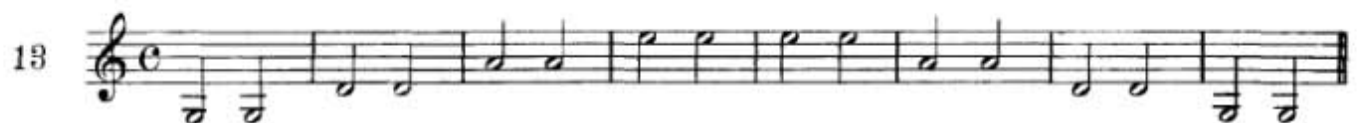
Little by little, as the pupil allows the bow to be guided without stiffness, he may be left to play unassisted.

In passing from *G* to *D*, the pupil, during the rest, should slightly lower wrist. (For the *D*, *A* and *E* strings the elbow must be close to the side.)

Exercises 3, 4, 5, and 6 are shown as four staves of music. Exercise 3 is a treble clef staff with a common time signature 'C', featuring a sequence of quarter notes on the G string (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4) with rests between them. Exercise 4 is a treble clef staff with a common time signature 'C', featuring a sequence of quarter notes on the G string (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4). Exercise 5 is a treble clef staff with a common time signature 'C', featuring a sequence of quarter notes on the G string (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4) with rests between them. Exercise 6 is a treble clef staff with a common time signature 'C', featuring a sequence of quarter notes on the G string (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4) with rests between them. Each staff ends with 'etc.'.



Lightly, not roughly, at the nut.





Lightly, with the whole length of the bow.



The eighth-note is to be played (1) from the middle to the point, slightly raising the wrist for the up-bow; reverse movement for the down-bow; (2) close to the nut, using very little bow, and solely with a wrist-movement, without moving the forearm.



A whole bow to the quarter-notes; from point to middle on the eighth-notes.



N.B. Fullness of tone depends upon its purity. Consequently, at the beginning, try to get a soft and pure tone; later, if you have flexibility, it will become large, and will remain beautiful.

The eighth notes, from nut to middle; a whole bow on the quarter-notes.

25 

In the first measure take the eighths at the point; in the second, at the nut; and so forth.

26 

For a long time the pupil will find it very difficult to restrain the speed of his bow on the long notes, especially when they are preceded by short ones. The following exercises will accustom him to use the bow according to the length of the note.

27 

1st measure: Eighths at the point. 2^d measure: Eighths at the nut.

28 

29 

Take the eighth-notes at the point.

30 

31 

32 

Take the eighth-notes at the nut.

33   

The Legato

In passing from one string to another adjacent string the pupil must lower or raise the hand by motion of the wrist only (lower it to reach a higher string, raise it for a lower string) without changing the elevation of the forearm.

36      

THE LEFT HAND

Hold the neck, close to the string-box, loosely between the first joint of the thumb and the third of the forefinger, with the fourth finger well to the left toward the neck of the instrument. Bring the fingers over to the strings with the thumb opposite the forefinger. The hand should be practically in a direct line with the forearm.

1 *mf*

2

3

4

5

6

Take care that when the pupil puts down the second finger he does not raise the first, which he should find in place when descending.

7

8

9

10

Keep the fingers down while ascending.

11

12

1/2 tone

Keep the fingers down on the strings while ascending, so as to get the same notes coming down.

13

14

THE INTERVALS

The Second

Keep the fingers down, while ascending.

1

2

3

4

Detailed description: Exercises 1-4 are in G major (one sharp) and common time. Each exercise consists of two staves. The first staff shows ascending intervals with fingerings: 0, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 4, 3. The second staff shows descending intervals with fingerings: 4, 3, 2, 3, 3, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 0, 1, 0. Exercise 1 includes slurs under the ascending and descending lines.

The beginning note should be accurately located, thus:

Detailed description: A single staff in G major and common time showing the first four notes of the scale with fingerings: 0, 1, 2, 3.

5

Detailed description: Exercise 5 is in G major and common time. The first staff shows ascending intervals with fingerings: 3, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 3, 0, 3, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 3, 0. The second staff shows descending intervals with fingerings: 3, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 3, 0, 0, 1, 0, 3, 4, 4, 0. The exercise ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

6

Scale of G major

7

8

9

The Third

1

2

The beginning note should be accurately located, thus:

2

Scale of D major

3

4