

Bars 102 – 108

Poco meno mosso,  $\text{♩} = 96$

The musical score is written for a single staff in treble clef, 4/4 time. It begins with a tempo marking 'Poco meno mosso' and a metronome marking of quarter note = 96. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains bars 102-104, the second system contains bars 105-107, and the third system contains bar 108. The music features complex rhythmic patterns with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above notes. There are also 'sim.' (sforzando) and 'cresc.' (crescendo) markings. A 'V' marking is present at the start, and a 'IV' fingering is shown below the first few notes. A dashed line follows the end of the third system.

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Issues:

- Intonation
- Bowing
- Articulation
- Structure

1. Intonation –

- First, I had to get the notes. Working bar-by-bar, note-by-note very slowly, ignoring all the bowing patterns, articulation, note values, etc. The first priority was the intonation because it is so difficult in this position of the viola.
- I separated this passage into two sections (102-104 and 105-108) in order to get comfortable with each position slowly and consciously.
- Double stops were particularly important for the position of the fingers, especially for the fifths. Keeping the fingers down for as long as possible, even when not played with the bow, helped to strengthen the hand and get it familiar with the high position.

<sup>10</sup> Bartók, Béla 1949, *Viola Concerto, Op. posth.* Ed. Tibor Serly. Boosey & Hawkes. London. Music score. Pg 5.

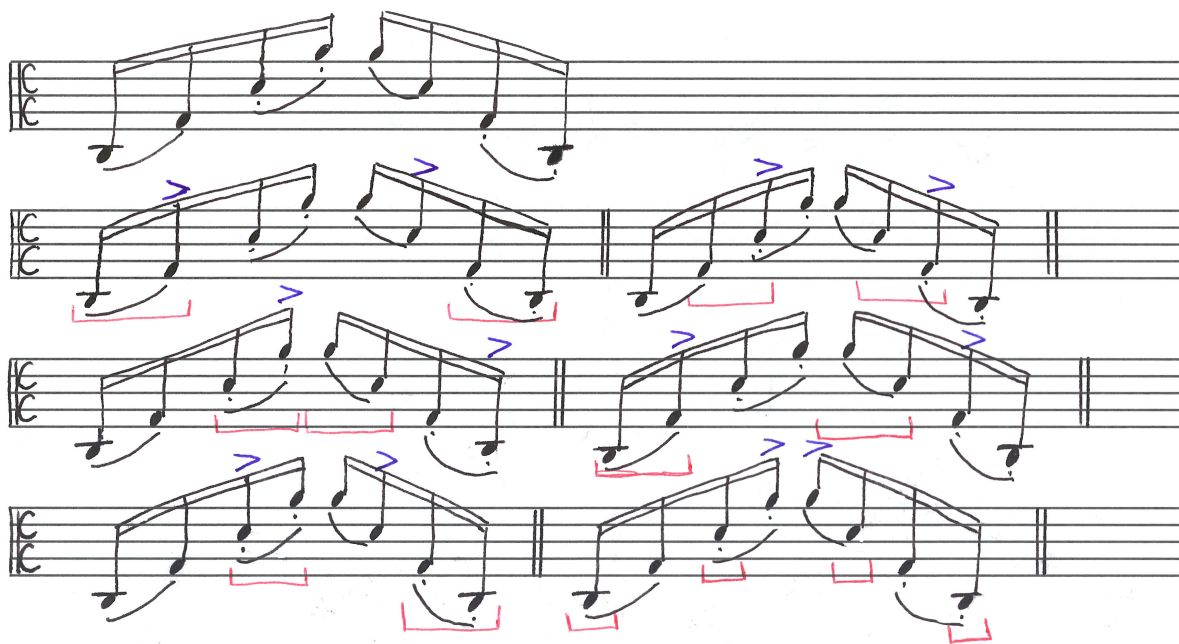


*Double-stopping*

- I frequently checked the top B<sup>4</sup> intonation by checking it with the octave below.

2. Bowing –

- After being completely comfortable with the position of the left hand and the intonation I started to look at the bowing, which is over all four strings.
- At first I ignored the articulation and just played everything on the string legato (still following the printed bowing) with the minimum amount of bow possible for the control in the finger tips. Doing this at different points in the bow really secured the position of the right hand.
- After this, practising the printed bowing articulation with open strings helped to focus all my attention on the right-hand technique as it removed the added distraction of the left-hand difficulties.
- Once the movement became more familiar, I started adding accents on different notes in the pattern to strengthen the position of the right-hand (and inadvertently securing the left hand). I found that adding accents on specific strings also helped strengthen the movement. For example, whenever I moved to the G string I would add an accent.
- Rhythm practice!



*Open string bowing exercise. Then practise with accents (blue marking) and isolating patterns in the motif (red markings).*

### 3. Articulation

- This required the same principles as bars 67 and 100-101, where the staccato was subdivided into as small a value as possible to encourage the flexibility of the wrist.
- Also using the collé bow stroke to bite the string and emphasize the articulation.

## **Visual Example**

### 4. Structure

- At the advice of the pianist I was working with, when I studied this piece, Michael Hampton, finding the structure was very useful for the coordination of the hands, which meant isolating notes and building up the pattern gradually to gain a bigger picture of what is happening within the passage. In a similar fashion to the work on the triplet passage (bars 41 – 54)
- The use of a metronome was of great help in building the speed and structure – putting the click on every subdivision of the beat (in a similar way to using accents) at a slow tempo to encourage evenness in playing.
- At the final tempo. Taking away the metronomic subdivision as follows: once every semiquaver, quaver, crotchet, minim and semibreve. This encourages the longer lines and more melodic movement.

Bars 112 – 124

♩ = 100 110

*f*

*mf più dolce*

*dim.*

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Issues:

- Double-stops
- Chromatic steps and shifting
- Bowing

1. Double-stops (bars 112 + 116) –

- The most effective way of practising these was to first isolate the lower notes and get an idea of their pitches, then isolate the upper notes for theirs.
- Secondly, playing the lower notes again with the necessary fingering to play the double-stop, but without sounding the upper note. This encouraged good intonation in a double-stop position without the distraction of playing both notes together. I follow this by swapping the voices around and only playing the upper voice.
- The I finally played it with the full double-stop.

<sup>11</sup> Bartók, Béla 1949, *Viola Concerto, Op. posth.* Ed. Tibor Serly. Boosey & Hawkes. London. Music score. Pg 5



*Playing the voices independently (marked with different colours) before adding together.*

## 2. Chromatic steps and shifting (bars 113 + 117) –

- As usual, I isolated the notes and played them slowly, separate bows to secure the pitch.
- I practised double-stops to strengthen the hand position and intonation in a faster tempo.



*Practicing with double-stops.*

- Finally, I practised the shifts with the double-stop sounded since this again prepared the hand for the faster tempo.

## Example

### 3. Bowing –

- First, I worked on open strings since the bowing is mostly over 3 strings per beat and needs to have the pattern automatically built in before the left hand is added.



*Open string bowing exercise.*

- Primrose's bowing exercises were very useful in this coordination.
- Isolating note groupings (eg. 1+2, 1+3, 1+4, 2+3, etc), just like the previous section helped to build up the structure of the motif.

Following these bars, I practised as usual – with staccato, portato, accents and rhythm variation.

Bars 127 - 152

a tempo  
mf

130

p

f

mp

f

p Cadenza

p poco a poco cresc.

140

f

poco a poco dim.

Tempo Iº, ♩ = 100

p

sempre dim.

150

II I

12

<sup>12</sup> Bartók, Béla 1949, *Viola Concerto, Op. posth.* Ed. Tibor Serly. Boosey & Hawkes. London. Music score. Pg 6

## Issues:

- String-crossing
- Voicing
- Double-stops
- Structuring

### 1. String-crossing (bars 129, 133, cadenza) –

- This is a very similar problem as the voicing, but on a technical level it can be practised with a motionless bow on the string – so I shifted the position of the bow from string to string to get the movement familiar in the wrist, bow arm and finger tips.
- I Practised this exercise at different parts of the bow.

## Visual Example

### 2. Voicing –

- To emphasize the voicing, which is played against a static note, whether through string crossing (bar 129) or double-stop (bar 131), I would isolate the voice on it's own to follow the musical line.
- Then with the bow, I placed heavy accents on the moving line and being extremely light on the static note in order for it not to overwhelm the overall melodic movement, especially with the the open strings.
- Bartok marks this anyway with tenuto lines, but I practised it to the extreme.



Isolating the melody

### 3. Double stops –

- In bar 135 there is a triple-stop, so finding the C in the middle of the chord helped to give a core to the chord and made the tuning of the notes around it easier to secure as well as the position of the right hand (although the lower note should still be given more weight with the bow)
- All the double-stops were worked in the same ways bars 112+116, taking away the static A pedal.

### 4. Structuring –

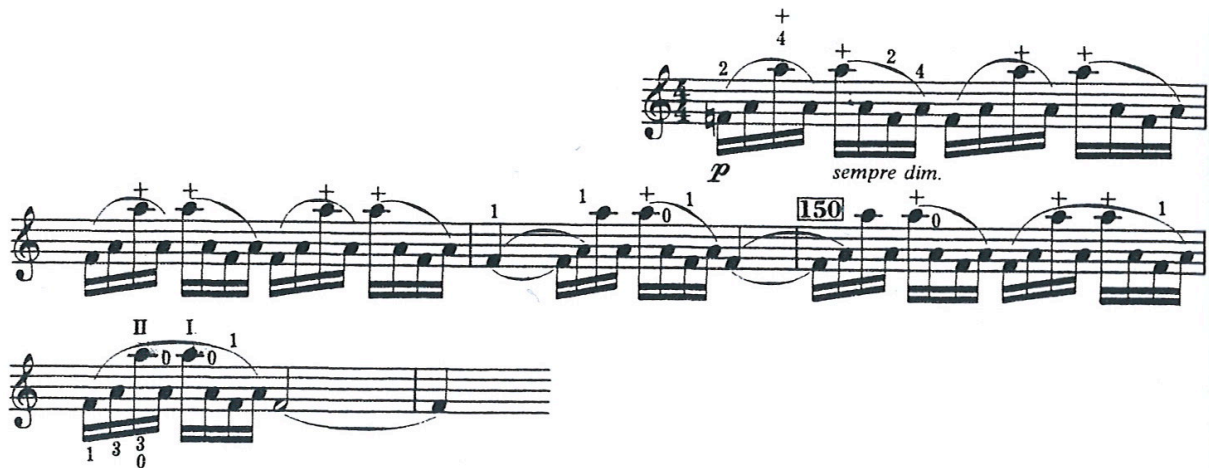
- There is a clear sequence of two alternating voices in bars 136 – 141, therefore I isolated the voices to see where they go, starting with the lower voice and then the upper voice to do the same helps to build the relationship between them and give the chromatic ascension a better direction.



The top staff shows the line of the upper melody and the bottom staff shows the lower melody. The double stops should be practised as previously demonstrated.

5. Further Issues – sounding the open A string –

- In bars 146 – 151 the viola part is an accompaniment the melody that is now in the orchestra.
- I found that the open A string never sounded very clear when I came off the octave harmonic because the sonority always carried through, so there is a suggestion by William Primrose to use a light left-hand pizzicato. This meant that I could come off the harmonic and accurately play the open string.



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The crosses show where the left hand pizzicato can be applied (this is standard notation for this kind of articulation).

<sup>13</sup> Dalton David. 1988, *Playing the Viola. Conversations with William Primrose*. OUP: New York. Pg. 142.



## Bars 160-161

160

14

### Issues:

- Fifths in chromatic ascension
- Bowing

#### 1. Fifths in chromatic ascension –

- These are very difficult to tune so as I was learning this concerto I added practising scales in fifths to my daily warm up scale routine just to get more familiar with the sensation of them.
- In this passage I learnt it in the same way as any other double-stop – starting with the lower note first, then upper, and finally both together.
- I had to make sure that the pads of my finger tips were flat against the string and aiming for the space **between** the strings, since this gives an evenness of tone to each note.
- A note-by-note building of passage was very important for securing the direction gradually.
- My pianist also suggested starting from the final double-stop (G<sup>♯</sup> + E<sup>♯</sup>) in bar 162 and then working backwards, building the scale up by getting comfortable with the notes in the higher position first.

*Building up the melody, starting at the end and working backwards.*

#### 2. Bowing –

- This was worked in the same way as it comes before, incorporating the collé stroke for added bite, since it is harder to articulate on the double-stop.

### Visual Example

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<sup>14</sup> Bartók, Béla 1949, *Viola Concerto, Op. posth.* Ed. Tibor Serly. Boosey & Hawkes. London. Music score. Pg 6 – 7.