

The Goldilocks Principle

by Faith Farr

Once upon a time Goldilocks went for a walk in the forest. When she came to the Three Bears' house, she went inside. She found three bowls of porridge – one was too hot, one was too cold, and one was just right. One chair was too big, one was too small, and one was just right. One bed was too hard, one was too soft, and one was just right.

I tell my students my favorite story is Goldilocks. When they wonder what size their bow stroke should be, I tell them – not too big, not too small, each note has a “just right” bow size. What weight should the bow be? Not too heavy; not too light;

let's try “just right.” What's the best place for the left elbow to float? Not too high; not too low; the “just right” place will feel really balanced. What's the best tone? Not too crunchy; not too slippery; “just right” sounds great. What's the best tempo? Not too slow, not too fast, but “just right” to suit both the character of the piece and your technique.

I want all my students to experience the extremes so they can sense where the “just right” place is. Some students really enjoy the exaggeration and might need guidance to find the middle. Some students are reluctant to leave their place of comfort and need

encouragement to go to an extreme and stay there for a whole measure or phrase. For everyone, if you have the control to play a phrase too _____ and too _____, then you will be able to discover “just right.” I call it the Goldilocks Principle.

Faith Farr teaches at her home studio and at MacPhail Center for Music. She self-publishes Foundations for Music Reading, a music reading curriculum for young players. With Brian Wicklund she co-authored American Fiddle Method for Cello published by Mel Bay. ♪

The transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”

Foundations for Music Reading

Theory curriculum for violin, viola and cello

by Faith Farr

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