

# My First Pieces

Music for Beginning String Players

## Viola

Composed, arranged and compiled by  
Stephen Chin

Welcome to the wonderful world of making music with a bowed string instrument! By working with your teacher, following the instructions carefully and practising regularly, you will start a journey that you may continue to follow in the years to come.

The first few pages of each book contain details of each instrument's components, how to look after it and hold it correctly.

Carefully go over "Some Basics of Music Reading" pages as these simple facts will help you play your music easily. Important information appears throughout the book as you need it.

A glossary can be found at the back of the book so you can quickly find the meaning of the terms you have learned.

Piano accompaniments can be downloaded from the My First Pieces page at [www.everythingstring.com](http://www.everythingstring.com). This may help you to experience the music in a fuller way. Your teacher may also be able to play the accompaniment, which is always lots of fun!

Enjoy!

Everything String

# Stephen Chin

M Mus, B Mus, Dip Mus Comp



As a founding member of the Sydney Youth Orchestra, Stephen's interest and enthusiasm for music lead him to undertake further studies at Sydney University where formal training in both violin and composition were completed under former leader of the Australian Chamber Orchestra, John Harding and renowned Australian composer, Peter Sculthorpe respectively. Since that time, he has been invited to perform with such groups as The ABC Sinfonia, The Badinerie Players, The Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra, The Queensland Symphony Orchestra, The Queensland Pops Orchestra and Corda Spiritus.

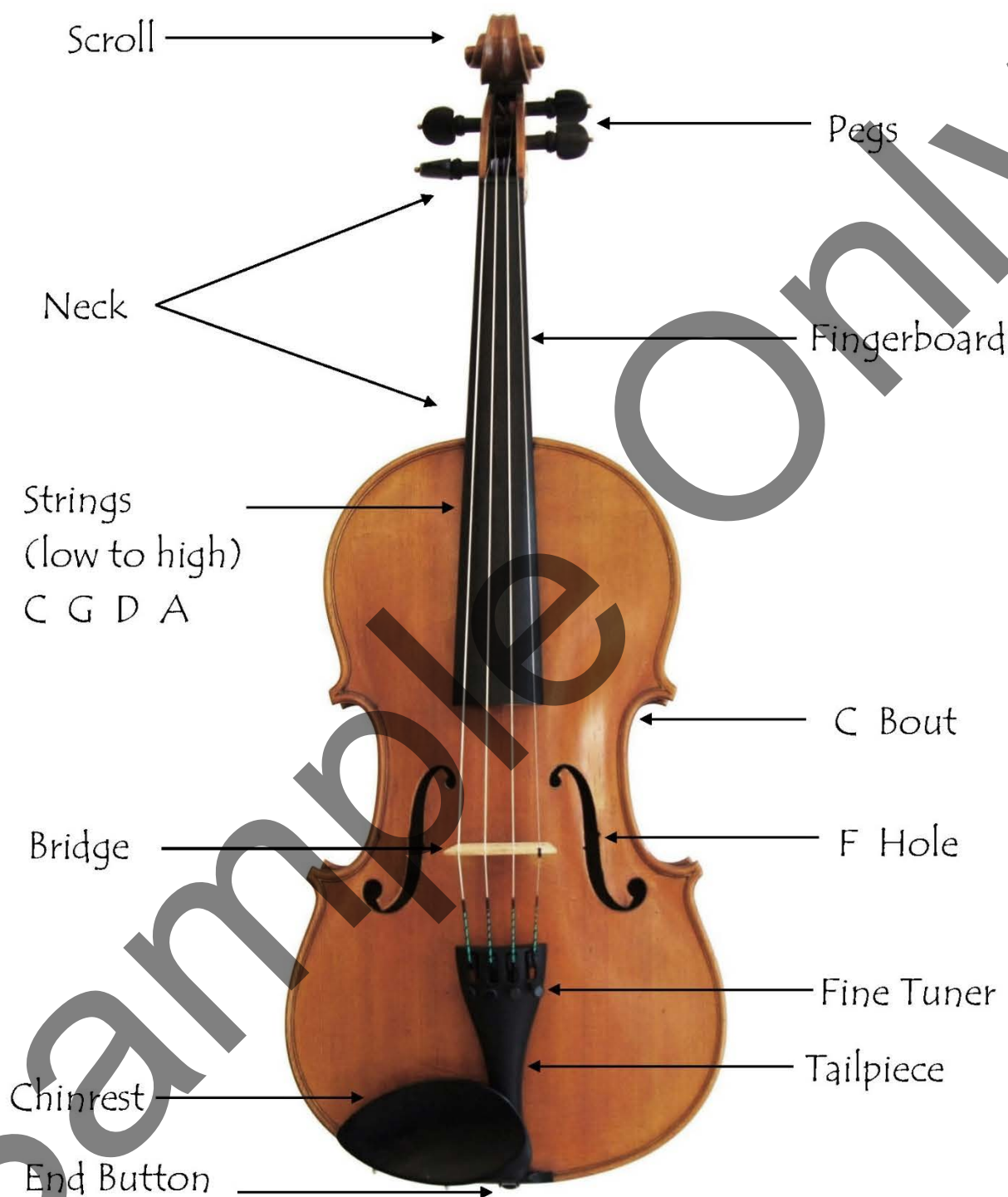
Stephen holds a Master of Music from Queensland Conservatorium of Music Griffith University specialising in violin performance and pedagogy. He is also an examiner for the Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB). In addition to this, Stephen performs regularly with a number of professional chamber ensembles. Stephen publishes a number of string compositions and arrangements which have been used as test pieces for a number of competitions throughout Australia and are also presented as examination pieces for the AMEB. Stephen has been invited many times to adjudicate various eisteddfods and competitions such as Queensland Festival of Music, The Western Australian Schools Orchestra Festival, The Hobart Eisteddfod and the Gold Coast Eisteddfod. He is also in demand as a string and orchestral clinician, regularly conducting a number of workshops and festivals both nationally and internationally including the Melbourne Youth Music Summer School, the Sunwater and Stanwell Winter Music School and the All State Senior Orchestra in New Mexico, USA.

From 2008 - 2013, Stephen was the conductor of the BEL faculty Chamber Orchestra at the University of Queensland. Stephen is presently National President of The Australian Strings Association (AUSTA), Principal String Teacher and Director of Orchestras at Brisbane Grammar School and lectures in String Pedagogy and Practicum at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music, Griffith University.

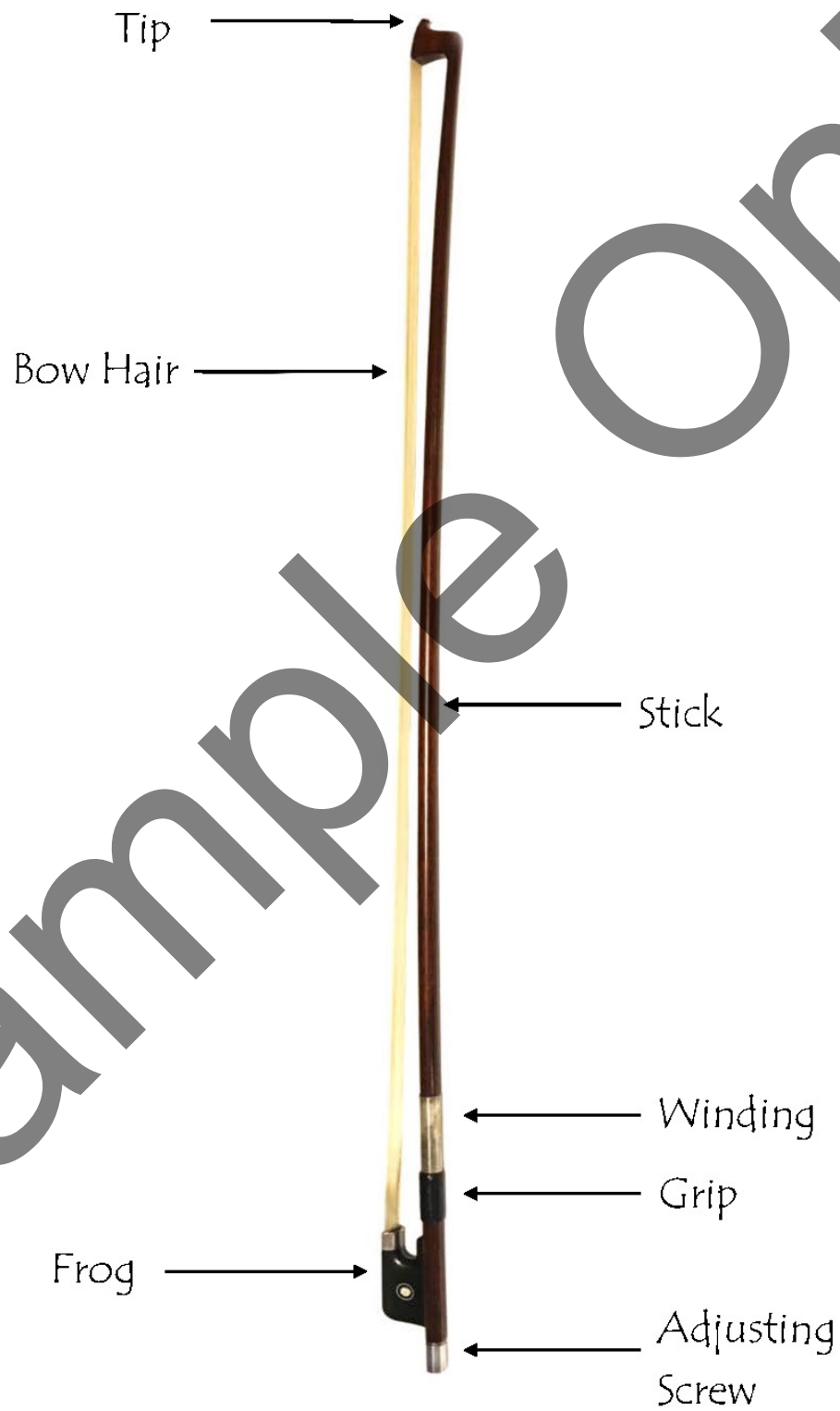
# Caring for My Viola

- Lay your case flat on the floor when taking out both the instrument and bow.
- Always make sure the case is closed properly when packing up.
- Always leave your instrument in a place with a temperature that you yourself would be comfortable in.
- Tighten the bow just enough for a pencil to go through the space at the middle of the bow between the hair and the wood.
- Never touch the hair of your bow with your fingers.
- Always rosin your bow before playing – your teacher will show you how to do this.
- Regularly use a clean cloth to wipe off any rosin dust on the instrument and bow.
- Make sure that your bow hairs are loosened before the bow is placed back in the case.

# The Viola



# The Viola Bow



# General Posture

## Standing Position

- Stand with your feet well apart.
- Place the viola on your collar bone and left shoulder.
- Hold the viola well up so the scroll is in line with your nose.
- Keep the left hand fingers relaxed and well rounded.
- Keep the left wrist out slightly.
- Hold the bow lightly with the wood tilted a little away from you.



## Seated Position

- Similar to the standing position but sitting at the edge of the chair.
- Always sit so the left shoulder is facing the music stand.
- Place the scroll slightly to the left of the actual music.



# The Bow-hold

- Holding the bow with your left hand, hang all the fingers over the stick near the frog.
- Raise the little finger, keeping it curved and place it on top of the stick in line with the dot on the frog.
- Move the crease near the nail of the index finger so it is also on top of the stick.
- Gently bend the thumb out and place it between the frog and the stick at around 45 degrees.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> finger gently covers the thumb.
- All fingers should be evenly spaced and relaxed.
- Whilst bowing, keep the right hand in line with the “C” bout. Tilt the wood of the bow slightly away from you.
- Be aware of the little finger taking the weight of the bow as you bow near the frog.
- **ALWAYS strive to make an even and beautiful tone.**



# The Left Hand

- The instrument rests between the base of the 1<sup>st</sup> finger and thumb.
- Carefully set up all fingers 1, 2, 3 & 4 before playing.
- Knuckles must be bent out and fingernails facing you.
- Keep your wrist out gently at all times.
- Try to hear the note clearly in your head before placing your fingers.
- Let the fingers feel the strings vibrations as you play.
- Remember the string names **C G D A** from the lowest to the highest (or the thickest to the thinnest) this way:

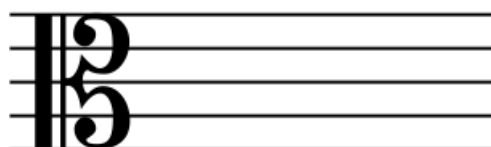
**Camels Go Down Asleep**





# Some Basics of Music Reading

## STAFF LINES



Alto Clef

Staff Lines

Music is written on lines called a **Staff** (or stave). An **Alto Clef** tells us that the notes sound at a medium pitch.

The **lines** from the bottom are named:

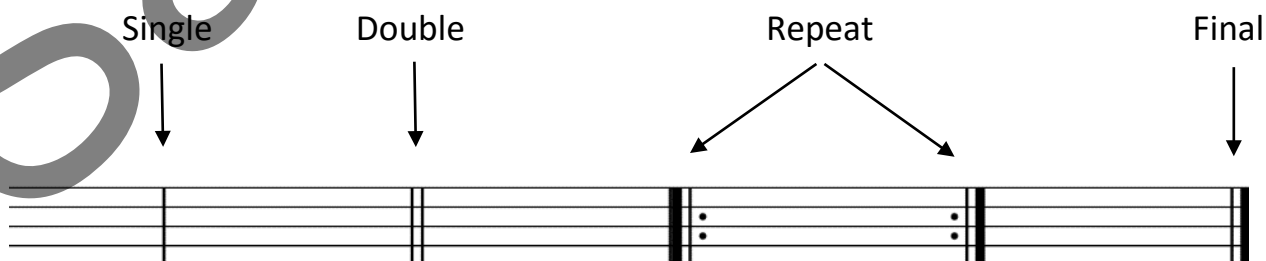
**F A C E G**

The **spaces** from the bottom are named:

**G B D F**

## BAR LINES

Music is divided up into bars which are separated by **Bar Lines**. The **Single** bar line is the most commonly used. The other bar lines work as follows: **Double** – the end of a section; **Repeat** – play the music again between the signs; **Final** – the end of a piece.



## TIME SIGNATURES

A **Time Signature** tells us how many beats there will be in a bar of music. The most commonly used time signatures are:

The time signature 2/4 is shown, with a large '2' over a large '4'.

Two beats a bar

The time signature 3/4 is shown, with a large '3' over a large '4'.

Three beats a bar

The time signature 4/4 is shown, with a large '4' over a large '4'.

Four beats a bar

## ACCIDENTALS & KEY SIGNATURES

**Accidentals** placed before a note are used to change the pitch. Often they are placed at the beginning of a staff to save putting them on every note that needs them. This is called a **Key Signature**. For instance, a sharp placed on the F line or F space means that every F will become F sharp.

We use these accidentals in music:

The sharp symbol (#) is shown.

**Sharp** - raises the note a half a tone from its letter name note.

The flat symbol (b) is shown.

**Flat** - lowers the note a half a tone from its letter name note.










The natural symbol (♮) is shown.

**Natural** - returns the note to its letter name note after a sharp or flat has been used.

## NOTE VALUES

A **Note Value** tells us the length of time a sound lasts for. They are matched with a **Note Rest** which tells us how long a silence will be.

The most common note values and rests are as follows:

Note Value	Note Rest	Length in Beats
Crotchet 		1
Minim 		2
Dotted Minim 	Various combinations of the above rests.	3
Semibreve 	 May also be used for a full bar rest with any time signature.	4
Quaver 		1/2

# Getting Ready for My First Play!

Set up left hand fingers  
on the viola body



pizz. - pizzicato - pluck the string  
with the right index finger.



Strings, lowest to highest, remember:  
**C**amels    **G**o    **D**own    **A**sleep

# 1. My Open Strings

pizz. Stephen Chin

0 0 0 0

C C C C G G G G D D D D A A A

Detailed description: This musical exercise is in 2/4 time, indicated by a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of four measures. The first measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction and an '0' above them, representing open strings. The second measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The third measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The fourth measure contains three eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them, followed by a quarter rest. The notes are C, C, C, C in the first measure; G, G, G, G in the second; D, D, D, D in the third; and A, A, A in the fourth.

# 2. My Open Strings the Other Way Around

pizz. Stephen Chin

0 0 0 0

A A A A D D D D G G G G C C C

Detailed description: This musical exercise is in 2/4 time, indicated by a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of four measures. The first measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction and an '0' above them, representing open strings. The second measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The third measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The fourth measure contains three eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them, followed by a quarter rest. The notes are A, A, A, A in the first measure; D, D, D, D in the second; G, G, G, G in the third; and C, C, C in the fourth.

# 3. Walking in the Park with Open D's & A's

pizz. Stephen Chin

0 0 0 0

D D D D A A A A D D D D A A D

Detailed description: This musical exercise is in 2/4 time, indicated by a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of four measures. The first measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction and an '0' above them, representing open strings. The second measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The third measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The fourth measure contains three eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them, followed by a quarter rest. The notes are D, D, D, D in the first measure; A, A, A, A in the second; D, D, D, D in the third; and A, A, D in the fourth.

# 4. Gypsy Open D's & G's

pizz. Stephen Chin

0 0 0 0

D D D D G G G G D D D D G G D

Detailed description: This musical exercise is in 2/4 time, indicated by a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of four measures. The first measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction and an '0' above them, representing open strings. The second measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The third measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The fourth measure contains three eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them, followed by a quarter rest. The notes are D, D, D, D in the first measure; G, G, G, G in the second; D, D, D, D in the third; and G, G, D in the fourth.

# 5. Hymn on Open G's, D's and A's

pizz. Stephen Chin

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

D D A A D D D D G G D A D G D

Detailed description: This musical exercise is in 2/4 time, indicated by a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of four measures. The first measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction and an '0' above them, representing open strings. The second measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The third measure contains four eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them. The fourth measure contains three eighth notes, all marked with an '0' above them, followed by a quarter rest. The notes are D, D, A, A in the first measure; D, D, D, D in the second; G, G, D, A in the third; and D, G, D in the fourth.

## 6. Open Strings for Two

Duet

You need to work out your open string notes before playing.

**Duet** - a piece of music written for two separate parts.

pizz. Stephen Chin

A

B


pizz.



## 7. Crazy Open String Challenge

You need to work out your open string notes before playing.

pizz. Stephen Chin



Practise holding a pencil to get ready for the bow-hold later on.



# 8. Plucking the Note D

Set up your left hand fingers 1 2 3 4 on D.  
Lift all fingers just above the string.  
Keep knuckles bent and wrist gently out.



pizz.

0

D D D D D D D D D D

Stephen Chin

# 9. Plucking the Note E

Set up 1 2 3 4 on D,  
Lift 4 3 2, leave on 1.



pizz.

1

E E E E E E E E E E

Stephen Chin

## 10. Plucking the Note F sharp (F#)

Set up 1 2 3 4 on D.

Lift 4 3, leave on 2 1.



pizz.

2

Stephen Chin



Say "Fis" for F sharp

## 11. Plucking the Note G

Set up 1 2 3 4 on D.

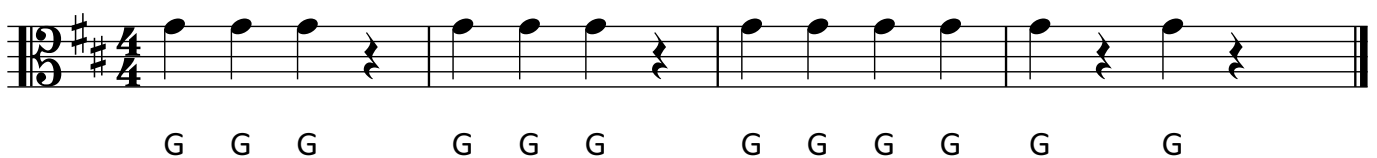
Lift 4, leave on 3 2 1.



pizz.

3

Stephen Chin





# 12. Plucking the Note A

Set up 1 2 3 4 on A.

Lift all just above the string.



pizz.

0

A A A A A A A A A A

Stephen Chin

# 13. Fun with D's & E's

Set up 1 2 3 4 on D; lift all but get the 1st finger ready.

pizz.

0 1 0 1 0

D D D E E E D D E E D D

Stephen Chin

# 14. Odyssey in E minor

Set up 1 2 3 4 on D; lift 4 3 2, keep on 1.

pizz.

1 0 1 0 1

E E E D D D E E D D E E

Stephen Chin

## 15. Fast & Furious First Fingers

Set up 1 2 3 4 on D; lift all but get the 1st finger ready.

pizz. Stephen Chin

D D E E D D E E D E E E D D

## 16. Stepping Out with D, E & F#

Set up 1 2 3 4 on D; lift all but get the 1st finger ready.

pizz. Stephen Chin

D D E E F# F# F# F# D D E E F# E D

### THE SET UP RULE

Set up all your fingers on the string you are to play on then lift as few fingers as possible to play the first note.

## 17. Ancient Echoes

pizz. Stephen Chin

E D E E D E F# F# E D E D E

# 18. Three Note Ping Pong

Duet

You need to work out your fingering and note names before playing.

Remember the Set Up Rule.

Stephen Chin

pizz.

A

B

pizz.

## 20. Mary Had a Little Lamb

(pizzicato version)

***f*** Forte - play loudly    ***p*** Piano - play softly

Remember the Set Up Rule.

Traditional  
arranged Stephen Chin

pizz.



***f***

***p***                      ***f***

You can now practise holding your bow.



## 21. Au Claire de la Lune

(pizzicato version)

Remember the Set Up Rule.

Traditional  
arranged Stephen Chin

pizz.

*f*

*p*

## 22. The Finger Twister

**Crescendo** - gradually becoming louder.

Remember the Set Up Rule

Stephen Chin

pizz.

*f*

*p*

*f*

## 23. Mirror Magic

**Decrescendo** - gradually becoming softer.

Remember the Set Up Rule.

Stephen Chin

pizz.

*f*

*p*

## 24. Bowing the Note D



**Down-bow** - move the bow to the right.



**Up -bow** - move the bow to the left.

**Arco** - play using your bow.

**MB** - Play at the middle of the bow.

Stephen Chin

MB  
arco

*f*

## 25. Bowing the Note E

MB  
arco

Stephen Chin

*f*

## 26. Bowing the Note F Sharp (F#)

Play using the bow from now on  
unless the music is marked pizz.

Stephen Chin

MB

*f*

## 27. Bowing the Note G

Stephen Chin

MB

*f*

## 28. Bowing the Note A

**Retake** - lift the bow in a clock-wise circle to play another down-bow.

MB

Stephen Chin

*f*

## 29. Double the Fun!

**♩ = 92** **Metronome marking** - play at a speed of 92 beats per minute.

A down-bow will follow an up-bow and an up-bow will follow a down-bow unless otherwise marked.  
This is known as "bowing as it comes".

♩ = 92

MB

Stephen Chin

*f* *p*

## 30. Moving in Minims

**♩** **Minim** - hold for two beats.

**WB** - Whole Bow.

Be sure to keep the bowhair always at a right angle to the string.

♩ = 92

WB

Stephen Chin

*f* *p*

# 31. Hop, Skip and Jump

**LH** - use the lower half of the bow; **UH** - use the upper half of the bow.

$\text{♩} = 92$

Using the bow from LH to the UH is called "dividing the bow".

Stephen Chin

Musical notation for 'Hop, Skip and Jump' in 3/4 time, key of D major. The piece is marked *f* (forte). The notation includes bowing markings: WB (Whole Bow), UH (Upper Half), LH (Lower Half), and V (dividing the bow). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes.

# 32. Norwegian Folk Song

Be sure to follow the bowing markings to help you play the dynamics (lounds and softs).

**Andante** - the speed of an easy walking pace.

**Andante**  $\text{♩} = 72$

Traditional  
arranged Stephen Chin

Musical notation for 'Norwegian Folk Song' in 3/4 time, key of D major. The piece is marked *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). The notation includes bowing markings: LH (Lower Half), WB (Whole Bow), UH (Upper Half), and V (dividing the bow). The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes.

# 33. Boil Them Cabbage Down

**ff** **Fortissimo** - play very loudly.

**Allegro** - fast and lively.

Traditional North American  
arranged Stephen Chin

**Allegro**  $\text{♩} = 120$

Musical notation for 'Boil Them Cabbage Down' in 3/4 time, key of D major. The piece is marked *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). The notation includes bowing markings: MB (Middle Bow), V (dividing the bow), and LH (Lower Half). The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes.



Pages 25 - 61 not included  
in this sample.