The Corporal Disposition of Viola Playing

D.M.A. Document

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Abstract

The Corporal Disposition of Viola Playing is a documentation of a somatic method for improving physical and mental function while playing the viola. This method is created by an Austrian violist (Prof. Wincor) who believes that the restricted movements and unnecessary tension that an instrumentalist has built up through daily practice can be released by restoring the freedom and expression to the body, which results not only in a better corporal disposition i.e. stage manner, but also in a more effortless execution of instrumental technique. Her theory is a combination of the eastern esoteric Tai-Chi and her own discovery of imitating selected ancient and modern statues, as well as paintings of religious and mythological subjects; integrating all small, detailed movements into a one big whole.
Dedicated to my parents,
for their patience and loving support over the years.
Acknowledgements

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Introduction

When I started my music education program at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, I was expecting a study that focused on a traditional rudimentary training of viola playing techniques and the development of musical style. Like every other violist in the beginning phases of technique development, executing detaché strokes parallel to the bridge, as well as maintaining the same length of each stroke at a fast tempo for the second Kreutzer etude, was already a challenge and a struggle for me. To my surprise, an overly concentrated focus on executing the technique of detaché did not produce a satisfactory sound. Instead, the sound was flat, and the physical motion was stiff. At that point, the viola teacher showed an image of “Sower,” by Van Gogh (see Figure 1), and she suggested that I play the detaché strokes by imagining the successive motion of sowing. After thinking about and imitating the motion of the sower, my quality of sound increased and my physical motion became freer and less fixed on technique.

In the following lessons, the development of body awareness was emphasized as important for the establishment of the fundamental technique of playing viola. In my opinion, when the physical movement of playing viola is combined with agility, exuberance, and especially an awareness of the whole body, it helps performers sink into the resonance of the composition he or she is playing. Galamian described the state of so-called “resonance of a composition,” or “best performance,” as one in which “the artist is moved by the music he plays, forgets about technique, and abandons himself with
improvisatory freedom to the inspiration of the moment. A performance of this nature is the only one which is capable of transmitting the essence of the music to the listener with the immediacy of a true re-creation.”¹ The awareness and quality of various physical movements related to the techniques of playing viola can be initiated and cultivated through different approaches, and can then be transferred into playing other musical instruments.

Learning Tai Chi and playing the viola seem to be two unrelated subjects. Yet, Tai Chi provides a great experience that increases flexibility and develops a smoothness in body movement through daily practice of its choreography. The deep abdominal breathing and the deliberate slow movement encountered in Tai Chi enhance one’s quality of movement and arouse an awareness in the entire body that is often ignored by people living in the modern world. The movement of a dancer can transmit messages of various characters, moods, and emotions. For musicians, movement is responsible for expressing their musical intention and interpretative ideas. Qualitative movement describes a controlled weightiness in physical motion, which is revolutionary for the sound production of a musician.

This document is a summary of knowledge about playing viola, combined with an introduction of a somatic method established by an Austrian violist, Professor Ilse Wincor, who integrates viola playing with Corporal Disposition and Tai Chi. Chapter Two includes information about the principal techniques of playing viola. Chapter Three introduces the somatic theory, “Corporal Disposition.” Chapter Four includes various

topics about Tai Chi. Chapter Five is the integration and application of Corporal Disposition and Tai Chi in viola playing.

Figure 1. Sower by Van Gogh

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1. The Principal Technique of Playing Viola

1.1 Posture

Since the performance of solo repertoire for the viola requires standing posture, being able to play or perform in a relatively relaxed way contributes greatly to both technical and artistic achievement for a violist. Compared to playing the smaller-sized violin, playing viola in a relaxed fashion requires special attention from the players to apply more weight for both hands and arms in order to bring the instrument into resonation. However, a certain amount of relaxation after the contraction of muscles is necessary, especially after the use of particular muscles for playing the instrument is extremely important. This results not only in better execution of technique but also in a more balanced, relaxed movement of the body.

Almost every viola player learns to hold the instrument with their feet standing parallel in the first lesson, but the standing posture develops over time, depending on the teachers’ suggestion and self-adjustment. Some teachers recommend that students stand with their feet approximately shoulder width apart with one foot slightly forward, the weight of the body resting either on the left or the right foot. Others suggest that students remain standing parallel with an equal distribution of weight on both feet. For decades, the so-called asymmetrical and symmetrical standing positions have been discussed and promoted by many treatises, performers and string pedagogues. For example, Suzuki recommended the asymmetrical playing position, while Flesch, Rolland and Havas
encouraged a symmetrical one; Galamian accepted either an asymmetrical or a symmetrical standing posture.³

In terms of chamber or orchestral playing, most teachers believe that the seated playing position resembles the standing position, although the center of gravity shifts from the feet to the pelvis. One recommendation for the seated position is often to put the right leg lower and to the rear so that a greater freedom of movement is created for the right arm.⁴ Moreover, sitting near the front of the chair with an upright body will certainly lead to a more flexible body movement than sitting toward the back of the chair with a slouched posture.

The issue of how to hold the viola depends mainly on the body structure of an individual person. It is recommended that players who have long arms hold the instrument toward the left side so that they do not have to twist their right wrist at the frog.⁵ Players who have short arms may hold the instrument closer to the front so that their right arm can reach the bow tip without difficulty.

There should not be strict rules for holding the instrument because every person has a different size and shape. Some players support the instrument with their shoulder and head weight, while others place the instrument between their collarbone and chin. However, players who have long necks should use a shoulder rest and chin rest of appropriate length to fill the entire space between the collarbone and chin. The purpose of using the shoulder and chin rest is to release any unnecessary tension caused by the shoulder and the left arm so that the body is able to move freely.

⁴ Gregory Barnes, ed. Playing and Teaching the Viola (Fairfax Va.: American String Association 2005), 92.
⁵ Ibid, 93.
Certain types of chin rests, such as Rosewood, Ebony, and Boxwood, and shoulder rests made of wood can change the sound of an instrument. Therefore, players who seek a better projection of sound should experiment with different combinations of chin rests and shoulder rests. For those who have short necks, an appropriate chin rest can help stabilize the instrument. In this case, the omission of the shoulder rest is warranted.

Many players have a tendency to hold their breath while playing difficult passages. As a result, their posture and movements suddenly become stiff. This is because the holding of the breath causes additional tension in the body which leads to an impediment of playing techniques. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for instrumental players to breathe normally. While breathing in and out in a normal rhythm, one can practice playing a scale coordinated with the breath, such as a down bow with an exhale and an up bow with an inhale, and vice versa. A down bow resembles the exhale of a breath, which is like the exhalation that allows a vocalist to relax and sing. Also, combining breathing with the character of a musical phrase helps emphasize the mood of music.

A balanced posture consists of many of the elements mentioned above; the lack of any one criterion will prevent a good posture. As Robert Jacoby points out, “a good stance is essential for maximum freedom of the right arm. The instrument should be held as far to the left as the length of right arm permits – that is, so that the bow can still be drawn at right-angles to the string to within a few inches of the tip.” Though the playing posture has been categorized into asymmetrical and symmetrical, players should be able to perform with a posture that is not “categorized.” This means the players can

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shift their lower body weight back and forth or from left to right when necessary so that the posture and movement flow constantly with the music and the players can adjust to any desired direction without strain.

Both asymmetrical and symmetrical postures require flexible, slightly bent knees, which allows for the transfer of weight and energy between the upper and lower body. Standing with slightly bent knees also helps create spontaneity and elasticity of movement without stiffness. A certain amount of movement, as Galamian indicates, “is natural and helps the coordination and the feeling for rhythm and accent. Thus, bodily motion should be limited but never completely suppressed.”  Although an ideal playing posture is established, one should never forget, as Galamian emphasizes, “the relationship of the instrument to the body, arms and hands has to be one that will allow a comfortable and efficient execution of all playing movements. This is, in the last analysis, the main criterion for the ‘rightness’ of any bodily attitude or any muscular action in connection with violin playing.”

1.2 The Left Hand

In general, the technique of the left hand in terms of movement can be categorized into four types. The first type is the vertical movement of the fingers which drop onto and lift up from the strings. The second type is the horizontal movement of the fingers, which involves the change of positions through shifting. When a finger glides only a half step up or down without moving the thumb and the frame of the hand, it is considered a half shift. When a finger glides from a lower to a higher position or vice versa moving

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7 Galamian, 13.
8 Ibid., 12.
with the thumb and the frame of the hand at the same time, it is considered a complete shift. The third type is a combination of vertical and horizontal movement. This type of movement primarily involves the crossing of the strings without completely releasing the pressure of the fingers. The execution of the double stops, such as a sequence of sixths and fourths, is considered this type of movement. The fourth type is the movement of vibrato.

Since the viola is larger and the strings are thicker, the instrument responds and speaks more slowly and requires a different technical approach than the violin. For the left hand, the differences between violin and viola are the longer and wider fingerboard and the thicker strings. This requires the extension of the hand by bending the wrist inward and moving the thumb, as well as applying more pressure from the fingers so that the fingertips can reach their places properly. Because of the larger fingerboard on the viola, the left hand must constantly adjust with the fingers, wrist, and left elbow, which is not a serious issue on the violin because of its smaller size.

To establish an ideal left hand shape, violists can picture the successive motion of taking off a hat by turning the left hand and spreading the fingers into a natural position with the forearm (Figure 2).
To deal with the wider distances between fingers on the longer fingerboard of the viola, it is extremely important to maintain a balance for expanding the left hand toward the fourth finger. The following exercise (Figure 3) is recommended to achieve that balance:

![Figure 2. Left Hand](image)

![Figure 3. Sevcik: School of Technique (adapted by Lionel Tertis) Op. 1. Part 1](image)
In group one, the wrist is held in an approximately straight alignment with the hand and forearm in a natural rest position as indicated in Figure 2. In group two, the hand should start to expand so that the third finger can reach its place with ease and without hesitation. Moreover, the fourth finger is held close to the string as if it is ready to drop. In group three, the fourth finger can find its place effortlessly, provided that the wrist bends slightly inwards and the thumb moves slightly towards the fourth finger.

The slight inward bending of the wrist and flexible movement in the thumb are two indispensable factors that contribute not only to the straight alignment of the left hand, wrist and forearm, but also to the release of tension. This is because a straight alignment of the hand resembles its natural rest position. Of all the fingers, the fourth finger is considered the weakest. Therefore, in order to maintain a good left hand shape, it is helpful to remember that it is less strenuous for the hand to stretch back with the first finger than to stretch forward to reach the fourth finger. Violists can think of the fourth finger as the starting point of the left hand.

As mentioned before, playing viola requires more weight and pressure from the hand and fingers in order for the fingertips to reach their places properly. Yet, the overuse of weight may cause extra tension which leads to injury and cramps if the students do not relax their finger muscles after using them. Therefore, an immediate release of finger pressure is required after percussively dropping them. This action can be best learned by practicing the ninth Kreutzer etude (Figure 4) while treating each note as if it were a “harmonic.” Besides, additional finger dropping together practice will help enhance the positioning of the fingers and the hand shape.9

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9 Catharine Carroll, “Viola Lesson” (The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 2005)
One of the most common problems for shifting is releasing the string and becoming airborne, because this invites guesswork and makes the shift insecure. Therefore, the left hand should always keep light contact with the string because it provides aural and tactile clues which provide necessary assistance in executing the shift. Also, players should regard a shift not only as a connection between the two fingers, but also between the two hand positions. This concept helps players maintain their hand frame and finger dexterity once they arrive in new positions.

A descending shift is usually more difficult than an ascending one, since adduction, movement toward the body is easier than abduction, movement away from the body. Therefore, being able to think a step ahead to anticipate the proper tonality as well as the hand position and interval will definitely contribute to a more effortless shift.

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Once the desired pitch for the new position is in mind, using both tactile and visual senses for orientation is the key to a successful shift.

Among the most difficult aspects of playing a stringed instrument is the development of good intonation. Problems of intonation can be either physical or perceptual. Physical problems can be solved by overcoming technical problems, such as building a frame for the left hand or using a guide finger to give a sense of security for a shift. Perceptual problems typically relate to listening. Poor intonation can be caused by a player who does not pay attention to what he plays or does not know what to listen for. There is a difference between produced and perceived tones, so the training of fine intonation requires the integration of both; the tone a player produces should match the tone a player hears in advance before he or she plays.

To improve the accuracy and intonation for the left hand, Robert Gerle specifies a new way of thinking about the left hand technique which consists of a “Gridiron of the fingerboard” and a “Finger Pattern” system.\(^\text{11}\) He indicates that “every note has its own permanent and pre-arranged slot, giving the player a mental guidance system in which not only the target of the fingers, but the relative distances and the relationships between the fingers can be instantly and positively identified and visualized. The classification and condensation of all note and finger combinations into a few basic and recurring finger patterns will enable you to think and play in large units, groups of notes, instead of single note.”\(^\text{12}\)

Various motifs, themes, and melodic passages found in repertoire are made up of different patterns. Therefore, the idea that one pattern may be followed by several

\(^{12}\) Ibid, 26.
different patterns to build a longer passage will allow players to divide a passage into shorter units so that it can be more easily memorized and played in tune.

Regarding the technique of vibrato, string pedagogues have categorized vibrato into three different types: hand (wrist), arm and finger. The developed vibrato may be focused on the arm, the finger, or the hand (wrist), depending on the performer’s preference; but the performer should know that each vibrato type will normally bring about an interplay of the neighboring muscles for the motion of any given type, which will naturally involve the motion of the other two types.

Vibrato requires flexibility in the finger joints, especially in the first joint nearest the tip, so that the fingertip can roll on the string as wide and fast as possible. Also, lighter finger pressure will contribute to freer finger joints, which creates wider vibrato amplitudes. Practicing vibrato with a balanced body, especially with the appropriate weight of the bow arm, will contribute to the execution of good vibrato as well.

Since each type of vibrato produces different kinds of warmth and richness, a performer should be able to use all three kinds of vibrato so that he or she can combine the possibilities to create different color and expressiveness in the music.

The absolute control of vibrato has to do not only with the left hand and arm, but also with the balance of the entire body. As Fischbach mentions in his article “The Birth of a Vibrato,” “the issue of balance in vibrato does not begin and end with the left arm. Body, instrument, and bow function as a fluid, dynamic system … The instrument must be supported entirely by the body, which should feel as though it is floating under the instrument.” This balance will definitely help players successfully control their vibrato.

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13 Galamian, 37.
Many students feel tight when they use vibrato. To solve this problem, students need to make sure that the thumb is relaxed and flexible and the finger pressure is light. The inward or outward bending of the wrist can also cause problems when playing vibrato. If a player can keep his or her left wrist relaxed and straight, it will make the vibrato free and effortless.

Due to the different types of vibrato and personal preference when using vibrato, the proper speed of vibrato is debatable. The vibrato speed on the violin is typically fast. Generally, the speed of vibrato on the viola, due to the larger size of the instrument, is wider and slower. According to studies in the psychology of music by Carl E. Seashore, the average rate of the vibrato in artistic violin playing is approximately seven cycles per second, which is the same as the rate of the vibrato in artistic singing. The average vibrato rate on the viola is 6.10 vibrato cycles per second.\(^\text{15}\)

Since the first half of the twentieth century, vibrato has become an essential part of the violin and viola technique.\(^\text{16}\) To avoid overusing vibrato as a mechanical technique, Newman’s words that the vibrato “must have originated in an effort to parallel or imitate the vibrant quality in the artistic human voice, which has always been the ultimate model for musical instruments and strings in particular,”\(^\text{17}\) illustrates the importance of using vibrato to resemble the human voice.

\(^{15}\) Carl E. Seashore, ed. *The Vibrato* (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1967), 287.
1.3 The Right Hand

The viola produces a darker, warmer, and richer tone quality similar to that of the alto voice, as opposed to the light, flute-like, and brilliant soprano voice tone quality of the violin. The instruments are different in size, yet they share similarities in their playing techniques, such as posture, basic diatonic and chromatic fingerings, and bow-grip with its related bow strokes. There are subtle differences in the technical aspects of these two instruments, but the concepts are transferable. Since the viola is larger and the strings are thicker, the instrument responds and speaks more slowly and requires a different technical approach from the right hand, such as a stronger and more controlled bow hand.

A good viola bow hand should be constructed with the thumb and the middle finger as a ring or a circle in which the thumb is slightly bent and the tip of the thumb contacts the first finger joint of the middle finger.\textsuperscript{18} The ring will be opened slightly so that the bow stick can fit into the space in between. Furthermore, the tip of the thumb reaches the bow stick at the spot between the frog and the pad, while the middle finger embraces the stick between its two joints. The ring finger is placed approximately over the center of the frog where the round point is marked.\textsuperscript{19} The pinky is placed close to the ring finger on top of the stick with its joints curved.\textsuperscript{20} The index finger contacts the bow stick slightly away from the middle finger and is placed on the wrap (winding) close to the thumb pad with its first finger joint.\textsuperscript{21} I believe the distance between each of the four fingers on the bow stick should represent the most relaxed and natural spaces, as if the

\textsuperscript{18} Galamian, 45.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 46.  
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 46.  
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 46.
hand was woven out of the wrist and stayed at its rest position. Nevertheless, the bow hand for the viola should cover a greater expanse than the one for the violin because viola playing simply requires more weight and pressure.

In order to have better bow control, an understanding of the function for each finger is extremely important. The index finger plays a significant role for adding pressure, creating accent and setting the bow. The middle finger and the ring finger are responsible for maintaining the ring formation and serving as a fulcrum transferring and compensating weight while bowing. The ring finger is especially active as a cushion while executing bow changes at the frog. The pinky functions as a balance and directional finger. To feel how each finger balances the bow, students can practice the following exercise: while playing a down bow on the A string and after reaching the balance point, students can first lift the pinky, followed by lifting the ring finger at the middle of the bow; when the campre point or two thirds of the bow is reached, the middle finger is lifted. Reverse the entire procedure while playing an up bow.²²

There are two fundamental movements regarding the bow hand, namely horizontal and vertical movements. Specifically, adding downward weight to create accent through vertical movement. It is relatively easy for students to visualize as well as to execute the horizontal movements with the bow hand and bow arm. Yet, in terms of vertical adjustment, especially of the weight, most students are confused. They usually equate weight with a vertical pressure, which is the reason why students sometimes over-press the bow without using natural arm weight, resulting in a cramped bow hand.

Feeling the natural arm weight and then transferring the arm weight to the bow stick and the strings requires a body awareness for the entire right arm that is as loose as

²² Catharine Carroll, “Viola Lesson” (The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 2005)
possible - as if the arm is hanging at its rest position, none of its muscles contracted. Once the natural arm weight is discovered by a student, the teacher can help lift the student’s right arm to the position where the bow is held, while maintaining the same feeling for the weight. This natural arm weight is the weight which will be transferred into the bow stick and the instrument through a flexible bow hold.

Among all the technical aspects of the right hand, a long legato straight bow that remains permanently parallel to the bridge is considered the most important one and serves as the basis of all bowing.\textsuperscript{23} Maintaining a right angle to the bridge with the bow will create the most effective resistance against the string, resulting tone production that is achieved without difficulties. Yet, according the natural disposition of the body movements, it is impossible to execute a long sustained straight bow stroke with the right arm, since the swing of the right arm results in a pendulum movement. Therefore, adjustments, compensations and coordination of the parts in the right arm are required to create a straight alignment with the bow. A coordinated interplay of the right arm with circular movements, as illustrated in Figure 5, is the key to a straight bow stroke.

\textsuperscript{23} Galamian, 51.
1. The natural course of the pendulum movement (convex course).

2. The opposed, counter course of the pendulum movement (concave course).

3. The result of compensation of 1 and 2 (straight line).

**Figure 5. Straight Bow**

The opposed, counter course of the pendulum movement which the bow arm follows will lead to a correct bow arm movement. Moreover, in order to understand the successive physical interplay of the bow arm, students should be aware that the down bow stroke from the frog to the balance point is executed by the upper arm, while the balance point to the campre point the stroke is executed by the forearm. After passing two thirds of the bow, the forearm starts to stretch with the elbow, and the upper arm pushes forward. Also, the pronation with the fingers, wrist and forearm for the down bow and the supination for the up bow will help balance the bow and lead to an even sound quality.
Regarding the changing of the bow, Robert Gerle points out that “a seamless, unnoticeable bow-change, like a singer’s breath-control, is essential for an uninterrupted, beautiful singing tone, giving the impression of an unlimited bow-supply and an unending bow.”

In order to not interrupt the phrases, he suggests that:

The only way to avoid this gap is to maintain the continuous motion of the bow, even if at a reduced speed. This can be done by moving it in a ‘loop’ with a flat elliptical path at the moment of bow-change … While guiding the bow in this loop, the actions of the various parts of the arm are staggered: they changed direction consecutively, one slightly after the other. This principle of de-synchronization is the same as in walking: one leg moves forward while the other is already preparing the next step in continuous, overlapping motion.

This elliptical path suggested by Gerle, which resembles the figure of Arabic number eight, supplements the opposed, counter course of the pendulum movement; this and a bow hand that remains relaxed following the counter course of pendulum serve as excellent tools to an organic legato bow stroke.

In order to achieve the least strenuous, yet most economical and effortless playing, students are strongly recommended to analyze the varieties of physical movements for the bow arm so that unnecessary or excess amounts of motion can be reduced to a minimum. As Galamian indicates, the motions of the fingers can be categorized into horizontal, vertical, horizontal pivoting, vertical pivoting, and lengthwise-axis rotation. The motions of the hand in the wrist joint can be specified as vertical and horizontal movement, and a combination of both which, allows the hand to move in any direction. The motions of the forearm include open-close motion and forearm rotation (pronation and supination). The motions of the upper arm involve vertical, horizontal, and a

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25 Ibid., 32.
combination of both movements which can result in all varieties of oblique and curved motions.\textsuperscript{26}

For advanced players, a mastery of various styles of bow strokes without executing appropriate physical movements of the bow arm will lead to an improper execution of body motions and will result in injuries. Therefore, a specific stroke executed with the adequate physical movement is essentially important. For example, Galamian claims “it is a good idea to keep in mind that the finger motions are used for the smaller, more delicate adjustments and that the hand and arm come into play as the broader and less sensitive effects are desired.”\textsuperscript{27} Yet, as different types of movements and their combinations occur, the technical difficulties and their complications increase. Therefore, not only being able to execute a sequence of the kindred movements, but also being able to deal with the mixture of different types of movements is of great importance.

In terms of tone production, many string pedagogues have pointed out three principle factors: pressure, speed, and sounding point.\textsuperscript{28} These three factors not only play a significant role in the production of sound but also in dynamics and the change of various sound colors. The bow speed, pressure and sounding point should never be regarded as individual factors. Instead, they must be viewed in a close relationship with a simultaneous function. For example, to increase the volume without changing the bow speed, the bow has to come near the bridge or add more pressure. On the contrary, to decrease the volume without changing the sounding point, the bow has to slow down its

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{26} Galamian, 48.
\item\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 48.
\item\textsuperscript{28} Galamian, 55.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
speed or reduce the pressure. The interrelationship of these three factors can be practiced to enrich the sound color and to add depth to players’ interpretation.

1.4 The Relationship between the Left Hand and the Right Hand

The technical demands for playing the viola require extremely different, skillful and delicate physical movements from each hand. Among all the physical movements that are executed by either left hand or right hand at any moment, being able to carry out two or more thoroughly different physical movements simultaneously is one of the most challenging requirements for mastering the instrument. The natural tendency for both hands and arms is to move together. For example, strenuous exertion in one arm usually leads to a sympathetic reaction from the other. Therefore, the development of the ability to mentally direct and to physically execute the desired playing movements of the left and right hands, arms, and fingers without interfering with the opposite side is of great importance.

Since the essential physical movements of the left and right arms while playing viola are diametrically opposed, disturbances such as running out of bow, accidentally touching the neighboring strings, and undesired tone production often occur when the left hand is under particular pressure. At the same time, squeezing the neck with the thumb and ineffective execution of techniques, such as trills, vibrato, and shifting are usually caused by a left hand that is not relaxed and strained. This is undoubtedly a consequence of using too much pressure in the right hand. Therefore, one must develop mental control over the various degrees of physical activity for the left and right hands so that each side of the body can balance properly and will not be interrupted by the other. The
exercise of playing harmonics in the left hand with a regular right hand execution, mentioned in section 1.2, is one way to train the independence of the right- and left-handed physical activities.

Most students spend a great amount of time practicing the left hand techniques, yet the results are often disappointing. The techniques of the left hand, such as vibrato, shifting, and trills, are highly delicate physical movements and require a focused mental command to detail to carry out. The technique of trills can be executed more effortlessly if one can initiate the trill action by accenting the first note of the trill with the right hand. Also, the entire execution of the trills will be more relaxed if less pressure is applied to the fingered note so that the trill finger can drop and lift without strain. Regarding vibrato, most students have difficulty vibrating freely with their fingers as well as vibrating immediately from the beginning of the note. If this is the case, a percussive action from the knuckle of the left hand can usually initiate the vibrato motion immediately. In addition, an accent produced by the right hand and an intense bowing with the full arm weight will help carry out the vibrato motion more freely and with less strain. This principle of an impulse coming from one hand to help the other hand is applicable for shifting as well.

Although the hands are in constant diametrical opposition while playing viola, a parallel relationship between both hands and arms is apparent in Figure 6.
Figure 6 is an exercise originally designed by Williams Primrose to practice crossing strings. As one can see, the exercise starts with a down bow on the lower C string, going gradually upward together with the left hand to the A string, and then returning with an up bow to the C string. The bow arm and the bow stick change the angle for reaching the neighboring string while the elbow of the left hand guides the arm movement in the same way for placing the fingers comfortably. This constant parallel movement between both hands and arms reveals the pedagogical idea that only a good balance and an appropriate correspondence between both sides of the body will result in effortless instrumental playing. Moreover, one should never focus only on one hand and ignore the other, because the ultimate state of an instrumental playing involves multiple part of the entire human body.

2. Corporal Disposition: A Method of Total Body Equilibrium

Corporal Disposition is created by an Austrian violist, Prof. Ilse Wincor. The original term is “Körperliche Disposition” in German. “Körperliche” means relating to the body, while “Disposition” means a person’s character, specifically in this case, the musician’s stage presence. Prof. Wincor emphasizes the importance of body balance and the quality of movement during performance, both of which can be enhanced through an understanding of natural bodily equilibrium as expressed in art masterpieces. I first learned this concept from Prof. Wincor from her lessons at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, Austria. Prof. Wincor introduced Corporal Disposition to students by asking them to act out difficult technical movements without the instrument, by noticing balance in natural movement of a swing or motion similar to the demanding technique. After finding this relaxed and spontaneous motion, the performer can then practice the instrument with ease. In addition, Prof. Wincor asks students to be mindful of their natural posture and balance during ordinary daily activities, so that a proper posture would become second-nature during performances.

By applying these concepts to viola practice, the performer can play with distinguished composure while reducing the possibility of tension and injury. Once the performer finds the perfect balance in movement, he or she can then project the sound of the instrument without forced movement, and add expressive quality to the music.
2.1 Approaches for Training the Corporal Disposition

Not many musicians include body movement as an expressive, musical device to intensify sound, rhythm, tempo, ensemble communication and musical interpretation. Performances with technical perfection, but lacking a bodily response to the music often result in a bored and disappointed audience. A good musician should present not only technical perfection, but also a heartfelt musical performance delivery with inspiring body gestures related to the character, dynamics, phrase, tone, and style of the music he or she is performing. Moreover, effective movement and aesthetic gestures can help players enrich and enhance tone quality, temperament, and stylistic character, as well as prevent injury.

Regularly, a certain amount of muscular tension is required for both hands to execute physical movements. However, muscular tension that is not followed by relaxation or practicing while forcing the muscles to achieve technique goals without taking tension-release into account can lead to tendinitis or muscle aches. In fact, the overuse of muscles is often ignored by most students, and muscular tension is built up unconsciously little by little through daily practice. Muscular tension not only affects the dexterity of the hands but also results in performance anxiety which sacrifices the performance of the music he or she is playing.\textsuperscript{30}

The training of the Corporal Disposition helps performers apprehend the function of the parts of the body and to consciously regard the body parts as one entity so that the whole body becomes integrated with the instrument to intensify the sound as well as to enrich the craft of expression. After all, musicians serve as creative intermediates that

bring music into life; if they could gesture a musical idea they corporally grasp, their
interpretation may be more easily appreciated and could be moving to the audience.

In my opinion, the conceptual theory of the Corporal Disposition can aid
performers to achieve these goals:

- Balanced body and playing posture
- Better stage manner and body presence
- Extension of resonance
- Playing without muscular tension and muscle ache
- Intensification of sound
- Further development of the awareness of the ability to control various
  muscle so that the quality of movement can be differentiated
- Ability to find a musically adequate expression of the composition through
  various dispositions

2.2 Balanced Posture as the Starting Position

The evolved human body is constructed in such a way that allows for a variety of
movements, as well as a combination of movements from one kind to another.
Nevertheless, professional musicians are trained to execute the most delicate physical
movements and are so concerned with performance outcomes such that the emphasis on
the techniques of the hands has become an extraordinarily important topic without taking
the entire body into account. Most great virtuosos exhibit exceptionally balanced,
flowing movement associated with the music they are playing; they seem to find
equilibrium between their body and limbs coupled with their performance. Therefore, one
should never regard the movement of the limbs as detached from the body; rather, the movement of the limbs is produced and supported by the body. Good posture and a well coordinated body will definitely lead to a better execution of the movement of the extremities.

Unlike a quadruped, the human body is constructed to move with two legs, and the center of gravity is elevated approximately to the level of the pelvis. Since the center of gravity is elevated and therefore more unstable, the posture of a human body is in a constant adjustment searching for balance. Posture always involves movement, so an ideal posture in a static sense is therefore non-existent. Nevertheless, maintaining an upright posture is usually considered ideal in civilized human society, which is totally against the natural curvature of the spine and often results in corporal discomfort and incorrect posture.³¹

In order to maintain the natural shape of the spine, Susan Kempter suggests observing and learning from babies because:

Babies instinctively understand how to balance as they move through the stages of sitting, crawling, standing and walking. Humans generally lose this ability as they age and fall into slumped, inefficient postures. This may be due to the enormous task of maintaining the upright posture, misconceptions about proper posture, and/or the adaptation of a sedentary lifestyle. Most people vacillate between two postures, the ‘strain and the slouch,’ in an attempt to win the fight against gravity. The former posture has too much tension, the latter not enough. Both postures are inefficient.³²

In general, the starting position for a balanced posture is shown in Figure 7. This posture can be also associated with instrumental playing.

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Important components for an open and reactive corporal disposition include:

- **Axis:** The body revolves or rotates around an imaginary line that goes vertically from the top to the bottom through the body. Prof. Ilse Wincor advocates that one should not confuse the imaginary axis with the spine, however; the axis should be regarded as an entity extending through the body, similar to how the axis of the earth extends to the universe. No matter how the angle of the posture, i.e. the

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33 The use of Figure granted with the permission of Prof. Ilse Wincor
tilting of the torso, or the center of gravity in the body varies, the axis is always maintained in relation to the direction of the torso. With the idea of axis as a basis, all possible extremity movement will be better correlated. In order to establish an imaginary axis, one can lean his or her forehead against a wall while letting the collarbones and the hips rotate forward around the axis, in both clockwise and counter-clockwise directions, similar to the motions of a revolving door. Once the feeling for the axis is established, one can maintain a small rotation around the axis in various postures.

- **Elbowroom/Reach:** Elbowroom is the extent of how far the extremities can reach their objects with a balanced body. The center of gravity in the body should be permanently maintained while shifting the weight so that players have unlimited freedom to move inside the elbowroom. The elbowroom is a concept that includes the feeling of dimension, space, and effortlessness. Players who execute their physical movement with the extremities too close together will encounter postural stress. Therefore, imaginary elbowroom with greater dimensions would help players enhance their freedom for physical movement.

- **Elasticity:** Elasticity in posture refers to flexibility in the bending of the knees, in the nodding of the neck, and looseness of the joints. When the body is well elasticized, the weight of the head and the rib cage is transferred downwards to the spinal column and then through the pelvis into the legs. Under this circumstance, through an awareness of the weight placement on the lower body, the balance for the entire body is easily established. In order to experience
elasticity in one’s posture, one can exercise on a trampoline, wobble board, or an anti-burst exercise ball.

2.3 The Interrelation of Weight and Counterweight

As previously explained, because of the elevated center of gravity, a standing posture involves a constant unconscious weight-compensation in the trunk in order to prevent the human body from falling. The sense of an elevated gravity center in a standing posture becomes more obvious when one tries to stand still on a bus or subway without holding on, balancing the body while the vehicle is in motion. Under this circumstance, one should not fight against the influence exerted by the counteraction; instead, lowering one’s center of gravity as well as allowing one’s body to move with the force, resembling a roly-poly toy (wobbly man), will help stabilize the standing posture.

According to Ekard Lind in *Exercises for Musicians*, muscles in the entire musculature, like the spine, are intended for movement. He points out that “some of the muscles in the body are meant more for movement, while others are more suited to the maintenance of position. Consider for example the contrasting functions of the biceps and the neck musculature … we can speak of muscles which are (mainly) oriented to ‘moving,’ and others which are (mainly) oriented to ‘holding.’”\(^{34}\) These two types of musculature are complementary to each other and alternate between tension and relaxation. For example, in a forced position such as a crooked one, the holding musculature is reinforced by the moving musculature so that the postural support is still

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\(^{34}\) Lind, 12.
maintained; on the contrary, in a position that uses no force, the holding musculature serves as a foundation that supports the moving musculature.

As a matter of fact, there are various effectively operative weights and counterweights inside and around the body that one can experience as well as to enhance the sense for balancing. For example, to experience counterweight in the vertical direction, the most noticeable condition is when one stands still inside an elevator while the elevator lifts up and the human body is pulled down by gravity at the same time, in one’s own weight and counterweight. However, if the elasticity in the body, i.e. the looseness of joints, is not maintained, then the counterweight is less perceptible.

In terms of counterweight in a horizontal sense, one can refer to an exercise involving a protagonist and an antagonist in which two partners stand, facing each other, with feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent; one foot forward and the other is at a forty-five degree angle. After setting the standing position, both protagonist and antagonist raise one hand to chest-level and contact each other with the outer edge of the wrist. The protagonist starts giving weight to the partner by pressing the outer edge of the wrist of the antagonist, as shown in Figure 8.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{35} Ronnie Robinson, \textit{Total Tai Chi} (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2009), 110.
The “give” and “take,” which refer to weight (positive) and counterweight (negative), alternate between protagonist and antagonist with the weight transfer back and forth in a horizontal circulation. This exercise can also be practiced incorporating the ideas of “the starting position for a balanced posture” (axis, elbowroom, and elasticity) to regenerate body consciousness.

According to Kempter, “muscles do not make a decision about the ‘best’ way to move, they simply try to satisfy the demands made on them. From this point of view, it is clear that it is the cognitive command that determines what the muscles do – for better or worse.” 36 This explains why many athletes and musicians have physical discomfort due to long term use of particular muscles through ambition and force. In general, developing physiologically oriented posture and movement will contribute to a more effective and healthy life.

36 Kempter, 80.
Postural stress and muscular tension are often caused by focusing continuously on each single physical movement, as well as by ignoring the consideration of each movement as part of the coordination within the whole body. Therefore, Lind suggested that “it is particularly important for instrumentalists to train and use antagonistic muscle groups in such a way that a balanced relationship between flexors (‘bending’ muscles) and extensors (‘stretching’ muscles) is maintained. The development of strength for preparing or discovering is often neglected in relation to that for striking or pressing. This leads in the course of time to reduced facility.”\(^{37}\) After all, tension release and postural relaxation through a cognitive comprehension of the interrelation of the body is of great importance.

The interrelation inside the body, especially of the skeleton bones, can be compared to a mobile. The movement of a mobile reflects that of a chain reaction, in while the movement of one part forces the other parts to move due to the interplay of the parts. Each part has its specific weight which contributes to the maintenance of balance in the entire mobile, as shown in Figure 9.

\(^{37}\) Lind, 13.
Figure 9. Mobile

2.4 Asymmetry as a Possible Starting Position

A balanced playing posture serves not only as a starting position and a foundation for all integrated physical movement, but also as a center in which all physical movement is connected. Moreover, one can always return to this starting position after any deviation from it as a result of playing different movements. All integral physical movement generated by a balanced playing posture carries out not only effective strength for executing instrumental techniques but also productive energy for delivering the musical expression.

As mentioned in section 2.3, an organic and musical movement generally includes the alternation of tension and relaxation (weight and counterweight). In biophysics, this refers to inhalation and exhalation; in music, this refers to the buildup of tension before the climax and the resolution and relaxation after the climax. The principle of the
alternation between tension and relaxation functions not only in the shaping of musical phrases, but also for enriching the characteristics of one’s own interpretation.

Regarding posture and physical movement, breathing plays an enormously important role. In daily life, breathing is indispensable for absorbing oxygen to maintain life; the success and failure of sequences of movements depend on breathing as well. For example, jerky and unrhythmical breathing often cause muscle cramping and disturbances in coordination. On the other hand, possessing a balanced posture with integrated physical movement is responsible for better breathing regulation and a sense for establishing musical rhythms.

Each instrument requires a different playing posture and different kinds of physical movement; yet, what is the best posture for the starting position that an instrumentalist should possess in order to carry out the most efficient playing movement?

Instruments that require a symmetrical starting position (such as piano, cello, and oboe) often build a right angle in the extremities and joints. Such a symmetrical starting position can easily lead to stiffness and static tension due to the execution of movements that are too close together, thus reducing both elbowroom and range of movement. Therefore, an asymmetrical, or diagonal, starting position is strongly recommended because, as Nelson claims, “physiologists agree that an asymmetrical stance is often assumed by a body at rest and that is therefore the more natural position.”\textsuperscript{38} Moreover, this diagonal posture should include an axis, elbowroom, and elasticity so that a totally new playing dimension is well established. To picture an image of an optimal

asymmetrical, or diagonal, initial posture, Prof. Wincor suggests one observe Michelangelo’s statue, “David,” shown in Figure 10.

![Figure 10. David](image)

2.5 Integrated Body Movements in Everyday Life as an Aid to the Corporal Disposition

Interestingly, particular drills and specific exercises for establishing an ideal Corporal Disposition are absolutely unnecessary. Instead, one can establish a new feeling

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for a sequence of movement by regenerating the quality and consciousness of the body movements from everyday life.

Routine physical activities in everyday life, such as ironing clothes, doing dishes, and vacuuming are considered tiresome and boring household chores. These physical activities are typically carried out with a poor quality of movement and are often executed without feelings and expressions, which quickly leads to exhaustion. Nevertheless, the quality of movements in daily life can be improved by rethinking that these movements can be performed with joy and enjoyment instead of slump and force. Such a rethinking helps enhance the quality and endurance of the physical movements, which prevents fatigue.

It is important that a good instrumentalist displays no difference in the quality of movement between daily life and playing music. This means, for example, that the body should not collapse once the instrumentalist has finished performing; instead, the body should always remain in such a state of prepared physical and mental readiness without having to change the posture.

In general, the physical movement in everyday life and the performance of music should be executed in connection with either a wider elbowroom/reach outside the body, as discussed in section 2.2, or an expanded torso. Performers can expand their torso by inflating one’s ribcage through deep abdominal breathing. Greater imaginary dimension inside and outside the body will result in performing with a full range of movement so that the body and its integrated movement can maintain good quality without difficulty.

Some of the integrated body movements found in everyday life include:
- Walking: The movement of walking should be performed in a fluid sequence where the thighs lead, and the calves and feet follow. The knees and heels should stay loose so that the stride can be executed with an appropriate distance of footsteps. The upper body should be upright and supported by an expanded ribcage, which allows both arms to swing rhythmically with the strides.

- Sitting: When the body is well balanced, the spine approximates its natural curvature and the weight is transferred through the spinal column to the pelvis and legs. This feeling should be maintained while sitting. The pelvis in connection with the ribcage and spine become a balanced center while sitting. At the same time, flexibility and looseness of the pelvis should be maintained in the sitting position so that the arm movements can be performed without limit.

- Stooping: As mentioned above, routine movement such as vacuuming, washing dishes, cleaning up, lifting and dusting require a stooping posture which discomforts the body and often results in sore muscles and backaches. These mechanical movements should be performed as small circular movements instead of jerky ones as to reduce the excessive use of energy to a minimum.

- Standing: Standing still with two legs shoulder-width apart while distributing the weight evenly on both sides of the body approximates the square, angular standing position of a soldier. The “upright” posture of

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\[40 \text{Kempter, 14.}\]
this kind of standing position requires more energy to maintain and can easily lead to physical exhaustion. An ideal standing posture is asymmetrical and effortless, resulting in an entire body looks “rounder” and less edgy. As Prof. Wincor explains, an example of this relaxed posture is shown in Figure 11.

![Figure 11. Standing Posture](image)

- Movements with raised arms: Movements with raised arms are common movements in everyday life such as waving hands, dancing, holding a cell phone, and so on. With respect to playing an instrument such as the violin or piano, or to the act of conducting, this kind of movement is

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indispensable. In order to perform such a movement with ease and
effortlessness, an expanded and unobstructed ribcage is of extreme
importance. An expanded ribcage (see Figure 12) not only helps support
the arm movements, but also enhances the stance of the entire body which
leads to a good stage presence. Pictures shown in this chapter have all
been selected by Prof. Wincor to illustrate the ideal body position in her
Corporeal Disposition methodology.

Figure 12. Movements with raised Arms

2.6 Models of Corporal Disposition

The self-awareness and the perception of our entire body in connection with its extremities, for most music students, is an undiscovered territory and thus becomes a neglected topic. The body itself has the potential not only to develop the sensibility but also to improve the perception so that the instrumental players can refine their playing quality by an entirely different understanding of the body.

In order to develop a corporal sensibility and flexibility, as well as to cultivate bodily awareness, one can, at the beginning phase, use various materials and tools as aids to improve the tactile sense and skillfulness in the body:

Simple materials can be used to help train bodily awareness with feasibility. The following are some materials whose specific physical properties can be experienced by the human body through movement and tactile sense.

- Elastic materials (Rubber bands of various strengths, anti burst exercise ball)
- Objects with particular balance/weight (Qigong ball, bottle filled with water, roly-poly toy)

There are rubber bands for exercising, to be pulled by hands or by knees and ankles, that can help performers experience the elastic nature through expansion and contraction. Performers can also practice by sitting on anti-burst exercise balls to feel the rhythmical bounce and buoyancy. One can also improve dexterity by practicing with the qigong balls, a set of two balls that are placed in the palm of the hand; the qigong balls are rotated in circular fashion through finger movement. By manipulating a partially filled
water bottle, one can experience the changing weight dynamic as the bottle alters its orientation.

A second set of objects can be used to train the flexibility of the whole body. The following tools help to establish a balance with the entire body, instead of given individual parts.

- Dexterity and skillfulness (yo yo)
- Balancing on a material (twist board, wobble board, rocker board, balance trainer)

Playing with the yoyo can train performers to manipulate the yoyo movement with their entire body in unison, rather than just with their arms and wrists. Performers can train their sense of balance by standing on the twist boards or wobble boards, so that they learn to stand in various tilted angles.

In general, the more one experiments with gymnastics tools, the more they will discover the physical possibilities, and the more sensible the body awareness will become. Therefore, it can be concluded that a well-balanced posture consists not only of the weight distributed delicately throughout the entire body, but also of the flexibility and reaction provided by the body awareness itself.

When performers have improved awareness of their balance and flexibility, at this advanced phase, they can benefit from observing and imitating the selected ancient and modern statues. Additional paintings of religious and mythological subjects are introduced in this section. These concepts will help instrumental players release their postural tension, improve their postural balance, as well as integrate small, detailed movements into one big whole.
Moreover, one should not maintain a static position while observing and imitating the models. Maintaining a static position as a statue often leads to static stress which is not the concept of this somatic method. Instead, it is strongly recommended that one imitate the models with playfulness and kinesthetic sense so that the possibilities of movement beyond the visual perception of the models will not be limited.

Additionally, the three components of the corporal disposition, namely axis, elbowroom, and elasticity, should always be carried out both mentally and physically. Without keeping these three components in mind while imitating the models, the extremities and joints in the body will remain immobile without any dimensional flexibility, thus resulting in a static position, which is against the concept of this method. Therefore, the models should be regarded as objects in motion rather than in stillness.

Also, being able to sink into the psychological state of the subjects and the underlying theme will help students as they enhance their quality and expression of both movement and body presence so that the physical imitation also expresses descriptive and artistic mood.
Poseidon was the god of the sea, as well as the earth-shaker of earthquakes and storm-bringer, in the Greek mythology.\textsuperscript{44} As one can see in Figure 13, this statue of Poseidon is shaped as if he stands in position to throw his trident as far as he can. The standing position is supported by the widely separated feet while the right arm is winding up and the left arm and eyes are aiming for the target. This delivers both a decisive and powerful impression and makes use of the maximum space.

For instrumental players, being able to stretch both arms, balanced by the further separation of feet is of great importance and often helps enlarge the elbowroom and create more imaginary space. As an exercise in daily life, one can try to move or fetch objects from a fixed balanced standing position without too much stretching.

\textsuperscript{43} Russell Roberts, \textit{Poseidon} (Hockessin, DE: Mitchell Lane Publisher, 2009), 15.
The goddess Nike is the Greek word for victory and is depicted in statues as a female figure with wings. As time went on it became standard practice for seamen to christen the front of their ships with a statue of the likeness of Nike.

In the sculpture shown in Figure 14, the wrinkles of Nike’s robe are billowing as if she is moving forward against the strong wind with her wings open and ready to take off. Her ribcage and flanks are so roomy and expansive that the upper body and wings support each other in a perfect relationship. The revelation from this Nike sculpture helps release the tightness and smallness caused by performance anxiety. When the instrumental players are nervous on stage, their physical movements become tense and

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46 Ibid.
small. Therefore, the image of the Nike statue as a mental strength, with an expansive ribcage and open flanks, helps bring out calmness and ease.

The internal space of the ribcage and flanks can be filled with the air during inhalation. But, how can the ribcage be inflated without holding the breath? It so happens that the ribcage can be expanded through the leaning on the back, which leads to a parallel elongation of the ribs and a slight flexing of the spine. The imperceptibly enlarged ribcage will cause the muscles of the upper body to contract, therefore maintaining expansion.

Figure 15. Dancer\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{47} Berger, 10.
The statue of a dancer shown in Figure 15 depicts a young lady who seems to be intently focused on listening to the music. Her eyes are closed, appearing to be leaning against an invisible backrest. Her head is slightly tilted to the left, both arms are raised, and the right foot is stepping slightly forward. The gesture seems to have a connotation that she is completely absorbed in her intellectual world and forgets her surroundings.

Her suspended and weighty arms supported by the entire composure are excellent examples of weight transfer for the bow arm. Furthermore, the fluid and calm mood she displays is very suitable for the lyrical phrases with slow tempo. Players who are over-agitated while playing slow movements should note the serenity in Figure 15.

Figure 16. Ariadne on the Panther48

As with Nike, the female shown in Figure 16 possesses a widely expanded ribcage and flanks. She is sitting on the panther with her left arm placed on the panther’s head while stretching her right leg out as she balances with her hips. As one can see, her entire body is slightly twisted while her weight is balanced on her flexible pelvis, supporting the spine and ribcage, thus allowing the legs to be mobile and free.

In order to loosen the hip joints, one can first practice on a “twist board” and try to move according to the principle of axis mentioned in section 2.2. Once the feeling of axis is established, one can sit on a chair and try to expand his or her ribcage by slightly twisting the upper body with relaxed hips joints. The information this statue provides is very helpful for musicians who perform in a sitting posture.

Figure 17. Adagio

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49 Berger, 265.
The statue “Adagio,” shown in Figure 17 radiates calmness and serenity with her neck that is slightly curved in connection with the natural shape of the spine. The whole body is therefore full of tenderness and peacefulness. For upper string players, it is extremely important to maintain a natural and flexible spinal curvature in accordance with the neck. This enhances the unity and intimacy between the instrument and player as well as prevents static tension from holding the instrument with too much pressure. In general, allowing a slight nodding of the head and revolution on the axis inside the body help improve the sound quality and remove the irritation on the neck.

Figure 18. The Inner Face\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{50} Berger, 335.
The female statue of “The Inner Face,” shown in Figure 18, seems contemplative with her eyes closed. This occurs when musicians are focused on performing, sinking into the music. Yet, stage anxiety sometimes causes tension all over the body, especially on the face, where the spotlight projects. In order to remove the facial stiffness and the static tension of the neck, it is highly recommended that instrumental players and vocalists smile while performing. A smiling face leads not only to a reduction of the static stress in the neck caused by performance anxiety, but also to a better facial expression.

![Figure 19. Michelangelo from the Sistine Chapel](image)

Figure 19 comprises a detailed part from “The Last Judgment” on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel in which Michelangelo lowers his body with bending knees so that he

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can carry maximal strength with his arm and back through a spring-back motion. The
information delivered by this figure is of enormous importance for instrumental players
in creating dynamics, especially of greater volume. As a fact of physics, a greater
exertion of weight can be obtained by winding up, much as a tennis player lowers his
body and brings his racket back before striking the ball. The awareness of the back in the
body becomes more apparent if one crouches with the back and raises the arms as taking
cover before danger.

Figure 20 shows similar information about the placement of weight on the back. As one can see, Eurydice hesitates and leans back as Orpheus pulls her forward to the
front by holding her back as a leaning rest. Although the back of these two people are
not directly visible, the reader can feel the presence of his and her back by the slight
resistance produced when leaning against objects. Viola players can lean slightly
backwards and execute bow movement more smoothly with a stable shoulder blade.

Figure 20. Orpheus and Eurydice

In order to establish a feeling for spaciousness of depth, Figure 21 is informative and instructive. Shiva, the god of fertility, stretches out his arms and raises his leg in mid-air. He is free to move about within the circumference. His body weight is lowered, thus creating space both above and around him. When playing viola in the standing position, this visual image can help the performer take a flexible and elastic stance.

![Figure 21. Shiva](image)

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The kneeling statue in Figure 22 has great openness in her ribcage and flanks, supported by a slightly twisted upper body which maintains an upright position and prevents the presence of slumped arms. The kneeling legs are in a well balanced position because of the relaxed hips, and seem to be very flexible; she looks as if she is ready to move. The balance of the whole body requires having axis, elbowroom, and elasticity in mind; the lack of either one will lead to the collapse of the body stance, thus interrupting the flow of movement.

54 Berger, 247.
The descriptive situation and the positive atmosphere delivered by the painting “Nuit d’été” (Night of Summer) as seen in Figure 23 correspond to a psychological assistance against performance anxiety, by encouraging positive excitement instead of negative nervousness. The innovation associated with Homer’s painting is to expand into an imaginary dimension, or to visualize an imaginary dimension of an endless sea horizon against the tightness and smallness felt while performing on stage.

3. Body Awareness from the Perspective of an Eastern Esoteric Meditation-Technique

The concept of Corporal Disposition is actually very similar to the practice of Tai Chi. In Corporal Disposition, the instrument is an integrated part of the performer. In Tai Chi meditation, the entire body moves as one in slow motion. Since Tai Chi practice also focuses on lower body rotation and movement, it can be a helpful aid to musicians to adjust their lower body in coordination with upper body movements. In this section, I will explore the philosophical practice and implementation of Tai Chi.

In terms of the Eastern esotericism and notions associated with ancient Chinese philosophy, Tai Chi is often considered enigmatic and therefore makes no sense to people whose knowledge acquisition is based on Western science and logic. The perception of life, health, illness, and nature for Asian folks and Chinese people remains steeped in tradition, carrying through their legacies while modern science progresses. Since Tai Chi’s introduction to the western world in the 1980’s, many people began experiencing benefits from practicing Tai Chi, but at the time, this included only certain people of limited fields, such as those attending Tai Chi classes at martial art schools or health-related classes in hospitals.

With the worldwide recognition of somatic education in the last decades of the twentieth century, created by Feldenkrais, Alexander and so forth, the importance of Tai Chi and its application became significantly noticeable later in the fields of sport and

music. Today, the influence of Tai Chi is not only seen in the area of sports and recreation, but it is also used for medical purposes as well as for the betterment of health.\textsuperscript{58}

In general, Tai Chi is known for its choreography being practiced and performed by a group of elderly people, usually in the morning, at a slow and steady pace for maintaining their physical dexterity. However, the practice of gentle, fluid movements and achieving peace of mind resembles the situation that a musician or athlete encounters while performing physical skills. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for instrumental players to learn Tai Chi and to comprehend the philosophy of Tai Chi.

This chapter includes topics of Tai Chi regarding self-defense, health, and meditation as well as posture, movement, and breathing. Important terminology, especially related to the concepts and definitions of Tai Chi are introduced and discussed. Also, diverse preliminary exercises and selected Tai Chi choreography are presented to help one comprehend the connotation of Tai Chi.

The practice of Tai Chi can help performers improve their coordination and become flexible. With a heightened awareness of their body, music performers can implement concepts from corporal disposition more effectively.

### 3.1 Introduction of Tai Chi

Tai Chi, also known as Tai Chi Chuan, can be literally translated as “supreme ultimate boxing” or “supreme ultimate fist.” It originally existed as an ancient martial art rooted in China and performed by Taoist monks. Since the concept and practice of Tai

\textsuperscript{58} Robinson, 14.
Chi is strongly related to the Chinese tradition of energy work, Tai Chi is therefore also considered part of the Chi Kung, which can be translated literally as “energy cultivation.”

Tai Chi is a practice based on a series of postures, inspired by the flowing movement of different animals, and was used for the purpose of self-defense. However, the practice of Tai Chi choreography in cooperation with the concept of energy cultivation not only has the effect of more flexibility, and of freer and healthier movement, but also of developing spirituality and a more focused mental state. As a matter of fact, the benefits of practicing Tai Chi result from the application of the interrelationship of Yin and Yang, which are derived from classical Chinese philosophy and theory indicating two complementary, yet opposing forces that make up the whole.

Yin-Yang theory is considered the foundation of Chinese science, defining two sides of a substance. For example, Yin is characterized by darkness, femininity, passiveness and pessimism. Yang is characterized by brightness, masculinity, activeness and optimism. In the phenomenon of nature, Yin and Yang symbolize polarities such as moon and sun, night and day, static and dynamic, and so forth. Nevertheless, these two polarities should not be regarded as oppositions that represent only, according to dualism, two extremes. Rather, Yin and Yang form a complex by complementing each other.

In his book, *What is Tai Chi?*, Peter A. Gilligan compares Yin-Yang to the troughs and peaks of waves, with these two states being connected by Chi, which is energy. He points out that “the ‘wave’ links the peaks and troughs, so it is the ‘communication’ between the peaks and troughs, which are Yang and Yin. Chi flows and communicates between Yin and Yang. In modern terms it is both the information and
the carrier of the information.” Therefore, the cultivation of Chi, especially the flowing of Chi while practicing Tai Chi, is of great importance.

In order to apply the concept of Yin-Yang to Tai Chi, one can think of the complementary polarities that always alternate in a natural order. For example, if a person is encountering a physical attack, instead of fighting against the attacker with hardness, the force from the attacker can be compensated by softness of the defender; thus the force is neutralized and the damage is reduced to a minimum. Also, in the situation of sitting on a roller coaster, most people are not used to the feeling of freefall in the downward trajectory of a coaster when gravity is pulling their body downwards. As a result, they tense their body to fight against the gravity, which often causes cramping of the body and muscle injury. According to the concept of Yin-Yang, one should therefore follow the natural direction of the gravity so that the impact of two forces in opposite directions can be avoided.

Tai Chi and the concept of Yin-Yang can be characterized by the Yin-Yang symbol shown in Figure 24.

![Yin-Yang Symbol](image)

**Figure 24. Yin-Yang Symbol**

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As one can see, the circular symbol includes two parts. The dark side symbolizes Yin, while the bright side symbolizes Yang. The dark half contains a bright spot, while the bright half contains a dark spot. This reveals that Yin and Yang always include an aspect of each other, and nothing is always dark or bright. Although Tai Chi consists of various postures performed constantly at a slow tempo, the transition from one posture to another is seamless and effortless; a movement is always followed by a counter movement. For example, a rising movement is followed by a falling one; a movement toward the front is followed by one toward the back; and a closing movement is followed by an opening one, and so forth.

3.2 Tai Chi as Self-Defense, Health, and Meditation

Compared to the combative martial arts, Tai Chi deals with the principles of the Yin-Yang concept, in which softness overcomes hardness by performing fluid movements. Therefore, Tai Chi is considered part of the “soft fist” schools while the others belong to “hard fist” schools. Moreover, Tai Chi serves not as an aggressive, combative martial art, but as self-defense backed by the ideas of philosophical Taoism. As Ronnie Robinson in Total Tai Chi indicates, Taoism is “concerned with achieving harmony with our environment and letting nature take its own course. The qualities of yielding, softness, slowness, balance and rootedness are central to both Taoism and Tai Chi.”

In terms of health, Tai Chi is strongly related to traditional Chinese acupuncture, in which the Chi plays a central role in the human body. According to the knowledge of

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Chinese acupuncture, there are so-called “meridians” (energy-lines or energy-routes) underneath the skin of a human body that are the paths through which the Chi flows. Furthermore, specific “points” located on the meridians correspond to all the parts of the body and their functions.\textsuperscript{61} Therefore, illness is regarded by the Chinese as the blocking of an energy-flow through one or more points on the meridians. Through acupuncture, the blocking of the energy-flow can be removed by stimulating the relevant point. Practicing Tai Chi has a similar effect, enhancing the flow of the Chi so that the risk of blocking the meridian-points will be reduced to a minimum.

The choreography of Tai Chi is essentially designed to stimulate the Chi so that the Chi can flow through the meridians without restraint; thus, the blocking of meridians is avoided. Unlike general sports activity encountered in the West, which requires a lot of physical strength and muscular tension, Tai Chi deals with the depth of relaxation in both the body and mind. Musicians and athletes train daily to achieve perfection and to surpass physical limits, however, their daily training sometimes cause dangerous damage and injury. The ideas and benefits of practicing Tai Chi can help change their perspectives and the way they go about achieving their goals.

In terms of meditation, Tai Chi is also considered to be “meditation in movement.” As mentioned before, Tai Chi is performed at a slow tempo, seamlessly changing between different postures. Nevertheless, the slow movement of the body and the flow of the Chi should be in constant harmony with deep breathing and a focused mind, and should also integrate the concept of Yin and Yang. Deep breathing plays a significant role in initiating and circulating the Chi throughout the performance of Tai Chi. The inhalation resembles the accumulation of Chi and is always performed with a

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid, 24.
closing movement (Yin-process). The exhalation resembles the distribution of the Chi and is always performed with an opening movement (Yang-process). The mind participates in both processes, and thus the concentration of the mind improves and is able to control the pace of respiration as well as to manipulate the Chi. The purpose of deliberately slowing down the breathing while performing Tai Chi is not only to guide the flow of the Chi, but also to achieve tranquility in both the mind and movements. The more peaceful one becomes the more open-minded, heedful, and independent from the outside environment.

3.3 Concepts and Definitions of Tai Chi

Since Tai Chi deals with concepts and terminology that are unique and uncommon to the Western intellect, it is thus of great importance to discuss and explain the terminology so that confusion and misunderstanding regarding Tai Chi can be avoided:

- **Chi**: The Chinese people regard Chi as a substance of nature that resembles energy, such as gravitation, or air that is not visible. Yet the Chi exists everywhere and serves as a deliverer of vital energy that is sensible, perceptible and that can be experienced through exercises. Using the image of an oil lamp, the Chinese people believe that the oil to the lamp is the same as the Chi to human life; a lamp without oil cannot be lit up, and a human body without Chi will not function well. The Chi can be obtained by having good nutrition and a regular metabolism. Also,
practicing Tai Chi in combination with deep breathing, fluid movement, and mental focus will lead to restoring the circulation of Chi, thus enhancing the function of the human organism.\textsuperscript{62}

- **Meridian**: Meridians are pathways in the human body through which the Chi travels. They spread out both vertically and horizontally, located both deep inside the body and just underneath the surface of the skin.\textsuperscript{63} Meridians can be compared to tunnels or channels connecting the internal body parts, which are regenerated by Chi. Nevertheless, the permeability of meridians and the flow of the Chi may be disrupted due to psychological problems, injury, and surgery, which the Chinese attribute to the meridians being cut off.

- **Dantian**: Dantian, literally translated as “elixir field,” is described in traditional Chinese medicine as an important focal point in which the center of gravity or the center of the Chi is located. The position of Dantian is approximately three to four finger widths below the belly button and about two inches behind the abdominal wall.\textsuperscript{64} Dantian can be compared to a battery and is activated by the specific posture shown in Figure 25.

\textsuperscript{62} Gilligan, 42.  
\textsuperscript{63} Robinson, 24.  
\textsuperscript{64} Robinson, 27.
As one can see, the lower part of the belly is contracted while tensing the buttocks and lowering the body at the knees. By holding this posture with a slight tension in the abdominal area, the Dantian is activated and the Chi can circulate out of the Dantian throughout the entire body.

Although Chi, Meridian, and Dantian are neither anatomically nor scientifically proven, their effects are well founded. According to empirical evidence, people report certain warmth throughout the whole body after performing Tai Chi. The therapeutic effect that results from the Chi flowing through the Meridians, in particular, is compared by Gilligan to what happens when “an acupuncturist’s needles target organs by affecting meridian flow.”

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65 Gilligan, 47.
3.4 Breath, Posture, and Movement in Tai Chi

Chi circulates through the meridians, and the circulation of the Chi results from deep breathing, which is considered by the Chinese people to be the motor for Chi circulation initiated by the Dantian. The interrelation of the motor and Chi circulation is comparable to the one between the heart and blood circulation. Chi can flow more smoothly when the muscles, joints, and tendons are at their optimal relaxation.

Nowadays a lot of people suffer from so-called “civilization diseases” due to the enormous increase in stress caused by a highly competitive society and an advanced civilized industry. In such an environment, many people do not execute the process of respiration correctly, which typically means that the inhaled air does not fill the entire space of the lung, and the exhaled air is not completely eliminated. Therefore, people must restore their pace of respiration in order to improve their breathing-related health condition.

The breathing during Tai Chi practice is a soft, round, deep and slow process which requires an unnoticeable transition between inhalation and exhalation. Through this deeply relaxed breathing into the abdomen, or Dantian, one can manipulate the Chi through the meridians to reach all parts of the body. Deep breathing not only enhances the flexibility of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles, but also has a massaging effect on the organs located in the lower trunk. Yet, one should not overload the capacity of the lungs by taking the air in with force; instead, the rhythm of breathing has to be guided according to the natural pace of each individual person.

Performing Tai Chi requires an upright posture in which the buttocks are held slightly forward while the pelvis is lowered with the knees. The torso and the head,
especially, are held upright as if to create resistance against the space above one’s own height. A slumped posture results in a malfunction of the physical capacity and the disturbance of the Chi due to the pressing of organs inside the ribcage. This leads to flat breathing, which handicaps the Tai Chi performance.

The smooth, relaxed, and slow movement of Tai Chi helps one experience mental calmness and concentration. Tai Chi movement improves not only the human body function, but also the flexibility and elasticity in muscles, ligaments, tendons, and the spine. The sequence of Tai Chi movements consists of constant postural changes of Yin and Yang in which the movement proceeds through an unvarying, steady tempo without interruption. Nevertheless, each movement of Tai Chi should be initiated and executed from the center of the weight – specifically from the feet, and especially from the hips. Moreover, each part of the body should be considered part of a single unit; when one part of the body moves, the entire body follows, and vice versa.

3.5 Diverse Preliminary Exercises before Learning Tai Chi

Since the movement of Tai Chi is chiefly based on shifting the center of gravity into the lower part of the body - namely the feet and hips - it is thus recommended for instrumental players to discover and restore flexibility in the lower half of the human body. When observing the gait of older people, one usually notices that they have difficulty walking. Often times, their feet prevent fluid movement. Older people, due to the aging process, tend to contract the particular muscles they are used to; therefore, not
every part of the foot is participating in balancing the weight, so the joints, bones, muscles, and tendons lose their flexibility, which leads to stiffness in the lower body.

The distribution of weight on both feet while balancing the human body has various possibilities, which are symbolically illustrated in Figure 26.

![Figure 26. Distribution of Weight on Both Feet](image)

Through the awareness of being able to distribute various degrees of weight on both feet, as well as shifting the weight between the left and right sides of the human body, one is able to create a better balance for the complex body. The exercise of “slow walking” indicated in Figure 27 is designed to enhance the sensitivity of the heel, instep, ankle, and toes, which are mostly neglected in general Western sports activity.
Figure 27. Slow Walking

As one can see, the weight of the body is evenly distributed on both feet at the starting position (1). The left foot is lifted and placed in the front again with the heel on the ground in a very slow tempo. At this point in the process, the balance of weight is on the left foot. After setting down the left foot, one shifts the balance from the left foot to the right foot by lifting the right heel in a clockwise half-circular route, followed by placing the right foot in the front with the heel (2-3). The shift of weight from the right foot to the left foot proceeds in the same way but in the opposite direction (4-5). Step 4 is darkened because the body weight is 100% on the left foot for that instant, but the weight begins to shift to the right foot with step 5 when the right heel lands on the ground.
While walking backwards (6), one should first lift the toes up for the step and then place the foot down with the toes. The rest of the procedure remains the same as indicated above. When executing this exercise, the shifting of body weight between each side of the body is continuous and seamless; the practice of “slow walking” often leads to flexibility of the foot joints, thus preventing injury and spasms.

The movement of Tai Chi is built up by regarding the body parts such as the feet, legs, and hips as a predominant unity within a sequence of Tai Chi movement. Therefore, the gyration of the hips while performing Tai Chi also means that the body and head will also gyrate. The awareness and mobility of the hips can be increased by the “swing” exercise indicated in Figure 28.

![Figure 28. Swing](image)

While swinging the body, one should initiate the movement out of the hips and pelvis, which is followed by the movement of the arms and the trunk. One swings to the
left or right until he or she can see backwards. This exercise improves the flexibility of the hips and spine, as well releases shoulder tension.

In terms of breathing while performing Tai Chi, deep abdominal breathing is of great importance. Therefore, one should be familiar with the anatomical process of respiration; the diaphragm sinks into the belly while inhaling through the nose, and the diaphragm rises to its starting position while exhaling. This process of respiration can be demonstrated through breathing while lying on one’s back.

Instrumental playing resembles performing Tai Chi in that both require breathing of good quality. Therefore, Sydney Robjohns’ description in Violin Technique helps realize the great importance of breathing. He recommends that one “practice to breathe freely and deeply while playing whenever possible. At times playing is very strenuous, but seize every opportunity to relax physically, and you will develop the power of endurance necessary to strenuous or prolonged playing. Incidentally this will help to break the tension that often is the cause of nervousness.”

3.6 Choreography of Tai Chi

Throughout the history of the Chinese martial arts, various styles and techniques of Tai Chi choreography were developed and practiced. As Robinson mentions, “there are five major styles of Tai Chi: Chen, Yang, Wu (Hao), Wu and Sun. Each style is named after the Chinese family that taught – and still teaches – it. The Chen style of Tai

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Chi is the oldest and the Sun style is the most recent.” Among these five styles, the characteristics of each choreography feature different focus points. For example, the Sun style is a hybrid style incorporating the elements of other martial arts; the Wu (Hao) style allows practitioners to lean forward and backward, which is strictly prohibited by the Yang style; the Yang style requires an upright posture from the practitioners, and is characterized by round, expansive movements. The Yang style is considered the most popular style of Tai Chi.

Many people think that learning Tai Chi is very similar to learning a sequence of choreography of dance; thus, they claim that it is easy and can be self taught by following the instructions of books, figures and video recordings. As mentioned before, practicing Tai Chi deals with concepts different from Western logic and thinking and requires absolute coordination, as well as an excellent equilibrium between breath, mental focus, and physical movement. Therefore, the need for a teacher at any phase of learning, especially at the beginning one, is very important.

This is also true when learning to play a musical instrument; the instructions of a teacher help students avoid incorrect postures, excessive movements, and unnecessary physical tension. Similarly, a Tai Chi master helps mend uncoordinated movements and serves as a role model for the choreography so that students can imitate the postures without using any guesswork. Nevertheless, some students, due to poor practice habits and limited knowledge of the related Chinese philosophy, develop incorrect moves which degenerate Tai Chi into plain physical exercises and result in poor functional habits.

The Yang style, being the most popular Tai Chi style, consists of movements with upright postures that resemble the postures of upper strings players. The complex

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67 Robinson, 20.
choreography of the Yang style requires flexibility, coordination, and smooth execution in asymmetric moves, much like the demands imposed on upper string players in their music performance. Figures 29, 30 and 31 show the beginning and ending postures that are prevalent in all style of Tai Chi. These postures are often used to help the upper strings players increase smoothness in movement as well as quality in sound. The ideal state of performing Tai Chi described by Gilligan can be the ultimate goal for all Tai Chi practitioners: “as the body relaxes and the separation between mind and body dissolves, the natural wave of movement due to breathing spreads out through the entire body. The whole body breathes. This is movement in stillness.”

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68 Gilligan, 128.
Figure 31. Ending Postures
4. Integration of Corporal Disposition and Tai Chi in Viola Playing

As mentioned in the chapter of Corporal Disposition, the three components of the axis, elbowroom, and elasticity are a prerequisite for establishing an optimal Corporal Disposition; and these three components are most efficient when an asymmetrical standing posture is adopted. In terms of integration, practicing Tai Chi and applying the Tai Chi principles of meditative move, deep breathing, and the Yin-Yang philosophy for body awareness help increase not only the quality of Corporal Disposition but also the quality of body movement, which is of great importance for sound production while playing a stringed instrument.

When combing the three components with the basis bow technique, or the straight bow stroke, the result is:

- **Down bow:** viola revolves around the axis (torso) toward the right
- **Up bow:** viola revolves around the axis (torso) toward the left

As mentioned before in section 2.2, the collarbones and hips are in a parallel relationship, and can revolve around the axis centered around the torso in both directions. According to this principle, combining Corporal Disposition and holding the instrument leads to a slight swinging movement of the viola revolving around the axis. This means that the viola, which revolves around the axis at the neck, rotates to the right side while executing a down bow, and to left side while executing an up bow. This unilateral movement between the viola and the body in both directions prevents tension caused by
holding the viola with too much pressure; the viola thus becomes a lively integrated part of the body. In addition, the length of the strokes should match the gyration of axis.

Performing music with a musical instrument resembles the process of executing physical skills; both musical and physical movement flow and move effortlessly. Therefore, the shifting of weight in the body from left to right, from back to front, and vice versa is inevitable. Musical expression can be emphasized by the movement of body, or the shifting of weight. For example, a long musical phrase constructed by many short strokes can be shaped and concluded as a whole through one big gesture of the shifting of weight. A momentary standing position on the left side also aids in the communication with the pianist. Weight shifting from left to right can be used to bring out an important harmony or an ending tone. Moreover, the shifting of weight with the body serves not only to achieve the correct balance in the body for executing the desired physical activities, but also as tools to express the interpreter’s musical ideas. The exercise indicated in Figure 32 is a suggestion for directions that the performer can move in while playing a scale.

Figure 32. Scale
While performing music at a fast tempo, it is impossible for the body to react quickly enough to move the viola back and forth for each note, due to the short value of notes, such as a group of thirty-second notes. Therefore, it is logical to play a full measure or an entire passage of notes with one or more gyration of the body. (See Figure 33)

![Figure 33. Dont: Etude No. 5](image)

The tone production in viola playing is based on the understanding and applications of weight in physics. According to the principle of weight and counterweight, the elasticity and flexibility inside the body serves as a keystone to remove stiffness and tension. This means that a player should react to the bow and arm weight by having a slight bend in knees and nodding in the neck. For example, the execution of particular strokes, such as martelé and collé, is less strenuous if one can react to the bow pressure, compensating the weight by slightly bending the knees as to decrease stiffness and increase the projection of sound. Also, the execution of bouncing strokes, such as spiccato, will become more effortless if the performer maintains elasticity in the body and follows the law of springing.

The integration and application of the Corporal Disposition and Tai Chi in viola playing will expand the space inside and around the performer, so that the performer and
instrument can become one resonating body in unison. The opening of Sonata op. 11 No. 4 by Paul Hindemith, shown in Figure 34 incorporates various models and situations mentioned in chapter three.
Figure 34. Paul Hindemith, Sonata Op. 11, No. 4, First Movement, mm. 10 – 15.
Conclusion

Due to the larger size of the viola and its fingerboard, the action of dropping fingers on the viola is quite different from that of the violin. Also, the bow grip and the relationship between the application of weight in the bow arm and tone production are slightly different from those of the violin. The correct use and application of physics (i.e. weight) plays a significant role in mastering stringed instruments.

Physical movement under the aspect of instrumental playing serves as a tool to help execute technical skills, as well as to express an interpreter’s musical idea. But repeated movement in daily practice without taking the quality of movement into account can lead to isolated movements that become mechanical, leading to the development of bad habits. Therefore, musical-aesthetical ideas and movement must be regarded as two equal parts of a whole. However, the quality and awareness of movement increases when the body is trained to become more sensitive and conscious.

In order to develop the concept of Corporal Disposition, the deep observation and imitation of the “models,” especially of the image of a well-balanced posture, through the experimentation and restoration of balance in the body is of enormous importance. The training of Corporal Disposition not only arouses an awareness of the body but also enhances the relationship between physical response and musical sense, which lead to a higher quality of performance. Unfortunately, the poor postural habits that performers have formed as part of their body posture through many years of training remain unnoticed and interfere with the restoration of body balances. Therefore, cultivating
appropriate body dispositions also means the removal of the old bad habits at the same time so that new experiences can be maintained.

The ideas and daily practice of Tai Chi serve as tools to enhance the physical and the psychological condition of a practitioner, which ultimately leads to a better quality of physical movement in Corporal Disposition and viola playing. The application and integration of Corporal Disposition with Tai Chi in viola playing are designed to improve both the technical and artistic level for a performer, and the concepts are transferable to other musical instruments.

The method of Corporal Disposition should not be, however, regarded as a priority within the training of playing a musical instrument; instead, it serves only as one of the available tools to express the music. The musician’s main focus should always be the music. As Przygocki states, “the constant inner hearing and singing that goes on while playing as the performer creates the sound mentally and the produces what he imagines.”69 Therefore, Corporal Disposition serves as a supplementary tool to aid the musician to interpret the music that he or she has imagined. The music must always remain in the foreground.

Appendix

Biography of Prof. Ilse Wincor

Prof. Ilse Wincor has been teaching at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna since 1982 and is the Associate Professor of Viola since 2004. She taught master classes, among others at the Neuberger Kulturtagen Music Festival in 1993. From 1980 on, she was the principal violist of the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, the Camerata Academica Salzburg, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Klangforum Wien, and the Ensemble Die Reihe. She appeared as soloist and chamber musician in numerous ensembles. In 1995 she gave the première of F. Cerha’s Concert for Viola in Vienna. Wincor studied viola at Vienna University of Music with H. Beyerle and graduated with distinction in 1981. She continued further studies under the guidance of Sir W. Primrose and P. Schidlof.
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