

# PAUL ROLLAND STRING PEDAGOGY WORKSHOP

by Elizabeth Ericksen

Paul Rolland (1911-1978) was an innovative violin teacher. He created a String Project that had the goal of developing Actions and Exercises to help students learn to hold and play their string instrument in a balanced manner. He was also interested in helping students learn how to release tension. Paul Rolland used public school string programs in Illinois to develop and test his ideas; but the exercises are applicable to any curriculum. At the end of the Project, he created a series of 17 films (each one about 15-20 minutes long) which presented the Actions and Exercises he had developed, along with a book. Both are called: *The Teaching of Action in String Playing*. The films are now available at Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/paulrolland>

The Paul Rolland String Pedagogy Society is now offering Certification as a Paul Rolland teacher. Through a series of four levels, candidates for Certification learn how to perform his Actions and how to use them in their teaching. Candidates (who are usually already teaching) receive an "Endorsement" for each Level that they pass. When they have passed all four Levels, they are granted "Certification" by the Paul Rolland String Pedagogy Society and the candidate's name is added to a Certified Teacher List. There are also Certifications available in Presenting and Mentoring.

Presenter Training focuses on being an effective speaker and modeling Paul Rolland String Pedagogy principles to large groups. Mentor Training focuses on effectively guiding individuals and small groups of teachers through the knowledge and skills required for an understanding of Rolland pedagogy.

The Paul Rolland String Pedagogy Level 1 Workshop is an overview of the entire book and videos. Each session in the workshop is associated with one chapter from the book and its accompanying video. The sessions are scheduled for an hour and include a presentation that goes into detail about the Actions for that chapter, a viewing of the video that goes with that book, and a short Question and Answer session. Later in the day, a longer Q & A is offered with the presenter for people who want to go into even more detail about that topic. There are also additional sessions (which are not required for endorsement) which may include: Alexander Technique, Rolland History, Equipment, and *New Tunes for Strings* Play-Ins and how these topics relate to Rolland Pedagogy.

Levels 2, 3, and 4 are each structured around different chapters from the book and video. There are 2-6 candidates in each group who meet for 11-13 hours spread over 4-5 days. At the end of all the sessions in the level, there is a final evaluation in which

each candidate teaches one of the other candidates an Action, along with 3-4 preliminary Actions. Each level includes a Pre- and Post-Instruction Video, with the candidate performing piece(s) on their instrument. As the candidates progress through the Levels, the hope is that they also show an increased understanding of Rolland Principles in their own playing. These Levels can be on-line or in-person.

During the sessions, the Level 2, 3, or 4 Mentor goes into more detail about the Actions and the candidates ask questions and discuss any issues or areas that need clarification. They also practice teaching the Actions and evaluate each other on their teaching.

I have mentored two Level 2 sessions (both held on-line via Zoom) and have come away with a renewed awe of string teaching in the world. In one of my groups, one of the candidates asked about chin rests and shoulder pads and we had a robust dialogue with excellent suggestions from several people (some of them quite inexpensive). In the other group, we had a useful conversation about teaching vibrato (which is actually not part of the Level 2 curriculum), in which we discussed how the Actions introduced in the early years, if done well, lead directly to the Actions we use later to learn vibrato. Experienced teach-

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### Topics presented and/or discussed in each workshop level

#### Level 1 Workshop

- Principles of Movement in String Playing – DVD 2
- Rhythm – DVD 3
- Establishing the Instrument Hold – DVD 4
- Learning to Hold the Bow – DVD 5, Part 1
- Playing in the Middle with Short Strokes – DVD 5, Part 2
- Establishing Left Hand and Finger Placement – DVD 6
- Principles of Left Hand and Finger Action – DVD 7
- Extending the Bow Stroke – DVD 8
- Developing Left Hand Finger Movement – DVD 9, Part 1
- Basic Shifting Movements – DVD 9, Part 2
- Bouncing the Bow – DVD 10, Part 1
- Martelé and Staccato – DVD 10, Part 2
- Developing Flexibility – DVD 11
- First Steps in Vibrato Teaching – DVD 12
- Sustained and Detaché Bowing – DVD 13
- Remedial Teaching – DVD 14
- Young Violinists in Action – DVD 1

#### Level 2 Workshop

- Principles of Movement I
- Establishing the Instrument Hold
- Learning to Hold the Bow
- Principles of Left Hand and Finger Action
- Establishing Left Hand and Finger Placement (1<sup>st</sup> position)

#### Level 3 Workshop

- Principles of Movement II
- Playing Short Strokes at Middle
- Extending the Bow Stroke
- Developing Finger Movement
- Basic Shifting Movements I
- First Steps in Vibrato Teaching I

#### Level 4 Workshop

- Remedial Teaching
- Basic Shifting Movements II
- First Steps in Vibrato Teaching II
- Bouncing the Bow
- Martelé and Staccato
- Developing Flexibility
- Advanced Bowing

ers also bring an understanding of what is difficult to teach. With everyone contributing their own ideas of what works for them, we all benefitted from the discussions.

Last summer, the University of Illinois sponsored a 5-day, online, Level 1 workshop of Paul Rolland String Pedagogy. Viewing the entire workshop, gave the attendee a Level 1 Endorsement in Paul Rolland String Pedagogy. This year, the workshop will again be sponsored by the University and will be offered online, synchronously and

asynchronously June 27–July 1. Registration info available at <https://publish.illinois.edu/paul-rolland-workshop/>.

More information about the individual levels and when levels are offered are available at [www.paulrollandsociety.org](http://www.paulrollandsociety.org). If you have questions, e-mail: [paulrollandsociety@gmail.com](mailto:paulrollandsociety@gmail.com)

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*Paul Rolland teacher, as well as a Presenter and a Mentor. Liz was a Senior Lecturer in Music at Carleton College for 28 years, taught violin and viola at MacPhail Center for Music for 40 years, and has been a coach for MacPhail's summer Sartory String Quartet Institute and GTCYS summer orchestra. She currently maintains a private studio in her home. In addition to Paul Rolland, her mentors include Mary West and Joseph Gingold. ♪*