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## "It's easier if you have a system" : analysis and applications of the Milanov violin method

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“IT’S EASIER IF YOU HAVE A SYSTEM”:  
ANALYSIS AND APPLICATIONS OF THE MILANOV VIOLIN METHOD

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by

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A development that repeats, as it were, stages that have already been passed,  
but repeats them in a different way, on a higher basis  
... that proceeds in spirals, not in a straight line; a development by leaps, catastrophes, and  
revolutions; “breaks in continuity”; the transformation of quantity into quality  
... these are some of the features of dialectics as a doctrine of  
development that is richer than the conventional one.

–Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924)

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to analyze the historical context, philosophic basis, and teaching principles of Trendafil Milanov's violin method, as well as practical applications for violin pedagogy. This qualitative case study incorporated narrative and material culture components and utilized ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews. The participants were members of the Milanov family who were raised in that tradition and an American student using the Milanov method at the time of the study. An analysis of Milanov's last published method, *First Violin Lessons* (1981), was completed to complement interview and observation data. Emergent themes related to the method's pedagogical strategies, including the encouragement of student autonomy and the use of songs as recycled material. Additional themes emerged relating to the method's treatment of violin technique, including early exposure to fingerboard geography and the emphasis of forearm rotation as fundamental to bow technique. Comparisons were made between the Milanov method and other popular violin methods, and practical applications to modern violin teaching were suggested. These findings unveil the relatively little known Milanov method and contribute to the growing body of violin pedagogy research.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Well-executed violin playing is a difficult task, ripe with complex requirements of fine motor control, proper posture, selective aural discrimination, and more. Through its history, experts have acknowledged the challenging aspects of violin playing and teaching in their writings. Galamian (1962) described the “road to violin mastery” as “long and arduous” (p. 93). The difficulties in violin playing are due in part to the mechanics and structure of the instrument, and the “optimal balance required” to cope with the unnatural position in which it places the body (Boesch, 2007, p. 8).

Professional and advanced amateur violin instruction has been largely built upon the one-on-one apprenticeship model in which a student seeks long-term guidance from an experienced violinist. Practice on this model originated traditional violin treatises (Flesch 2000; Galamian, 1962) and the most popular violin method for beginners (Suzuki, 1959a). Recent research shows that students who take private lessons are more likely to practice longer and more effectively (Hamann & Frost, 2000), establishing habits that will contribute to their technique and musical development.

However, the public school large ensemble setting in the United States created a rationale for the development of methods for that venue, in which violin or string class is taught in groups (Applebaum, 1960; Rolland, 1972). These methods address the many problems associated with beginning violin instruction based on their authors’ experiences in both settings: the private violin lesson and the group violin (or string) class. The present research explores a violin pedagogy that emerged from individual instruction, but might bring new pedagogical and technical perspectives to individual or group instruction.

There are two areas that need attention in cultivating good violin teaching: violin performance and violin pedagogy. Experienced violinists who focus on performance are trained to practice methodically in order to play at their highest levels, with their training based on intensive musical development and performance opportunities. Studio teaching is often required through their own performance successes, whether they have been prepared to start teaching or not. The search for relevant materials (pieces, technical exercises, and scales) that provide a learning sequence for students takes place throughout their teaching career. Without previous preparation and awareness of solid, basic violin pedagogy, the lesson experience can very quickly become ineffective both for the student and the teacher.

Violinists who focus on violin pedagogy are trained to teach effectively, and to use good methods towards these goals. Their training may include general string teaching, including viola and cello. As a result, they are capable of introducing the instruments to children with the support of structured lesson plans and consistent methods. However, the focus on methodology alone as the key for effective teaching may sacrifice hours of personal practice and performance experience, diminishing playing ability from the teachers' side, which can result in a narrowing of the students' understanding of the instrument.

Violin performers should be more connected with pedagogical strategies, while music educators who teach violin would benefit from more expertise on the instrument. In order to succeed as teachers, violinists must not only achieve instrumental proficiency and remain active as performers, but must also have knowledge of effective violin methods, so that a better foundation is provided to novice musicians.

I come from a performance-focused background in a generation in which the stigma 'those who can't play, teach' still resonates. I do not support this statement, because I see

effective teaching as challenging as excellent performing. I believe when teachers lack performance capabilities they are unlikely to provide students with high-level technique development from the beginning. However, a similar problem occurs if experienced performers are incapable of transmitting their technical and musical expertise: a gap is created between the beginner and advanced levels. It is my understanding that violin pedagogy from the performer's perspective is a topic in need of discussion. We need to provide students a solid start in violin, one that connects the beginner stage to the development of solid violin technique required at the advanced level with a strong pedagogical plan.

Bulgarian violin pedagogue Trendafil Milanov has developed a violin method as a result of extensive experience with early childhood music education, connecting violin pedagogy to concepts present in advanced violin playing. It is my view that, although largely unknown, the Milanov method has a promising approach to students of all ages and levels. My experiences using the Milanov method both with my own students and in my own violin technique practice have been rewarding. Sharing them and unveiling the Milanov method may contribute to violin performance pedagogy discussion. It is my hope that this examination of the Trendafil Milanov violin system will provide the violin pedagogy community with a new approach that helps connecting the violin beginner level with the performing requirements of advanced violin practice.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

In order to understand the traditional violin methods, and the need for new perspectives in violin pedagogy, this chapter will explore topics related to violin pedagogy in the US. In particular, the chapter reviews violin methods for beginners, further literature about their characteristics, and a research trend in violin pedagogy, examining the effects of finger placement markers as visual aids in string class. The review also introduces Trendafil Milanov and his Bulgarian background.

### **Violin Pedagogy in the US**

The use of organized violin pedagogy methods in the US has a long history that can be traced to the end of the 18th century. The first method books printed in the US were published by relatively unrecognized violinists who used great European violin treatises such as Geminiani, Campagnoli, Rode, Baillot, and Kreutzer as main sources (Eddy, 1990). These method books were intended for the amateur public and freely borrowed chapters from these authors. A large part of European violin methods that were republished in the US date from a time when violinists were not only great performers, but also accomplished composers and violin professors, as is the case with Rode, Baillot and Kreutzer. Several of these violinists wrote violin études, concertos and violin methods. Even before the second half of the 20th century, several string instruction initiatives were taken in the public schools of the US, always focusing on multi-instrumental classes and group instruction (Kenee, 2009). The methods containing borrowed material from European books became more and more popular, until American authors started publishing their own methods in the 1940s.

There were significant changes in the treatment of violin pedagogy as a field of study from 1940-1950, a period known as the “String Renaissance” (Garverick, 1998, p. 18), when the

most traditional string class methods in American violin pedagogy were developed and adopted (Applebaum, 1960; Rolland, 1972; Suzuki, 1959b). Since then, many accomplished violin pedagogues have written methods for beginners. To varying degrees of application in the school system or private studio teaching, these methods have become part of the American violin pedagogy tradition. While some methods can be used for individual lessons, to provide students with musical and technical material, others have also been helpful when used in a group instruction setting.

Pedagogues developing these methods were intrinsically connected to legendary violinists of the European violin tradition. Figure 1.1 shows a violin pedagogy genealogy based on select literature (Perkins, 1995; Milsom, 2003):

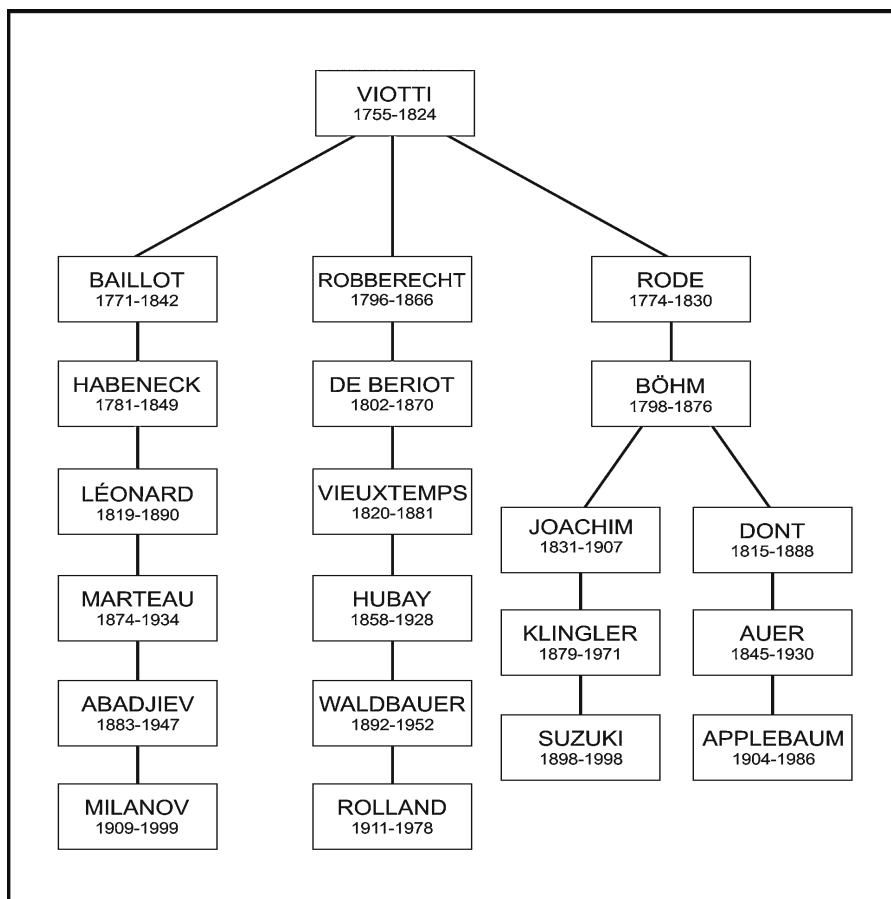


Figure 1.1. Violin Pedagogy Genealogy.

This genealogy was traced from traditional schools of violin playing to the pedagogues discussed in this review: Shinichi Suzuki, Samuel Applebaum, and Paul Rolland. Trendafil Milanov has been added to the genealogy as his contribution pertains to this study's prospective discussion. Several important violinists and pedagogues are not included for the sake of focusing on the most relevant pedagogues to this research; most of the violinists listed were students of more than one teacher. Therefore, schools of violin playing can never be rigidly delineated (Milsom, 2003), but interpretations of this genealogy can help us associate pedagogues with possible violin playing influences.

The violin tradition takes us back to Giovanni Battista Viotti and his pupils: Pierre Baillot, André Robberecht and Pierre Rode. Shinichi Suzuki studied with German violinist Karl Klingler a student of Joseph Joachim. The latter, although Hungarian by birth, belongs to the German school of violin playing. Paul Rolland's school is Hungarian: his main teacher was Imre Waldbauer, a student of Jenő Hubay. Hubay studied with Henri Vieuxtemps, but also with Joachim. Samuel Applebaum studied with Leopold Auer, who was also born in Hungary, but has been described by Flesch (2000) as a member of the Russian violin school. Trendafil Milanov's pedagogical genealogy includes Bulgarian, French, and Belgian origins, traced through Nikola Abadjiev, Henri Marteau, and Hubert Léonard to François Habeneck. Nikola Abadjiev was known for bringing the Franco-Belgian violin school to Bulgaria. The next section reviews three important contributors to the violin pedagogy tradition in the US.

### **Shinichi Suzuki (1898-1998) and *Talent Education***

Suzuki was born into a prosperous family in Japan (Perkins, 1995). His father was the owner of a factory which built *samisen*, a Japanese string instrument, and later started building violin, violas, cellos and basses (Suzuki, 1959a). The factory was one of the first to build small instruments fit for children as young as two years old. Suzuki demonstrated interest for the violin



during his teenage years, and studied in Japan until 1920, when he decided to travel to Europe to continue his violin training. He studied for eight years in Germany as a private student of Karl Klingler, member of the Klingler Quartet (Perkins, 1995). Suzuki was married in Germany and returned to Japan in 1929, where he started teaching privately.

After several international conflicts, Japan entered into World War II in 1941, a period in which Suzuki did not teach. Instead he returned to his hometown to work at his father's factory, which had been turned into a lumber mill to provide wood for seaplane rafts to the Japanese navy. Subsequently, he became very ill, and almost did not survive the war years (Suzuki, 1959a; Perkins, 1995). Like many others who survived war times, Suzuki was thankful, realizing that he had the opportunity to make his work more meaningful: "Besides my life being prolonged, many things came out of this experience that can only be called fate" (Suzuki, 1959a, p. 67). In 1945 he was invited to start his own school, and in 1955 he published his violin method as part of his Talent Education project, which later became known as the *Suzuki Violin School* (1959b).

During the wartime, Suzuki started making connections between the process of learning how to speak and the violin learning process. This connection shaped his philosophy of teaching, which he called the "mother tongue" approach: if every child learns their mother's language, they can also learn how to play the violin by the same process. The pedagogical concept involved constant exposure (listening), imitation, and repetition, all nurtured by an ideal home environment. In Suzuki's view, children should be exposed to music from the day they were born, and can start playing the violin at the age of three, or even two (Coff, 1998).

Students of the Suzuki method receive individual instruction and a group lesson every week, in which they play songs in unison. According to Suzuki, parent participation is crucial because parents provide the musical environment outside of the lesson, exposing children to

music and helping them practice at home (Kendall, 1966). Parents are present at every lesson and learn how to play the violin to help the child practice at home. The musical pieces are familiar to the child and learned according to the mother-tongue philosophy. Behrend (1998) described the music learning process through a six-step process, expanding Suzuki's philosophy: 1) Exposure, 2) Imitation, 3) Encouragement, 4) Repetition, 5) Addition, and 6) Improvement/refinement. The Suzuki method achieves best results if its philosophy is fully implemented, a process that requires parent participation and early childhood exposure to the specific repertoire included in the method prior to learning those pieces on the instrument. According to Perkins (1995), Suzuki's pedagogy is divided into three essential elements: listening (education for music sensitivity), tonalization (education for tone), and playing (education for technique).

Suzuki compiled several pieces from the violin repertoire and organized them into 10 volumes by level of difficulty. They contain pieces adapted for violin and piano, most from the Baroque period. Music learning at the initial stage is conveyed by rote, including regular exposure to recordings of the pieces. Recordings have always accompanied the method; early recordings were sold as cassette tapes, and the latest editions of the *Suzuki Violin School* method contain CD recordings of the repertoire.

The first step in teaching left hand technique is the first-position finger pattern in A major. Suzuki finds this finger pattern (the second and third together) the most natural to children's hands (Perkins, 1995). Several practitioners use finger markers on the notes of the major scale starting on open strings (Behrend, 1998), and pictures of Suzuki with his students show the finger placement markers (Starr, 1976). The fourth finger is introduced to the child a few songs later, as well as the introduction of different finger patterns.

The Suzuki method explores different finger patterns in first position before introducing the technique of shifting positions and, for that reason, “students are well beyond the beginner level when they first learn how to shift.” (Perkins, 1995, p.181). In older editions of the method, shifting from first to third position in a song is introduced in the *Vivaldi's Concerto in A minor*, first movement in *Book Four* (Suzuki, 1959b). A teacher following Suzuki's original sequencing will have students work on approximately 39 pieces before they learn how to shift. The newest editions of the method introduce shifting at the end of the second volume (Suzuki, 2007).

Suzuki does not offer additional bowing technique recommendations in his method books other than bow hold instructions. However, different sources based on observation connect Suzuki's bow hold to one advocated by Joachim and the German School. According to Perkins, “Suzuki's recommended low position of the bow arm and elbow is the most controversial aspect of his newer techniques and the least understood” (Perkins, 1995, p.44). Video recordings of Suzuki also indicate the use of a low elbow in his technique.

Suzuki wrote specific books for technique development, such as tonalization, scale, and étude books in addition to the 10 volumes of his method. These books have been translated and published during the past 20 years, and exercises from them are now integrated into the method alongside related songs.

Suzuki became an icon not only in violin education, but also in general education. He says that education starts from the day a child is born: “Talent is not inborn, it has to be created” (Suzuki, 1969, p.46). He is accredited for bringing the possibility of early-age violin playing to the awareness of American violin teachers (Kendall, 1966). Suzuki wanted his work acknowledged and validated by American teachers in order to gain the approval and confidence of Japanese teachers; for that purpose, he recorded a video of hundreds of his students playing

Bach's *Double Concerto* (in a performance in Tokyo) and sent it to the US via Kenji Moshizuki, who showed it to the violin professor Clifford Cook, in Ohio in 1958 (Kendall, 1966). The video was shown in that year during an Ohio String Teacher Association meeting. The results displayed in the video impressed Clifford Cook and John Kendall, both important members of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA). They traveled to Japan to investigate the method: Kendall spent three months during 1959 completing observations and interviews with teachers and parents, and Cook visited there for two years in 1962 (Perkins, 1995). Kendall and Cook facilitated several of Suzuki and Japanese student visits to the US.

The Suzuki method since then has represented a huge turnaround in violin and string pedagogy in the US and abroad. In the 1960s John Kendall and several other teachers were strong advocates of the proliferation of the method (Perkins, 1995). Thus American teachers were presented with a new method full of new discoveries; ultimately Suzuki received the acknowledgment of his compatriot teachers, which culminated in the creation of the Talent Education Institute, founded in 1967. In 1969, Suzuki's wife translated his book, *Nurtured By Love*, which made his philosophy more accessible to American teachers. The Suzuki Association of the Americas was founded in the late 1960's, and the method has since been used worldwide. It has influenced and has been influenced by several other violin methods and teachers. Revisions of the method occur periodically and Suzuki Violins and Co. still provides quality student violins.

### **Samuel Applebaum (1904-1986) and *The Belwin String Builder***

Samuel Applebaum graduated from the Julliard School, where he studied with Leopold Auer. He taught violin at the Manhattan School for 35 years and was the American editor of *The Strad*, a British strings magazine. Applebaum wrote several methods for strings and was an

active member of American String Teachers Association (ASTA), which voted him their Teacher of the Year in 1967. Applebaum was a very popular figure among string teachers and within the soloist circle. Together with his wife, Sada Applebaum, he wrote the series *The Way They Play* (Applebaum, 1972-1984). In 14 volumes he interviewed famous violin, viola, and cello players, including Yehudi Menuhin, Josef Gingold, Mischa Elman, and Itzhak Perlman. These books include pictures of left-hand positions and bow holds, but are not intended as instruction books: rather, they provide authentic source material for string musicians, reporting on curiosities of the soloists in interviews and on their technique peculiarities. Applebaum also published *The Art and Science of Violin Performing* (Applebaum and Lindsay, 1986), which explains his violin technique principles in interview format.

Before 1960, most method books used in the US were compilations of translated European books (Eddy, 1990). Applebaum's interest in violin teaching contributed to the improvement of string pedagogy in the US. His most popular method, *The Belwin String Builder* (Applebaum, 1960), a method for string class—including violin, viola, cello and bass—provides a learning sequence for string students. Applebaum provides separate books for all the stringed instruments, but they play the songs together with piano accompaniment in class. The songs are very simple at first, using what Applebaum calls “the quarter-note approach” (Applebaum, 1960). Students learn the open strings, and then are slowly introduced to one finger at a time—all with quarter notes. An entire book is dedicated to learning finger patterns in first position, and fingerboard charts show the distance between fingers. Half notes and rests are slowly introduced and third position, and shifting is taught at the end of the second book. Bow strokes are developed in *Books* three and four. Songs are simple and at one time were popular among children. Applebaum also included a book with studies on third and fifth position, and another

one on second and fourth. There are no illustrations on how to hold the instrument and bow, just brief pedagogical instructions (Applebaum, 1960). It is possible that the absence of detailed instruction trusts the teacher to choose his or her approach. Additionally, Applebaum used to offer teacher training through ASTA and has an LP collection of seven volumes, in which he talks about proper posture and suggests exercises to solidify violin technique. Selections from *The Belwin String Builder* are still used in public schools for their practical approach to strings group class, as support material for sight-reading, and also in the private studio as complementary repertoire (Smith, 1985; Lin, 2010).

### **Paul Rolland (1911-1978) and *The Teaching of Action in String Playing***

Paul Rolland was born in Hungary and studied violin with Desdoz Rados and Imre Waldbauer in Budapest, then moved to the US with his string quartet in the 1930s. He applied for residency and started teaching at the University of Illinois, where he worked for 33 years and developed his method in string teaching. His method *Prelude to String Playing* (Rolland, 1972) and his book *The Teaching of Action in String Playing* (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974)—which also contains a series of films—are based on his research about the role of movement in the acquisition of string playing technique and his experience in classrooms (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974). Rolland recommends books developed by the project used as musical material, but also makes clear that his principles are applicable to literature of the teacher's choice.

Rolland was a founding member of the ASTA and served as editor of the its journal, during which time he helped develop the new ideas in the violin pedagogy of Applebaum and Suzuki, among others, available to American string teachers (Perkins, 1995). He worked in collaboration with F. A. Hellenbrandt, the physiologist who wrote a scientific analysis of the motions involved in violin playing, which forms the first chapter of Rolland's book, *The*

*Teaching of Action in String Playing* (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974). Rolland also gives credit to Fredrick Matthias Alexander, the creator of the Alexander Technique, as an influence on his work. The Alexander Technique approaches performance of activities with minimal effort and balance through body awareness (Gelb, 1996). Much of Rolland's interest in playing freely derived from the influence of his teacher, Imre Waldbauer, who advocated a similar idea: a good sound production through balanced use of the body (Perkins, 1995).

The basic principles of violin playing in Rolland's teachings include motion, leverage, and gestalt. He views string playing as motion, and therefore the whole body (and the whole being) should be engaged in that activity. Rolland criticizes traditional violin teachings that concentrate purely on finger motion and sacrifice comfort for fast results. He suggests that the actions in the book are developmental and remedial, which makes it possible for previously injured players to regain confidence in their playing (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974).

Rolland also introduces action exercises for the positioning of the violin and bow, as well as right and left hand actions in the beginning of his method. For example, he introduces "The Case Walk" (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974), in which students carry their cases over their heads to help strengthen the arm muscles, and the "Statue of Liberty" (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974), where the violin is held up over the student's head while facing the teacher, then placed on the collarbone with a counter-clockwise movement of the arm. This action ensures that the violin will be high enough as it is placed from above, an easier movement for children than from below (Lin, 2010). Left-hand exercises facilitate playing in different positions from a much earlier stage, as compared to Applebaum and Suzuki. "The Shuttle" (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974) is one of his most popular exercises, in which students move their arms up and down the fingerboard while plucking the strings with the left hand.

The bow hold is taught in great detail in Rolland's method, initially using a pencil to solidify the correct position. Once the pencil position is comfortable, the child starts holding the bow at the balance point where it is not as heavy, and, only after that the bow hold is completely established, at the frog. Once the bow hold is established, several actions help strengthen the use of the bow (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974).

Rolland proposes a shift of emphasis from the teaching of notes and tunes to the teaching of basic violin foundation. He criticizes the "all too frequent approach of the string teacher: one of 'end gaining' rather than one of purposeful and methodical building" (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974, p. 4). Rolland often observed this "end-gaining" approach in the private studio and class setting (p. 4).

To present public concerts, regardless of the quality of the performance, is often the prime goal for even a first-year class. While there is nothing wrong in giving such goals as motivation, the teacher should have a clear idea of how to fit such short-term objectives into a long-range program" (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974, p. 4).

Rolland has provided a new approach to body awareness in violin playing, where specific instructions provide teachers with better strategies for violin instruction. Children being more aware of the use of their bodies may contribute to fewer cases of injury throughout their adult life.

This review of important pedagogues is crucial to understanding of how string pedagogy developed in this country and in considering available choices for violin teaching. There is a vast exchange of information that enriches violin pedagogy, providing teachers with different approaches. The methods of the above-mentioned pedagogues have become their own schools of violin and string pedagogy. The following discussion of research on some of their pedagogical achievements and applications provides an understanding of their influence in the field.



## **Research Trends in Violin Pedagogy**

Violin pedagogy typically falls under the umbrella of string pedagogy. As an independent field of study, violin pedagogy is still lacking substantial research (Mishra, 2000). Part of the limited research reviewed in this chapter falls into the following categories: 1) Examination of select violin methods, delineating their main characteristics, and comparing of their pedagogies, with the intent of highlighting the best qualities in each method (Fischbach, 1972; Perkins, 1995); 2) Study of an expert string practitioner as a model of effective advanced teaching, grounded in the theoretical concepts to which they ascribed (Gholson, 1998); and 3) Research regarding possible effects of finger placement markers in string class (Bergonzi, 1997; Smith, 1985). Research including direct sources from pedagogues on the conception of their own methods and their comparative analyses can be helpful to delineate each method's strengths. Similarly, research investigating the applications of these string methods' can help us identify their practicality. Such types of research provide the string pedagogy community with insights into different methods and their applications. Furthermore, research in more advanced violin teaching provides violin teachers with better strategies for the studio violin setting.

Gerald Fischbach's (1972) doctoral dissertation compares Samuel Applebaum's and Paul Rolland's methods, their applications and results. He experimented with both methods during 35 classes (of 45 minutes each), dividing students into two classes: one using the Applebaum method, the other the Rolland method. At the end of the term, Fischbach's most important finding was that although students using Applebaum method had better sight-reading development, the Rolland students had developed better technical qualities, including a more proficient bow arm and a larger range of bow strokes. Fischbach concluded that the principles developed in Rolland's students are not as perceptible in terms of music preparation as they are

in terms of good posture and technical abilities. Fischbach also includes a discussion comparing the Suzuki and Rolland methods, including a letter from Rolland describing how his method differs from Suzuki's.

Marianne Perkins (1995) wrote a comparative analysis of the Rolland, Kato Havas, and Suzuki methods, based entirely on her direct contact with those pedagogues. She offered detailed accounts on each method and thoroughly compared their techniques and philosophies. As a result her work became a reliable first-hand source in string pedagogy. Perkins concluded that Suzuki's technique "appears to conform more closely to the older, German school traditions" and Rolland's technique "confirms the ... modern refinement and synthesis of the collective European-school traditions and Carl Flesch's ideas" (1995, p. 201). The latter conclusion provides string teachers with the important details of the violin technique from each violin school, and shows how to make use of each method's best features. The Suzuki method's popularity may have overshadowed some of the great ideas proposed by Rolland. Perkins also observed that Rolland's methodology lost favor after his death, and "has been eclipsed in the US by the popularity of the Suzuki Method" (1995, p. 202). A question for future research left by Perkins (1995) is: "is it possible for string teachers to be entirely objective or total 'purists' when restricting their teaching to one method or another?" (p. 205) Nowadays finding teachers who base their entire teaching methodology in only one method is difficult, and an emerging tradition of string teachers use Rolland's concepts combined with Suzuki's methodology (Schwandt, 2006; Zweig, 2007).

Further research focusing on the private lesson setting is needed as much of what expert pedagogues can offer at the advanced level studio setting remains undocumented, if not unobserved or unanalyzed. Research on models of expertise in applied lesson teaching (Gholson,

1998) helps practitioners delineate important strategies in the applied studio. Gholson (1998) investigated the studio of pedagogue Dorothy Delay in a case study design that included observations, interviews, fieldnotes, and copies of lesson materials, including a notebook of student work and worksheets of student progress. Selected transcriptions of lessons were analyzed through coding and layered analysis. Interviews with Delay were recorded and provided additional data. The analyses indicated patterns that generated strategies of the practitioner in the studio, including preparatory and facilitative strategies. Research led to the framing of Ms. DeLay's teaching philosophy within the concept of “proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86), which means the master might take the pupil's background into consideration in order to create a productive and nurturing environment. The proximal development theory is relevant because “it reveals the nature of and present models for developing effective lines of instructional communication” (Gholson, 1998, p. 539) and makes Delay’s pedagogical principles available to researchers.

Traditional violin methods start by introducing the violin in first position (Applebaum, 1960; Suzuki, 1959), and some students tend to remain in that fingerboard area for an extensive period of time. The current approach to the violin left hand in most violin beginner settings is to work on a specific finger pattern in first position until the student becomes comfortable with the instrument. The need for fast results in the beginner violin lesson and classroom may have influenced practitioners to adopt the use of visual aids in the instrument to facilitate performance. Finger placement markers are largely utilized to provide a visual aid to students until their perception is fully developed and they can distinguish pitch with more autonomy. The strategy of using finger placement markers is applied to different extent throughout methods. Suzuki recommended finger markers as a guide to parents and suggested markers for the notes on the

major scale, starting on open strings (a major-second, major-third and perfect-fourth from the open string), sometimes including a mark for the fourth finger as well, a perfect fifth from the open string (Behrend, 1998; Starr, 1976). Rolland advises the use of marks for the first and third fingers (a major-second and perfect-fourth from open string) and a “high dot” for the harmonic at the octave (the half-point of the string) (Lin, 2010). The use of finger placement markers has been examined through various lenses by a number of researchers (Bergonzi, 1997; Smith, 1985).

Smith (1985) investigated the effect of the use of finger placement markers on the development of accurate intonation for beginning violin students. The study was conducted with university students enrolled in string technique class during a 16-week period. The students were divided into three groups of six students each. Group A students did not use finger placement markers (FMPs) over the course of the class; Group B used two FMPs (a major-second and minor-third interval above the open string) during the entire 16 weeks; and Group C used FMPs for only the first eight weeks of the experimental period. The findings of this study should be interpreted cautiously, because all subjects, although beginners in strings, had previous musical knowledge (they were music majors). The first eight weeks were taught by rote learning combining the technique of Rolland with Suzuki literature. Reading skills were developed in the second half of the course with selected literature from the repertoire. Students in Group C, whose FMPs were removed after the first half of the experiment, showed the greatest decline between weeks 8 and 16. This result can be interpreted as representative of the need for a visual aid created in order to play in tune, instead of a solid aural and kinesthetic skill development. However, the removal of the FMPs also coincided with the week the students started focusing more on reading, which may have influenced their ability to deal with so many problems at once.

The study also measured general intellectual ability by means of scholastic aptitude test scores, and this variable seemed to have a stronger connection with the development of intonation accuracy than any other variable, including FPM. This data also indicates that stimulating students' critical thinking to connect with the sound they want to create might have a greater impact on finding notes on the fingerboard than by simply placing a finger on a pre-determined area. Researchers and practitioners seem to have overlooked this result, which have direct implications on the teaching of left-hand technique. Although visual aids can stimulate immediate results, it is still in question whether these results will carry on to the application of student learning, so that the learning sequence is logical rather than an isolated experience.

Bergonzi (1997) investigated the effect of FPMs and harmonic context on string intonation and performance of elementary school string players. He acknowledged two main research fields: one regarding the effect of harmonic accompaniment on the development of a sense of tonality; and the other examining the effect of finger placement markers on the development of better intonation. However, Bergonzi determined no consensus on the effects of finger placement markers combined with harmonic accompaniment in teaching beginning string players. The focus of his research was to analyze how tactile or visual reference (FPM) and aural reference (harmonic accompaniment) can—combined and separately—influence the development of string intonation performance skills. Both finger markers and harmonic context were taken into consideration in the statistical data. Bergonzi randomly applied FPMs to string instruments individually within schools. Scores on a musical aptitude profile were used as a covariate (a variable that is possibly predictive of this study's outcome) and a researcher-created test of beginning string performance was used as a post-test to evaluate student's individual performance skills. Musical materials comprised a one-octave D-major scale, four simple songs

from the school's first-year string curriculum, and students prepared songs with and without teacher assistance. Student performances were videotaped. Two highly experienced string teachers received extensive training to judge student performances. Judgment isolated technical and musical criteria. Left-hand technique was evaluated during scale and arpeggio performances, focusing on the position of the left arm, hand, wrist, thumb and fingers (as described by Suzuki and Rolland), using a 4-point scale. Students were assigned audiocassette tapes to practice. Some students were given audio that consisted of harmonic accompaniment; some were given just rhythm underlining figures. Pieces of transparent tape applied to the fingerboard, at specific intervals of a major second and a perfect fourth above the open string, were used as finger placement markers. Analyses were conducted to investigate the effect of FPM and harmonic context on string performance, specifically in intonation performance skills and overall musical performance. Left-hand position was also investigated, specifically the position and functional movements of the arm, hand, wrist, and fingers. Results indicated that students whose instruments had FPMs, or students whose practice and instruction were accompanied by harmonic background, had higher scores than did their counterparts for both performance tasks. Results of the left-hand evaluation suggested that the independent variables (FPM and harmonic context) neither assisted nor hindered the development of students' left-hand technique. FPMs were more effective for intonation and harmonic context was more effective for achieving a higher degree of performance overall.

Bergonzi's study confirms the idea that FPMs help with intonation, but it also breaks with long-held beliefs that FPMs help left-hand technique, as stated in string pedagogy books and methods (Anderson and Frost, 1986; Behrend, 1998; Johnson, 1985; Kohut, 1973; Matesky & Rusch, 1963). His results also contradict the belief that harmonic context provides better

intonation, suggesting that piano accompaniment provides a better overall musical-performance ability instead. That study reveals that FPMs should be used with caution because, although they provide fast intonation results, they have not been proven to improve left-hand technique. The justification for the use of FPMs is that beginner students have not yet developed enough aural skills to find the notes themselves. A more effective solution to the problem of tuning accuracy could be to focus on developing students' aural skills in conjunction with violin playing, rather than giving them more and more visual aids to facilitate violin playing. The overuse of markers (either over time or in the amount of markers) may represent a drawback to the student if, instead of building a sense of intonation in an aural process, student and teachers' focus is exclusively on a visual or physical aid. The extant research on string and violin pedagogy remains limited and the string pedagogy community might benefit from more studies of methods and their applications in the studio or classroom setting.

### **Trendafil Milanov and Violin Traditions in Bulgaria**

The violin tradition in Bulgaria developed considerably when, at the country's liberation from the Ottomans in 1878, its government began placing greater value on arts education. Thus a need arose to preserve Bulgaria's national identity and art forms, while the culture as a whole became more influenced by Western European art. It was common for prosperous families to send their children to study in Western and Central Europe, where art education was well-known for its high standards. Great importance was given to establishing a Bulgarian educational system, and that was accomplished by importing teachers from Europe, especially from the Czech Republic (or the former Kingdom of Bohemia) (Curtis, 1992).

The school system in Bulgaria differs from that of the US. From a music education point of view, the basic difference concerns the student who, if he or she wants to pursue a music

career, must pass an audition in a highly specialized music high school. As often occurs, students get help of vocational instruction from 8th grade in order to decide which profession they want to pursue. Once the student enters a music high school, the education offered is narrowly focused and includes few courses outside of music. This process ensures a better emphasis on the student's area of concentration than that of the US system. Students take private lessons at a minimum of twice per week in addition to courses in performance practice and pedagogy.

Professionalized music education developed in Bulgaria at the end of the 19th century. Since then, several pedagogues and violin performers have had much success in and outside of the country. A founder of the Bulgarian violin tradition, Nikola Abadjiev, graduated from the Brussels Conservatory, and studied violin primarily with Henri Marteau, a famous pedagogue who himself studied in Paris (and, as previously noted, whose violin school traces back to Baillot). Nikola Abadjiev was an accomplished pedagogue who wanted to raise the quality of violin pedagogy in Bulgaria, and he stood very passionately against what he called “an amateur way of teaching the violin” (Grudev, 1981, p.98). Among Abadjiev students were Trendafil Milanov, Vasil Chernaev (who premiered several violin concertos in Bulgaria), and Vasco Abadjiev (Nikola's son and the most legendary violin virtuoso from Bulgaria).

### **The Milanov Violin Pedagogy: An Overview**

Trendafil Milanov (1909-1999) invested a great deal of his life in teaching violin to students of all ages and developing his pedagogical system. Most of the method's experimentation stage included his daughter, Stoika Milanova—who later studied with David Oistrakh and won second prize in the 1967 *Queen Elizabeth Competition*—and Yova Milanova, his granddaughter, also an accomplished violinist who has been teaching the method for over 20 years. Yova was a member of the first group of children that studied with Milanov in the 1970s



while he and a group of teachers implemented their methods at the Research Center for Music Education in the Sofia Music School, Bulgaria.

The Milanov method approaches violin pedagogy according to the nature of the instrument from an advanced player's perspective. The process used to develop left-hand technique makes it vastly different than most popular violin methods. Instead of using the standard positions, spending considerable time in first position, the Milanov method uses simple songs, familiar to children from previous solfeggio lessons, as material to be transposed and played in several positions on all four strings. The method offers a great development of fingerboard geography by exploring several movements of the left hand through horizontal motion along the strings, vertical pressure, and a variation of movements across the strings. This unique feature of the method helps solidify ear training and advanced violin technique in its embryonic form, while immediately offering a more holistic understanding of the fingerboard (Milanov, 1981).

Tone production is at the heart of Milanov's system, and it is incorporated through activities that prepare the child to produce a quality sound. His teacher Nikola Abadjiev, a violinist who studied at the Brussels Conservatory, is credited with bringing new trends from the Franco-Belgian violin school to Bulgaria (Grudev, 1981). Milanov registered much of the knowledge he gained from his teacher in his method, the most prominent Franco-Belgian characteristic being the approach to bow technique, entirely based on the rotary movement of the forearm.

The purpose of this study was to explore the practical applications of the Milanov method, more specifically the last published version of *First Violin Lessons* (1981), his two-volume violin method. To that end, the use of qualitative research techniques served two

purposes: 1) To provide historical context and biographical information about Milanov and his teaching principles; and 2) To examine the practical applications of portions of the method in lessons. The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the history and philosophy behind the Milanov method?
2. How is the Milanov method implemented in lessons?
3. What aspects of the method can be recontextualized in modern violin teaching practice?

The violin applied-lesson environment lacks in research tradition, and qualitative studies can provide a deeper understanding of what happens in that environment. Few researchers have directed their attention to the use of a specific method in the applied-lesson setting, and for that reason a need to extend the literature remains. Although it provides non-generalizable findings, the use of qualitative research inquiry focused on one student at a time can help us identify the dynamic of the lesson and observe the surroundings of that setting on a deeper level than observing an entire studio of multiple subjects. A case study provides perspectives that can be reflected and applied to other contexts through the concept of naturalistic generalization (Melrose, 2009).

Naturalistic generalization is a process where readers gain insight by reflecting on the details and descriptions presented in case studies. As readers recognize similarities in case study details and find descriptions that resonate with their own experiences; they consider whether their situations are similar enough to warrant generalizations. Naturalistic generalization invites readers to apply ideas from the natural and in-depth depictions presented in case studies to personal contexts. (2009, p. 1)

The Milanov method has not been examined by researchers in the violin performance or violin pedagogy fields. Therefore, a qualitative research design brings first-hand perspectives on the method's history and applications. The proliferation of the method's concepts might provide another approach to violin teachers and expand the dialogue in violin pedagogy.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

The present study was built on qualitative research methodology, which facilitated developing a deeper understanding of the Milanov method (1981). Through the collection and analysis of multiple sources of data, I have learned the history of the method, its philosophy, pedagogical principles, and practical applications. Qualitative research inquiry is not often used in research in performance. Therefore, terms specific to that research inquiry are explained in this section.

Qualitative research inquiry was accepted as a legitimate research technique towards the end of the 20th century. It emerged from anthropology and social sciences, both areas of study that utilize ethnography as a tool to research, analyze, and describe a particular human society (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research provides “the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). As opposed to quantitative research, which has a pre-established research format in which standard statistic results are expected, qualitative research focuses on the richness and peculiar aspects of a specific culture. Instead of selecting a large number of participants and a diverse sample, the qualitative researcher focuses on participants that represent a possible perspective of a culture. Findings of qualitative research are not generalizable, but can be applied to naturalistic generalization (Stake and Trumbull, 1982). They offer richer and more complex characteristics of the research problem in question, which might help readers to reflect on their applications. Unlike quantitative research, in qualitative research the voice of the researcher is acknowledged through the use of first person (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative methods gained greater acceptance in music education journals as authors felt the need to provide more humanized information about various research problems (Roulston, 2006). This type of research inquiry can be particularly helpful in pedagogy, given the fact that several aspects of performance technique are passed through generations, several times, undocumented.

Case study is a qualitative research methodology in which the researcher studies a closed system over time, keeping a detailed record of data collection through multiple sources such as observations, fieldnotes, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents (Creswell, 2007). Observations in the chosen field are a crucial part of this case study. Observations usually begin with total immersion in the chosen field as a whole, until the researcher is familiar with the field and can work with an emerging design that will focus the research. I have followed the ethnographic research cycle proposed by James P. Spradley (1980), in which the researcher asks ethnographic questions, collects ethnographic data, makes ethnographic record, analyses ethnographic data, writes the ethnographic report, and goes back to the beginning of the cycle as a form of triangulation (or prism), so that data is checked with research participants.

In the case study format, the research report includes an analysis of selected themes based on that case. Often times a case study research design includes narrative aspects from the stories told by the research participants, as the researcher is constantly picturing the environment the participants lived, and the details about their past. In this sense, research can be “guided by an implicit narrative structure, by a story we tell about the peoples we study” (Bruner, 1986, p. 139). The present case study focused on the private violin lesson, in which the second volume of *First Violin Lessons* (1981), Milanov’s last published method, was taught by Yova Milanova to

Sophia Ceballos, her most successful student. Data collection strategies included extensive observations, interviews, and analysis of material culture.

I conducted observations of violin lessons taught by Yova Milanova to Sophia Ceballos during the spring semesters of 2011 and 2012. I completed live observations of 13 lessons and watched video recordings of 10 lessons. Lessons were taught at Yova's residence in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and were generally an hour in length. I also observed her performances at the end of each semester. Videotaped lessons (including the live observations) totaled approximately 20 hours. They were transcribed and resulted in 33 single-spaced pages of text data. Fieldnotes were taken during the observed lessons in order to enrich transcriptions later (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). I catalogued lessons with the specific techniques learned on top of every transcript page to facilitate further analysis. I also had the opportunity to be a participant observer (Spradley, 1980), by having a lesson with Yova Milanova on one of the method's *tema*<sup>1</sup> in the second volume, and a lesson with Milanov's daughter, Stoika Milanova, on basic technical exercises from the method's first volume.

To enrich the research narrative, I conducted extensive interviews with Stoika and Yova. Most of Milanov's biographical information was derived from interview data. I also interviewed Sophia and her mother Marie Ceballos with the purpose of showing their perspective on the method. I used semi-structured interview techniques, design, and subsequent analysis models proposed by Fontana and Frey (1994). The interviews were at times unstructured. They were carefully planned as semi-structured systems, but in order to give the participants more freedom to express their views, they often took a more conversational tone. Interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed, resulting in a total of 51 transcribed pages of text data.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapters of the Milanov Method are called *temas*. Each *tema* explores a technique development topic.

Also pertinent to my research was the analysis of material culture (Hodder, 1993). In his method, Hodder argues that material culture can be interpreted in combination with speaking subjects, utilizing “what is said” to fit into more common understandings (1993, p. 398). This research has used Milanov’s method books as the main material culture to be analyzed and checked with research participants. Other sources of material culture included pictures, Milanov’s letters from distinguished violinists such as David Oistrakh and Peter Bodarenko, and participant’s interpretations from Milanov’s book *New Directions in Music Education* (1979).

The book *New Directions in Music Education* contains extremely ornamented and old-fashioned language, aside from including trends from psychology that influenced Milanov’s teaching philosophy. The technical language of the book was an obstacle to obtaining a translation of it. Yova and I referred to it as “the purple book.” I made several attempts to have it translated, or at least briefly explained to me by friends, but the technical language, plus Milanov’s ornamented writing style did not contribute to get the task accomplished. Stoika and Yova revealed that they have tried to interpret the writings in the book without much success because of Milanov’s technical terms and philosophical thinking. Yova and I discussed how examining portions of “the purple book” could be relevant for this research, especially with regards to explaining Milanov’s teaching principles. She then selected a few chapters to read for me and made audio recordings of the introduction and selected portions. She focused on chapters in which Milanov talked about methodologies in Bulgaria during his time there, and proposed his philosophy and teaching principles as an option to gear music education in Bulgaria towards new directions. As any source of material culture, the “purple book” material explored in this monograph is not an exact translation of Milanov’s book, but an interpretation recorded by Yova and adapted where I discuss Milanov’s teaching principles (see Chapter 4). Therefore, it will not

be rigidly cited as Milanov's publication, since it is embedded in the participant's interpretation of it.

The full set of compiled data for this study included fieldnotes, transcriptions from observations, and material culture documents relevant to the research. The analysis process took place during and after data collection. Video and audio recordings were revisited and pages of fieldnotes and transcriptions reread until primary themes emerged. The analysis process used open and focused coding (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). Open coding was used to allow themes to emerge from data analysis, while focused coding was used once specific themes became relevant to the subject matter. Some of the themes related to the history of the Milanov method, while others related specifically to the method's philosophy and pedagogical applications. Research themes are explained and supported by data through the research findings. To ensure the validity of the research, the analysis of themes was checked back with the research participants, especially Yova and Stoika Milanova, but also with Sophie and Marie Ceballos, a student of the method and her mother. Triangulation of data from multiple sources (observations, interviews, and material culture) helped confirm research findings (Flick, 2009).

The Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board approved this study at the beginning of the research process. All participants were signed a consent form, which can be found in Appendix A with the IRB approval.

### **Limitations of the Research**

Emerging themes are connected to Milanov's career, philosophy, teaching principles and approach to violin technique. The findings in this research are limited solely to my experience with the method and, therefore are not generalizable. In qualitative research, one of the researcher's challenges is to understand concepts through multiple lenses. As much as a

researcher needs to strive for objectivity and clarity, his or her subjectivity must be embraced before funneling findings into more shaped interpretations. Jørgensen (2009) offers a perspective on the matter of objectivity. She suggests “objectivity” (lowercase “o”) as a middle ground between the subjectivity needed in the process of qualitative research, and the rigid “Objectivity (uppercase “O”)—the latter sense might be taken, not in the strict sense of definitive meanings, but “in the soft sense of knowledge that continues to be tested and verified, where multiple perspectives are combined to establish shared understandings that continue to be subject to revision but are useful for the present and taken as more-or-less trustworthy” (Jørgensen, 2009, p. 76). Therefore, although qualitative research findings cannot be taken as a means for large generalizations, they certainly offer models that can be adopted successfully in violin pedagogy.

### **Participants**

The research participants were Yova Milanova and Stoika Milanova (Milanov’s daughter and granddaughter), Sophia Ceballos (Yova’s most successful student at the time), and Marie Ceballos (Sophia’s mother). Yova selected Sophia for this research to make it possible to better analyze the method’s results.

### **A Word on Naming**

Sophia and Marie Ceballos are pseudonyms chosen to protect the anonymity of the participants (Yova’s violin student and her mother) according to ethical principles of qualitative research. Yova and Stoika Milanova are part of the Milanov tradition, and since their names and careers are bound to the Milanov method, they both agreed that the use of their real names would be more appropriate.



## **Yova Milanova**

Yova Milanova was born into a family of musicians. She had her first tour as a soloist of a chamber orchestra at the age of 6, and at age 8 she gave her first violin recital. She debuted in London's "Queen Elisabeth Hall" at age 11, followed by her recording for the "Southern Television" (England) as a soloist of the Bournemouth Sinfonietta. Yova studied with her grandfather Trendafil, her mother Stoika, André Gertler, and Walter Verdehr among others. She is a winner of the Maria Canals International Competition (Spain, 1989), and has graduated with honors from State Music School "Liubomir Pipkov" (Sofia, Bulgaria), State Academy of Music "Pancho Vladigerov" (Sofia, Bulgaria), and the School of Music (Enschede, Holland). She was also awarded the "Cobb Award" at Michigan State University. After culminating her studies at Michigan State, Yova has worked extensively as a performer and teacher. She has performed in Bulgaria, England, Belgium, Portugal, France, Hungary, Germany, Spain, Holland, Venezuela, and United States. She currently lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and is the owner and Artistic Director of Grace Notes Music Studio, the first studio to apply the Milanov method in the US. I met Yova in 2009, and have been captivated by her playing ever since. Luckily, we became co-workers shortly after I started observing her teaching.

## **Stoika Milanova**

Stoika Milanova is Trendafil Milanov's daughter. She was born in 1945 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria and took violin lessons from her father until she was 18 years old. Stoika was the Gold Medalist at the Music Festivals in Sofia and Helsinki in 1952 and 1962 respectively. She was given, in addition, a special diploma by the jury, presided over by Mstislav Rostropovich. She was invited to join David Ostrakh's class in 1964, where she was his student for five years. During this time she won the gold medal at the 1967 Queen Elizabeth International Competition,

in Belgium. In 1968, she was a guest of Yehudi Menuhin at the Bach Festival in Great Britain where she played chamber music with the Maestro himself, and the pianist Clifford Kurzon. Two years later Stoika won the First Prize at the Carl Flesch competition in London and has since toured numerous times Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the US, Canada, and South America. In 1973 she received the *Grand Prix du Disque de l'Academie Charles Gros* in Paris and the Belgium Radio and Television award. In that same year, she recorded all of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerti with Karl Munchinger and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra for DECCA Records. She has also recorded many important works for violin and orchestra for the Bulgarian label Balkanton. Stoika was granted the *Sagittario d'Oro* award in Rome in 1983 for her contributions to the arts, and nominated to the *Woman of the Year* award in 1995 by the Biographical Center in North Carolina. She has taught master classes and seminars in the Royal Academy of Music (London), Tokyo, Japan, Brazil, and Venezuela. She is a faculty member of the Music Conservatory in Sofia. Stoika Milanova plays on a Guarneri del Gesù "Consolo" violin from 1733. During the research period, it was fortunate that she visited Baton Rouge to perform with the Louisiana State University Symphony Orchestra, for during this visit I was able to interview her, as well play for her at a master class and take lesson on Milanov's pedagogical activities. In our encounters, she spoke about her father, her career and passion for the violin.

### **Sophia and Marie Ceballos**

Sophia Ceballos, 8 years old at the time of the study, is a home-schooled student. She lives in a small town in Louisiana with her parents and she has two sisters who play the piano. Sophia started taking violin lessons with Yova when she was 6 years old and her training is essentially based on the Milanov method. Sophia also enjoys activities such as reading, creative

writing, pottery, sewing, and gymnastics. It was fun to interact with Sophia and her sense of humor, watching her progress as a proud little violinist.

Marie Ceballos, Sophia's mother, studied International Relations at the University of Tulane (New Orleans) and International Relations at Bristol University (England). She now dedicates herself to raising and educating her three daughters while also working at the local public library. She has also engaged in philanthropic projects and volunteering with non-profit arts organizations. Marie is a very caring mother who celebrates every step accomplished by her children.

### **Chapters Design**

This research report is organized as follows: Chapter 4, provides historical and biographical background, and context to the research findings. It describes the life of Trendafil Milanov and his career as a pedagogue, which led to his philosophical and teaching principles. The chapter is divided into sections of Biography, Historical Context, Philosophical Foundation and *First Violin Lessons* (1981): Structural Frames. I have used narrative research (Bruner, 1986) and material culture techniques (Hodder, 1993) to shape this chapter. The chapter's discussion reflects qualitative research methods, although introductory and contextual in nature. Most theoretical findings about Milanov's teaching and philosophical principles were identified throughout observations and interviews before I had access to Milanov's writing accounts. Triangulation was completed after Milanov's writings were translated, towards the end of the research process.

Chapter 5 shows applications of select *temas* based on the experience with the practitioners whom I studied, organized according to the research's emerging themes. The chapter is divided into two sections: Pedagogical Strategies and Violin Technique Development.

The pedagogical strategies most consistently adopted in lessons became themes: Student Autonomy, and Songs as Recycled Musical Material. The aspects of violin technique approached most often by the Milanov method are examined in the themes Up and Down and Forearm Rotation. Some overlapping of topics across sections is inevitable because of the nature of the method's organization.

Chapter 6 forms two parts: Comparing and Connecting, in which I place the emerging themes from the Milanov method in perspective within the extant methods and literature; and Milanov in Context, in which I foresee possible applications and adaptations of the method's best features to current string pedagogy venues.

In Chapter 7 I discuss aspects that might be further explored within the Milanov method and its contexts. Appendices contain consent forms, a permission letter pertinent to the research, and selections from Milanov's method *First Violin Lessons, Book II*.

## CHAPTER 4: TREDAFIL MILANOV

Before exploring the practical applications of Milanov's method, it is important to consider Trendafil Milanov's trajectory as a pedagogue to better understand the historical context of the method and also address the first research question: "What is the history and philosophy of the Milanov method?" This chapter explores Milanov's biographical information and important career achievements as a pedagogue, including his methods and publications. His method *First Violin Lessons* (1981) is the main focus of this discussion. However, examining Milanov's biographical information, added to his previous methods and studies, may also help us understand the circumstances in which he developed his system and the philosophy that shaped his teaching principles. The last section of this chapter provides an overview of the method.

### Biography

Trendafil Rangelov Milanov (1909-1999) was born in Novo Selo, a small town in the Plovdiv area of Bulgaria. His mother was Stoina and his father Rangel. Rangel was an amateur violinist who also played *kaval*, a traditional instrument from the Balkans similar to the flute. Trendafil had three sisters, all interested in music, especially folk traditions. While growing up, Trendafil's mother and sisters worked in the rural fields of Novo Selo and sang for pleasure. One of his sisters was particularly fond of singing folk songs. Trendafil started playing the violin during his childhood, probably influenced by his father. He pursued violin at the professional level at the Music Academy of Sofia, where studied with Nikola Abadjiev, graduating in 1934. Milanov married Yovka, with whom he had two daughters: Dora and Stoika. During the 1930s, Milanov researched Bulgarian folk music, working on the transcription of Bulgarian oral tradition folk songs. Milanov's employment in music schools after 1944 provided the perfect circumstances for intensive research in violin pedagogy, which became the focus of his career.

His daughter, Stoika, and his granddaughter, Yova, both studied violin with him until they were 18 years old. As a result of his commitment to research in violin pedagogy, Milanov wrote the two of the most prolific violin methods in Bulgaria: *Violin School* (Milanov, 1958) in five volumes, and *First Violin Lessons* (1981) in two volumes. Figure 4.1 shows Trendafil Milanov in his 60s.



Figure 4.1. Trendafil Milanov, Bulgarian violinist, pedagogue, and music education advocate, who developed violin methods.

In 1944, with financial investment from the local government and private patrons, Milanov helped to found the Music School in Plovdiv, in which he also served as Director until 1950 when he moved with his family to Sofia. According to Stoika, Milanov founded a boarding school for talented children in Sofia during the 1950s. Children were chosen to live at the school to learn music, having all their expenses paid by the government. Stoika remarked:

They used to bring famous pedagogues, pianists, singers, and famous people that would come and visit and give master classes and work a little bit with those kids... they were saying that there was no place like this in the world ... from there came all the most famous pianists and violinists from Bulgaria.

Milanov's older daughter, Dora, received her piano instruction there as a child, at a time in which Stoika would receive lessons from their father at home. Dora and Stoika became a violin and piano duo, and built a career together matriculating at the Moscow Conservatory. Dora's life was sadly interrupted by cancer when she was 55. Yova mentioned: "my aunt Dora was a great pianist and she and my mom were an incredible duo. They had a very strong bond and complemented each others' playing." Figure 4.2 shows the Stoika and Dora duo in a picture for the press.



Figure 4.2. Stoika and Dora Milanova (left to right), concert violinist and pianist (1970s).

During the years he worked at the boarding school, Trendafil Milanov experimented with a variety of methodologies while developing his own method. Stoika was a small child and remembers working on Ševčík exercises<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup> Ševčík was a Czech violinist and creator of prolific systems to develop left hand and bow technique.

He hadn't written his system yet. I started when I was four, and he was practicing on me and on other people how to have those results. I remember having to play Ševčík, and it was difficult for me, and very boring.

Stoika mentions Milanov's strictness in teaching, but also his constant research, and how the method and his approach changed over time during his career: "... he replaced [the Ševčík exercises] with songs, and things that are easier for children."

Milanov's years of experience with violin pedagogy resulted in the publication of earlier violin methods and an evolution of his ideas on pedagogy and violin technique. Stoika talked about her father with great passion and respect:

He was a great pedagogue, extremely demanding. When I was little, he used to work a lot. He would teach all day [at the boarding school] and at the end of the day, twice a week he would teach me. He was really serious, and especially demanding towards the way of practicing.

Stoika described how she learned countless technical exercises and études, spending many hours of her childhood carefully practicing double-stops until she could hear the resultant overtone: "as a little child, focused there, just to hear... but it was good for my intonation."

Milanov's first complete violin method, *Violin School* (1958) in five volumes, proposes violin teaching through traditional Bulgarian folk songs and nursery rhymes. It also contains visual graphics illustrating the mechanics of bowing. Although exploring new pedagogical strategies, the method contains extensive first position training, similar to most methods available at that time. *Violin School* is a precursor to *First Violin Lessons* (1981); some of Milanov's greatest ideas were shared for the first time in the earlier publication.

Stoika appears in pictures as the model violinist in the first volume of the method, as shown in Figure 4.3.





Figure 4.3. Stoika Milanova, T. Milanov's *Violin School*, Vol. 1, p. 11.

Stoika's studies with Milanov lasted her entire childhood and adolescence. When she was 14 years old, during a visit to Bulgaria for a concert arranged in Sofia, legendary violinist David Oistrakh listened to Stoika for the first time. He was so impressed he invited her to study with him in Moscow when she reached 18 and could enter the Conservatory: "Oistrakh recommended that I continue the studies with my father until I was old enough to move to Russia, and said I was in good hands, because Milanov was a great pedagogue." Figure 4.4 shows Stoika and Milanov in an apprentice-mentor picture.



Figure 4.4. Stoika Milanova and her father and teacher, Trendafil Milanov.

In 1960, Milanov became the Director of the L. Pipkov Secondary School of Music in Sofia, a position he held until 1980. In 1970, in collaboration with other pedagogues, he started developing the Research Center for Music Education at the school, opening music programs for pre-school, elementary, middle and high school.

In 1981, as a result of further research and experience, Milanov published a method in two volumes, titled *First Violin Lessons* (1981). The context of this development was one of constant collaboration between Milanov and a group of professors of violin, cello and piano at the Research Center for Music Education. *First Violin Lessons* (1981) represents the culmination of Milanov's work, in its shift of approach to violin technique, and its clear delineation of his violin technique and pedagogical principles, explored in more detail throughout the research findings. Yova Milanova was part of the first official group of children that experienced the new method at the L. Pipkov school, and she appears as the model violinist in the pictures of the book. Figure 4.5 shows Yova's picture in the original publication of *First Violin Lessons* (1981).



Figure 4.5. Yova Milanova in Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981), p. 3.

Yova recalled being part of the research undertaken by Milanov and his colleagues:

When I was four, I started going to theory classes at the school, and I was in the first official group of the method. The first years it was just experimenting with what we now

have in the book [*First Violin Lessons* (1981)]. He had it organized, but we were the first group at the school when they developed methods for different instruments: violin, piano, cello. A few years later he published the book.

Milanov applied his own method while his colleagues Rusi Dragnev and Anna Ilievska applied their methods for cello and piano, respectively. The other methods were also published, and all used the same song material, so that children could play together.

Yova remarked that Milanov's strictness got "less strong as he got older," to which Stoika added, "he was more experienced." While Stoika was on tours playing concerts, Yova spent a great deal of time with her grandparents. Throughout her violin education, Yova was never assigned the Ševčík exercises, and did not recall doing heavy practice during her childhood: "Everything was very balanced. We didn't have excess of anything, it was just the right amount, so that you can build a good base, but never too much." Figure 4.6 shows Yova warming-up for a performance for guests on her sixth birthday party.



Figure 4.6. Yova Milanova preparing for a performance with Milanov's guidance.

She recalled her grandfather's strictness as both a teacher and a relative, but also remembered fondly being surrounded by his great affection for her and for the violin: "He and

my grandmother were strict ... but in a nice way. They loved me very much ... They use to organize my day, so that I could do homework, have a “siesta,” practice [violin], and go to school.” Yova’s education was clearly balanced between violin practice, her formal school education and leisure activities.



Figure 4.7. Yova and her grandparents Trendafil and Yovka at play.



Figure 4.8. Yova and her grandfather Trendafil Milanov at leisure.

The grandfatherly education Yova received is also reflected in Milanov’s *First Violin Lessons* (1981): as Milanov became more mature as a teacher, the method’s articulation of his

principles became stronger. Significant changes appear in the methodology and violin technique when compared to the earlier *Violin School* (1958). With the new method, Milanov strove to offer material for developing a string violin technique within two volumes, instead of five. Obviously, the size of the method is not the only difference, as Milanov also shifted his approach: each chapter, called a *tema*, focused on specific key points and was placed in a well-planned sequence throughout the method, as opposed to his looser approach in the previous book. Milanov remained faithful to the application of songs to violin teaching, which he introduced in *Violin School* (1958). In *First Violin Lessons* (1981) Milanov adapted the songs in different transpositions, so that children began to experience the whole fingerboard from the beginning of instruction. He also introduced the use of pedagogical activities to improve the use of the body with the instrument before the child starts playing.



Figure 4.9. Right to left, Yova and her mother Stoika Milanova playing together at home.

Milanov retired from his position at the Pipkov Secondary School in 1985, when the funds for his research were no longer available. He spent the rest of his life working on the method's last revision, (not yet published), the last update Milanov completed after his

retirement. Stoika has used Milanov's last version to teach seminars to teachers in Bulgaria and Venezuela. In our interviews she shared some of the changes that improved the method even more in her opinion: "I understood that he came to a genius, absolutely genius idea to introduce a strong base of the intonation from the first, very first approach to the left hand." In the unpublished version, Milanov introduces songs using two notes a whole step apart, then a half step apart. On this topic, Stoika remarked, "you see that you tell to the child, 'this is the semitone, be careful, your fingers have to be close together.' And this is the basis of intonation from the beginning, and he explains that."



Figure 4.10. The Milanov music tradition. Left to right: Dora, Milanov, Yova, and Stoika.

Stoika told me that although Milanov made some song adaptations and sequential changes, his teaching principles did not change in the unpublished version. She is satisfied with the results achieved through her father's methods: "the results are so quick... really brilliant results with children." As music had been a tradition in the Milanov family, the violin pedagogy

tradition was carried on for three generations: Milanov, Stoika and Yova. Still hard at work on revisions for his method, Trendafil Milanov died in Sofia surrounded by his family at the age of 89.

### **Historical Context**

Milanov lived his young adult years in communist Bulgaria during an important time for music education. Significant political changes took place in Bulgaria with the rise of Todor Zhivkov as leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party and head of state of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in 1954. Zhivkov's ascension ushered in a relatively stable 35-year period for the Bulgarian economy and politics after the conflicts of World War II (Curtis, 1992), precisely the time during which Milanov developed his violin methods.

In musicological studies, associations between specific political conflicts and their effect on music practice have tended to focus on the negative impact of political events in music, as in the case of censoring composers. Communism is burdened with a heavy stigma because of the many conflicts that arose and its extreme societal rules resulting in restricting the autonomy of the arts in general. However, it seems the unifying measures of the communist philosophy had a positive impact in the development of high standards in education, specifically music education in the case of Bulgaria. It was very common for parents to want their children to start early with music instruction, since musicians held a prestigious status.

### **Philosophical Foundation**

Soviet countries placed great emphasis on unifying education, and that Soviet music educators and psychologists specialized in early childhood education had great influence on Milanov's philosophical basis. Milanov's book *New Directions in Music Education* (1979) reveals his idealism and passion for music education, based on the select authors. Milanov cites

works of Dmitri Kabalevsky, Lev Vygotsky, Carl Orff, Aleksei Leontiev, Boris M. Teplov, K. V. Tarasova and D. B. El'konin. This research focused in the influences of a few authors on Milanov's work.

Milanov cites the contributions of Kabalevsky, who aside from being a composer was active in the music education field, working closely with communist agendas (Charkiolakis, 2011). Kabalevsky wrote the book *Music and Education: A Composer Writes About Musical Education* (1988), which had a great influence on Milanov's recommendations to teachers. Kabalevsky advises teachers on how to "enrich [their] teaching methods and consecutively create a more appealing learning environment to students" (Charkiolakis, 2011, p. 97).

Milanov cites influences of Soviet psychologists in child development: Vygotsky (1997), Leontiev (1981), and Elkonin (1971). Out of this group of psychologists, Lev Vygotsky's theories seem to have been assimilated by researchers in the past years (see Blunden 2011; Gredler and Shields, 2008; Obukhova, 2012; Robbins, 2001). Nonetheless, Vygotsky worked in conjunction with some of the psychologists, and his work, not only has been largely translated but also is substantial enough to be representative of their ideas.

### **The Influence of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934)**

Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky represented a "revolution in the developmental psychology" (Obukhova, 2012, p. 51), examining psychology from a social perspective. His theory of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) has been largely explored in the US in the past decades as a new perspective in early childhood education. Vygotsky emphasized the difference between the child's level and their development ability level, "theoriz[ing] that there is a difference in what a child can accomplish in isolation and what he or she can accomplish with assistance" (Castronova, 2002, p. 4). Zone of proximal development, according to



Vygotsky's definition, is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86).

Yova remembers Vygotsky's collected works, *Child Psychology* (1997), as part of Milanov's library. Milanov knew from Vygotsky's work the importance of the development of the child's higher mental functions, which will determine their personality, in the early years of social interaction. He also recognized the importance of play, a concept fully embraced by Milanov in his method. The concept is practiced there through adaptation of the musical material and learning through playful activities to develop rhythm and aural skills at an early stage of development.

Vygotsky lived in the Soviet Union, an atmosphere "saturated with Marxism and with a mandate to work towards fostering a new, higher type of human being, 'socialist man.'"

(Blunden, 2011, p. 463) It is only natural that his theories were influenced by Marxist ideology.

Marx and Lenin approached dialectics from the social point of view:

A basic understanding of Marxist-Leninist theory is that social consciousness is determined by social being. The contradictions of social being express themselves in social consciousness so that human beings confronted by the contradictions of social being arrive at their various individual positions on the basis of their interests, traditions, experiences, and understanding. (Holz, 1992, p. 33)

Dialectics applied to societal development can also be applied to child development. In this sense, development is as a result of contradictions created between the child's understandings and the social reality(s) he is exposed to. "This self-emancipation of the child manifests a drive which transcends the limits of their situation." (Blunden, 2011, p. 464)

Theories of child development are seen through the socialist lenses of that time, which saw

human development possible only through some sort of revolution. Milanov adopted that approach in creating situations of problem solving in the lesson through his method.

### **Milanov's Teaching Principles**

As mentioned before, Milanov lived in a time of change in politics that strongly influenced how intellectual production was molded within the philosophies of the political reign. Unifying approaches, including school methods, were taken seriously in education. The Milanov method offered a systematic way of teaching violin that could be made accessible to a large population of teachers to fulfill the needs of that time. Milanov's teaching principles found associations across disciplines, going beyond violin technique teaching or music education into a social-philosophic approach of child psychology.

Milanov developed his method envisioning a setting in which music is available to all children at school, with the intent to provide the best setting to develop talented musicians. Yova shared Milanov's great intentions with his method: "he saw it as a tool for school education, and the instrument learning coming out of this concept." For Milanov, an important issue in every teaching method is the connection between the beginner and subsequent stages. He affirmed that no one has discovered a musical talent in a child in just a few days. It is necessary to educate children during one or two years to be able distinguish children who can demonstrate notable talent or ability. Yova read from Milanov's "purple book" that we can only advise students toward a professional career, or toward music as a hobby, after several years of study. This is why Milanov thought music education should be taken as seriously as possible and to start as soon as possible, also because early childhood is the best time to stimulate musical activities.

Milanov started delineating his teaching philosophy because he believed music can more easily be taught to children. He criticized the rigid methods of teaching in schools that failed to

take into consideration the child's stage of development (age), making the whole process arduous for teachers and students. He saw the learning process in current music methods as following the sequence: I SEE – I PLAY – I HEAR. Milanov argued that this model overlooked the reality that it may take a student several years to develop the connection between the written note and the sound image of that note, an important step that can be developed through ear training. In that model, some students never get a chance to develop the ear-to-visual connection, because note reading is mechanical, not an aural process. Instead, Milanov proposed a different model: I SEE – I HEAR – I PLAY. In that model, ear training becomes part of learning the instrument, starting from the beginning. Milanov thought this model was difficult to achieve, and in his view none of the extant methods offered a good solution. He described unsuccessful attempts to incorporate note reading, such as offering solfeggio prior to instrument learning, or using methodologies such as Ševčík to develop note-reading. Both ideas are problematic: the first delays violin playing, essentially not a good idea; the second makes violin playing boring.

Milanov observed the many inconsistencies and flaws of traditional teaching methods, and the impossibility of building a better way of teaching using the old principles. He affirmed that the solution was to start from a complete new ground, and the right methodological starting point would emerge from a more natural way of acquiring knowledge. Milanov's beliefs on the process of music-making were supported by studies in child psychology and education, published by contemporary Soviet authors, and by his extensive experience in violin teaching.

**Playing by ear at the beginner stage.** Milanov believed that every child can play the violin, and that this process is accomplished more successfully if the method follows the way children learn their native language:

They [children] do not start by remembering its grammar rules nor do they start writing right away, but they do start with the live, oral language. Only after the children have

gained enough linguistic experience do they start realizing the sound structure of the words and the grammatical and syntactical structure of speech. (Milanov, 1981, p. 2)

For that reason, in the Milanov method, reading music is not recommended in the beginning of violin instruction. Milanov's teaching principles are intimately related to the philosophic ideas of dialectics, largely espoused in different versions throughout the history of humanities, especially during the heyday of communism in Eastern Europe.

Milanov's principle of playing by ear is based on dialectic methods, which largely influenced soviet psychologists and educators. Marx saw dialectic methods as a theory applied to societal development in which society overcomes transformations through revolutions (Marx, 1873). Contradiction is at the base of dialectic methods, which consist of a structure of thesis, antithesis, analysis and synthesis. According to Milanov, musical knowledge starts from our sensory perception, is processed to the abstract knowledge, and only then becomes concrete. Once musical knowledge becomes concrete, more details may be added to it (see Fig. 4.11).

<b>SENSORY &gt; ABSTRACT &gt; CONCRETE &gt; DETAILS</b>
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Figure 4.11. Musical knowledge path according to Milanov (1979).

Milanov urged teachers to avoid starting from the concrete concept of music literacy, then add details like note-reading, without first having any idea of the music itself. Based on Vygotsky (1978) and the basic dialectic method (thesis, antithesis, analysis, synthesis), Milanov drew a parallel with how we learn to speak: the process starts by the mimic-auditory path, as when a child listens (thesis) and tries to imitate (antithesis). Once the child has a satisfactory database of language in the brain, it is possible to proceed to the next stage, which consists of analysis, synthesis, and discerning the different components of speech, leading to the details of grammar. Applying that principle to music learning, children need to be able to hear and sing the notes before they can play them correctly, especially on the violin, which requires refined

coordination. Sound is the most important part of music, and is learned before symbol in the Milanov method. The connection between the written note and the sound image of that note is built little by little, so that when visualizing the note on the staff, the student contextualizes the note within the song, and knows internally how it sounds before playing. This principle is similar to Houlahan and Tacka's description of Kodaly's sound to symbol, of which he said, "Kodaly believed that instrumental instruction should also incorporate the use of singing" (Houlahan and Tacka, 2008, p. 22).

**Musical material connected with solfeggio and theory.** According to the above dialectic interpretation, music learning starts with pure listening, similar to learning speech. When learning to play the violin, however, the child is not ready to perform what she hears without understanding how the instrument functions. That is why Milanov recommends using the same violin song material for theory and solfeggio lessons, or at least singing the songs before playing them, so that the concrete knowledge of music can be externalized by singing.

Yova read from Milanov's book: "for Milanov, the easiest way for children to learn music is singing songs that have a text, and adding body movement to it." That can be achieved by implementing songs to the violin lesson, so that text contained in the songs helps solidify memory while marching and dancing help internalize the rhythm. Only after songs are internalized it is possible to combine note-reading and singing by ear, using the same musical material. The use of body movements implemented by Milanov was a direct influence of the work of Carl Orff (1978), which is similar to the eurhythmics of Rudolf Steiner (1967) and Dalcroze (Spector, 1990). According to his literature, Milanov thought that knowledge of theory had to be based on the same material as knowledge of the instrument, because adding extra songs to study note-reading is unnecessary at the beginner stage.

**Age appropriate activities and musical material.** Milanov recommended that all materials have to be adapted to meet the developmental needs of the child: songs and exercises should be playful and short, so children might easily understand and engage. Children might be very emotional about their choices, some children will refuse to play, and there is nothing one can do to force it. Therefore, music has to be made interesting. Milanov argued that the sound is the most essential element to music, and its cultivation should not be replaced by theory and concepts, especially during the first experiences with music. Songs must be learned entirely through experiencing sound in the beginner stage. Milanov advised avoiding long exercises or activities too removed from real music, which tend to make the lesson boring. The child should engage in the lesson, through relatively fast-paced activities and songs. He stressed the importance of children choosing to be involved in the activities proposed in the lesson to assure their learning quickly.

Milanov debated the dangers of what he called “the Wunderkind” style of teaching, referring to the rapid advance in the child’s literacy and the concept of child prodigies. He affirmed these concepts can do irreversible harm to the child’s mind, making them practice against their will, and that their physical and psychological health are jeopardized by excessive practice, not balanced with the realistic goals. Yova read from “the purple book”:

Many children in that situation play very well, the problem is that not too many teachers know how to help in the transition from childhood to adolescence or adulthood, so many of those kids are just burned out during an early stage and they don’t even become musicians.

Milanov believed that in most cases, if the child has been treated carefully and developed harmoniously through childhood, much better and more durable results would follow as an adult. He believed there is no need to rush through the child’s education, and recommended the use of music and activities appropriate to the student’s development phase.

**The integrated approach.** Milanov's integrated approach, also referred to as the "complex" approach, is a principle at the base of the method. According to Milanov, learning starts from whole and moves to detail. Every detail is part of a bigger picture, without which it is incomplete. Generally, in traditional methods, the learning process moves from the detail to the whole, each concept taught separately, without showing the connection between parts. For example: in the tonal system, the keys are learned one by one, causing problems when switching, for example, from D major to B-flat major, because the teaching of tonality is not approached in a holistic way. Milanov's solution: transposing songs from the beginning, so that the child avoids absorbing artificially built problems when playing the same melody starting from a different note. Similar to scale practice, the pattern in between the steps of a specific song is always the same, no matter which note you start from.

Milanov also mentioned the problem of learning specific positions very well on the violin, leaving the rest of the fingerboard unexplored. A student who played violin for two or three years only in first and third position, or who can only play in first position, is in great trouble when learning to shift. Thus the greater effectiveness of approaching the violin as a whole, using all positions incorporating transposing. This way, when the student has a large enough database of musical material, the teacher can introduce little by little different details of the theoretical implications such as note-reading.

Milanov proposes a strong methodology, organizing the musical material in a way that leads to harmonious development of the musician's skills. He notes that most teachers do not have a clear idea of what order specific skills should be learned. This lack of perspective from teachers has affected the students' perception of what is difficult in violin playing, making such difficulties seem bigger than they actually are. Teaching a random skill, for which the student is

not ready, does not contribute to further cognitive connections in the learning process and, therefore, affects the student's technique foundation and musical development. Yova agreed:

There are so many fake barriers that are built on the way we learn music with traditional solfeggio learning ... everything is learned in C major, and then we add one sharp, and then everything changes, it becomes so difficult for a child to figure it out.

Transposing the songs opens up the ears to different tonalities, so that when theory is explained, it is much more natural for the child to accept and understand how different tonalities are built. Yova added,

It is really a big help for the future musical and technical development of the child ... when you have played the same song from, let's say, ten different places on the violin, there is just no secret to it.

With the use of transposition, children become engaged in repetition of the same song by singing or playing it in a different key. Transposition of the learned songs is an extremely useful tool in teaching note-reading using the Milanov method because it places note-reading in context. Combined with the idea of implementing easier songs that are fun for children, transposing is a vital way to learn the instrument more holistically.

**The problematic approach.** Milanov observed that traditionally, there are two approaches to teaching: the dogmatic approach and the illustrative, or explanatory approach. The dogmatic approach has the student simply listen, and eventually memorize the material, without having received much explanation on the matter. In the illustrative or explanatory approach, the material is learned more easily, because the teacher offers further explanation about the concept or skill, but the student remains in a passive position. The last of Milanov's philosophic principles is the proposition of a new approach to teaching, which he calls the problematic approach.



Milanov believed the student should take the initiative to solve problems. In his approach to teaching, the student must face situations in which he or she has to find solutions to problems. Milanov believed that although this approach takes more time, and is more complicated to develop, the results amounted to the best way of learning. Its further and most lasting benefit was that the student earns the merit of arriving at a solution. The student is always led by the teacher, but should not be simply fed with information. The general difficulty in teaching music is to identify the inherent contradictions of the learning and to let the student solve them independently whenever possible.

Milanov's problematic approach is based on Vygotsky's theory of proximal development, which, together with theories by Piaget (1954) and Dewey (1997), provides the theoretical foundation to a larger research topic known as discovery learning (Castronova, 2002). In discovery learning, (or constructivist learning), the student is active in the learning process, while developing abilities in constructing richer meanings of understanding. Cleary and Schank (1995) identified five main architectures in discovery learning: case-based learning, incidental learning, learning by exploring/conversing, learning by reflection, and simulation- based learning. Table 4.1 shows Castronova's summary of architectures in discovery learning, which illustrate the models proposed by Cleary and Schank (1995):

Table 4.1. Summary of architectures in discovery learning (Castronova, 2002, p. 6)

Architecture	Description	Example
Case-based Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very old</li> <li>• Students examine cases and discuss how to solve problems.</li> </ul>	Groups of students are given a case to read and examine. The class then discusses possible solutions to the problem described.
Incidental Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Game-like activities</li> <li>• Motivational</li> </ul>	Jeopardy game Crossword puzzle
Learning by Exploring/Conversing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students asking questions</li> <li>• Encourages thinking of multiple ways to categorize</li> </ul>	What's in the bag? (game)

Table 4.1 continued.

Architecture	Description	Example
Learning by Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to ask better questions</li> <li>• Builds analysis skills</li> </ul>	Teacher answers a student's questions with additional questions for the student to answer
Simulation-based Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experimenting in an artificial environment</li> <li>• Allows for trials without fear of failing</li> </ul>	Planning and taking a space mission

To Milanov, music education includes solving contradictions causing cognitive conflict, a characteristic easily associated with *learning by reflection* and *learning by exploring or conversing*. Similarly, as examined previously, the use of age-appropriate activities in the Milanov method, in conjunction with the age-appropriate musical material relates to *incidental learning*. Contradictions are found between the internal image of the sound and the student's trials on matching that image. For example, let us examine the task of playing in tune: once the student has a clear image in his mind of how the song should be played and must find it on the instrument, it is a very bad idea for the teacher to constantly place the student's finger on the fingerboard, much better for her to let the child search around and find the sound. In the Milanov method this process takes place little by little, starting with very simple tasks like playing songs on one note.

Milanov's main philosophy of teaching comes from the law of the unity of opposites, the basic law of materialist dialectics. When applied to music teaching, Milanov views two types of images: the perfect or ideal image in the performer's mind, and the real image (reality) of sound that actually comes out of the instrument. Milanov believed the real image will never reach the perfect image, and bringing the two of them closer together, going deeper into detail with every repetition, is a basic contradiction found in violin playing and teaching. Violin teaching exists so that the teacher can help transmit his image of what the music should sound like to the student.

To help the student internalize that image might prove difficult, thus the teacher's help is crucial. With each repetition of a basic task, the real image should come closer to the perfect image. Although the result will never reach the perfect image, the student can get very close to it, and the student should be led into this search. Each repeat brings a higher level of achievement. The teacher's participation might be intense, but should never take away from the student's involvement. On the contrary, teachers' liveliness should incite active learning on the part of the student. Yova shared some of her grandfather's philosophical beliefs:

In times of communism, his thoughts were very much shaped on the philosophic beliefs of the regime. There are laws that are the base of the communist society by Lenin, and one of those that my grandfather loved was the theory of the repetition on a higher level, like a spiral in which you learn something, and then, every time you come back to it, you make it a little bit more difficult, and that's how you progress.

The concept of repetition at a higher level can be identified throughout *First Violin Lessons* (1981). The same songs are repeated in different keys, strings, positions, and using different techniques. Likewise, technical topics that are well assimilated can be used to learn new music. Milanov described that process:

When it comes to violin performing, which is inevitably associated with numerous repetitions of one and the same activity, one has to keep in mind that the successful mastering of a skill depends not on the total sum of repetitions, but only when the repetitions reinforce the material already learned and add something new to the newly forming skill. (1981, p. 4)

Stoika commented on the necessity of taking one step at a time with students when she said, "In the [Milanov] system, you add systematically one more step at a time, not four or ten steps. You cannot jump certain problems, go from *tema* IV to *tema* XX." She mentioned several instances in which she had to take a few steps back with a student because they were playing pieces beyond their level. The Milanov method's philosophy of introducing one new concept at a time, revisiting a familiar song or exercise from a different technical perspective, or vice-versa,

is found in writings by Lenin. He writes, “. . . human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates a series of circles, a spiral” (Lenin, 1915, p. 579). Therefore, the learning pace in the Milanov method is fast within each “loop” of the spiral, but takes a full lap to move to the next level. As Lenin (1915) stated: “Any fragment, segment, section of this curve can be transformed (transformed one-sidedly) into an independent, complete, straight line, which then (if one does not see the [forest] for the trees) leads into the quagmire, into clerical obscurantism” (p. 579). In this sense, the spiral model of knowledge does not follow a straight, one-sided line, in which the student will spend a long time working on a task because of the complexity of the concepts introduced, but offers a wider view of violin through simpler operations that are easily assimilated by the student, always active in the learning process.

Milanov’s major philosophical tenets are boldly influenced by the socialist contexts of his time. They include playing by ear at the beginner stage, connection of musical material with solfeggio and theory, use of age-appropriate activities and musical material, the integrated approach (moving from whole to parts), and the problematic approach. Milanov’s basic philosophy and teaching principles shaped the violin method explored in this research: *First Violin Lessons* (1981). In order to give a general idea of the structure of the two volumes, the next section describes their organization.

### ***First Violin Lessons* (1981): Structural Frames**

The last published version of the Milanov method is divided in two volumes to be used as foundation material. Each volume is divided into *temas* (chapters) that address concise tasks, establishing short-term learning goals that may require more than one lesson to accomplish.

*Book I* comprises 26 *temas*. Milanov gave very specific teaching directions at the beginning of each *tema*, so that the teacher could achieve his pedagogical plan (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Milanov *Book I* structure.

Milanov: <i>Book I temas</i>	
<i>Tema I</i>	Emphasizing the songs learned in solfeggio lessons. These will be used in the following lessons played on the violin; getting to know the violin and the bow, learning how to take them out and put them back in the case
<i>Tema II</i>	Learning a new song or reinforcing old ones; placing the violin under the chin in position for playing; exercises to build skills on how to hold the bow and feel the functions of the wrist, forearm and fingers
<i>Tema III</i>	New songs are learned or old songs reinforced; sliding the fingers of the left hand along the strings (“The Slide”); new exercises to feel the functions of the wrist and fingers of the right hand while holding the bow
<i>Tema IV</i>	Sliding of all four fingers of the left hand throughout the string with the thumb in its normal position; playing pizzicato with the fingers of the left hand; new activities for the right hand; producing a tone with the bow on open strings and octave harmonics
<i>Tema V</i>	Playing harmonics and pressing the string; preparatory exercises for playing with the whole bow; widening of the bow used in the middle; symmetrical bow distribution
<i>Tema VI</i>	Playing with the participation of two fingers; sliding the right hand fingers along the bow stick (imitating playing with the whole bow); playing with a whole bow
<i>Tema VII</i>	Playing with whole and half bow, with and without stopping its movement; preparatory exercises for playing with whole bow by portato stroke; sliding the fingers of the left hand along the string
<i>Tema VIII</i>	An exercise to solidify playing with the whole bow by fixing the end points and drawing (pulling) the bow in one direction only; sliding the fingers along the harmonic on the octave
<i>Tema IX</i>	Playing two notes on one bow (legato); playing a song by alternating two neighboring fingers at different parts of the fingerboard
<i>Tema X</i>	Exercises for achieving freedom and confidence when playing along the strings; adding string crossing; playing songs with minor and major thirds
<i>Tema XI</i>	Exercises for symmetrical distribution of the bow (the whole bow, upper and lower half of the bow); playing by sliding the same finger of the left hand
<i>Tema XII</i>	Using the rotary movement of the forearm to assure better contact between the bow hair and the string; playing the same notes on neighbor strings (diagonal movements of the fingers from right to left)
<i>Tema XIII</i>	Playing with the participation of the four fingers; further practice on using the whole bow

Table 4.2 continued

Milanov: <i>Book I temas</i>	
<i>Tema XIV</i>	Exercise to achieve freedom and flexibility of the right-hand fingers when holding the bow; playing intervals of third and fourth with the left hand
<i>Tema XV</i>	A contracted position of the left hand fingers (through alternating and sliding them); playing double-stops
<i>Tema XVI</i>	String crossing on neighbor strings; shifting from a lower to a higher string through an octave interval (diagonal movement left-right)
<i>Tema XVII</i>	Practicing major and minor second played with 4-1 and 1-4th finger on neighbor strings; preparatory exercises of mastering the lateral movement of the left hand
<i>Tema XVIII</i>	Double stops with pedal note as a lower or higher voice
<i>Tema XIX</i>	Shifting after an open string
<i>Tema XX</i>	Shifting using the same finger
<i>Tema XXI</i>	Shifting using two fingers
<i>Tema XXII</i>	Shifting in arpeggio like melodies
<i>Tema XXIII</i>	Shifting with finger exchange on the same note
<i>Tema XXIV</i>	More complex exercises on diagonal movement of the left hand
<i>Tema XXV</i>	Widened position of the left-hand fingers
<i>Tema XXVI</i>	Further practice on double stops

Initial *temas* include topics as elementary as introducing the student to basic routines with the instrument, learning how to take the violin out of the case, and proper instrument setup.

Milanov strategically infused important violin technical skills throughout his method's *temas*.

Each major skill is acquired gradually as a result of the increased task complexity each time they are revisited. By the end of *Book I*, the student has relative fluency in important skills including shifting (several types), string crossing, portato, legato, and double-stops using a fingered string combined with an open string. The musical material used in the Milanov method consists of approximately 50 short songs, predominantly folk and nursery songs. *Book I* uses exclusively folk and nursery songs, while *Book II* also contains excerpts from classical music repertoire (Western art music), and revisits old songs as a tool for expansion of note-reading and violin techniques. All folk songs used in the book are arranged for violin and piano in one possible tonality at the end of the first volume, so that the student can sing them and play them also with accompaniment.

*Book II* comprises 18 *temas*. It introduces note-reading and while solidifying the skills and songs learned in the first volume. Learning in *Book II*, Milanov advised, the student plays repertory outside from musical excerpts in the book. In that volume he also identified études to match with specific *temas*, providing a list. The structure of *temas* on *Book II* as shown below.

Table 4.3. Milanov *Book II* structure

Milanov <i>Book II temas</i>	
<i>Tema I</i>	Reading and playing on the D String.
<i>Tema II</i>	Reading and playing on the A string.
<i>Tema III</i>	Connecting the D and A strings.
<i>Tema IV</i>	Reading and Playing on the G string.
<i>Tema V</i>	Connecting the D and G strings.
<i>Tema VI</i>	Reading and Playing on the E string
<i>Tema VII</i>	Connecting the E and A strings.
<i>Tema VIII</i>	Connecting the G, D, and A strings.
<i>Tema IX</i> Suggested Études: Wohlfahrt Op. 45: N.1, 2, 4, 15, 16, 18, 33, 47; Mazas Op. 36: N.6; Kreutzer N.2, 5, 10, 12	Reading and playing on the D, A and E strings.
<i>Tema X</i> (Same études as <i>tema IX</i> )	Reading and playing on the four strings.
<i>Tema XI</i> Études: Wohlfahrt N.6; Mazas N.7	Vibrato
<i>Tema XII</i> Études: Wohlfahrt N.4, 15, 40, 49, 51; Mazas 2, 3, 6, 21, 28; Kreutzer N.4, 6, 7, 13, 24, 29; Fiorillo N.3, 11, 28, 30, 34	Bow strokes: long bow strokes (détaché, small détaché and legato); détaché crossing three strings; more complex string crossings; dynamics when in détaché and legato; dynamic nuances in détaché; contrasting dynamics; dynamic nuances in long notes and legato; short bow strokes (portato stroke, staccato articulation, staccato stroke, martelé stroke); off the string and bouncing bow strokes (spiccato, ricochet and sautillé)
<i>Tema XIII</i> Études: Mazas N.25; Kreutzer N.32, 33; Fiorillo N.4, 29, 32	Double stops (octaves, thirds, and sixths); exercises for stretched position, scales in unison, preparation for fingered octaves, fingered octaves, tenths (see Appendix C)
<i>Tema XIV</i> Études: Kreutzer N.14, 30; Fiorillo N. 20, 36	Chords
<i>Tema XV</i>	Harmonics
<i>Tema XVI</i> Études: Mazas N.30	Pizzicato: right-hand pizzicato; left-hand pizzicato; alternating playing with the bow with left hand pizzicato; alternating left and right hand pizzicato
<i>Tema XVII</i> Études: Kreutzer N.8, 36; Fiorillo N.20	Solidifying intonation precision (see Appendix C)
<i>Tema XVIII</i> Études: Wohlfahrt N.18, 51; Mazas N.19; Kreutzer N.9, 15, 20, 21, 40	Trill preparation

*Book II* introduces advanced techniques, including bow strokes, double-stops (including octaves, unison, thirds, sixths), harmonics, pizzicato, left-hand pizzicato, chords, and a special

approach to intonation precision. Select pages of *Book II* are attached to this documents’

Appendix C, including songs in double-stops, and some of the best features in advanced violin left hand technique development. Appendix C contains exercises developed by Milanov for the development of left hand stretched positions taking the unison as a starting point. Milanov special approach to intonation precision explores the combination of double stops on the perfect fifth with thirds, sixths, perfect fourths, and octaves in several positions.

The next chapter explores emerging themes of the Milanov method, which relate to practical applications of the method in lessons, establishing a connection of practice and theory both at the pedagogical and violin technical levels.



## CHAPTER 5: THE MILANOV METHOD IN STUDIO

This chapter explores the second research question: “How is the Milanov Method implemented in lessons?” Practical applications of several aspects of the Milanov Method were observed in private lessons and discussed with the research participants. Analysis of data from observations generated themes pertaining to two categories: 1) implementation of the method’s pedagogical strategies; and 2) implementation of the method’s violin technique development.

### Pedagogical Strategies

This section explores instances in which the Milanov Method’s specific pedagogical strategies were employed in the studio to facilitate the learning process. Emerging themes pertaining to this category are *Student Autonomy* and *Singing Songs*.

#### **Student Autonomy: “They have to learn how to figure it out!”**

Episode 1: As I park my car in front of Yova’s house, a little girl carrying a violin case is let into the house by her mom. Sophia has long, curly hair with bangs, and wears pink eyeglasses and braces. I come into the house and greet them. Sophia takes her violin out, and Yova tunes it. As they start the lesson, Sophia becomes a proud little violinist, participating actively in the lesson, asking questions when in doubt, and taking pride in her achievements. Yova and Sophia work on the method’s second volume, *tema XII*, which introduces several bow strokes. In this *tema* short familiar songs are used to practice the martelé stroke, a type of bow stroke with a clear attack of the bow from the string. In one of the examples, Yova plays the melody on the piano as Sophia sight-reads it on the violin. Sophia identifies the melody immediately and plays with the piano. Yova then lets Sophia play it without the help of the piano. Sophia seems confused about what fingering to use. She asks Yova what finger to start with, and Yova recommends that she use a low two. Sophia had practiced a different fingering at home, and gets

confused with it, playing it hesitantly. Yova asks her to think of the song and play it by ear: “You know the song. Try something. If it doesn’t work, fix it, then try again.” Sophia plays again with much better intonation. They work on repertoire and Yova gives Sophia directions on how to practice specific passages. At the end of the lesson, Yova takes notes on Sophia’s notebook, while asking, “so, tell me, what are you supposed to work on?” Sophia shows Yova the places in the music: “here I have to bring it down, and I have to play a crescendo here, and these three notes have to be the same length.”

An important component of the Milanov method is an emphasis on the development of autonomy within each student. This emphasis in student autonomy was evident in my observations of Sophia’s lessons with Yova. Sophia’s autonomy and active participation in the lesson were always encouraged. When learning a new task, Sophia was helped through the process, but achieved the results herself.

In our interviews, Yova constantly referred to the importance of student active participation in the lesson: “I do not feed my students with information, they have to learn how to figure it out.” The opening episode is one example of several moments in which Yova puts Sophia in charge of her development, giving her one general direction to explore (in that case, to think about the song and play by ear). The general direction provided by the teacher fixed the problem, because Yova gave Sophia the confidence to think critically to correct problems by reminding her that she knew the song. Sophia found the solution without having to be given detailed directions to solve the problem (e.g., what fingering to use throughout the entire song).

It is evident that the student-teacher relationship is an important factor in the development of student autonomy encouraged through the Milanov method. Yova is always honest with Sophia, giving her positive reinforcement when it is due, and openly discussing

aspects that Sophia has to improve in her playing. Marie, Sophia's mother, identifies the importance of their teacher-student relationship, and the strong impact it has on Sophia's progress: "because they have built a special relationship, and she wants to please Yova ... I notice a huge change in her; she is taking violin more seriously, in a good way." Yova compares her teachings to Sophia to the lessons taught to her by Milanov. She recalls Milanov as a mentor that provided guidance and the best opportunities to improve her thinking. They built a strong teacher-student relationship, to which both contributed greatly:

After the first year, I had to read the pieces by myself, and he [Milanov] never did the work for me. The same with intonation: he would tell me, "it's out of tune," but I had to fix it. He would tell me if I wasn't practicing in the right way but he wasn't controlling the practice himself. He just gave the direction and made sure it was done well, but I was the one in charge. My entire process of learning violin was achieved with that dynamic. As time went by, our relationship moved away from an apprentice/mentor type, and at the end we would discuss the problems of violin playing like two professionals would do.

Milanov advised that violin teachers follow a model for instruction in which the student starts developing practice and self-regulation habits. The last part of chapter four offered a full explanation of Milanov's teaching principle in question, "the problematic approach," and this premise is confirmed by the research findings. The theme *Student Autonomy* emerged from lessons before I had access to the translation of the Milanov method. Once I read his text, the connection between his teaching philosophy and all the instances in which student autonomy appeared in lessons was clear.

In his last published method, *First Violin Lessons* (1981), Milanov addresses his theories to violin teachers and repeatedly affirms that successful teaching depends on how actively the student participates in the learning process:

Modern pedagogical psychology claims that real and lasting is only the knowledge that has been achieved through the individual pursuit of the student himself. Therefore, the student has to be put in situations in which [s]he has to solve educational problems. Above all, he has to get accustomed to independently watch, think and work. (p. 4)

Milanov further explains his “problematic approach” in his book, *New Directions in Music Education* (1979), a separate publication from the method book. However, within the method book Milanov chose to expose only the practical steps necessary in achieving this teaching principle, which is convenient to teachers and parents. Each task in the Milanov method is considered an operational system consisting of three stages: 1) Orientation; 2) Performance; and 3) Control (Milanov, 1981, p. 4).

During the orientation phase, the student must understand the task to be performed and how to achieve it. At the beginning the teacher can guide that process. The student’s awareness of the task might then be verified if she can explain it to the teacher. Milanov stated that creating habits for self-orientation is a complex process, and its establishment begins from the very first lessons. Such habits cannot take place if children are given the answers to every problem. Children have to receive the necessary stimulus to generalize and make their own conclusions, no matter how simple they are. Milanov remarks that his proposed “new foundation for teaching violin playing offers a wide range of opportunities for individual orientation and work” (1981, p. 4), a characteristic easily identified in Sophia’s lessons with Yova. The teacher’s role during the orientation stage is crucial for the accomplishment of the other two stages of the task: performance and control.

Milanov’s ideas on the orientation process are closely connected with research findings on instrumental practice. For instance, in a study paralleling student practice strategies recommended by teachers and students, Barry (2007) concluded that the practice strategies more likely to be applied by students are the ones more explicitly emphasized by teachers. This study was conducted in college-level studio teaching, but reveals how students depend on teachers to design their practice approaches. Byo (2004) advocated the implementation of problem solving

in the lesson, and provided ideas for how the teacher can be responsible in that process, so that students “become thought and decision makers” (p. 23). Similarly, Milanov argues that the teacher’s involvement in the orientation stage is decisively influential to the development of higher levels of student autonomy in the next stages of learning a musical or technical task.

During the performance stage the student has the opportunity to perform the task with the teacher’s guidance. Milanov has stated, “the process of developing the student’s autonomy will not progress if the teacher is only a passive observer during the performance stage.” (1981, p. 4). By providing feedback (both positive and corrective), the teacher’s attention at this stage is crucial to developing thoughts that frame the individual work of the student. Both types of feedback are important. Corrective feedback should be given through leading questions. Contradicting the misconceived idea that negative feedback should be avoided, and emphasis placed on the positive aspects of reinforcement, research on teachers’ reinforcement shows that “negative,” or corrective, feedback is not perceived differently than directive feedback by observers (Duke and Henninger, 2002). In the Milanov method, both positive and corrective feedback is given to help the student identify problems in violin playing. In the performance stage the teacher can observe if the student is able to proceed to the next step (control), which takes place during individual practice (Milanov, 1981).

The control stage depends largely on the student’s individual work. During that stage, the student is responsible for refining the learned task as described during orientation and experimented through performance and further feedback. Acquisition of new skills depends on how actively the student’s attention is focused on the task as well as on the ability of the student to watch and analyze his own actions, which tends to improve with the continuous exercise of this operational system in lessons. It is through self-regulated practice that student will solidify

the material learned, and for that reason self-regulated practice is an important component in student autonomy.

**Self-regulated practice in the development of student autonomy.** Milanov's system of orientation, performance, and control cannot be applied without the student's active participation. Through this system the autonomy fostered during lessons contributed to Sophia's ability to practice independently at home.

A few months after I began observing Sophia's lessons, I interviewed her mother Marie about Sophia's development with the violin. Following Yova's recommendations, Marie reminds Sophia when it is time to practice every day: "she started with very minimal daily practice: five or ten minutes a day. We gradually increased that time and now she practices one hour." Marie has two other daughters, all of whom she home-schools, working on school materials with all of them. She divides Sophia's practice into two 30-minute sessions, one at the beginning of their workday and the other early in the afternoon. Marie perceives a better focus on schoolwork when Sophia starts immediately following her violin practice. Sophia confirmed Marie's perspectives on her practice sessions: "I have to practice at home too ... one hour when I don't have lessons, and half an hour when I do. And then I get to play for people sometimes." Yova describes how her meetings with Sophia had to take place more often and for longer periods of time due to Sophia's ability to overcome technical and musical problems proposed in the lesson:

[Sophia] keeps me on my toes all the time! Sophia is making such a fast progress that I sometimes find it difficult to keep up with her. We started with one 30-minute lesson a week. In a few months once a week wasn't enough, because she would complete the assignments in the first two days, having nothing new to work on during the rest of the week. So, we gradually increased our lessons and now we meet twice a week for one hour. She is just wonderful!

Marie takes Sophia's practice seriously, without interfering with the process: "at the beginning, yes, I was very aware of what she needed to work on, but she very quickly surpassed

my musical level, so, it's definitely not like I am teaching her at home." When asked about her participation in Sophia's practice, Marie confessed to interfere minimally: "I can tell when there is something wrong [with the music Sophia practices], but I cannot say what it is. I usually ask: 'Is that how you are supposed to be playing?' [*laughs*]." Marie's non-expert contribution to Sophia's practice also fosters Sophia's engagement in self-regulated practice, because she encourages Sophia to find out herself what can be corrected in her performance.

I was present at a performance in the spring of 2011, when Sophia played *Clowns* by Kabalevsky and the third movement of K  chler's *Violin Concerto*. Sophia was praised by several teachers who called her "a prodigy," and peers who repeated with excitement: "we should call her 'the maestro!!!" There have been several instances similar to the spring recital during which people have praised Sophia's playing, always citing her unusual talents. Yova always states that Sophia's accomplishments are a result of her ability to work independently at home through self-regulated practice and bringing good results to the lesson. It is Yova's view that talent is important, but student autonomy fostered by self-regulation is the ultimate nurturer of talent, and it plays a much larger role in the musical and technical development of a child.

Stoika also remembers making a good impression among peers and teachers for her violin playing, and her ability to apply herself independently. In one of the stories shared with me, Stoika had to prepare an Ysa  e sonata for her professor, David Oistrakh, in only a week. She recalls working diligently by herself:

I had to learn Ysa  e's *Sonata number five, l'Aurora*, in a week for the Carl Flesch competition. I knew it was going to be very difficult. I took a box with 40 matches, queued them on top of the piano, and selected difficult passages to work on. I would place each one of the 40 matches back to the box every time I played something the way I liked. When I played for Oistrakh he was very impressed. In one week, I played the Sonata. He asked: "Oh! Stoika! How could you learn this sonata so quickly?" I said: "With matches!"

Stoika's ability to come up with practice strategies autonomously impressed her teachers and colleagues. Faced with limited time to prepare a challenging piece, she had the necessary tools to self-regulate her practice, also making a playful use of the matches to solidify the results achieved during her learning process. During her studies at the Moscow Conservatory, Oistrakh remarked on her high level of playing and professionalism in a letter to Milanov:

It's a big pleasure to work with Stoika. She is a wonderful, serious, gifted, hardworking girl, who thoroughly knows the violin, and that is thanks to your method that has given her the whole complex of necessary technical skills and musical discipline. Stoika is very demanding of herself. The fact that she is always dissatisfied with her playing is going to bring her professional success in the future." (David Oistrakh, letter to Milanov, 1965).

Oistrakh attributes Stoika's qualities of "musical discipline" and possession of the "whole complex of necessary technical skills" to the Milanov method. The dissatisfaction referred to by him shows his perception of Stoika's self-evaluation and constant desire to improve her playing. Stoika's acquisition of these qualities through work with Milanov and his method strongly supports the idea of student autonomy through self-regulated practice in the Milanov violin tradition.

It is clear that independent practice is an important skill for acquiring expertise, including in music (Ericsson, 1993). Research in music practice has suggested that proper, effective practice is the principal element needed for musical proficiency achievement (Sloboda et al., 1996). Self-regulated practice theories constitute a large subject that has informed music educators. In successful instrumental practice, tasks should take short periods of time so that several tasks can be completed consecutively, facilitating the attainment of larger musical goals (Hallam, 2001). McPherson and Zimmerman (2002) provided a model that illustrates self-regulation learning cycle phases. In that model, three stages of self-regulation occur: 1) Performance/Volitional Control Phase, which includes self-instruction; 2) Self-Reflection Phase,



which includes self-judgment; and 3) Forethought Phase, which includes task analysis and strategic planning (2002, p. 340). It would be unrealistic to expect children to practice at such an advanced analytic level; nonetheless, self-regulated practice theories help inform teachers on possible outcomes of fostering self-regulated practice habits from the beginning of violin instruction.

Zimmerman (2000) defined self-regulated practice as a “social cognitive perspective” that “entails not only behavioral skill self-managing environmental contingencies, but also the knowledge and the sense of personal agency to enact this skill in relevant contexts” (p. 13). Milanov talked about creating opportunities for the student to analyze errors and work towards correcting them. Through his method, students acquire that habit from an early age, carrying it on to a possible professional life, as was the case of Yova and Stoika. The Milanov method cultivates student autonomy with the teacher’s guidance through each task, allowing the students to learn how to practice, to self-diagnose errors, and to independently brainstorm solutions to problems.

Student autonomy and self-regulated practice emerged as significant factors in Milanov’s approach to violin pedagogy. In his “problematic approach” (1979), Milanov recommended that teachers stimulate students to be highly participative in solving problems during the lesson. This approach was evident in the lessons I observed and also extended to participant discussions of practice. Yova and Stoika confirmed and commented on the strong impact this teaching principle had on themselves and on their students, and Sophia’s progress in practice and performance may have been attributed in part to the Milanov method.

### **Songs as Recycled Musical Material: “They already know how it goes”**

Episode 1. Yova plays a song on the piano and asks Sophia: “Do you remember that song?” Sophia answers affirmatively and plays it once. Then Yova reminds her to use a “high three.” Sophia repeats the first part of the song, and says: “Now the song sounds better!” Yova then asks her to “watch the bow” for a better contact point. Sophia plays the song once more, until the end, and Yova says, “That was a very good reading!” Sophia cheers with excitement and immediately starts singing the song. During the lesson, Sophia plays transpositions of the song simply by starting them on different areas of the fingerboard.

Later in the lesson, Yova sets two chairs in front of the music stand with the method book. As they sit down, Yova points at the book and asks: “What song is that?” Sophia recognizes it, pointing at the previous page: “It’s the same as the one I just played.” They sing the song with the note names in different transpositions using the fixed *do* system, then write some missing notes on the staff.

Milanov included methodological notes at the beginning of his method’s volumes to better inform teachers on the functionality of the method and to justify his use of songs in violin pedagogy. He provided perspectives on faulty teaching methods and his own views. The justification of his teaching methods allows us to understand the context of the practical applications observed in lessons.

Milanov acknowledged that the violin is generally perceived as a difficult instrument, mainly because of the absence of frets as a reference for intonation, and because of the unnatural playing position required of the arms. However, Milanov disagreed that these are the real obstacles to successful violin playing. Instead, he affirmed that some teaching methods create

“artificial” difficulties, trying to accomplish too much too soon. One step he considered an unnecessary obstacle to beginner instruction is the inclusion of note-reading:

The child, who has just gotten acquainted with the notes purely theoretically, and has no idea of how they sound, has to perform several actions simultaneously: to read the note, to find its place on the string, to make it sound with the bow, and to count with his foot the duration of the tone created as a result of the first three actions” (1981, p. 1).

Milanov (1981) briefly explored cognitive elements of violin playing to justify his method. He described the process of music-making as having inner and outer sides: the inner, or mental side (artistic and emotional) “consists of the ideas, feelings and moods evoked by the piece of art (object of musical reproduction)” (p. 4). The outer, or sound side results from the image elaborated on the inner side. The outer side is connected with the performing skills, “at the basis of which lies a complex system of motor habits of both hands” (p. 4). Milanov stressed the importance of taking care of both sides in the process of developing successful teaching, connecting the inner and outer side of music-making: “To build skills of a performer not connected with artistic goals and intentions is one-sided and useless. However, the lack of enough care for the performing apparatus can turn into an obstacle for the musical development of the child” (p. 4). Milanov suggests singing as a way to achieve this connection, as a means to express the outer side of music-making at the beginning stage, when violin technique has not progressed to the necessary level to perform certain songs. Songs are thus learned by means other than playing (marching, dancing, singing), while the necessary motor skills for violin playing are developed. The same songs are conveniently used as musical material as the student acquires these skills. Because the songs are brief they do not exhaust the student, and are especially convenient in serving multiple functions and securing fast-paced learning.

At the time the method was being tested, children had solfeggio classes parallel to violin lessons. Songs were learned during solfeggio classes through activities such as marching,

dancing, and clapping. Unfortunately, this structure and level of cross-disciplinary collaboration is not always available for or preferred by modern violin teachers. Milanov did not overlook the possibility of teaching the songs during the violin lesson. In the first book of the method, he recommends that various songs are learned and reinforced (through singing) as a routine throughout lessons:

Solidifying old songs and learning new ones continues to be a task until the last *temas* ... Knowing the song materials is a must for the success of training. The better the song is learned, the easier it will be for the student to access its audio image and let it lead the process of finding it on the fingerboard.” (Milanov, 1981, p. 11)

Most of the songs used in the second volume of the Milanov method are learned in the first. The consistency in approaching songs in the first volume enables better focus on note-reading, notating skills and technique improvement. I observed lessons in which Sophia moved through some of these processes. Episodes in which Yova and Sophia work on the same song for different learning purposes constitute a starting point for examining the use of songs in developing different skills throughout the Milanov method, and for demonstrating Milanov’s teaching principles and philosophy, previously explored in this document but confirmed in lesson observations.

Episode 2. Yova starts the lesson with a tune that Sophia learned during the first book, *Borjano, Borjanke*.<sup>3</sup> The use of this song during the lesson shows the application of two of Milanov’s teaching principles: use of age appropriate songs and musical material connected with solfeggio practice. As mentioned earlier, Milanov arranged the songs learned in the method for

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<sup>3</sup> Боряно, Борянке (Borjano, Borjanke) is a Bulgarian folk song about a girl named Borjana. In the Bulgarian language, names change in the vocative form (as when one addresses oneself to a person). In the case of the name Borjana, the vocative form becomes Borjano or Borjanke (in diminutive form, meaning an endearment). In the song, someone tells Borjana about her singing, which translates literally to “is it only you who can sing?” Other verses in the song mention that Borjana’s voice can be heard across the fields, and also make reference to rural work: “I drop my sickle, so I can listen to the song you are singing.”

violin and piano at the end of the first volume. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show *Borjano, Borjanke* as it appears at end of the first volume.

39. БОРЯНО, БОРЯНКЕ Народна песен

$\text{♩} = 132$

Бо-ря-но, Бо-рян-ке, сал ти ли си мо-ма,

Figure 5.1. “Borjano, Borjanke,” Milanov, *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), p. 61.

D. C.

сал ти ли си мо-ма, сал ти ли знайш да пе-еш.

Coda pizz.

Пианистът свири с различни шрихи, динамика и апликатура.

Figure 5.2. “Borjano, Borjanke,” Milanov, *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), p. 62.

The song “Borjano, Borjanke” reappears when Yova and Sophia work on the second volume of the method (see Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3. Milanov, *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema* V, N. 22, p. 19.

The tune is notated in several transpositions with the pedagogical goal of practicing solfeggio, reading and notating music. When Yova asks what song they are about to read, Sophia points out the song on the previous page. The version they work on is in D major:

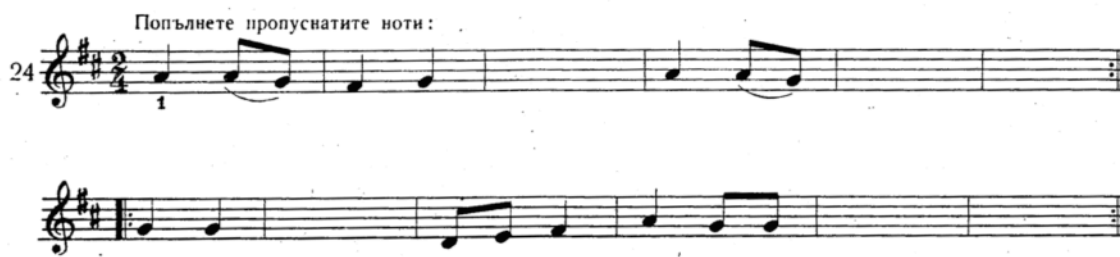


Figure 5.4. Milanov, *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema* V, N. 24, p. 20.

The directions above Figure 5.4 translate to “fill out the notes that are missing.” There are places left blank on the staff so that the student can write the notes out based on the first model. Yova points at each note as they read them together, asking Sophia to name them, and they sing the melody as they are identified. They work on one more transposition of the same song in C major, as shown in Figure 5.5.



Figure 5.5. Milanov, *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema* V, N. 23, p. 20.

After singing several transpositions of the same song, Yova asks Sophia to write the notes missing on the staff for all the previous exercises. Yova shows her how the printed notes appear so that Sophia might use them as a model; Yova also supervises correct notation of values, pitches and stems.

In the lesson episodes described, the song “Borjano, Borjanke” was observed as a tool for note-reading. The song makes several reappearances throughout the method’s first and second volumes, each time approached by a different technique topic. In the next section, I will show how the song is effectively recycled as musical material.

“Borjano, Borjanke” can be found in the first volume of the method, in the section labeled *tema XVII*, the technical key points of which are: 1) “practicing major and minor second played with fingers 4-1 and 1-4 on neighboring strings; 2) preparatory exercises for mastering the lateral movement of the left hand “across the strings” (Milanov, 1981, p. 26). Songs, including “Borjano, Borjanke,” are played in different transpositions and fingerings as a means to acquire technique skills.

Figure 5.6 shows the song played on the A string in D major, as practice for in-position fingering 4-1 and 1-4, using a major-second distance across strings. The first finger on the E string crosses to fourth finger on the A string, then shifts to the other way around.



Figure 5.6. “Borjano, Borjanke” in A major. Milanov, *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema XVII*, p. 27.



Figure 5.7 shows the song in C major, which provides exercise for the lateral left hand movement across the strings using the fourth finger on the A string, followed by the third finger on E string and backwards (a perfect-fourth interval). It also provides practice for 1-4 with a major-second across strings from first finger on the A string, to fourth finger on the D string, and the perfect-fourth interval 4-3 from the D to A strings:



Figure 5.7. “Borjano, Borjanke,” in C major. Milanov, *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema XVII*, p. 27.

The song is also played in B-flat major, creating further opportunities for practicing left hand patterns. Figure 5.8 starts with the third finger on the A string, and practices string crossing between third and second fingers from string A to E, and D to A (perfect-fourth), also reinforcing the descending major-second between first and fourth fingers on neighboring strings.



Figure 5.8. “Borjano, Borjanke” in B-flat major. Milanov, *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema XVII*, p. 27.

Figure 5.9 shows the last example of “Borjano, Borjanke” in *tema XVII*, in A major. Starting with the second finger on the A string, the exercise gives the student a chance to perform a minor-second between first and fourth fingers across the strings, and a perfect-fourth between second and third fingers. The example also contains a minor-third between the fourth and second



The second system of musical notation continues the melody. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a time signature of 2/4. The melody starts on a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note B4. This is followed by a half note C5, then a quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. The melody then descends through G4, F#4, E4, D4, and C4, ending with a quarter note B3. The system concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

27

[Milanov] recommended to sing songs first, then to do exercises for right hand, for left hand, and then to play the songs in the book. After that, you give a new song. So, when they play a song, they already know how it goes. It is a very strong construction of the lesson.

Yova mentioned that Milanov had great interest for Bulgarian culture: “When my father was young, he dedicated himself to writing down Bulgarian folk music that was just from mouth to mouth in little villages.” Milanov grew up in rural Bulgaria listening to music played by his father and sung by his mother and sisters in the field. In his method, Yova found a way to connect violin teaching with Bulgaria’s rich musical culture through songs. Yova remembers: “along with nursery songs, [folk songs] became the basis of the d. The songs he used were very popular among the children at that time.”

Yova's nostalgic childhood memories are apparent whenever she sings songs with Sophia. Even though emotionally connected with her childhood songs, Yova considered that the use of Bulgarian folk songs might have been one of the obstacles to making the Milanov method accessible in other cultures. She explained: "there is a language barrier, considering that children will sing songs and remember them better not only because of the melody, but also because of the words." Additionally, a few songs appear in asymmetric rhythm patterns, common in Bulgarian culture but not easily assimilated in other countries. This did not seem to be a problem to Sophia. I asked her about the book in Bulgarian, and if she had to learn how to speak the language. Sophia answered: "Ms. Yova writes down what I have to do, and I love the music we play."

When I asked Stoika how she dealt with the language problem in Venezuela, she affirmed making use of the piano and having the child sing random syllables in place of the song verses. She mentioned that the children did not have problems singing the songs on the repeated syllable "na." They remembered the songs easily and started playing them quickly. Yova also teaches songs with random syllables, but recognizes the impact of the words on learning songs.<sup>4</sup>

As songs contained in Milanov's method become familiar they start serving other functions in the development of violin technique. They are played in several keys and positions in order to prevent the hand's "cementation" in one specific group of notes. The development of left-hand freedom from the beginning makes the cognition process between keys much easier in theory and practice. Songs are effectively recycled throughout the two volumes of the book as musical material to introduce new techniques. Especially in the second volume, vibrato, double-

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<sup>4</sup> Yova has adapted portions of the method with American folk songs to improve children's engagement in the lesson, especially during the beginning stage. She is working on the complete American edition of the Milanov method, which will be published soon. In the American edition she uses most of her grandfather's melodies, alternating them with American folk songs.

stops, harmonics, diverse bow strokes, and several other techniques are introduced with songs that were previously learned.

For Milanov, musical knowledge is built from practice to concept, and not the other way around. Sophia's interaction with the song "Borjano, Borjanke" exemplifies one of the functions served by the songs, the acquisition of music literacy. The trajectory of "Borjano, Borjanke" in the book exemplifies three other purposes of the use of songs: solidification of the aural image already acquired, introduction of new violin techniques, and development of reading skills.

### **Violin Technique Development**

The following demonstrates the emerging themes related to violin technique development: Up and Down and Forearm Rotation.

#### **Up and Down: "Take your hand up! Bring your thumb up!"**

Episode 1. I walk into Yova's living room and see Sophia's little fingers going up and down the fingerboard, so naturally... I am truly impressed with Sophia's left hand freedom. She is not playing very fast, or perfectly in tune all the time, but what impresses me is how early she is experiencing the fingerboard in a simple way. Yova plays some notes from the scale on the piano to help Sophia find them on the violin. As Sophia repeats the scale, Yova limits the support provided by the piano by playing less and less until Sophia plays the song by herself. When Sophia plays the arpeggios, her hand does not easily reach the highest position. Yova instructs: "Take your hand up! Bring your thumb up!" while Sophia is playing, so that her fingers are on top of the fingerboard as she moves up in position (towards the bridge) and her thumb also moves up to make the hand more comfortable. Sophia adjusts her hand position and intonation is improved.

Up and Down has been the most fascinating theme of the Milanov method because it shows his freshest insights in violin pedagogy. Most methods delay the teaching of higher positions on the fingerboard, a choice that often brings the need for supplemental shifting exercises to improve students' skills. In the Milanov method, the focus is on the development of the necessary left-hand movements; the terminology *position* is avoided at first so that more possibilities are at the student's reach. Shifting is part of playing from the first approach to the fingerboard. The theme of Up and Down appeared during informal conversation with the participants, interview accounts, observations, and Milanov's teaching principles. Lesson episodes served as a starting point for a brief analysis of this theme as a left-hand technique aspect throughout the method. Milanov shared his views on the traditional methods:

For hundreds of years, traditional teaching has been using a method based on teaching the fingerboard in positions. Our practice shows that this approach is painfully slow for several reasons: it goes through numerous repetitions, and it is full of artificially created contradictions related to the entire learning process. Therefore, it does not achieve quick results and stable knowledge. Instead of positions, we suggest learning the fingerboard following the direction of the left hand fingers. (Milanov, 1981, p. 5)

After analyzing the violin repertoire literature, Milanov (1981) described three essential movements of the left hand: 1) vertical, which is the movement of the finger pressing the string onto the fingerboard; 2) horizontal, which is the movement of the finger when it slides along the string; and 3) lateral, which is the movement of the finger across the strings without changing position. I focus on horizontal movement in this theme, along with Milanov's pedagogical plan for playing up and down the fingerboard based on his theory.

Most methods ignore the horizontal movement described by Milanov, giving more importance to the vertical movement. Ignoring the horizontal movement results in playing extensively in first position. The focus on getting the students to understand that type of playing, and the need for fast results in that setting, can lead to teacher abuse of finger placement markers

(FMPs). As previously reviewed, research has shown FMPs are not proven to establish better left-hand technique or guarantee intonation consistency (Bergonzi, 1997; Smith, 1985). It may be helpful to use finger markers with students, but only if we also provide clearer notions of the entire fingerboard along with it. Furthermore, at higher positions, fingers get closer together, avoiding excessive finger extension and providing a better placement of the fourth finger. The excessive work on first position may be responsible for the difficulties in shifting, and the generated need for shifting exercises to master that technique.

One of the most traditional études for shifting is Ševčík, Op. 8 (1933), which offers a wide range of shifting exercises preparatory for scales. Ševčík, Op. 8 explores the same melodic motives in several positions, causing the finger patterns to change constantly, which might confuse pupils not yet familiar with the theoretical requirements of tonality needed to understand finger patterns. The modern violin technique of Ricci (2007) has explored concepts of approaching the entire fingerboard as facilitating “transportation” of fingers (Ricci, 2007, p. 6). Ricci found that violin playing can be made simpler if one acquires the ability to move fingers over the fingerboard freely without disturbing the stability of holding the instrument provided by the support of the left hand. His ideas are based on the 19th-century era, before the use of the chinrest (violinists Paganini and Wieniawsky never played with one), with the advantage that the left thumb remained more stable closer to the violin rib: “there were no such concepts as positions or shifting in the old system. These came about as a result of the chinrest—the violin change from being handheld to chin held” (Ricci, 2007, p. 1). Ricci also found that violin teaching has moved away from the nature of the instrument, which requires “moving the finger several times in succession ... at any kind of speed” (2007, p. 5). That change of emphasis has given extreme importance to pedagogy focused on “playing with four fingers but not with one”

(Ricci, 2007, p. 5). Playing with one finger along the violin is a concept explored by Ricci through exercises and application to repertoire. Milanov wanted to alleviate the amount of exercises needed to master the violin fingerboard by introducing opportunities to develop the horizontal movement along the strings at the beginning of violin instruction.

Milanov (1981) explains the method's "integrated approach," which he developed through pedagogical and experimental research over the years. Ultimately, Milanov advocates for offering the student a wider range of left hand activity, thus exploring the whole fingerboard from an early learning stage:

The integrated approach proved extremely useful in teaching violin. Its essence is in the approach of the whole fingerboard right from the beginning. Traditional methods of teaching the violin, using positions, create psychological barriers for the acquired knowledge and skills. This complicates and delays the learning process and leads to uncertain knowledge and skills. After a detailed study of all applicable methods used in violin teaching we came up with a method of structuring the performing habits in a way that allows us to cover even the most complex movements with the left hand as early as the first year. That way a foundation is laid and gives the student the possibility to develop further performing habits in the next few years. Each new piece of knowledge or skill comes to reinforce and further develop the ones learned earlier. The integrated approach and the transposition [of songs] gave us a chance to relieve the children of a great amount of unproductive practice, which results in losing the interest and love for the instrument. (p. 3)

As approached in the previous theme, the transposition of songs allows the left hand to operate in different areas of the fingerboard. Furthermore, Milanov treats the development of shifting skills as part of violin playing, allowing the student to navigate through the fingerboard not only playing different transpositions of songs, but also including shifting within songs. Proficiency in shifting appears to be achieved by Sophia through the Milanov method. Milanov developed his ideas from experience: Stoika remembers Ševčík, although Yova did not have to play these exercises. Thus Milanov designed his plan to develop and master shifting skills throughout the book, based on the horizontal movement along the strings:

**“The slide”: passport to the fingerboard.** The idea of offering the student a more complete approach of the fingerboard is presented throughout the method’s two volumes, starting in the third *tema*. One of the pedagogical activities proposed by Milanov, “The Slide,” is presented at different levels of difficulty throughout the book. Its essence is to train the left hand to move along the fingerboard with ease, therefore “to get the left hand used to the performing requirements of an experienced violin player” (Milanov, 1981, p. 10). In the first stage of the slide, it is introduced as a pedagogical activity without producing any sound, so that the focus is solely on the left hand task. The activity, at first, is done as follows:

Activity: The Slide without using the thumb (*tema III*)

The violin is placed under the chin and is held with the right hand in such a way that the left hand is free. The index finger of the left hand is placed with its tip on strings A or D. The thumb is close to the index finger. The finger slides lightly and evenly along the whole string from its place at first position to the end of the fingerboard and back. While sliding upwards the finger is straightened, and on its way back to initial position it is bent to what is normal for the position. This exercise is done on the other strings as well ... We do not place the thumb in its right place at first because it will be an obstacle for the movement of the fingers along the fingerboard. ‘The slide’ is practiced on all strings. (Milanov, 1981, p. 10)

With the slide, Milanov implemented the first kind of movement described in his methodology: horizontal, or along the string. The activity shows the student the physical action necessary to shift between positions: to place a finger higher or lower along the fingerboard. This is at first facilitated by the help of the right hand in sustaining the instrument’s weight instead of the left thumb, so that the focus is solely on the finger slide.

In the next *tema*, the activity is repeated, this time letting the fingers lead the thumb throughout the violin neck:

Activity: The Slide using the thumb (*tema IV*)

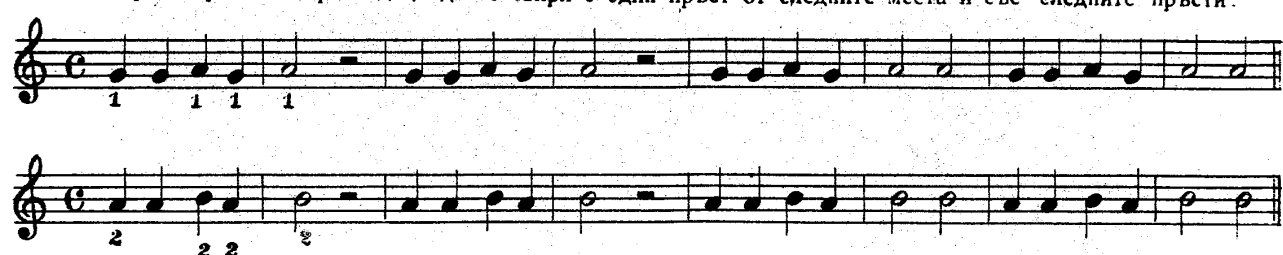
The left wrist is in first position; the thumb touches the neck lightly on the left side facing between the first and second finger; the wrist is straight and turned towards the neck; the thumb touches the neck with all the length of its first phalange. One of the fingers is placed on D or A string, touching it lightly. The finger slides along the string, and the

palm, thumb and the other parts of the hand follow its movement and try to make it easier. From fifth position up, the thumb moves further towards the end in the corner, at the end of the neck. From position seven up it leaves its place and slides along the fingerboard of the violin. When the sliding finger goes back to its initial position all parts of the hand follow back to their initial position. The basic rule here is that the movement of the hand should obey the movement of the sliding finger, which has the leading role. Slide all fingers of the left hand one by one along all strings. (Milanov, 1981, p. 11)

The slide activities found in the Milanov method help solidifying technical skills such as shifting, while making it more natural to the student from the beginning. Each time the sliding element is revisited an extra element is added. It is important to clarify that other skills are learned, in alternated fashion, with the horizontal movement of the left hand and in between the examples analyzed in this section (e.g., playing open strings, introducing bow division, playing harmonics, and playing alternating two fingers).

After the student is comfortable with silent sliding all along the fingerboard, Milanov uses a simple song to introduce short-distance slides, through major second intervals, as shown in Figure 5.10. The directions translate to “the song should be played with by sliding one finger on the following notes,” and “the song should be played on all strings.”

Скороговорката „Бързоходец“ да се свири с един пръст от следните места и със следните пръсти:



Да се работи и на останалите три струни.

Figure 5.10. Sliding through major seconds. From Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema* VII, p. 13.

In *tema* VIII, Milanov introduces a one-octave slide with the use of a song. He writes “the playing finger slides from position one until it gets to the harmonic tone. The sliding is done with the movement of the bow emphasizing the harmonic tone” (Milanov, 1981, p. 14).





Figure 5.11. Sliding to the Harmonic at the Octave. From Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981) (Volume I), *tema VIII*, p. 14.

The next time the horizontal movement is explored is through a variation of the slide including the lateral movement as an addition to sliding through other strings:

Activity: The Slide Crossing the Strings (*tema X*)

The second finger is placed on one of the strings pressing it lightly and slides evenly to the end of the fingerboard; then it is moved to the neighboring lower or higher string and slides back to initial position. The aim of this exercise is to achieve freedom and confidence in the movement of the fingers along the strings and the fingerboard. The child works with his left hand only, without a bow. All possible combinations of the fingers between neighboring strings are to be used.

The above exercise is a preparation for sliding to the same note on a neighbor string, which establishes the idea of the same note or group of notes performed on different strings to be explored in *tema XII*. Sliding to the same note on a lower string appears in three patterns. The first pattern introduces sliding to the same note on a lower string using single notes. The exercise is written on E and A strings, but should be played on other combinations of strings.



Figure 5.12. Sliding to the same note on a neighbor string. From Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema XII*, p. 18.

The entire set of slides uses whole-step distances between fingers on each line of the exercise for easier assimilation by the student. Figure 5.13 shows the second pattern, which adds a simple whole-step melody to the slide. The same finger that started playing the melody now slides, therefore practicing a longer shift. Notice that the sliding finger is also the one just before the one finishing the melody.



Figure 5.13. Sliding to the same note on a neighbor string. From Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema* XII, p. 18.

The third pattern offers yet a different melody, as shown in Figure 5.14. This time the same finger that finished the melody also performs the slide.



Figure 5.14. Sliding to the same note on a neighbor string. From Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema* XII, p. 18.

Yova remembers playing up and down the fingerboard since she was a child. While studying at the L. Pipkov Secondary School, she recalls going to a conference in Germany with her grandfather, other teachers, and the group of children from the Research Center for Music Education. Yova knew from an early age that the way she and her peers played made an impression on people:

I remember playing the songs, up and down, and everybody looking like, “Wow!” Because people just see it as complicated, well, you see Sophia now, she goes up and down, and no problem ... Everybody, not only me, the whole group, we would go somewhere to play at conferences, and people were very impressed.

Episode 1 of Up and Down occurred when I started the first set of observations, in the spring of 2011. Figure 5.15 shows the scale and arpeggios practiced in that lesson:



Figure 5.15. Scales and Arpeggios Connecting the D and G Strings. From Milanov’s *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema V*, N. 28, p. 21.

Sophia was working on scales and arpeggios in *Book II* of the method. She had started taking lessons with Yova, her first teacher, in September 2009. In less than two years of lessons, I noticed Yova giving Sophia instructions common to intermediate-level violin playing, such as, “take your hand up,” so Sophia could bring her hand on top of the violin and reach the high positions better; or “touch the violin,” so she could establish tactile memory of the places she

In playing the scales, according to the fingering indicated by Milanov, the left hand has to shift positions twice until it reaches the top of the scale. In arpeggios, the hand shifts only once, all the way to the top note. Therefore, the hand must travel a long distance, from the bottom to the top note, with a single movement, making the shift more complex. Yova helped Sophia to accomplish the shift by showing her how the hand should travel along the fingerboard. They played another scale, written in the same fashion, but transposed to F major. Milanov suggests transposition of this scale and arpeggio pattern using the same fingering. Figure 5.16 shows scales and arpeggios in F major.



The model of connecting strings is applied to other combinations of strings to solidify technique as the student connects the places on the fingerboard with note-reading. “Connecting strings” is a recurrent *tema* in the Milanov method, and it combines the horizontal movement along the string with the lateral movement across the strings.

Episode 2. Sophia and Yova also work on reading and playing on the E string. One of the songs used in the lesson is shown in Figure 5.17.



Figure 5.17. Reading and Playing on the E String. Milanov *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema* VI, N.2, p. 22.

During the lesson, Yova asks Sophia to prepare her hand for the shift so that all her fingers are on top of the string and reach better. The same song is also transposed to G major, as shown in Figure 5.18.

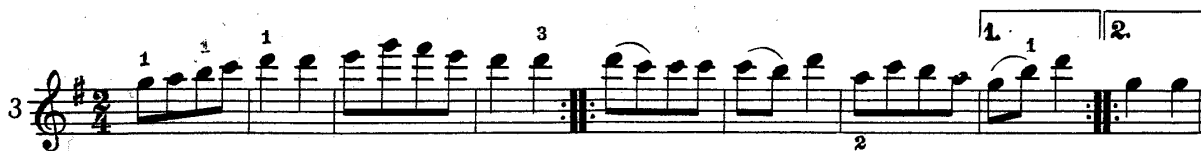


Figure 5.18. Reading and Playing on the E String from Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema* VI, N.3, p. 22.

While helping by playing notes on the piano once again, Yova reminds Sophia about preparing the hand. Sophia corrects it. The need for the hand's preparation ahead of the shift increases as the song moves to higher positions. When they finish, Yova explains the mechanics of left hand shifting and positioning:

Sophia, this is very important: when you go 'tadadada' [sings the song] you cannot stay here [Yova shows her first finger ahead of her hand], because there is no way your fourth finger will reach. You always have to think of the fourth finger. In the moment you are going up, the entire hand has to come here [showing the entire hand ready in the new position with the left thumb in its place] and then, just, put the hand here and it will be much more comfortable for you, you don't have to hang in the air. Just put it here [showing the hand touching the violin's rib] and it will be much easier, OK? Can we try only that? Just this, going up, the beginning of the song.

As Sophia plays, Yova asks her to stop to make sure she is touching the violin in fourth and sixth positions. Yova corrects Sophia's hand position by giving clear instructions several times during the lesson, until Sophia can do it herself. Figure 5.19 shows the song in A major.



Figure 5.19. Reading and Playing on the E String. Milanov *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema* VI, N. 4, p. 23.

Yova gives Sophia chances to play the song on her own, helping her find the best position for her hand. At some places, Yova stops playing the piano, letting Sophia play on her own. By playing the song on the violin, Yova shows Sophia what the thumb should do to adjust to different positions and then asks Sophia to try it one last time, telling Sophia to bring the thumb back when needed. The explanation on the mechanics of shifting is invaluable for understanding the adjustments needed to make the left hand play freely. That Sophia experienced playing on the fingerboard in detail at an earlier stage of her development appeared to contribute to the solidification of her technique.

It is easier to understand Sophia's fearless interaction with the fingerboard considering that playing up and down the fingerboard had been part of her routine since the beginning of lessons with the Milanov method. For that reason, a return to the beginning of the method, *Book I*, proves helpful in investigating how Milanov initially treats the fingerboard.

Similar to other technical skills developed by the method, opportunities for practice of shifting are arranged in a way that follows a spiral model of repetitions at a higher level. Milanov understood that repetitions are a crucial part of violin practice, but he gave special attention to the fact that each set of repetitions have a purpose and add something new to a pre-formed skill. In that sense, if we imagine the student's course of knowledge as a spiral containing the different

aspects of violin skills, each “loop” completed in the spiral by sliding tasks contains an additional element. Based on observations of Sophia’s development of fingerboard geography, we might transfer this information to the foundation of the spiral model, as applied to mastering horizontal movement along the strings. The basis of that spiral explores the simplest types of shift according to Milanov, illustrated in Figure 5.20.

Ultimately, the skills acquired with the slide are applied each time a change of position (shift) occurs in the left hand. Providing opportunities for that practice will contribute to making students accustomed to the gymnastics of this shift, so that they might focus on artistic choices rather than technical ones in later stages.

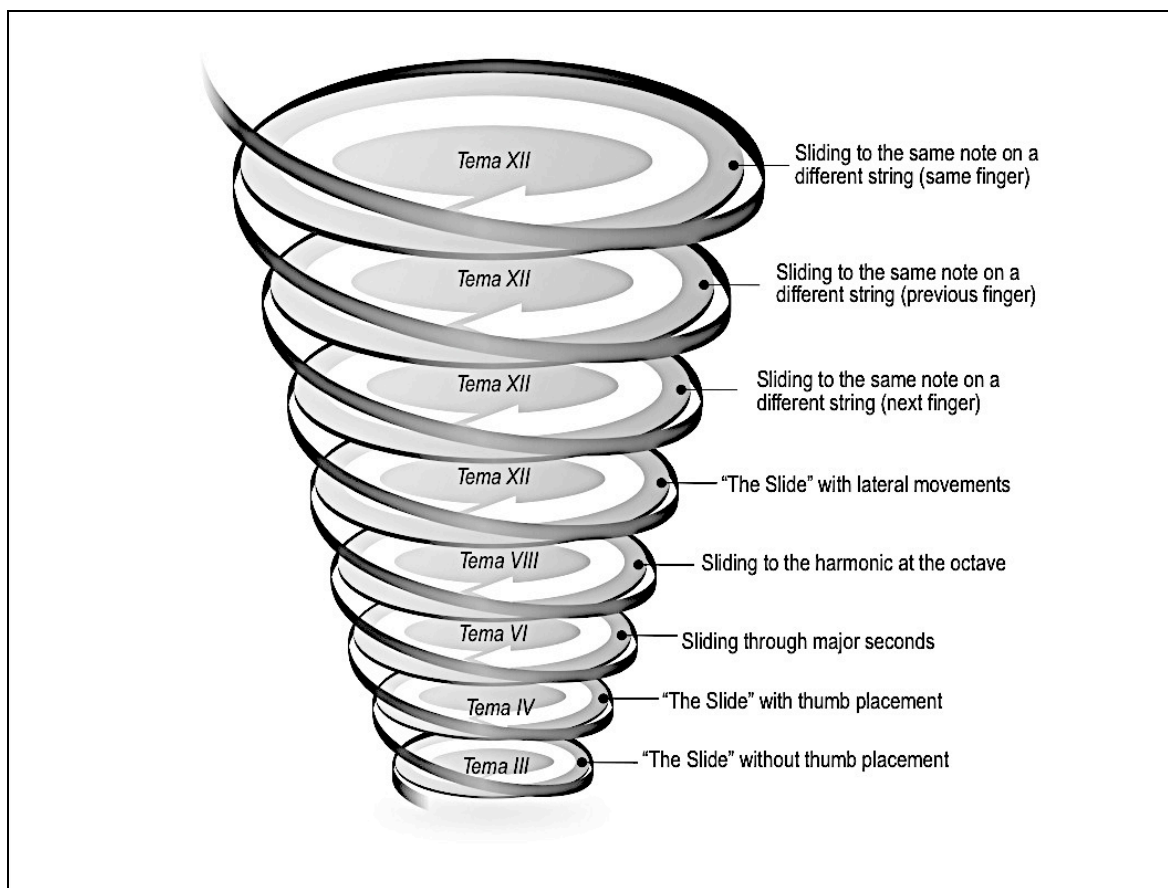


Figure 5.20. Spiral model applied to development of left-hand horizontal movement.

### **Forearm Rotation: “As if you were to open a jar”**

Episode 1. Sophia plays an excerpt that works on staccato. Yova responds, saying, “Yes, but I see a lot of this [moves her arm up and down] and not this [rotates her forearm]... try not to spend so much bow” They repeat it several times. Yova stresses the necessity of “biting the string.” She takes Sophia’s violin and shows her, saying “right now the stroke sounds too soft [plays] and I need it to be [plays a stronger articulation with the bow] like that ... I bend the wood each time there is a note, from here [shows forearm rotation].” She gives the violin back to Sophia and she plays better this time. Yova demonstrates this and tells Sophia once again that she should be moving the hand “from here” [rotating the forearm], and not “like that” [moving arm up and down].

Episode 2. Sophia can’t hide her excitement: “Ms. Paula, guess what we started today? Jumping bows!!!” Yova explains: “It’s called Spiccato! We are going to start with one at a time, and then up.” Sophie listens carefully while Yova continues, saying, “What I do is I help from here a little bit [demonstrates forearm rotation].” Sophia tries hitting the strings. Yova asks her to keep the movement “coming from here” [forearm rotation]. Sophia tries a little faster, two notes at a time. Yova then asks her to control the bow when it is on the air. They increase the number of notes to four. Yova asks Sophia to find a place where she is comfortable, and to let the bow come back by itself: “for that you have to relax your fingers, especially your pinkie.” Following this practice they try a musical example on one note. Yova asks Sophia to practice one, two, and four strokes at a time before practicing the musical example at home.

The Milanov method’s approach to right hand technique uses forearm rotation as the basis of sound production and articulation. Advice for the use of forearm rotation can be found throughout the text, from the earliest *temas* to the end of *Book II*. The use of forearm rotation is



an invaluable lesson for good bowing technique, easily overlooked, causing students to try to produce sound by simply pressing the arm against the string, which prevents its natural flexibility and, therefore, refined bowing technique.

In *Book I*, Milanov explains the nature of the movements of the right arm and fingers in violin playing (1981). He describes two basic dimensions of bow activity: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal movement happens when moving the bow across the string (up-bow and down-bow), and the vertical movement happens when applying bow pressure on the string. The horizontal movement over the string is achieved most of the time by the arm and its parts. He explains by saying, “The vertical pressure onto the bow is achieved through rotary movements” (Milanov, 1981, p. 8). Exerting bow pressure through the index finger, also called pronation, has a leading role in tone production in the Milanov bow technique. He also makes the connection between the basics of forearm rotation movement with more refined violin techniques:

Specific combinations of horizontal with vertical movements are in the basis of the bouncing and thrown bows ... change of bow direction, string crossing, double stops, chords are connected with rotary movements of the forearm and a special type of vertical activity of the wrist and the forearm. (1981, p. 8)

Carl Flesch (2000) delineates three main schools of bowing. He describes the German bow hold as “older,” the Franco-Belgian as “newer,” and the Russian as “newest,” including pictures of different bow holds (p. 35). Identifying schools of violin technique can be problematic, as the use of nationalities to divide violin schools has been a challenge for authors and violinists since the Italian heritage spread through Europe with Viotti. Milsom (2003) acknowledged the limitations in clearly defining schools of violin, saying, “At best, it should be considered a necessary but flawed means of organizing our viewpoints upon styles of violin playing” (p. 18). His research explains the differences of stylistic elements in the German and Franco-Belgian schools rather than their differences in technique. One aspect, analyzed as a

differentiating factor of schools of violin technique in the literature, is the type of bow hold, including its consequences on right hand technique. It is not possible to rigidly associate violinists to schools of bowing, and sources diverge in the association of names and schools of bowing. Therefore, such aspects have to be interpreted with flexibility.

In the German bow hold, the index finger (and all fingers other fingers but the pinkie) touches the bow at its first phalanx (see Figure 5.21). It is recommended in the Violin Schools of Spohr (1852) and Joachim and Moser (1905), both identified as important names of the German school of bowing by Flesch (2000). According to Schwartz (1983), Joachim's bow position was very unnatural, "a very low upper right arm pressed against the body, which necessitated a highly angled wrist" (p. 271). The bow position contributed for the weak dissemination of the German school of bow technique (Villaret, 1988).



Figure 5.21. German bow hold.

In the Franco-Belgian bow hold, the index finger touches the bow between the first and second phalanx (see Figure 5.22). This bow hold can be found in the translation of de Bériot's method (1899). Charles de Bériot has been considered the most important name of the Franco-Belgian violin school for representing "a marriage of the older French School of Viotti and colleagues and the new technical innovations of Paganini" (Schueneman, 2004, p. 765). The Franco-Belgian violin school is known for solid violin pedagogy and virtuosity (Rut, 2006).

Flesch described the energetic attack on martelé stroke after a “pressure pause” as “the hallmark of the Franco-Belgian school” (2000, p. 73).



Figure 5.22. Franco-Belgian bow hold.

Finally, in the Russian bow hold, the index finger touches the bow at the second phalanx (see Figure 5.23). Flesch attributes the Russian bow hold to Leopold Auer, who formerly taught in St. Petersburg. However, Auer’s writings indicate he advised against one specific type of bow hold for everybody; he acknowledged how different great masters held the bow to justify his claim (Auer, 2003).



Figure 5.23. Russian bow hold.

The forearm rotation degree increases considerably from the German to the Russian school. According to Flesch (2000), the main goal of forearm rotation is to achieve a fuller sound through all parts of the bow with less effort.

Milanov studied with Nikola Abadjiev, who can be credited for bringing innovations from the Franco-Belgian violin school to Bulgaria. The violin technique content in Milanov's method, including the development of high-level bow technique shows the connection between Milanov's school and an advanced, traditional school of bow technique. Stoika considers the Milanov technique to have originated from the Franco-Belgian violin school: "His [Milanov's] professor, Abadjiev, comes from the Franco-Belgian École, and when somebody tells me I am from the Russian school, I say 'no, the school is Bulgarian, but it is a fruit of Franco-Belgian school, that's where it came from.'" However overlapping schools of violin technique may be, Milanov's lineage of teachers likely connect to the basics of his bow technique, particularly his use of forearm rotation.

There are several pedagogical activities that introduce forearm rotation in *Book I* of the Milanov method. Most activities are introduced in the very beginning of the learning stage, in which lessons are focused on singing songs and do not include much violin playing. Prior to playing the violin with proper posture, pedagogical activities are taught to familiarize the student with movements important to basic violin technique foundation, such as naturally rotating the forearm, prior to consciously understanding the importance of that movement in more advanced technique. When I started observing lessons, Sophia was already working on *Book II*. Therefore, most of the practical applications of the pedagogical activities were observed in interviews, extra lesson observations of the Milanov method.

"The Frog Eye" is a pedagogical activity found in the second *tema* of *Book I*, and it "marks the beginning of the rotating movements of the right forearm, which are the basis for the sound production" (Milanov, 1981, p. 9) while helping to prevent extra tension on the right hand. The activity is done as follows:

Activity: “The Frog Eye” (*tema II*)

The bow is taken with the left hand, which holds it so that the frog points to your right. The thumb and the middle finger make a circle, touching “the eye” of the frog. The wrist is above the stick. With a smooth arch-shaped movement the wrist moves to under the frog; the fingers do not leave the frog. The wrist resumes its place above the frog and the stick. This exercise is repeated rhythmically with a song that is sung and repeated (p. 9).

Students of the Milanov method perform this activity in the first lesson among other activities to develop a solid bow hold. Singing songs is integrated with the practicing of such activities. Figure 5.24 shows a picture of “The Frog Eye” as it appears in the original book. (The student in the photos is Yova Milanova).

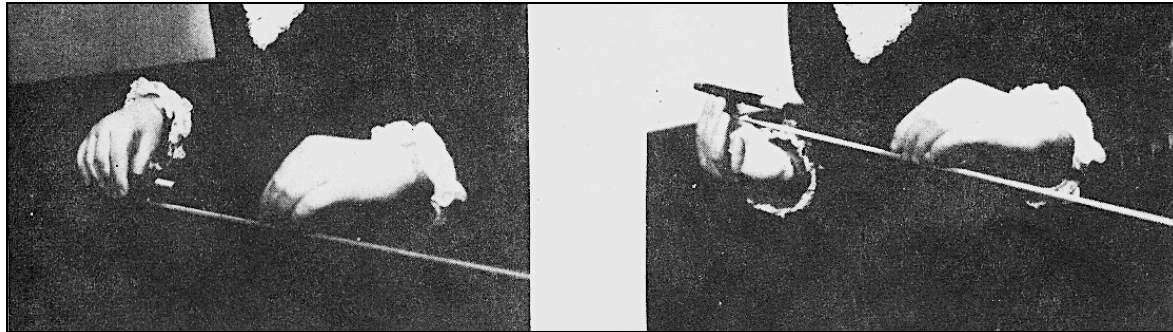


Figure 5.24. “The Frog Eye” from Milanov’s *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema II*, p. 9.

While introducing forearm rotation, this activity brings the student’s hand to a natural, somewhat suspended position in relationship to the forearm, avoiding extra effort or any distortions from the wrist.

Another important pedagogical activity in the Milanov Method is called “Press and Release” (1981, p. 10). The activity is completed as follows:

Activity: “Press and Release” (*tema III*)

The bow is held correctly as described earlier and placed on one of the strings. Using the thumb and the index fingers as a lever, the forearm is turned left; it forces and bends the stick of the bow slightly, then goes back to initial position. This movement of the forearm is at first hardly noticeable and the bending of the stick is almost just implied. It should get more noticeable when the student becomes aware of the functions of the thumb and the index fingers and masters the movement of the forearm. (Milanov, 1981, p. 11)

With the “Press and Release” activity, Milanov introduces forearm rotation applied to the violin. That is the movement that will be used by the student to assure a good contact between the bow hair and the string without extra tension of the rest of the arm, hand and fingers.

Another activity to incorporate forearm rotation is shown in Figure 5.25 and completed as follows:

Activity: “The Swing” (*tema V*)

With the violin in place and the bow correctly held, the forearm is turned right and the screw is put on one of the strings in such a way that the bow is perpendicular to the strings. The hand is lifted in such a way that the screw does not touch the string, the forearm is turned left and the bow is placed with its frog onto the same string. After a short pause, during which the teacher checks the position of the hand and the bow, the screw goes back again to the string. This exercise aims at practicing the rotational movement of the right forearm.

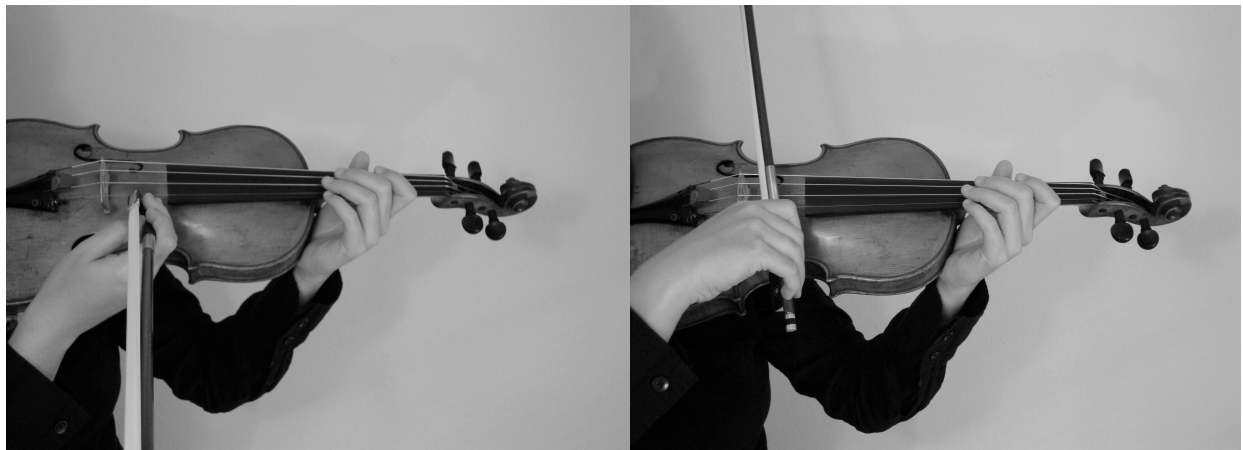


Figure 5.25. “The Swing.” From Milanov’s *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume I), *tema V*, p.12.

In *tema XII*, Milanov proposes a faster version of the activity “press and release,” this time as a quicker reflex. In the first book Milanov uses the rotary movement of the forearm to assure better contact between the bow hair and the string. More complex use of forearm rotation happens in *Book II*, as exemplified in the opening episode (forearm rotation theme) from Sophia’s lessons.

Episode 3. Yova and Sophia work on short strokes, starting with martelé. They go over an excerpt from an étude by Mazas (Fig. 5.26). This Mazas étude is used to work on the “bite”

necessary to make a clear articulation on the string. Yova shows Sophia that the bite is produced by the rotational movement of the forearm, not by a vertical pressure.



Figure 5.26. *Bow Strokes, Martelé*. From Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema XII*, N. 42, p. 64.

In the next lessons the étude is more polished and the martelé has much better articulation. I notice Sophia uses forearm rotation to improve contact with the string.

Episode 4. Yova teaches Sophia the staccato bow stroke (repeated short notes, on the string, in the same bow direction), Figure 5.27:



Figure 5.27. *Bow Strokes, Staccato*. From Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema VII*, N. 46, p. 65.

Yova and Sophia's work on staccato emphasizes the technical aspects of the bow stroke, largely based on the forearm rotation in order to perform a clear articulation of each note. The bow stick is pressed against the string as a preparatory action to each note. A release of the bow's pressure produced each note with very little movement of the bow over the string. The

pressure and release of the bow was achieved by the use of forearm rotation. Another instance of use of forearm rotation observed in the lessons (episode 2) was when Sophia learned spiccato (off the string bow stroke). Here is Milanov's introduction to spiccato:

Spiccato is an off-the-string stroke. Its bouncing is controlled by the hand. Here is what the preparation for the spiccato stroke looks like:

Put the bow in the middle on the A string. Lift the bow about 20 cm above the string and let it fall freely onto the string. If you don't squeeze the bow you will get uniformly accelerating bounces, which result of the bow's elasticity. Once you master this, combine the bounces of the bow with the up and down bows, which will make the bounces uniform. At first let the bow fall with a stronger push, which is achieved with the rotating movement of the forearm, to make it bounce higher. Try to control the bounces at the place where the sounding takes place. When you get more comfortable with the movement of the bow the bounces gradually get smaller and smaller until they go down to 1-2 cm off the string. Spiccato can be practiced as shown [in Figure 5.28].



Figure 5.28. *Bow Strokes, Spiccato*. From Milanov's *First Violin Lessons* (1981, Volume II), *tema* VII, N. 46, p. 69.

In Sophia's first experience with spiccato, she had a tendency to try to control the bow by moving her arm towards the string and back up. Yova guided Sophia through refining the movements of her arm, to keep it closer to the string. In this way forearm rotation increases the natural gravity-induced speed of the bow, letting it fall on the string while helping to control each bounce of the bow.



In one of our interviews, Stoika talked about the importance of bow technique, and how she evaluates the bow technique she developed at an early age as a student of Milanov:

Some people think that playing the violin is with the left hand, but more difficult and more important to me is the right hand - This is something that belongs to the [Milanov] system, because he has everything in there for the right hand - and left hand, of course ... Thanks to my father, when I hear some records from when I was 14, 15—I heard one Handel Sonata and also I did the Serenade Melancholic by Tchaikovsky—I find that the bow is maintaining the sound ... it was very sustained all the way to the tip.

The application of weight into the string can be problematic, especially at the tip. The sustained sound described by Stoika is achieved by an increased degree of forearm rotation. She talked about importance of developing the rotary movements of the forearm as a means to achieve better control of the bow and master good articulation:

In any case, you have to turn your bow, I say to the left because it's your left [pronation]. This movement is very important [she held the tip of the bow with her left hand and bent the bow against it by rotating her forearm] for chords, for phrasing, everything. You have to do this [rotate the forearm] as if you were to open a jar. And then you do it on the string. It is very effective with students. I do it too, just for fun. I find it helpful for everything.

She mentioned specific passages in violin concertos that need an “on-the-string bite” to the notes, which can be achieved with that kind of stroke.

During our second interview, we talked about the different exercises that the method proposes, and Stoika shared an exercise she developed that helps build a good bow hold and practice forearm rotation. The exercise can be practiced as follows:

- 1- Place the bow on a music stand, hair facing down, frog is on your right side
- 2- Let the right arm and hand hang loose by your side
- 3- Bring the bow on top of the bow, rotating the forearm to the left
- 4- With the thumb curved, place it underneath the bow stick, between the leather and the frog
- 5- Lift the bow stick from the stand without the help of the other fingers, and then let the bow rest on the stand again. Repeat it until the bow is balanced at the tip of your thumb
- 6- Let the index, middle and ring fingers rest comfortably (all at once) over top of the stick, placing the pinky on top at its tip

- 7- Lift the bow and hold it in vertical position
- 8- Turning the forearm to the right, bring the bow stick to the stand (frog is on your left side)
- 9- The exercise is repeated. This time, by rotating the forearm to the right and balancing the bow on the three fingers, then placing thumb and pinky and bringing the bow to vertical position, then back to its initial position

Figure 5.29 shows Milanov's application of the spiral model of human knowledge development proposed by Lenin (1915) in his philosophy as a pedagogical and philosophical basis for the development of bow technique through forearm rotation.

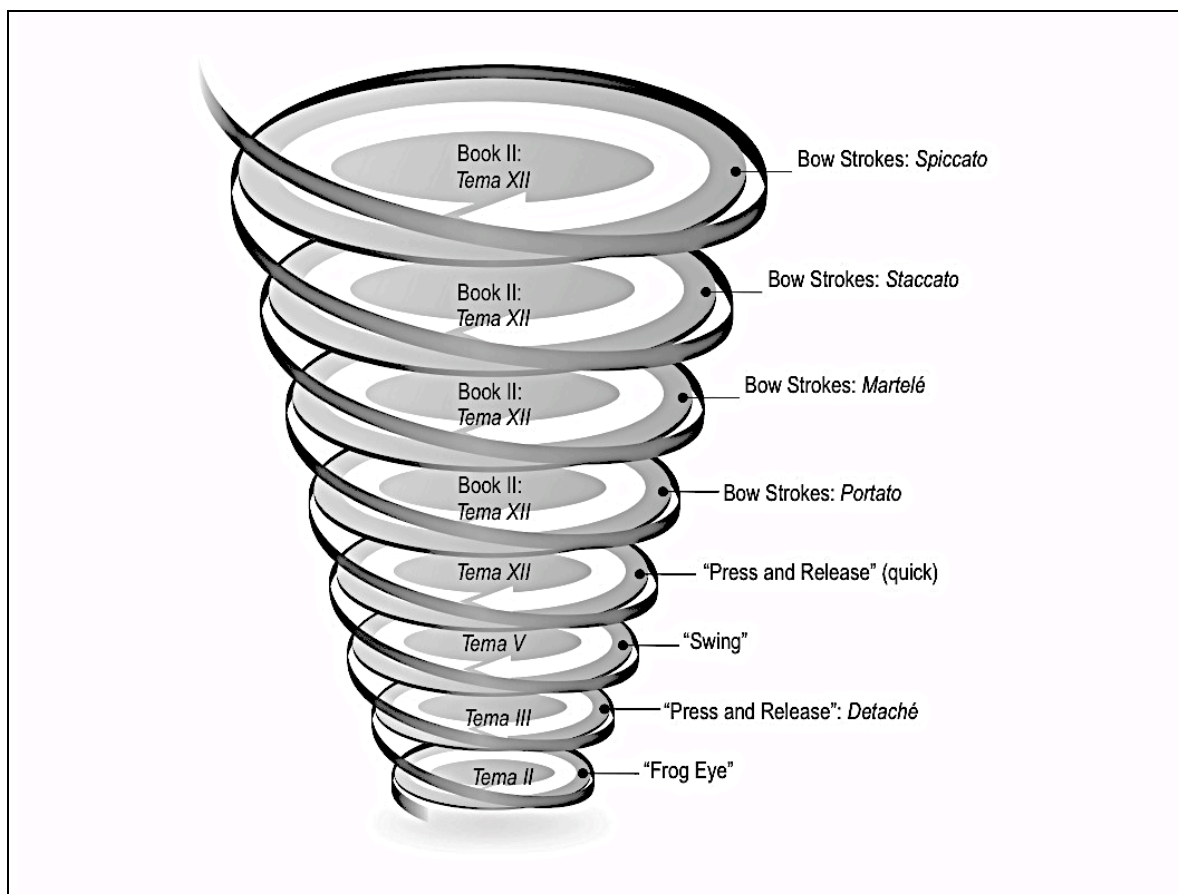


Figure 5.29. Spiral model applied to development of bow technique through forearm rotation.

The use of forearm rotation is a significant part of the Milanov method, applied to several modalities of bow strokes. The activities involving forearm rotation in the beginning of instruction are solidified by repetition of the same movement applied to diverse purposes.

Sophia's experiences with the Milanov method have provided the optimal structure to examine important aspects of the method closely. The opportunity for members of the Milanov family to share their experience and thought about the method enriched this research and brought themes to the surface of the research. In the Chapter 5, I connect the method philosophy with emerging themes to traditional violin methods, and provide possible applications for violin teachers and players.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND APPLICATIONS**

This chapter comprises two sections: the first section relates some research findings on the Milanov method to particular aspects of selected traditional violin methods, and to principles of Suzuki, Applebaum and Rolland. The second section speculates on applications of the Milanov method in studio teaching with possible transfers of its teachings to group instruction.

### **Comparing and Connecting**

#### **Milanov and Suzuki**

It is impossible to discuss violin pedagogy without considering the astonishing impact of the Suzuki method. Throughout the discussion paralleling the Milanov and Suzuki methods, we might usefully consider the close association of American violin pedagogy with the Suzuki method. This association is strong enough to blur any concrete distinction of what constituted Suzuki's ideas and those that became the American Suzuki Method. Several scholars and pedagogues have written on Suzuki methodology based on their observations of his teaching, and also as a result of applications of the Suzuki method in the American culture (Behrend, 1998; Kendall, 1966; Perkins, 1995; Starr, 1976;). Their basic intent has been to spread Suzuki's ideas and offer a strong, Suzuki-based teacher training. These authors have helped to dispense Suzuki's ideas throughout the US, offering their interpretations of the evolution of the Suzuki method over the years.

String teachers use string methods at their convenience, without necessarily having extensive knowledge of Suzuki's intentions in the course of his pedagogy. It is challenging to have a discussion about the Suzuki method without examining its changes and adaptations, undergone since it arrived in the US. In an interview, John Kendall, a strong advocate of the method in the US, evaluated how American teachers have embraced the Suzuki method: "In the

U.S.A. and worldwide, the [Suzuki] *philosophy* has remained quite consistent.” (Kuzmich, 1991, p. 22). In the US, the mother-tongue approach, the idea that every child can play the violin, the child’s learning potential, early memorization, and the important relationship of teacher, parent and child, have continued to be strongly advocated for as Suzuki’s main philosophic basis.

Kendall continues:

The pedagogy, however, has changed as the years passed because, whether we remember or not, Suzuki’s approach is basically experimental. An experimental method implies change. This approach means that Suzuki, himself, has experimented with his pedagogy over the years. He is not teaching the posture, the bow stroke, the bow-arm position exactly as he did thirty years ago, as long as he teaches, it will continue to change. Pedagogy is constantly evolving. (p. 22)

Kendall’s acknowledgment of the change in Suzuki’s pedagogy and violin technique over the years echoes a point noted by Masin (2012): “Suzuki devised his method not so much to create outstanding violinists but for the purpose of the development of an individual’s character through Talent Education” (p. 69). Suzuki’s main goal accounts for, in part, why the emphasis in the philosophic tenets of his method would have overshadowed standard development of violin technique from the beginning.

Examining the Suzuki method as a school of violin technique becomes problematic in that the most important information pertaining to his teaching was provided by researchers and pedagogues (Starr, 1976; Perkins, 1995; Behrend 1998), who kept detailed accounts. Suzuki held general sound production concepts such as *tonalization*—the search for good tone inspired in singers’ vocalization routines—broadly applied in the *Suzuki Violin School*, and a part of a later publication, separate from the ten volumes of the *Suzuki Violin School*. Later, tonalizations were added into the books along with Suzuki’s teaching philosophy; the repertoire he selected for the method books—especially up to *Book III*—was absorbed more directly than the specific details of his ever-changing violin pedagogy.

In his book *New Directions to Music Education* (1979), Milanov shares his impressions about the Suzuki method, praising many of Suzuki's ideas, and criticizing a few aspects of the method. Although Milanov and Suzuki were contemporaries, Milanov claimed to have no knowledge of the books explaining Suzuki's violin technique design. It is difficult to tell how much access Milanov had to Suzuki's pedagogical and violin playing principles, aside from the method books, especially if we consider that access of Suzuki literature in violin technique today is by American authors, not available in Bulgaria in Milanov's lifetime. However, some of Milanov's comments on the Suzuki method's principles show his familiarity with Suzuki's philosophic basis.

The Milanov and Suzuki methods share some principles. Similarly to Suzuki, Milanov believed in every child's musical potential to play the violin. Milanov also saw parental help as a positive aspect of the Suzuki method. Both pedagogues hold valuable the education of the whole person, indeed view it as an ultimate goal in violin teaching. Suzuki (1959a) shared his intentions to spread the Talent Education concepts:

I am devoting all my efforts to furthering Talent Education; what a child becomes depends entirely on how he is educated. My prayer is that all children on this globe may become fine human beings, happy people of superior ability... (p. 98)

In his method, Milanov (1981) argued that his violin pedagogy could have an impact on education of the child as a whole:

Violin training, if carried out in this direction, helps the student develop individual thinking and start coping on his own with different tasks. This will affect favorably not only the violin training process, but the development of the intellect personality of the child as a whole. (p. 4)

The Milanov method places an emphasis on the development of student autonomy, by providing the child with opportunities to exercise critical thinking throughout his method. The Suzuki method builds largely on the support of recordings, which are played repeatedly by

parents, who provide close support, and teachers, who in the US receive extensive training on how to teach each volume. The thorough support provided to the child has been seen as a problem in the Suzuki philosophy, in a sense that “older students can become overly dependent” on the safety net of resources established during childhood (Barber, 1993, p. 16). Students who grow used to their teachers’ “‘spoon-feeding’ every note” is not a tendency exclusive to Suzuki teaching, and in some cases carries on at the college level (Barber, 1993, p. 6). This pattern can be avoided through pedagogical approaches that ensure students are in charge of their development.

Milanov also pointed out aspects he viewed as negative in the Suzuki method. Suzuki recommended children start playing at age three, or as early as two in some cases. Milanov thought children should not start earlier than age four because, he noted, they are not physically ready, do not have the physical strength or coordination to hold the instrument correctly, and lack the necessary attention span (Milanov, 1979). Milanov suggested children could start musical activities without the instrument before reaching age four.

According to Milanov, Suzuki’s most progressive idea was to introduce the instrument before teaching the student how to read music. Milanov also delays music reading until the student is more comfortable playing. In the same interview mentioned before (Kuzmich, 1991), Kendall discussed the often-mentioned problem of postponing music reading in the Suzuki method. He advised teachers to make the decision based on individual cases. Overall, Kendall did not see teaching music reading as a problem in American music education: “Personally, I am not so much worried about the development of reading, since we have many reading methods, many ideas about teaching reading, and we place a high value on reading skills.” (p. 22). Kendall recommended that teachers make use of the available methods to teach reading, as long as

Suzuki's principles on note-reading were respected: "first, the reality (the sound); then the symbol; then the name of the symbol, in that order" (p. 23).

Thus Milanov's ideas moved in the same direction as Suzuki's: playing violin comes before acquisition of music literacy. However, Milanov found that music reading should be integrated with violin playing. The use of other teaching methods specific for music reading usually introduces new material unassociated with repertoire already learned to train reading skills. That lack of association truncates the learning process, creating two different lines of knowledge not systematically integrated. The child enjoys violin playing, but finds the theoretical aspects of music boring, because they are dissociated from the music experience. Thus the Milanov method includes note-reading opportunities and worksheets in the method book with the intent of providing a smooth pathway from playing by ear to reading.

Behrend (1998) analyzed Suzuki's book on note-reading, originally published in Japan in 1956, and translated to English in 1985. She describes Suzuki's book as "written for the Japanese child who has already learned to read music via solfège in his regular school" (p. 45). As a solution to that problem, she mentions the common use of mixed methodologies of Dalcroze, Orff, and Kodály, which are already integrated in several Suzuki programs in the US. More importantly, she proposes that the reading process starts as early as the first volume of the Suzuki method.

The use of methods originated in other cultures often requires adaptations, and the delay in music reading is an aspect that should be applied only to children who started at the earliest ages. In Japan, for example, children receive specific training on note-reading and sight singing at a very early age, and they connect that knowledge with violin note-reading later (Perkins, 1995). In Japan, students do not read until later in the method; neither do they play in positions



other than first until later. In Japan, the “later” in question is not so late in the child’s development, considering that most children get to experience reading and exploring the fingerboard when they are still six or seven years old. In Bulgaria, Milanov integrated the musical material of violin, theory, and solfeggio, so that when time came to start reading, children had already visualized and sung the same musical material on the staff. Although the music-making conditions provided to children should be the best possible, adaptations to methods are made when the only musical experience the child has is with the violin.

Milanov (1979) discussed Suzuki’s approach to the use of repetition. He noted that most of Suzuki’s foundation is based on extensive repetition of passages to stimulate the brain in a way that the learning can be performed on “automatic pilot” (Starr, 1976, p. 32). For Milanov, mechanical repetition does not lead to good results. He proposed an integrated approach in which something new is constantly added to old tasks and songs, so that the student can assimilate each step as a part of his whole musical development. Songs reappear, but always in a different way. The use of repetitions also plays a large role in Milanov’s method, but the variety of transpositions assures that each repetition reinforces the music memory while developing better technical skills. Therefore, teachers not only prevent students from getting bored, but also introduce new technique with the same song. The Suzuki method also contains examples of pieces of music that explore different rhythms and bow strokes (i.e., the *Twinkle, Twinkle Variations*). However, transposition is limited to playing songs on different strings, keeping the student in first position for an extended period.

Connections between playing the entire fingerboard and reading are established earlier in the Milanov method through extending the use of simpler songs until the child obtains more music literacy. The nature of the music chosen for the most part in the Suzuki method is classical

music adapted for violin and piano. Milanov, on the other hand, held as a teaching principle that children should start by playing music according to their level of musical literacy. In that sense, simple songs in the same fashion of “Twinkle Twinkle”, “Little Star,” or “Borjano, Borjanke” should constitute the majority of a method book for beginners, so that a larger amount of simple repertoire is learned before children play more elaborate repertoire. There are musical intricacies in the music of great masters that cannot be absorbed naturally by extremely young children. As noted by Barber (1993): “some young children progress very rapidly through the volumes and find themselves into some major repertoire, a Mozart concerto, for instance, before they are technically and emotionally ready for it” (1993, p. 15). If we return to the mother-language approach, a proper analogy can be established between speech and vocabulary. Young children can memorize a poem through repetition without knowing its meaning by repetition. However, the words pronounced are not necessarily in their present vocabulary. In that sense, the repertoire selected has to be integrated with what the child already knows and can apply to other tasks.

As discussed previously, Suzuki’s violin technique principles have been largely transformed and adapted by himself and by American violin teachers over the years. Specific aspects of that adaptation include earlier initiation of note-reading and inclusion of the translation of extra books by Suzuki with technical materials (*Position Studies*, *Tonalization*, *Quint Études*, *Note Reading*) to strengthen the method. These ideas were included throughout the latest edition of the Suzuki method. Milanov certainly did not have access to the Suzuki tradition that exists today. For lack of sources, Milanov avoids evaluating Suzuki’s technique of development too deeply, and his considerations about the Suzuki method should be interpreted with caution.

Milanov appreciates the system of preparatory movements implemented by Suzuki (rest position, playing position) to facilitate coordination and render holding the instrument more natural. The differences between the two methods lie on the pathway from listening to violin performance. In the Suzuki method, as originally designed, the child is exposed to repertoire through listening, which will give the memory support to internalize the musical material and transfer it to the violin. Although modern adaptations of the Suzuki method include other activities, in the original method, rote learning is focused almost exclusively on listening. The Milanov method, on the other hand, starts by using folk and nursery songs, to which the child is expected to march, clap, and sing before getting to play the songs on the instrument. In that sense, one step is added to rote learning, one that externalizes music in ways other than playing the instrument. This step not only enriches the child's experience but also improves memory of the songs helping avoid the establishment of bad habits from trying to play them before they are ready. Suzuki and Milanov were contemporaries with several philosophical ideas in common, and the major differences in their principles are weighted into their approach to violin technique.

### **Milanov and Applebaum**

Samuel Applebaum was a prolific pedagogue in the US, whose methods and ideas of violin pedagogy have largely influenced group instruction for strings. Applebaum was influenced by Auer's teaching ideas, which included careful analysis of problem solving in violin teaching (Arazi, 1969). Several teachers appreciate the logic ordering of the technique introduced throughout the Applebaum's books (Warrick, 1988). Applebaum traveled to meet many international soloists, which contributed to his ideas in violin pedagogy.

Applebaum's method has been critiqued by scholars, who define it as belonging to "the finger pattern approach" of violin teaching (Fischbach, 1972), or the "atomistic approach of

isolating each of the technical elements” of violin playing (Kovacs, 2011, p. 47). The melodic content learned explores the instrument’s simplest tonalities and the use of open strings. Finger patterns are learned in a way that each skill is learned separately without reinforcement of the previous learned skills, or preparation to the next. Kovacs (2011) observed: “Applebaum had no reinforcement or repetition built into his method; instead, each étude presents a new idea.” (p. 47). The delay of shifting was also seen as problematic by Fischbach (1972): “Both shifting and vibrato, then, are elements of the left-hand techni[que] which are neither studied nor prepared in the first two years of virtually all ‘finger pattern’ methods” (p. 13). Fischbach also pointed out the efficiency of Applebaum’s method compared to other methods available at the time, noticing the graded organization of the left hand, rhythmic structures, and use of the bow.

The Applebaum method uses the quarter note to introduce several easily learned songs. The simple nature of the repertoire selected Applebaum’s most popular method, *The Belwin String Builder* (1960), which uses folk songs, is similar to Milanov’s method. In fact, some of the songs are almost exactly the same, such as Applebaum’s “Melody in A” and Milanov’s “Little Soldiers.” They differ, however in the treatment of the left hand: Applebaum approaches the songs from the first position for an extended period of time, while Milanov transposes the song in several places of the fingerboard and recycles the song throughout the method.

As a string-class method, the priority of the Applebaum method is to introduce new songs, so that students learn a variety of repertoire while gaining confidence with the instrument. Similar to Milanov, Applebaum explores different strings from the beginning of instruction, starting with the open strings. The main difference between the methods lies in the complexity in which violin technique is prepared: The Applebaum method keeps the exploration of violin technique to a minimum and structures the book to ensure better results in class violin or string

class. It is not a fair compare methods that were designed for different purposes (string class versus private instruction); however, concepts from both methods can be interchanged to enrich learning in the different settings where they are applied.

### **Milanov and Rolland**

It is safe to assume that Milanov had no knowledge of Paul Rolland's work. Rolland's main contribution to modern violin pedagogy is the inclusion of whole body movement and awareness in violin playing. According to Kovacs (2011), Rolland's pedagogy included principles of Gestalt Theory. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's definition of Gestalt is appropriate:

The Germans have a word for the complex of existence presented by a physical organism: Gestalt. With this expression they exclude what is changeable and assume that an interrelated whole is identified, defined, and fixed in character. But if we look at all these Gestalten, especially the organic ones, we will discover that nothing in them is permanent, nothing is at rest or defined – everything is in a flux of continual motion. This is why German frequently and fittingly makes use of the word *Bildung* to describe the end product and what is in process of production as well. Thus in setting forth a morphology we should not speak of Gestalt, or if we use the term we should at least do so only in reference to the idea, the concept, or to an empirical element held fast for a mere moment of time. (Goethe, 1996, p. 50)

Gestalt theory has applications in psychology and education, and claims that the process of assimilating new knowledge always starts from the whole and moves to its parts, an understanding of their interaction as a system, to again make sense of the whole. Gestalt theory contrasts atomism, a theory in which understanding each fragmentation is the first condition to assimilate it as parts of a whole. In violin playing, Rolland advocated the use of the body, avoiding fragmentation of its parts in order to ensure greater balance and minimal effort. His book, *The Teaching of Action in String Playing* (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974), largely explores balance and leverage in violin playing, proposing a series of actions that can be incorporated in private or group teaching. Rolland's *actions* have been incorporated into other teaching methods by several pedagogues in the US.

Milanov and Rolland share similar philosophies regarding the application of Gestalt to the approach of violin pedagogy. Milanov based his teaching philosophy and the design of his method on concepts largely explored by Lev Vygotsky, the soviet psychologist whose theories have a strong relationship with Gestalt as explored by Goethe, Hegel, and Marx (Blunden, 2011). Milanov also believed that violin teaching starts from the whole and moves to its parts: body movement and pedagogical activities were included throughout his method.

Following the Gestalt concept, Rolland also advocated for moving away from the first position to free the left arm and shoulders from excessive tension. Moving from first position also stimulates the development of shifting skills and good vibrato from an earlier stage. To that end, he proposed actions that explore different areas of the violin fingerboard from the beginning of instruction. Rolland organized his *The Teaching of Action in String Playing* (1974) by topic, but advises that his actions should be practiced simultaneously throughout the course of lessons or classes. Milanov writes an order of *temas* throughout the book, in which activities to free the left hand are clearly placed at the beginning of the method.

Milanov's early bow hold (at the balance point) and bow activities are similar to Rolland's, and they both explore the use of forearm rotation as source of sound production in their pedagogy. Rolland explains his approach in detail:

The typical suggestion to press the first [index] finger for a bigger sound is ill-advised, as it tends to localize the pressure in the hand and short-circuits the forces of tone production. A much better way to produce the needed bow pressure is to release part of the natural weight of the arm into the string through the bow while letting the thumb and fingers merely resist the collapse of the bow hold. The thumb, of course, must support the bow upward, and since the thumb is part of the bow arm, the right arm must simultaneously offer upward support to the bow while releasing arm weight downward into the string. *Such action is possible only through rotary movement* [emphasis in the original]. (Rolland and Mutschler, 1974, p. 35)

Similar to the Rolland method, forearm rotation emerged as a theme in this analysis of the Milanov method. There were several instances of the use of forearm rotation applied to different bow strokes in lessons, and the importance of forearm rotation was confirmed in interviews with practitioners and analysis of the Milanov method's sources.

Repetition is approached in a similar way in the Milanov and Rolland methods, as a result of the Gestalt philosophy they share. Every repetition learned task is part of reinforcement of previous tasks, and the learning process is more integrated. They also advise use marching, clapping and singing as opportunities for students to make music while getting familiar with the instrument. Manipulating the same music material that will be learned later in their education makes repetition more engaging to students.

Most similarities between the Roland and Milanov methods involve their shared philosophy of approaching violin and music teaching from a Gestalt approach. The similarities include the approach to violin technique encompassing the use of games and playful activities, a more holistic approach of fingerboard, and the use of similar approaches to the bow. Rolland (1974) is more specific than Milanov (1981) in developing a balanced use of the entire body, given his extensive research on the movements involved in violin playing. On the other hand, Milanov offers a more systematic approach in the organization of contents. Songs are arranged and transposed for optimal sequencing in the introduction of different techniques.

### **Summary of the Comparison**

This comparison of methods does not seek to prove that one specific method is better or should be used exclusively. Although it would be very practical, there is no such thing as a violin method that works for everybody. Violinists and violin pedagogues should search for ideas that

provide the best quality education. Whichever system we decide to adopt as teachers, we should avoid inert violin teaching that is purely a vehicle of formal knowledge.

The research on the Milanov method and its applications confirms the method's pedagogical concepts and approach to violin technique in the form of emerging themes. Some of the themes relate to traditional violin pedagogy. The fostering of student autonomy in Milanov's method forms, perhaps, its most unique aspect, strongly emphasized not only throughout his methodological notes within the method, but also in sources outside of the book. This approach to student autonomy contrasts the structure created by the Suzuki method, in which children receive an extensive support from parents and materials, although not particularly the best conditions to become active in their own development. The use of simple folk and nursery songs as main repertoire in the Milanov method is similar to Applebaum's approach to string class repertoire, which limits note range to facilitate performance at the beginning stage. The repertoire provided by the Suzuki and the Applebaum methods includes extensive use of the first position, offering students a limited view of the instrument at the beginner stage. Such an approach might compromise the process involved in understanding the fingerboard. Milanov and Rolland methods, based on the approach from the whole-parts-whole, provide opportunities for students to explore the fingerboard at an early stage. The use of forearm rotation is advised by both Milanov and Rolland. They also share the Gestalt approach in violin teaching, introducing a more global view of the instrument, and taking advantage of activities that expose children to the most natural approach to the instrument.

The Milanov method was developed in Bulgaria at the same time of other violin methods discussed here. Although some of Milanov's ideas are similar to those of Suzuki, Applebaum



and Rolland, his unique notions in violin pedagogy make Milanov's method of singular value. Possible applications of these notions will be discussed in the next section.

### **Milanov in Context**

To better recontextualize the Milanov method, we might identify aspects that represent his violin pedagogy in a unique way. The most unique aspects of this method were identified in this research as emerging themes from the Milanov tradition: 1) Fostering of student autonomy throughout the development of self-regulated practice habits (student autonomy); 2) Transposition of simple songs throughout the fingerboard (songs as recycled music material); 3) Establishment of a notion of fingerboard geography from the beginner level (up and down); and 4) Forearm rotation as the basis of bow technique (forearm rotation). Moving to the future with applications of the Milanov method, we face two possibilities: the private violin setting, and the group violin setting. The violin technique aspects at the beginner level can be explored through the use of pedagogical activities in the same fashion in both settings. The application of student autonomy will vary, since assessment in group classes is different than in private lessons. However, the ideas related to violin technique could be incorporated in both settings.

### **Student Autonomy in Context**

Providing students with the best possibilities to create critical knowledge is crucial to fostering their autonomy. As string teachers in the studio or classroom setting, we always look for effectiveness and fast results, so that parents, teachers and students might see the outcome of professional work. We tend to forget about the connection between different interactions students have with music and the acquisition of skills that are part of a rounded complex of development. We should use the examples of successful pedagogues such as Dorothy Delay and

Trendafil Milanov, who employed theories of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) that give students tasks they can perform, and that build individual pride in their achievements.

It is extremely valuable that Milanov shared his pedagogical ideas well beyond violin methodology and technique. He provided his audience with the intricacies of the lesson as a system of tasks, not only emphasizing the importance of fostering student autonomy, but also offering detailed steps to achieve this autonomy, through a systematically organized method for violin and musicianship skills acquisition.

Teachers in the studio setting can adopt the student autonomy approach by providing problem-solving opportunities in the lesson. This teaching strategy may take more energy and time to develop, but students will learn the material at a deeper level because they are encouraged to find the solution themselves. It is important to offer tasks according to the student's level. When the student can achieve the task with limited guidance from the teacher, an optimal zone of proximal development has been found (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Songs as Recycled Musical Material in Context**

Several pedagogues have explored the use of transposition across the strings, but Milanov proposes song structures that can be moved throughout the fingerboard. The specific song material used may vary, as long as melodic range is introduced little by little to give children time to explore the fingerboard at ease. Culturally relevant songs are usually the best choice at the beginner level. However, some of the Bulgarian songs might be well received by children interested in repertoire from other cultures. I have given students the opportunity to create their own lyrics to simple songs, and have adopted some of them as a result. Singing, marching and clapping using the violin song material must be part of every lesson, especially at the beginner stage. These activities may work very well in the group class setting. In some cases the violin

class or lesson is the only music-making children experience with guidance. In the new edition of the Milanov method, most songs will be adapted into nursery rhymes such as “The Clock” or replaced by melodies such as “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

### **Up and Down in Context**

The student should be made to understand from the first lesson that every place on the fingerboard is a possibility, which frees her or him psychologically from imagining areas as static. Preparation for transposition along the fingerboard begins with the incorporation of the sliding activities, as suggested by Milanov, and then adapting them to simple songs in the beginner stage. In order to understand this process and offer a logical sequence that can be adapted to the lesson, a brief introduction of left-hand methodological content in the first *temas* of the method is provided.

Single-note songs have to be learned at first and will be the first ones to be transposed. After the child is comfortable with the open strings, the first approach to the left hand is the “Press and Release” activity (Milanov, 1981), placing four fingers on the same string to feel the opposition of the thumb and the contact between the hand and the violin neck.

The first use of the fingers in the Milanov method is on the harmonic at the half of the string. The child is immediately introduced to the notion of a holistic view of the fingerboard using one finger at a time in several places, starting with the harmonic and then pressing down the string at different places. The next step is to add songs with two notes and introduce the idea of a large distance between fingers. At the same time we introduce sliding back and forth with the same finger to a major second. Playing songs with two and three notes (all a major-second apart from each other) is the next step. Fingers together are introduced and the first four-finger pattern uses the whole distance between all fingers except three and four.

While the materials described are learned, the slide must be practiced in different versions. The sliding activities as described in Chapter 5 can be inserted in lesson plans using different methods, and songs with a narrow range can be transposed throughout the fingerboard. In the group setting, students can take turns playing on different strings and at different areas of the fingerboard, or try to match a note given by a leader. The experience of exploring the fingerboard with the student is extremely rewarding and usually results in a number of questions related to the mechanics of the violin. Part of the class or lesson can address these questions. Following student autonomy, the teacher should guide the process of answering questions rather than giving the answers to unsolicited questions.

### **Forearm Rotation in Context**

The use of forearm rotation can be applied based on the spiral model in Chapter 5. The development of the rotary movements of the forearm can be incorporated through pedagogical activities such as those found in “The Frog Eye”, “The Swing”, “Press and Release” on the string, and through the activity on the stand proposed by Stoika. These activities can be adopted easily in the group setting and private lesson, done in combination with singing songs or simply in rhythmical fashion.

Organizing the forearm rotation activities throughout lesson plans help students refine sound production, so that, when it is time to learn various bow strokes, a strong movement foundation has been established. It is crucial that violin pedagogues develop a better understanding of the mechanics of bow technique, and the application of arm weight onto the string, in order to provide students with these experiences.

## **CHAPTER 7: DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSIONS**

The present research analyzed the Milanov violin pedagogy tradition and its applications in studio teaching. Along with the research themes, which brought attention to key points of the Milanov method, several other topics emerged from the research and provide further research questions for future pedagogical studies.

As teachers, we face challenges in studio and classroom teaching every day. Yova once told me a student had asked her: “Ms. Yova, please give me a trick, so that I can sound better!” She laughed and answered: “I don’t sell magic tricks, you just have to play the song at home as well.” I cannot claim I have never taken advantage of finger placement markers, or “spoon-fed” information to a student days before a dress rehearsal. But each student or class is unique, and it would be impossible to find a magical method that solves all classroom and studio problems.

We need to avoid “methodolatry,” as described by Regelski (2002), a blind faith in a single method (p. 111). In our constant search for the best teaching tools, it is easy to forget that an important goal is to stimulate children’s cognitive thinking. In a search for immediate results we constantly provide students with answers, and forget the importance of giving students questions. We also need to provide time to process questions, understand why they were asked, and to find answers that generate other questions. When students are provided the necessary tools to engage and work independently, our task as teachers is accomplished. I see the Milanov method as an opportunity to explore violin playing in a systematic way that opens the minds of young violinists.

As much as this research design analyzed the practical applications of the method, and the most broadly exposed philosophical basis of Milanov’s work, a large portion of the method might be given more attention. Milanov’s treatment of technique development at the

intermediate and advanced levels (in *Book II*) has valuable practice examples of advanced technique using simple melodies. Several portions of the method can be applied as remedial technique for advanced students and professional violin players. The simplicity of melody allows better focus on tone quality and intonation than scale literature using double stops (see Flesch's *Scale System* (1987) or Ševčík's *Op. 1, part IV* (1905)). I include selected excerpts from *Book II* of the method, along with Milanov's practice suggestion of harmonic intervals to solidify intonation precision in Appendix C. They can be used for technique development, and their simplicity and systematic approach allows for more effective practice.

The Milanov method and his research in violin pedagogy were based on the violin private lesson practice, and this research focused exclusively on the applications of the method in that setting. However, there are aspects of the method that might transfer easily to group setting, including use of folk songs, music theory and solfeggio connected to violin repertoire, use of activities to develop violin technique, among others. The Milanov method and principles can be incorporated to the group-class setting if implemented whether as supplementary material or as a pedagogical frame to lesson plans.

This research relied on Yova's most successful violin student as a model to observe the method's efficiency. The qualitative research initiated in this monograph could be extended to the experiences of other children using the method. A quantitative research design on the effect of the Milanov method on specific key points of violin technique would also be beneficial. Research could be conducted within different settings, including group instruction to provide statistical data on the effectiveness of the Milanov method.

At the time Milanov developed his method at the Research Center for Music Education, in Sofia, his colleagues were developing methods for piano and cello. (Rusi Dragnev developed a

method for cello and Anna Ilievska a method for piano.) It would be interesting to pursue studies relating their methods to Milanov's violin pedagogy.

Milanov's teaching principles and philosophic basis were explored in this research from a material culture point of view (Hodder, 1994). Connections with extant literature on music education and child psychology were drawn based on the information accessed through the research participants. A full translation of Milanov's book, *New Directions in Music Education* (1979), might provide more information about the primary sources Milanov cites, and help us establish a clearer connection between his philosophy and the work of authors cited in the book.

With this monograph, I hope to have accomplished the purpose of my research, which was to provide the community of violin teachers with practical applications of the Milanov method, and offer new perspectives in violin pedagogy. Examining the story behind the method and observing it in the context of studio teaching made it possible to connect the available sources and deliver some of the method's concepts to violin practitioners. By writing a violin method strongly based in practical experience, Trendafil Milanov left a valuable contribution to violin pedagogy, one that, in my view, bridges the gap between stages of development in music and violin practice. It is my hope that his violin pedagogy legacy remains for future generations.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL AND CONSENT FORMS

### Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair  
131 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.6792  
irb@lsu.edu  
lsu.edu/irb

– Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://www.lsu.edu/screeningmembers.shtml>

- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
  - (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.
  - (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
  - (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
  - \*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
  - (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
  - (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtaining.com/users/login.php>.)
  - (F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://www.lsu.edu/irb/IRB%20Security%20of%20Data.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator: Paula Farias Bujes Rank: DMA  
Dept: Music Ph: 225 405 2476 E-mail: pbujes1@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each

Dr. Sarah Bartolome  
Assistant Professor of Music Education  
225 578 2481 sbartolome@lsu.edu

IRB#	ES845	LSU Proposal #
<input type="radio"/>	Complete Application	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Human Subjects Training	

3) Project Title: Milanov Method's Practical Applications: A Qualitative Study

Study Exempted By:  
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman  
Institutional Review Board  
Louisiana State University  
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall  
225-578-8692 | [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)  
Exemption Expires: 2/21/2015

4) Proposal? (yes or no) No If Yes, LSU Proposal Number

Also, if YES, either  
☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant  
 OR  
☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)

\*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Paula Bujes Date 01/30/2012 (no per signatures)

\*\* I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Exempted <input type="checkbox"/> Category/Paragraph 1		
Reviewer Mathews	Signature Robert Mathews	Date 2/22/12

## PARENT CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Milanov Violin Method: A Qualitative Study

1. Performance Site: Grace Notes Violin Studio, Riazuelo Residence
2. Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions about this Study, Monday through Friday, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
  
Paula Farias Bujes, MA (225) 405-2476
4. Purpose: The purpose of this case study is to explore the practical applications of the Milanov Violin Method, and the experiences and perceptions of violin students and teachers that have implemented it in lessons.
5. Subject Inclusion: Violin Students and Parents, Violin Teachers from Milanov Tradition
6. Number of Subjects: Approximately 10.
7. Study Procedures: This study involves four data collection strategies: Observation, interview, narrative studies, and analysis of documents written by Trendafil Milanov. Observations of violin lessons will be conducted throughout the duration of the service project. Student, parents and teachers participants will be interviewed during project. Each 30 to 60 minute interview will be audio recorded. The investigator will ask the questions listed on the attached "Semi-Structured Interview Protocols" (see last page of this document).
8. Benefits: There are no direct benefits related to participation, however this study may contribute to our understanding of the value of service-learning projects in music education courses.
9. Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study, however, sometimes people get nervous when they are being observed, interviewed and audio recorded. You are free to stop the interview at any time should you feel



uncomfortable or anxious. Additionally, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your responses. Audio files and interview transcripts will be saved on a password-protected laptop to which only the investigator has access.

10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

12. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu), [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb). I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

---

Signature of Parent

---

Date

Study Exempted By:  
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman  
Institutional Review Board  
Louisiana State University  
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall  
225-578-8692 | [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)  
Exemption Expires: 2/21/2015

CHILD ASSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to be in a study to help find ways children can best learn how to play the violin. My lessons will be just like they have always been: Ms. Yova will teach weekly. Ms. Paula will observe and videotape my lessons. I am also going to be interviewed at some point. I can decide to stop being at this study at any time without getting in trouble.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Study Exempted By:  
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman  
Institutional Review Board  
Louisiana State University  
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall  
225-578-8692 | [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)  
Exemption Expires: 2/24/2018

## **APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER**

Baton Rouge, April 17, 2013

Dear Paula,

I write this letter to grant permission for the use of excerpts, musical examples and images from the violin methods: *Violin School* and *First Violin Lessons* (Volumes I and II) by my grandfather Trendafil Milanov for educational purposes only, as included in your doctoral dissertation entitled: "It's Easier if You Have a System': Analysis and Applications of the Milanov Violin Method".

Sincerely,



---

Yova Milanova  
yova@gnmusicstudio.com  
Owner and Artistic Director,  
Grace Notes Music Studio

*Violin School* by Trendafil Milanov  
Copyright © 1958 Trendafil Milanov  
Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved.

*First Violin Lessons* by Trendafil Milanov  
Copyright © 1981 Trendafil Milanov  
Used by Permission. All Rights Reserved.

## APPENDIX C: MILANOV METHOD – BOOK II EXCERPTS

### XIII ТЕМА ДВОЙНИ ТОНОВЕ

Свирането на двойни тонове изисква умение за едновременно озвучаване на две струни. В първата тетрадка ние извършихме известна подготвителна работа чрез задачи за свиране на две свободни струни, както и чрез свиране с пръсти на едната струна с едновременното звучене на свободна струна. В настоящата тетрадка ние ще навлезем в по-сложните форми на двойните тонове, които изискват едновременното поставяне на два и повече пръста.

Най-често срещаните интервали при двойните тонове са октавите, терците и секстите, по-рядко децимите и унисоните. Като единични интервали се срещат всички останали интервали.

Последования от няколко октави, терци, сексти, унисони и децими се изпълняват чрез редуване на пръстите или чрез плъзгане на едни и същи пръсти. Чрез редуването на пръстите се изпълняват интервалите октави, терци и сексти. Същите могат да бъдат изпълнени и чрез плъзгането на едни и същи пръсти. Чрез редуване на пръстите могат да бъдат изпълнени и пръсторедните октави.

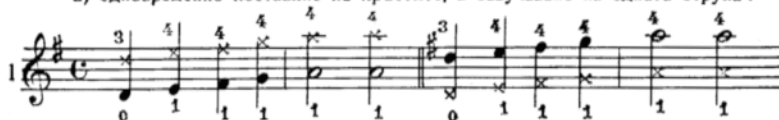
При свирането на терци, сексти и обикновени октави пръстите запазват нормалното си положение (чиста кварта между първия и четвъртия пръст). При свиране на унисони, пръсторедни октави и децими се използва разширено положение на пръстите.



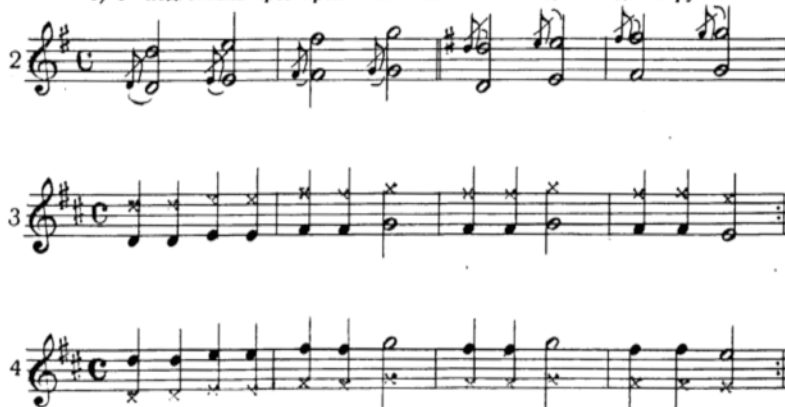
#### Октави

Подготовката за овладяването на интервал октава би могла да премине през следните няколко етапа:

а) едновременно поставяне на пръстите, а озвучаване на едната струна:



б) с подготовка чрез преминаване на лъка от една на две струни:



5

6

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23 

24 

79



Трудността при свиренето на терци идва главно от нееднаквостта на редуващите се една след друга терци. За преодоляване на тази трудност препоръчваме работата за овладяването на този интервал да премине през следните етапи:

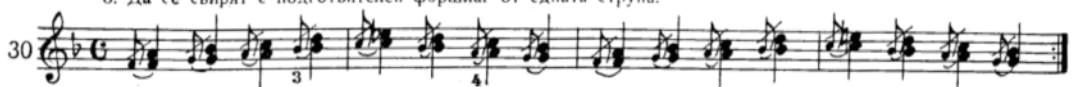
1. Да се свирят разложено, като се редуват тонове от двата гласа. Пръстите се поставят едновременно на двете струни:



2. Да се свирят поотделно първият и вторият глас, като пръстите се поставят едновременно на струните:

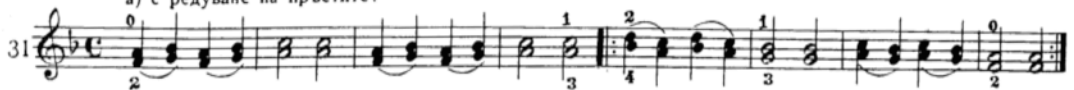


3. Да се свирят с подготвителен форшлаг от едната струна:

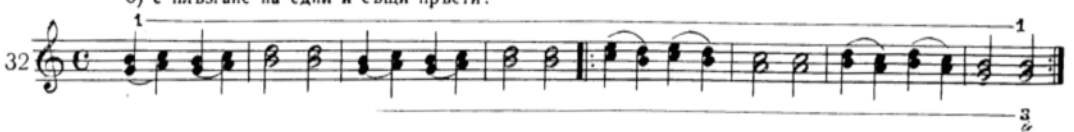


4. Изпълняват се както са написани:

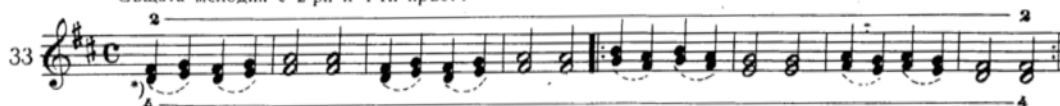
а) с редуване на пръстите:



б) с плъзгане на едни и същи пръсти:



With 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>  
Същата мелодия с 2-ри и 4-ти пръст:







### Терци

Трудността при свиренето на терци идва главно от нееднаквостта на редуващите се една след друга терци. За преодоляване на тази трудност препоръчваме работата за овладяването на този интервал да премине през следните етапи:

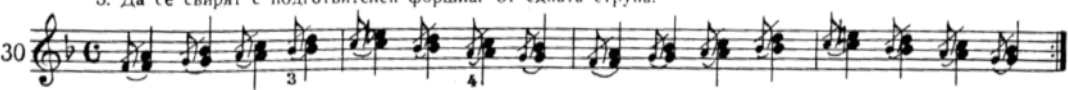
1. Да се свирят разложено, като се редуват тонове от двата гласа. Пръстите се поставят едновременно на двете струни:



2. Да се свирят поотделно първият и вторият глас, като пръстите се поставят едновременно на струните:



3. Да се свирят с подготвителен форшлаг от едната струна:

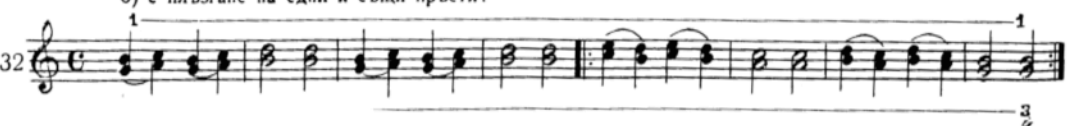


4. Изпълняват се както са написани:

а) с редуване на пръстите:



б) с плъзгане на едни и същи пръсти:



## Сексти

При свиренето на сексти, както при терците, трудността идва главно от нееднаквото раздалечение на пръстите при редуването на големите с малките сексти.

При свиренето на сексти с редуване на пръстите е необходимо да се обърне внимание, че единият от пръстите се премества на интервал квинта, което преместване трябва да става чрез плъзгането му от едната струна на другата, а не чрез вдигането му.

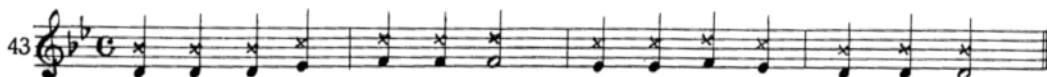


При работата върху сексти с редуване на пръстите могат да се използват следните подготвителни етапи:

а) с после: ователно свирене на тонове от ниския и високия глас:



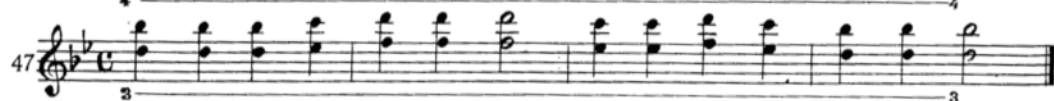
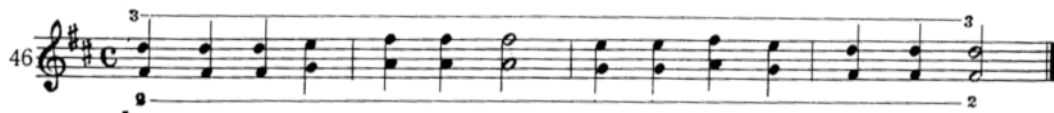
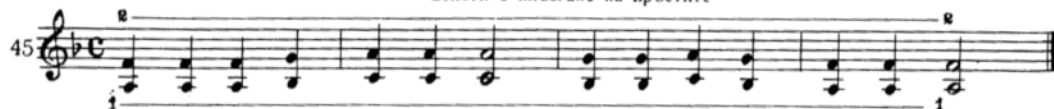
б) свирене на един от гласовете при поставени и двата пръста на струните:



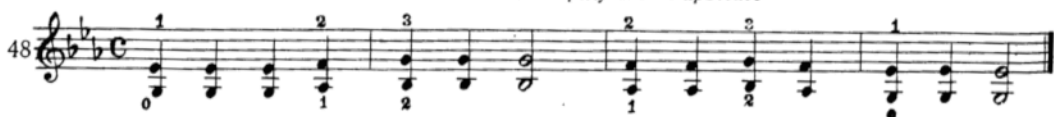
в) с форшлаг:



Сексти с плъзгане на пръстите



Същата мелодия с редуване на пръстите



58

Musical score for 'The Rose Tree' in G major, 2/4 time. The score consists of two staves. The first staff contains measures 58 through 63, and the second staff contains measures 64 through 68. The melody is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of measure 68.

## Гами в сексти

[illegible]

ПОДГОТВИТЕЛНИ УПРАЖНЕНИЯ ЗА РАЗШИРЕНО ПОЛОЖЕНИЕ  
НА ПРЪСТИТЕ

Френска народна песен

62 

Да се работи на Ла-Ми и Сол-Ре  
Р' и А - Е и Д - Б - Д

Popular Song: 

Популярна песен	
1.	2.

63 

Да се работи на Ре-Ла и Ла-Ми  
Play on D-F and A-

М. Кочев

64 

Да се работи на Сол-Ре и Ре-Ла  
Play on G<sup>2</sup> and F<sup>2</sup>

Герман 2012 Немска песен

65  Немска песен

Да се работи на *Ре-Ла* и *Ла-Ми*

Play on - 1 on 1 2

Подготвително упражнение за свирене на унисони

66

Начини:

Да се работи на Ре-Ла и Ла-Ми

Гами в унисони

67

68

69

Начини:

Подготвителни упражнения за пръсторедни октави

70

85

Музикална партитура за гитара, съдържаща мелодия и бас линия с детайлни указания за пръстиране и фретове.

71 *Да се работи на Ре-Ла и Ла-Ми*  
*Play on D-A and A-E*

Пръсторедни октави

72

73

74

75

76

77

86

78 

79 

Да се работи на Ре-Ла и Ла-Ми

Свиренето на дещимите става с най-голямо разширяване на пръстите в сравнение с предшествуващите го интервали (унисони и пръстородни октави). То се подготвя чрез работата върху тях. При първоначалната работа върху дещимите е необходимо да се следи дланта и пръстите на лявата ръка да са свободни, дланта да се намира в междинната (между 1—4 пръст) позиция и се използват максималните възможности за изтегляне на показалеца към прагчето. При разширяване на разстоянието между свирещите пръсти да се изхожда от удобството на 4-ти пръст.

[illegible]

Николов  
Л. Николов

Folk Song  
Народна песен

March  
Като марш

Folk song  
Народна песен

83

84

85

Начини:  
1. Ла

1. Ре

Да се работи на Сол-Ре и Ла-Ми  
Play on G-D and A-E

Schöniger-Mi  
Стара училищна песен

86

Ми

Ла

Folk song  
Народна песен

87

RR

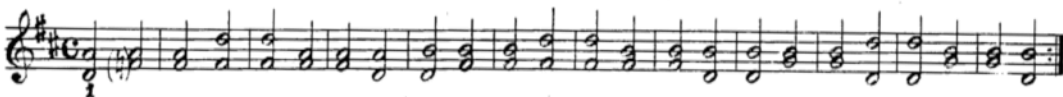
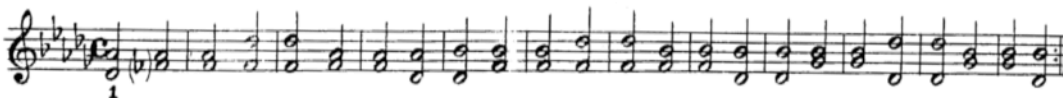
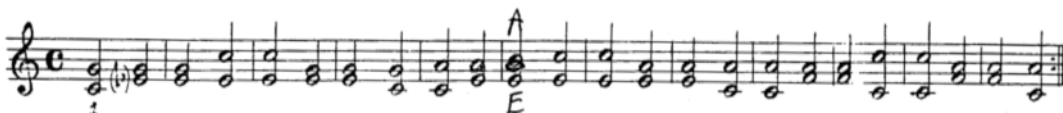
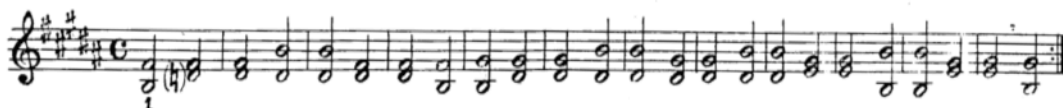
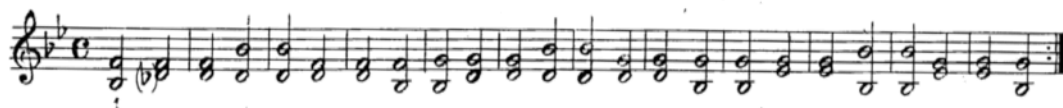
## XVII ТЕМА

### УКРЕПВАНЕ ТОЧНОСТТА НА ИНТОНИРАНЕТО

Постигането на точност на интонирането при цигулката е сложен процес, който не е възможно да се извърши само по мелодически път. Необходима е и работа чрез хармонични интервали. Предложеното по-долу упражнение дава възможност за избистряне на интонацията на почти всички интервали, включени в границите на чистата октава.



Повторението на всеки ред  
да се свири в минор  
*Repeat in a minor key*



*Ways of practice*  
Начини:





## VITA

Paula Bujes was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where she completed her undergraduate violin studies at the *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* with Professor Hella Frank. She was appointed to a position at the *Orquestra Sinfônica de Porto Alegre* immediately after graduation. Bujes holds a master's degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she studied with Mark Zelmanovich. After winning the 2009 concerto competition she performed *La Muse et Le Poete* by Camille Saint-Saëns as a soloist with her husband, cellist Pedro Huff and The University of Tennessee Symphony Orchestra. Bujes was a member of the Graduate String Quartet and also served as concertmaster of the University of Tennessee Symphony Orchestra.

While completing doctoral research on the Milanov method at the Louisiana State University School of Music, Bujes maintained a busy performance and teaching schedule in the US and abroad, with appearances in Panama City and Brazil. She has studied with Espen Lilleslåtten and served as concertmaster of the Louisiana State University Symphony Orchestra. A member of the Baton Rouge Symphony, Bujes is also an enthusiastic violin instructor at the Grace Notes Violin Studio in Baton Rouge. She will receive her doctorate degree in May, 2013 and plans to continue performing, teaching and pursuing her research interests in violin performance and pedagogy.