

## 9 CHOICE OF FINGERING

Choice of fingering is highly personal. It would be hard to find any two players who consistently chose the same fingering in any one piece of music. Choices differ for many reasons: schooling, physical factors determined by variations in bodily proportions, physical condition at any given time and, by no means least, differing musical approach. In spite of this there are certain principles which can be useful guides to choice of fingering, but these must not of course be regarded as rigid rules. The sign \* indicates principles which apply particularly to rapid passages.

\* Play at least two notes in a position; avoid the use of single notes with a change of position on both sides. This applies particularly in the lower positions.

\* Where possible, play the last two notes of a rapid passage in the same position. The final note will always be noticed more, so if the penultimate one is a little inaccurate, it is possible to compensate and play the last note correctly.

– When crossing strings, note the following:

The ear detects changes of string very acutely, because of the different tone properties of different strings and different string lengths. One should always avoid playing descending intervals that involve crossing from a low string to a higher one. For example, A on the D string followed by the open G produces a very marked change in colour. The change of string involved had the A been played on the G string followed by the G on the D, would have been less obvious. Exceptions have to be made for rapid tempi, but the principle should be observed wherever possible.

– Where possible, choose string crossings to allow notes very near to each other in pitch to be played on the same string (e.g. the leading note as upbeat to the tonic).

– If a series of notes is repeated sequentially at a different pitch, the string crossing and finger patterns should be similar for each sequence. (Any alteration will 'stick out' too much.)

– Where several notes with little difference in pitch are played legato on one bow, an audible change of position or string should be avoided between the last note and the one immediately before it.

– Big leaps upwards (for example, from normal to a high thumb position) are most accurately carried out if the left hand has time to 'settle' in the lower position, before the leap. It is also easier to hit the high note on a down-bow as the hands and arms will then be moving in symmetry during the leap.

\* In the case of a rising or falling phrase, position changes should follow the melodic line. Moves upwards should be avoided during descending phrases and vice versa. Try to find fingerings which make for natural, organic movements of the whole left arm.

– Upward position changes on one finger work better with the first finger than with the fourth.

\* Clearest articulation of rapid passages in thumb position is attained by reducing changes of position to a minimum. At slower speeds, other factors (vibrato, etc.) have to be taken more into consideration.

– Good intonation on double-stopped thirds in thumb position is best achieved by fingering playing major thirds 1-2 and minor thirds +-2. Move the whole hand “en bloc” where necessary, keeping the thumb down the whole time.

– Repeated use of open strings can often sound well provided they occur as tonic and dominant in the key being used. This applies especially to solo music of the Viennese Classical period: for orchestral music, the technique can be used in the major and minor keys of G, D and A but should be limited in others.

