# Dounis Daily Dozen



12 Fundamental Exercises for the

Left-Hand & Bow

tonebase Violin



**Demetrius Constantine (D.C.) Dounis** (born around 1894) is recognized to this day as one of the most significant teachers and technicians of violin and other string instruments.

After establishing his genius as a violinist and virtuoso mandolinist at a young age, Dounis earned medical training in psychiatry and neurology, and then served as a doctor in the Greek army during World War I. After the war, he became a concertmaster, and later began to distill his medical training in a unique way: providing medical treatment for his fellow musicians.

Dounis would often devise highly personalized, remedial musical exercises meant to bring his patients back to their natural instincts in playing. His medical understanding of the brain and nervous system informed his pedagogical approach: ingraining a "mental map" in the musician through drills that corrected ergonomic problems and made practicing much more efficient.

Among his many written works, he developed the **Violin Player's Daily Dozen** in 1925. Meant to be played every morning so that a violinist could have "that feeling of ease, fluency and surety... AT THE BEGINNING of the day's work instead of at the end," these 12 exercises will take you back to the fundamentals, rebuild your native connection to the violin, and help you become as expressive as possible in your playing.

Practice the Daily Dozen and see how much easier strong technique comes to you!



- Exercise #1: (A) For training the left hand in the "easy setting" of the fingers on the strings(B) For training the left hand in the "difficult setting" of the fingers on the strings(C) For the application of both finger settings, the "easy" and the "difficult"
- Exercise #2: To get the fingers into playing shape and for independence(A) 6 variants for developing the rhythm and the trill (vertical movement)\*
- Exercise #3: For developing the sliding motion of the fingers (horizontal movement)\*
- Exercise #4: For thirds
  - (A) Variant for fingered octaves
- Exercise #5: For intonation
- Exercise #6: (A) For Shifting (B) For developing independent finger action in shifts

(a) Two themes for bow exercises

- Exercise #7: The nut of the bow
- Exercise #8: The middle of the bow
- Exercise #9: The point of the bow
- Exercise #10: The whole bow
- Exercise #11: For tone production
  - (A) To develop a beautiful and singing tone
  - (B) To develop a powerful large tone
- Exercise #12: For left hand pizzicato

"Vertical movement refers to the up and down movement of the fingers to and from the fingerboard. Horizontal movement refers to sliding motion of the fingers which is used for chromatic passages and for stretches."

# D.C. Dounis' Original Preface to the Daily Dozen

It is a well known fact that, after the violin is taken out of the case for the first time every day, the first two hours or more are wasted in regaining that feeling of ease, fluency and surety which the violinist experiences at the end of his daily practice.

How much time could be saved; how much energy could be spared; and how much more profitable would the daily practice be if that feeling of ease, fluency and surety could be had at the beginning of the day's work instead of at the end, by practicing specific exercises for a few minutes composed according to scientific rules based on psycho-physiological laws. The scales, the etudes, and the compositions to be learned would not present any more "ugly or rough" spots, as the fingers and the bow would be much more responsive and ready to obey the impulses of the player's mind.

This is what the following exercises intend to do: to get the player into form in a very short space of time and keep him fit for the days work. These exercises are composed according to the same scientific principles on which is based my method: The Artist's Technic Of Violin Playing. They are especially composed to train the fingers and the bow as quickly and as thoroughly as possible... In fact, the twelve exercises contained in this book form a most excellent technical breviary that may be used with unfailing and immediate results whenever the violinist wishes to get into form in the shortest possible time.

The author would consider himself amply rewarded for his labors if the following exercises, conscientiously practiced, would help to minimize the dreaded weariness of the first hours of daily practice.

D. C. DOUNIS.

# **Explanation of the Signs**

This sign (-) indicates the sliding of the fingers.

I: First or E string.
II: Second or A string.
III: Third or D string.
IV: Fourth or G string.
Down bow.

V Up bow.



## 5 general rules to be strictly adhered to:

I. Cultivate at all times a feeling of absolute comfort while practicing.

II. In practicing finger-exercises watch your bow; in practicing bow-exercises observe a good position of the left hand.

III. Accent the weaker notes; make every note sound with a clear, full and round tone.

IV. Remember always that in technique evenness is that which counts most.

V. Form the habit of listening to your playing with the utmost attention; sharpen your hearing so as to detect the slightest disturbance in the flow of tone.

#### 5 left hand rules to be strictly adhered to:

I. Keep the elbow well under the violin and the fingertips parallel to the strings.

II. Try to forget the existence of the thumb; never press it against the neck of the violin.

III. Do not strike the fingers upon the strings with too much force. It is wasting one's physical energy. Cultivate a very sudden and elastic spring-like finger action and keep every preceding finger on the string.

IV. In shifting, pay due attention to the guiding finger which is the finger stopping the last note before shifting.

V. In a downward shift, remember that the thumb acts as a forerunner to the other fingers.

#### 5 bow rules to be strictly adhered to:

I. At all times cultivate freedom of movement.

II. Bear in mind that the elasticity and flexibility of all joints of the arm and the fingers are as important as those of the wrist.

III. Have and retain always a balanced hold of the bow; try to feel every stroke with your fingertips.

IV. Accent the up bow to equalize it with the down bow.

V. Never forget to round off the crossing of strings and the change of bow.



#### Exercise 1

To be practiced without the bow

There are two fundamental "settings" of the left hand fingers which we will name the "easy" and the "difficult."

The "easy setting" is when the first finger stops a note on a lower string while the others are placed on higher strings (Fig. 1).

The "difficult setting" is exactly the opposite; first finger on a higher string, other fingers on lower strings... (Fig. II).

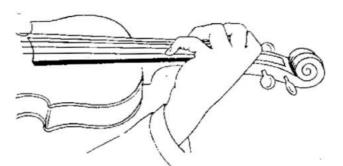
The "easy setting" is used for playing octaves, also fingered, sixths and tenths; the "difficult setting" is used for thirds, fourths and descending scale passages.

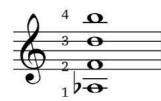
Chords of three and four notes use both "settings" alternately or simultaneously,

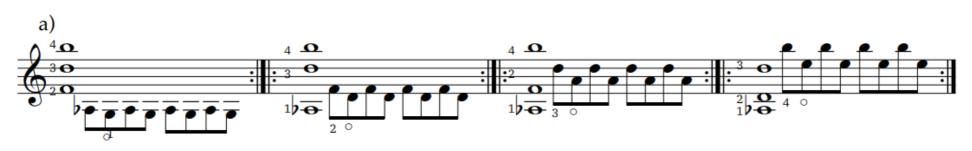
Directions For Practicing: Repeat each bar four times. The whole notes should be held down firmly. In a) one finger only is moving. In b) and c) two fingers are moving alternately, while the one ascends the other descends and vice versa. In d) and f) two fingers are moving simultaneously. In e) and g) four fingers are moving alternately; two against two.

Practice every day the bars contained in one letter only from both (A) and (B) following immediately with (C) which is the practical application of (A) and (B).

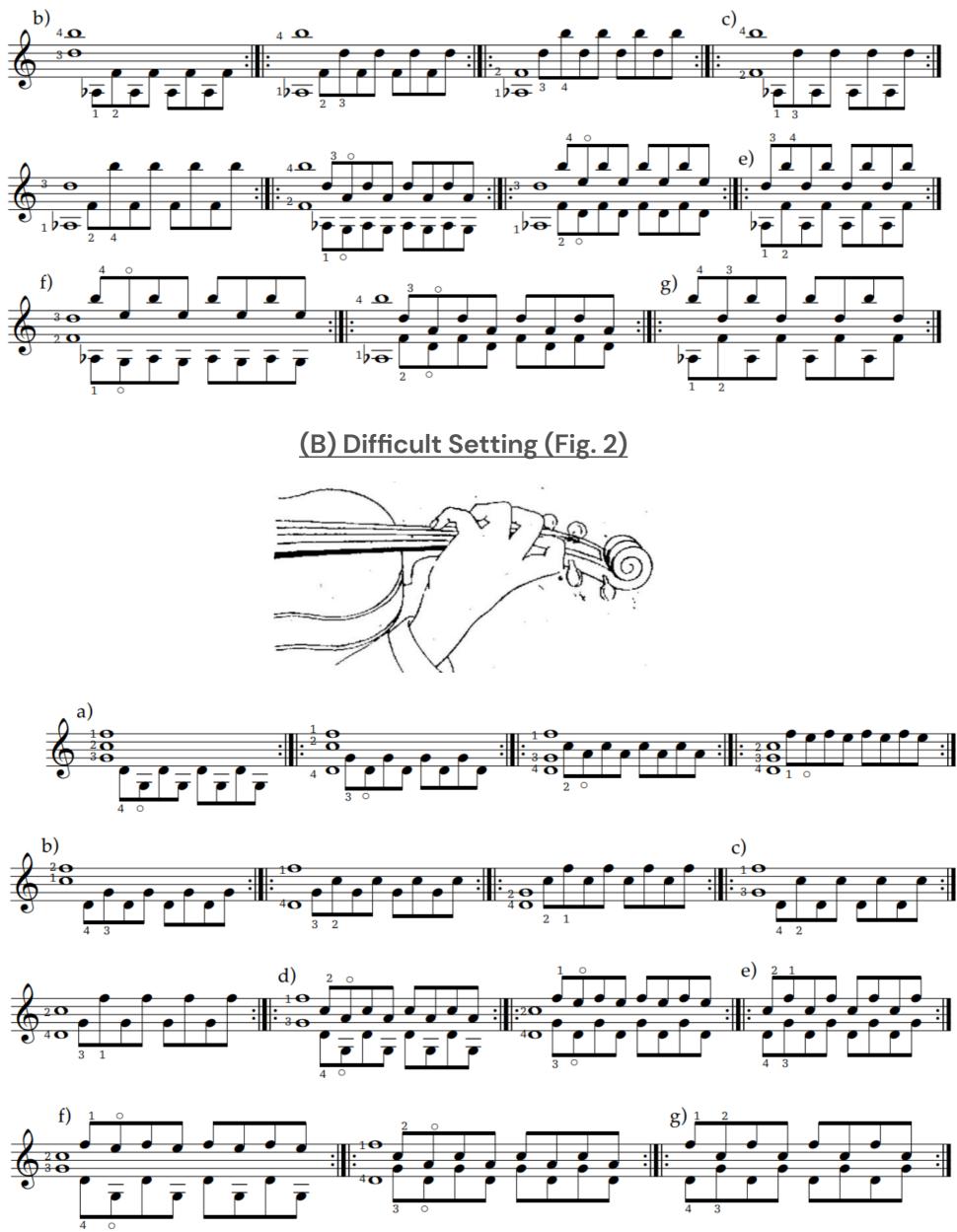
# (A) Easy Setting (Fig. 1)













(C) For the practical application of both finger "settings" in scale playing. To be played with the bow

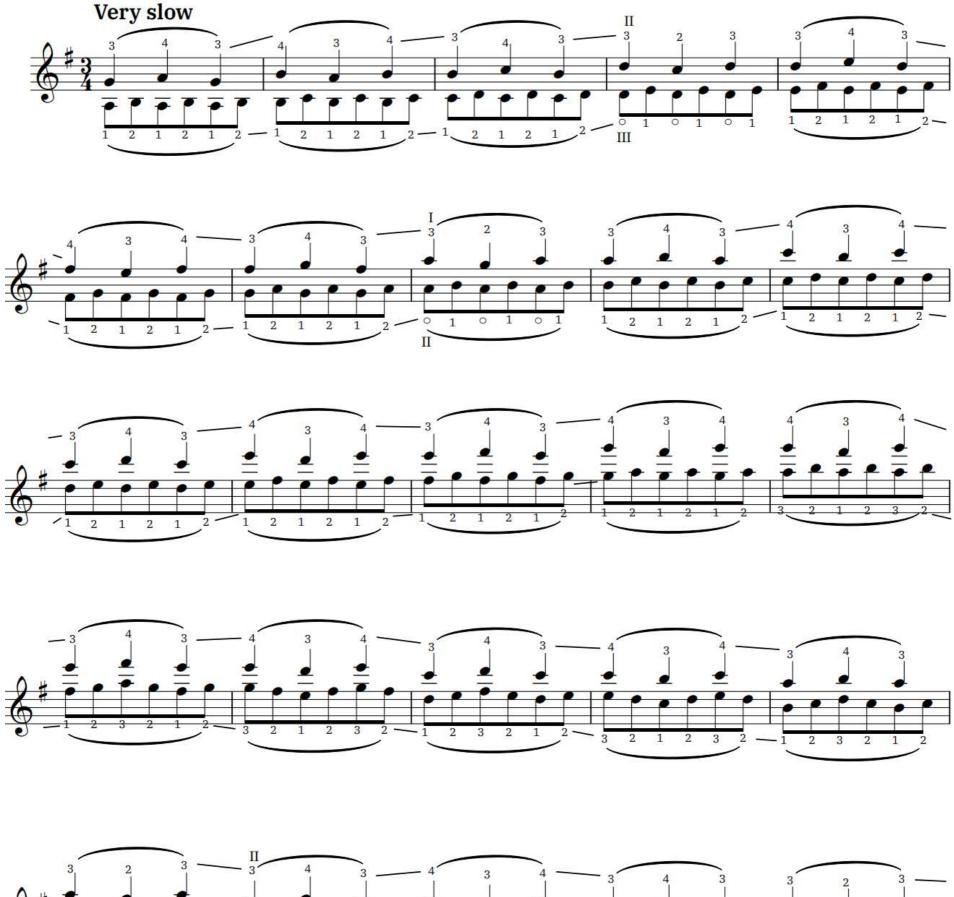


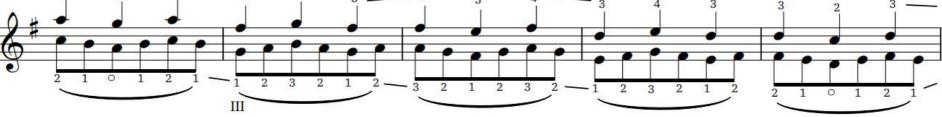


### Exercise 2

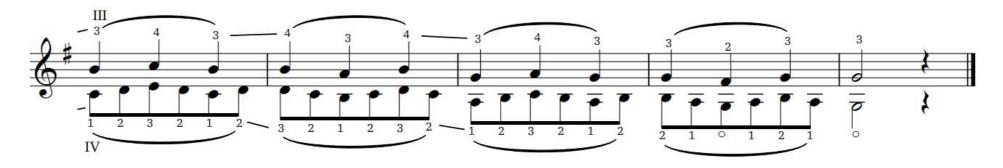
#### To get the fingers into playing shape and for independence

Directions for Practicing: Let the fingers fall upon the strings in an elastic and abrupt way. At the moment of passing from one position to another press the sliding fingers on the strings with great force. Make the sliding very slow and try to connect the preceding group of fingers v with the next one as thoroughly and as smoothly as possible. Bow evenly; divide the bow in as many equal parts as there are notes in the same bow.





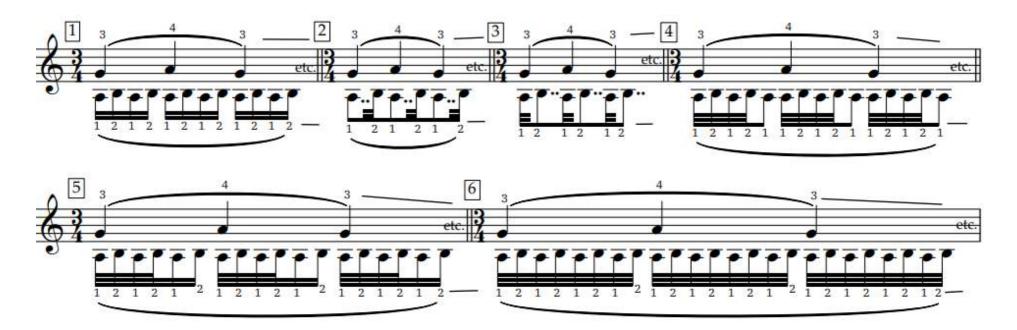




<u>6 Variants</u>

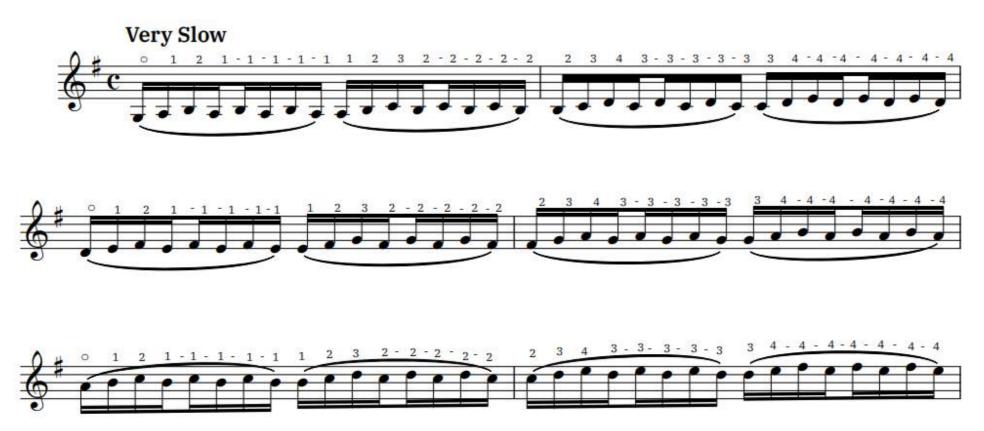
To be practiced one a day

For developing the rythm and the trill (vertical movement)

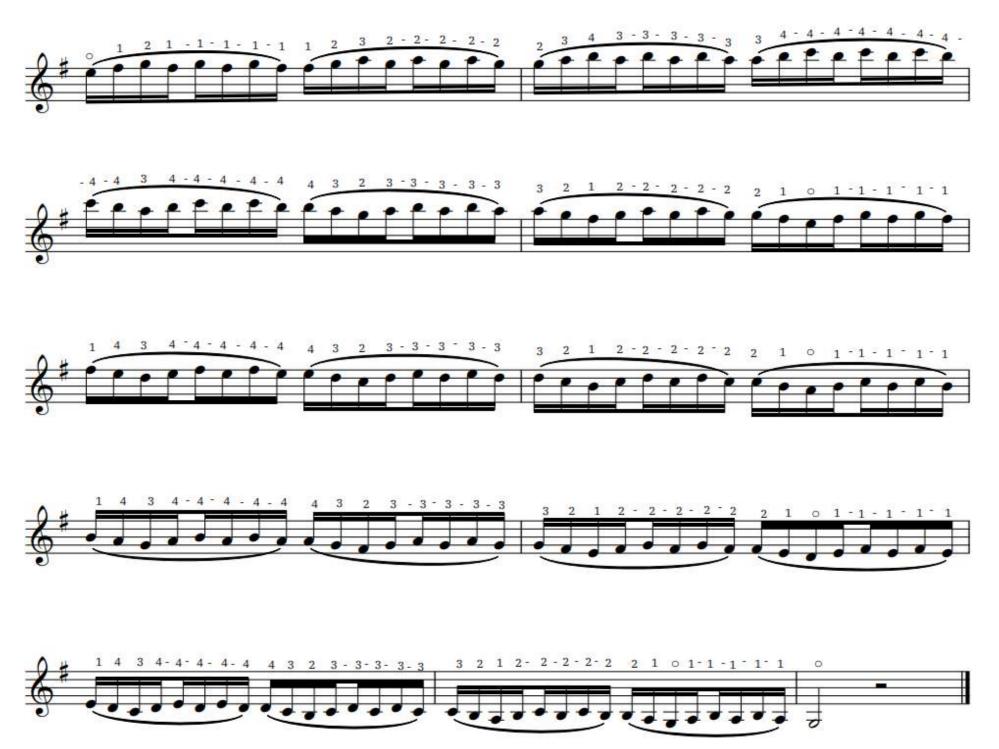


**Exercise 3** 

For developing the sliding motion of the fingers (horizontal movement) Directions for Practicing: Same as for the Second Exercise







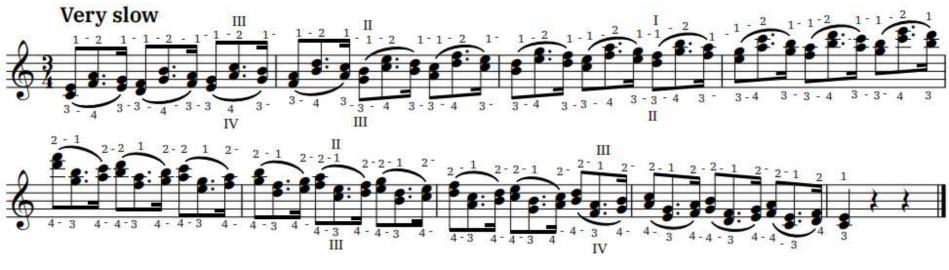
#### **Exercise 4**

For thirds

The whole art of third playing on the Violin, lies in the difficulty of correctly using the second and fourth fingers in ascending passages and the first and third fingers in descending passages.

The following exercise is specially composed to overcome that difficulty by scientifically training the two groups of fingers mentioned above, in the correct placing, both in ascending and descending passages.

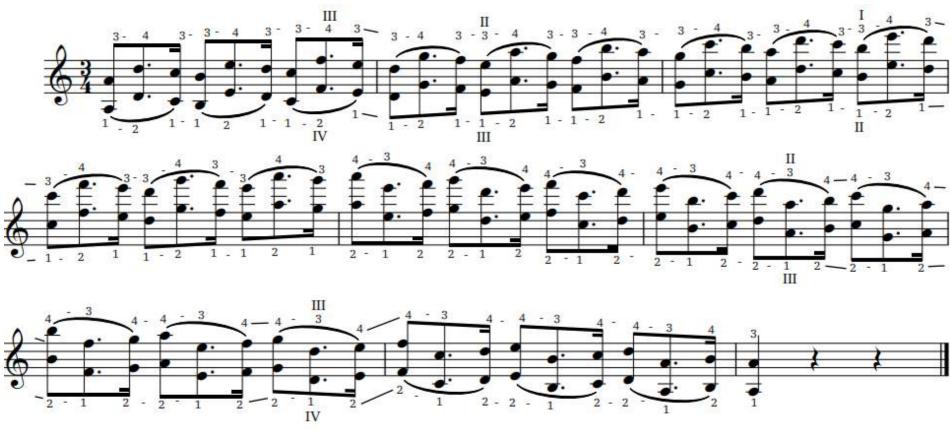
Directions for Practicing: The first and third fingers should always remain on the strings except where open strings are used. Aim at attaining the utmost perfection in the simultaneous movement of the second and fourth fingers. Practice this exercise in a new key every day.



# <u>Variant</u>

For fingered octaves

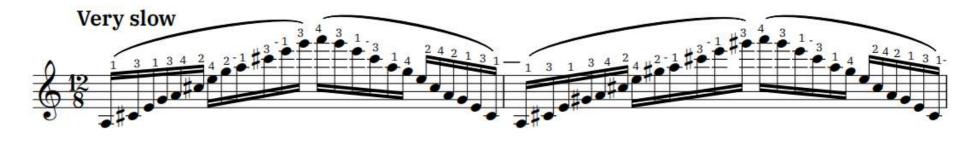
The fundamental technical principles of fingered octaves are absolutely the same with those of thirds. The directions for practicing given for thirds apply here as well. Less advanced players should practice the following exercise using the ordinary octave fingering  $\begin{pmatrix} 4 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}$  throughout, instead of  $\begin{pmatrix} 3 & 1 \\ 4 & 2 \end{pmatrix}$ .



Exercise 5

For intonation

Directions for Practicing: The greatest care should be exercised in bringing out the subtle alterations in tone color in the enharmonic changes.



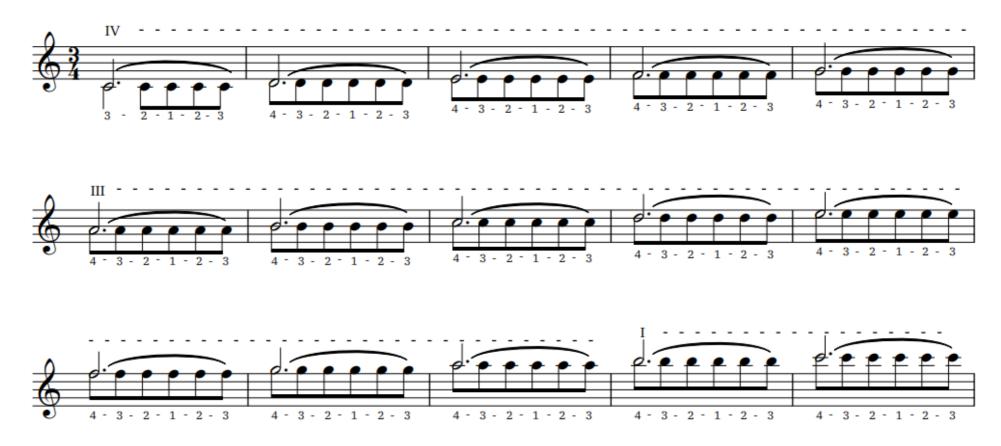


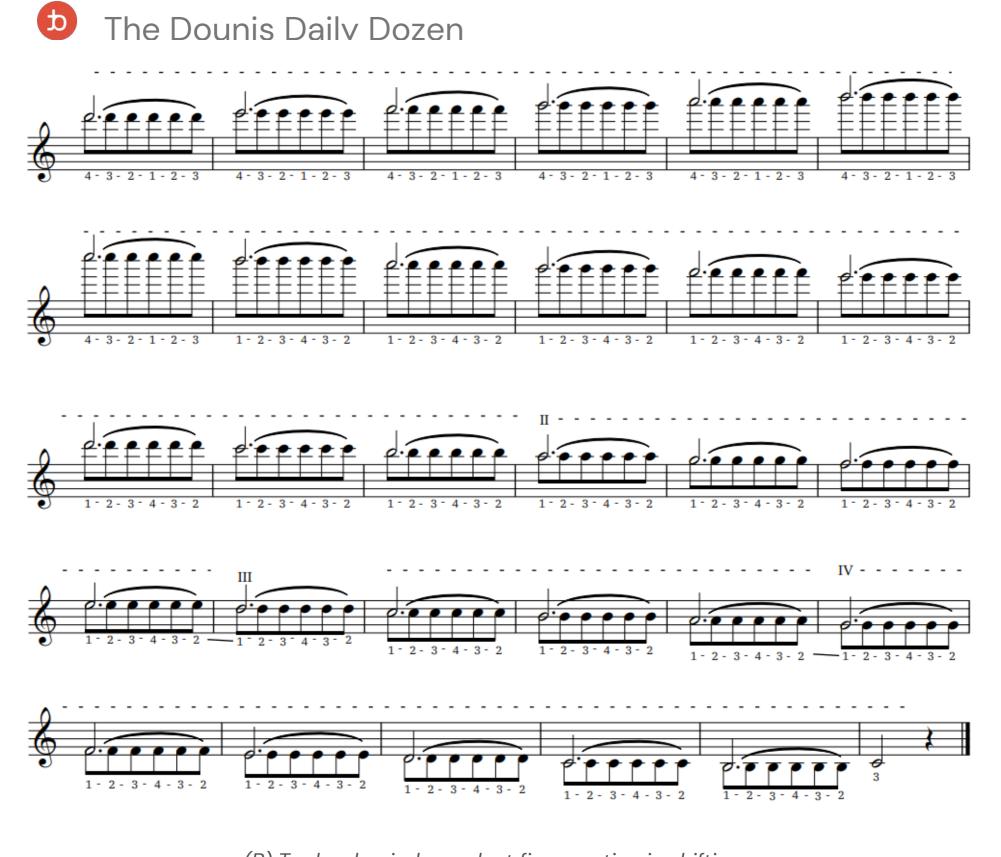
#### **Exercise 6**

(A) For shifting

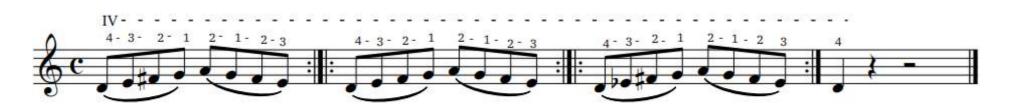
Directions for Practicing: The thumb should always follow the hand in an upward shift; while in a downward shift it acts as a forerunner to the other fingers. Shifting should never have any effect on the evenness of the bow stroke; the bowing should give the sante impression as if the notes were played in the same position, without shifting.

Practice slowly and with full tone; aim at producing the effect of a sustained note. Practice in a new key every day.





(B) To develop independent finger action in shifting.Directions for Practicing: Same as for (A). Repeat each bar four times.



To be transposed and practiced on the other strings as well.

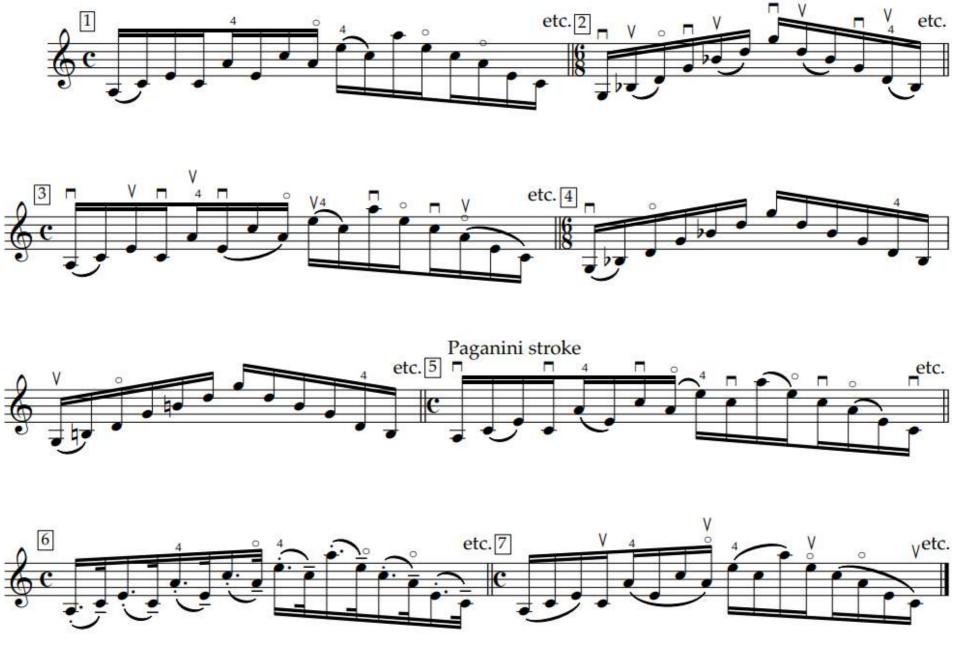


#### **Exercise 7**

#### The nut of the bow - seven variants

Directions for Practicing: All variants should be practiced at the nut of the bow. Try to ascertain the weight of the bow and balance it with the little finger. Variants (2) and (4) should be practiced on the first bow theme. Variants (1), (3), (5), (6) and (7) should be practiced on the second bow theme.

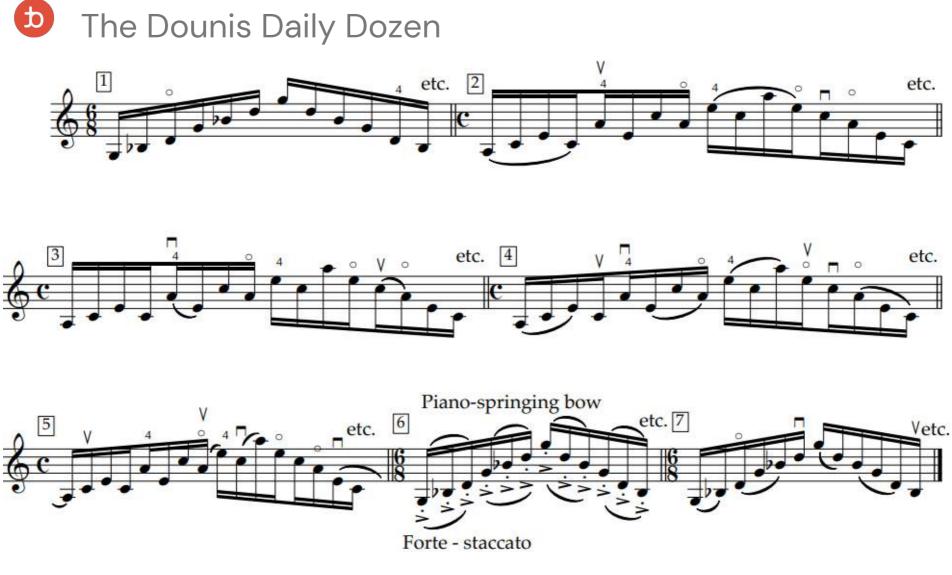
Repeat each variant four times: the first two times forte and very slowly, the detached notes with broad détaché, the last two times a little faster and piano, the detached notes with spiccato. Practice one variant a day.



Exercise 8

The middle of the bow - seven variants

Directions for Practicing: All variants should be practiced with the middle of the bow. Variants (1), (6) and (7) should be practiced on the first bow theme. Variants (2), (3), (4) and (5) should be practiced on the second bow theme. Repeat four times: the first two times forte and very slowly, the detached notes with broad détaché, the last two times a little faster and piano, the detached notes with spiccato. Practice one variant a day.

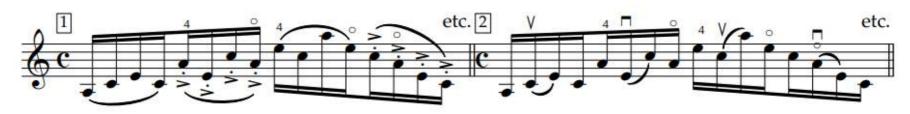


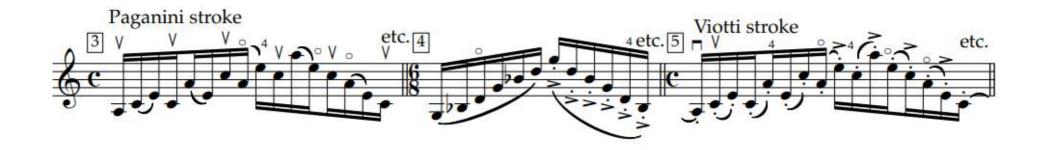
#### **Exercise 9**

The point of the bow - seven variants

Directions for Practicing: Practice the following variants at the point of the bow. Retain an almost straight position of the wrist when playing at the point. Do not break the wrist. Accent sharply the staccato notes and observe a slight pause after each staccato note. Repeat each variant four times — the first two times forte and very slowly, the detached notes with broad détaché, the last two times a little faster and piano, the detached notes with smooth détaché bowing. Practice one variant a day.

Variants (4) and (6) should be practiced on the first bow theme; Variants (1), (2), (3), (5) and (7) should be practiced on the second bow theme.



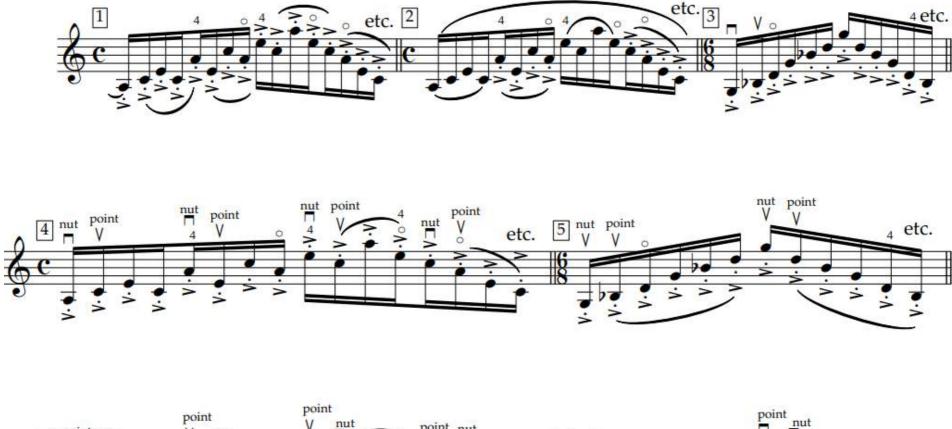


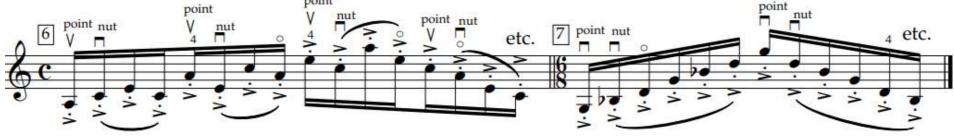


#### **Exercise 10**

The whole bow - seven variants

Directions for Practicing: Variants (3), (5) and (7) should be practiced on the first bow theme; Variants (1), (2), (4) and (6) should be practiced on the second bow theme. Variants (1), (2) and (3) should be played with the whole bow; for the detached note in variant (3) use also the entire bow. The detached note in variant (4) should be played at the nut of the bow, using very little bow; the remaining three staccato notes should be played at the point of the bow, drawing and pushing the bow as quickly as possible half an inch above the strings, so as to play alternately without any break at the nut and at the point of the bow. In exactly the same way are to be practiced variants (5), (6), and (7). Repeat each variant four times: the first two times forte and very slowly, playing the staccato notes in accented legato, i.e. accentuating each note without stopping the bow; the two last times a little faster and piano, playing the staccato notes in firm staccato, i.e. observing a slight pause between each note. Practice one variant a day.





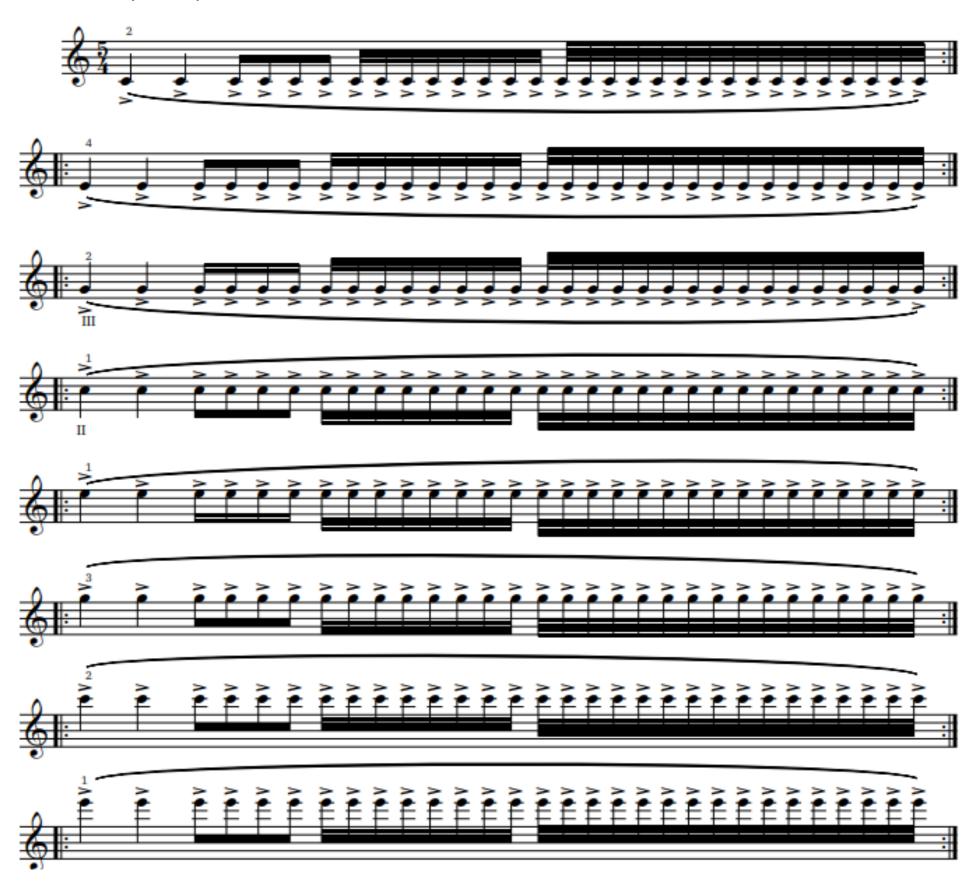


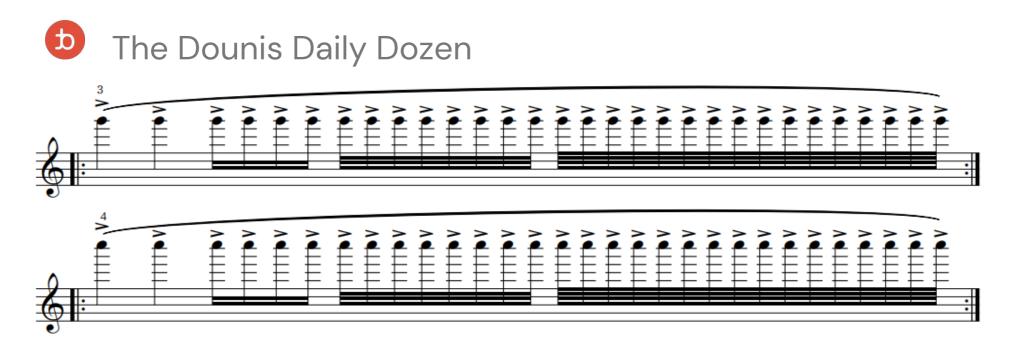
## **Exercise 11**

For tone production

#### (A) To develop a beautiful and singing tone

Directions for Practicing: Accentuate every note as indicated by imparting added pressure to the bow for each note. This pressure should come from the right hand fingers and it should in no way interfere with the even drawing and pushing of the bow. Accent the notes exactly as indicated i.e. f > p f > p etc. Do not stop the bow; there should be no pause between the notes. Practice very slowly and with full tone.





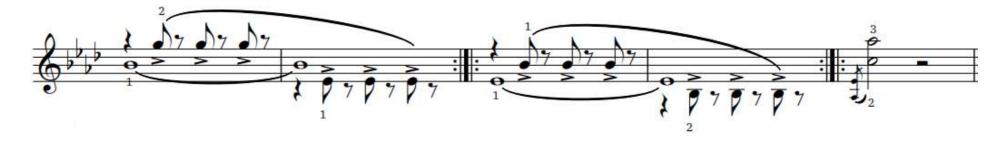
It will be found beneficial to practice a new chord every day in exactly the same manner as the above one. Repeat each bar twice.

#### (B) To develop a powerful large tone

Directions for Practicing: Practice as slowly and as loudly as possible. The intensity of the tone of the whole notes should not be lessened, nor there should be any break in the tone while playing the accompanying eighth notes. Accent the eighth notes and play them very broadly. Repeat every two bars twice. Practise alternately every day exercises (A) and (B).





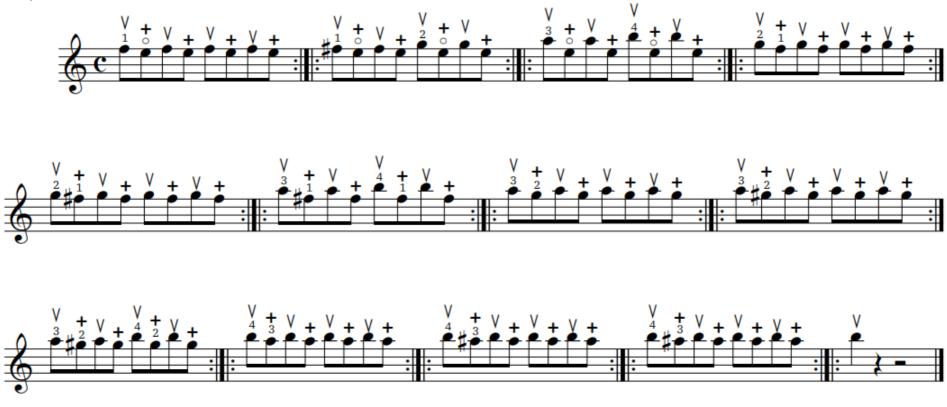




#### Exercise 12

#### For left hand pizzicato

Directions for Practicing: The string should be plucked with the fingers swiftly and with great strength. The pizzicato notes are marked thus: (+) They should be played with the same finger used for the previous note. Transpose the following exercise on all four strings; practice one string a day. Use the point of the bow for the up-strokes. Repeat each bar twice; practice slowly and very forte.



### To Conclude: A Last Word of Advice

Play everything always in an absolutely free and easy manner without any constraint or stiffness, whether mental or physical. Have continuously in mind that elasticity — suppleness — is the basis of artistic playing. Think of the acrobat who performs the most difficult and most intricate tours de force, always smiling. The secret of technical perfection being not to give the impression that you have difficulty in conquering a difficulty.

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