



Viola

From the Filing Cabinet: Filling in the Gaps

by Annette Caruthers

As we work with our students, we often find one who needs extra work with rhythms, or note-reading, or who loves duets but does not enjoy playing solos as much. Every teacher needs a large filing cabinet full of music to fill various needs. I often rummage through my cabinet to find just the right short exercise that will help a student be more successful with one specific problem; or another piece that will address the same problem and be new and interesting for the student. Here are some of my favorite resources; relatively new, or new to me!

String Power, Volumes I and II, by Sally O'Reilly, is published by Kjos. Each volume contains 60 technical exercises for the viola, arranged in five groups of twelve each, designed to address issues of fourth finger strength, reinforcement of reading skills, and separation of right and left hand skills. These books appeal to younger students just learning to read notes for themselves, and have pictures children enjoy (some will want to add their own colors!) along with comfortably-sized notes, short exercises with encouraging titles (e.g. *Running* for scales, *Shivering* for trills), helpful reminders, and even variations. For the busy teacher, the first page indicates which exercises address each skill, making it possible to pick and choose carefully, rather than always having to assign them in printed order.

A Rhythm A Week, by Anne C. Witt, is published by Belwin. This book really does have 52 "Units," each involving changing rhythmic patterns within one meter, using scales for simple changes of pitch. I love the patterns she uses, along with bowings and suggestions for teachers. This could be used in groups or individual lessons, and would definitely improve any student's ability to read rhythms. There is an index of keys and of time signatures to aid in selecting exercises to address skills needed for a specific piece, but the book does progress from simple to more complex in

printed order.

Technique Takes Off!, by Mary Cohen, is published by Faber Music. This is the second in a series that also includes *Superstudies 1* and *2*. The *Technique Takes Off!* volume is a real favorite of mine, and I use it with almost all my viola students. It has 14 intermediate studies for viola that are all imaginative and really work on technique including shifting, spiccato, string crossings, and double-stops. The pieces have a character that interests students, and they are more likely to really practice these than many other etudes.

Etudes, Opus 68, by Dancla, is edited for two violas and published by Peters. These are originally for two violins, but work quite well on viola. The volume contains 15 etudes, on an intermediate level, but more difficult than the above. Most of these duos have a second viola part that is easier than the first part, and cover a wide range of styles and techniques. Some higher position work is included, as well as string crossings, double stops, spiccato, trills, and some very showy passages. I have not used these on recitals, but I think some students would enjoy playing the first part with the teacher or another student "accompanying" them.

Six Very Easy Pieces in the First Position, Opus 22, by Elgar, is published by Bosworth (BOE 3913) for viola. These are not really easy, in spite of the title given by Elgar. Each one has its own style, and would be helpful for students who need another piece on the same level as their present work, but who need something new to work on, or who might enjoy playing a piece they have never heard before. I sometimes assign one of these as a reading test — "Can you figure out how to play this, even though you've never heard it?" These are rather short works, and good music.

Viola Music for Beginners, edited by Bartha Ferenc and arranged by Stephen Loy, is published by Editio Musica Buda-

pest (EMB). This thin volume contains 13 short works by known composers: Tchaikowsky, C. M. von Weber, Corelli, Mozart, etc. Again, not for beginners, despite the title. I find students must be able to play on a Suzuki Book 2 or 3 level to tackle this, but the pieces are good music and enjoyable. Some are good recital pieces and some also have interesting shifting — good second position work especially. Many of these short pieces are familiar, a few have new tonalities and counting issues. A very nice book! The table of contents is at the very back.

New Tunes for Strings, by Stanley Fletcher, with instructional design by Paul Rolland, is published by Boosey and Hawkes. This is not really new, but always seems new because of the devices used and how they are presented. *Book Two* is in front of me as I type, and I see items like *In Space*, which simply says "tacet." *Cinderella Dancing* uses half position for many short chromatic runs, but also some third position. *Tiddly-Pom Tune* has a pizzicato accompaniment, while the first player uses up bow staccato, followed by four notes ricochet. These are really fun, interesting pieces for students! Each page gives a fingering pattern at the top, indicates which positions are used, and where needed, practice tips.

These are books I pulled out of my files in one afternoon. I am glad I took the time to re-familiarize myself with them, as I will be needing many of them this semester again. I would love to hear from other teachers what your favorites are, or which new works you are enjoying!

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