

Clinic: Effortless Intensity: Tips & Technical Tools for Injury Prevention

presented by Dr. Sonja Harasim — reported by Faith Farr

Dr. Sonja Harasim, assistant professor of violin and viola at Concordia College Moorhead began her session an overview of injury prevention tips. A study from the University of Alberta shows that 80% professional musicians suffer from job-related injuries; if you've been through it, you are certainly not alone. Our emotional connection to music can manifest in an intense physical approach, leading to injury. Treating the whole person (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual), not just the symptoms, is key to recovery and developing healthier violin techniques. Some suggested books are: *Playing Less Hurt* by Janet Horvath (on musician health), and *Overachievement* by Dr. John Eliot (on performance psychology). To maintain good health, develop interests and activities that support physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Always be prepared for rehearsal and performance—sight-reading or playing unfamiliar music can cause injury if done without ease.

Posture Tips:

- Bring instrument to you (leaning neck/head can cause physical issues in arms/hands)
- Roll shoulders back/strengthen between shoulder blades (train with yoga poses, etc./keeps thoracic outlet pathway unobstructed)
- Envelop instrument/adjust posture for individual
- Posture technique differences in standing vs. sitting (i.e. use back of chair to support lower back)

Right Hand Techniques:

- Influence of gravity in virtually every technique. Upper arm weight assists in use of the whole bow (including upper half), detaché, spiccato, martelé, etc.
- Pronating without having a “break” in wrist; transfer weight to front of hand
- “Twist”—side-of-hair at frog “twists” to flat hair by middle of bow (also

reversed for up bow)

- Resistance—push instrument up against bow in upper half
- Accents with ease; use “whip” accent at tip and “drop” accent at frog

Left Hand Techniques:

- “The Fan”—play on the inside tips of fingers; the arm wraps, wrist comes towards neck as you pivot to higher fingers; release arm towards lower fingers
- “Shift sooner and slower”—release of finger pressure on upward shifts; release thumb on downward shifts from third to second or first positions
- Octaves—shifting tips apply; lightly set middle two fingers on upper string to establish hand frame

This write-up was created from Sonja Harasim's handout of her presentation. †