

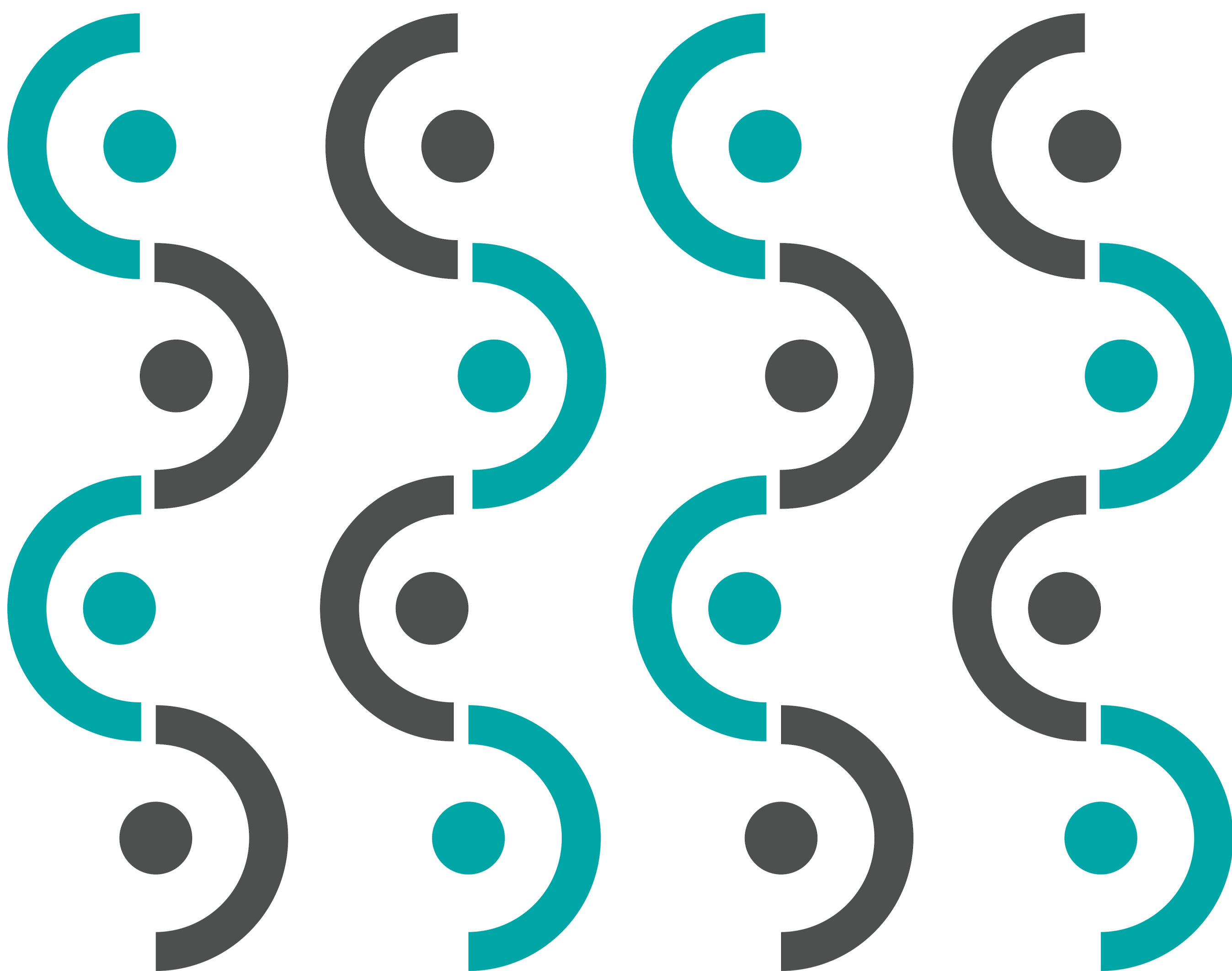
A Violist's & Violinist's

Right Hand

Bow & Sound Exercises

Kathryn Patricia Cobbler |

Loop Pedal Violist, Composer & Educator



A Note to Upper String Players:

Hello and Welcome!

So excited that you have come across Right hand Bow & Sound Exercises. I hope you find the content included helpful.

How to Use This Resource:

The following exercises centre around bow technique and sound were designed to give you more control over your sound production and artistic vision. Each exercise will provide you with a suggested sequence. Feel free to change or modify each exercise to meet your work/life practice and music goals.



A Few Notes Before Getting Started:

Why focus on the Right Hand??

As bowed string players, "our bow is our breath."

It is how the bow interacts with the string that brings all the notes we play with our left hands to life.

...But what happens when there is a "leak" in our musical execution. Whether it is due to injury, strained muscles, or too much tension while playing, we may not be able to execute musical passages as we would like to.

What This Guide Will Help You To Do:

Bring more understanding to how you use your bow in relation to the sound that you make:

The goal of these exercises is to aide violists and violinists in playing with a richer and warmer tone—to be able to capture and execute the sound you have dreamed of having.

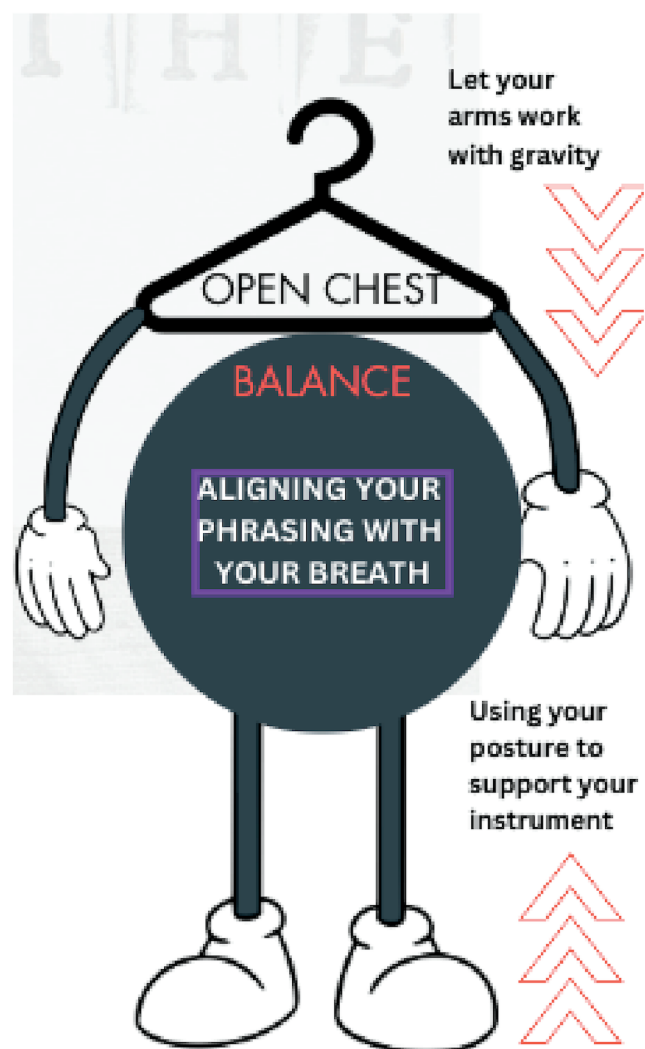
You will be provided with activities that can be added to your daily practice routine to strengthen your artistry and efficiency in musical execution.

A large part of our musical practice is getting curious to find the "leaks" in our technical and artistic performance.

Hope you Enjoy the Content!

A Violist's & Violinist's Right Hand Bow & Sound Exercises

Guide-At-A-Glance:



REVIEW OF POSTURE & BALANCE

'Balancing "From the Ground Up'

This guidebook will review balancing the instrument as apposed to holding it up (or squeezing the instrument) are key ingredients in a free bow arm.

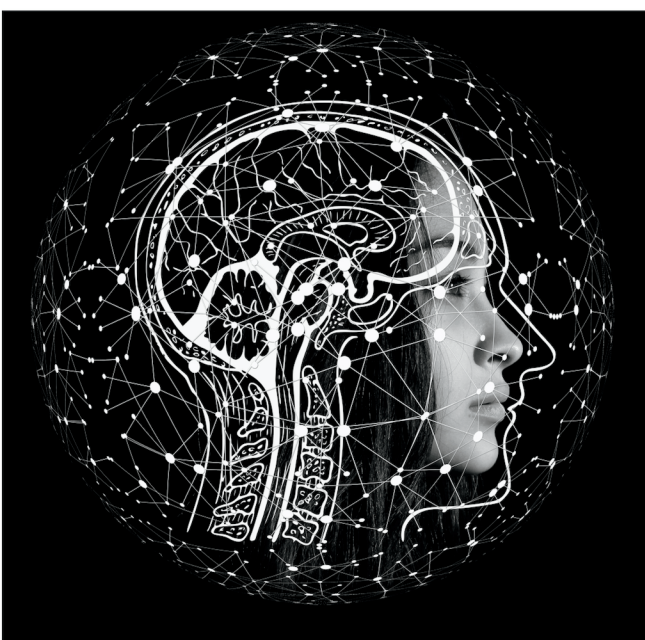
This section will give an introduction to the concept of **flow** and review the **slow bow** exercise.

Refer to the Isolated Practice Guidebook here for more guidance on this: <https://www.kathrynpatricia.com/isolated-practice-guidebook-for-violists>

BOW HAND BALANCE & SOUND VISUALIZATION

Connecting the Bow and the Mind

This is an 'off the instrument' exercise that will help engage your strongest "musical muscle"--our mind...



THE ABOVE EXERCISES & YOUR PRACTICE ROUTINE:

Remember, Change Comes In Small Steps--Not Leaps!

For each of the activities you are looking at intergrating into your daily musical practice, I am going to invite you to commit to practicing them for 30 practice days in a row.

I have heard it said that "consistency breeds legitimacy" if you want to bring valuable change to your practice, sound, technique, and artistry, consistency is the key!

REVIEW : BALANCE & SOUND

Creating a solid foundation 'From the Ground Up'

Open Chest, Soft Joints:

The quality of our sound starts with our posture and how we balance the instrument.

When I refer to posture, I am reminded of the analogy of the coat hanger I learned from the wonderful violist & pedagogue, Rennie Regehr:

Coat Hanger Chest:

Like a coat hanger, we need keep our chest and shoulders open. (Using a viola posture where you 'nose is in line with your navel' can help achieve this

.Refer to the [Isolated Practice Guidebook](https://www.kathrynpatricia.com/isolated-practice-guidebook-for-violists) here for more guidance on this:
<https://www.kathrynpatricia.com/isolated-practice-guidebook-for-violists>

The Concept of Flow & Our Viola/Violin Posture:

Hungarian psychologist, [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#) (pronounced, "Me-high Chick-SENT-me-high.") is the author of the concept of *flow*

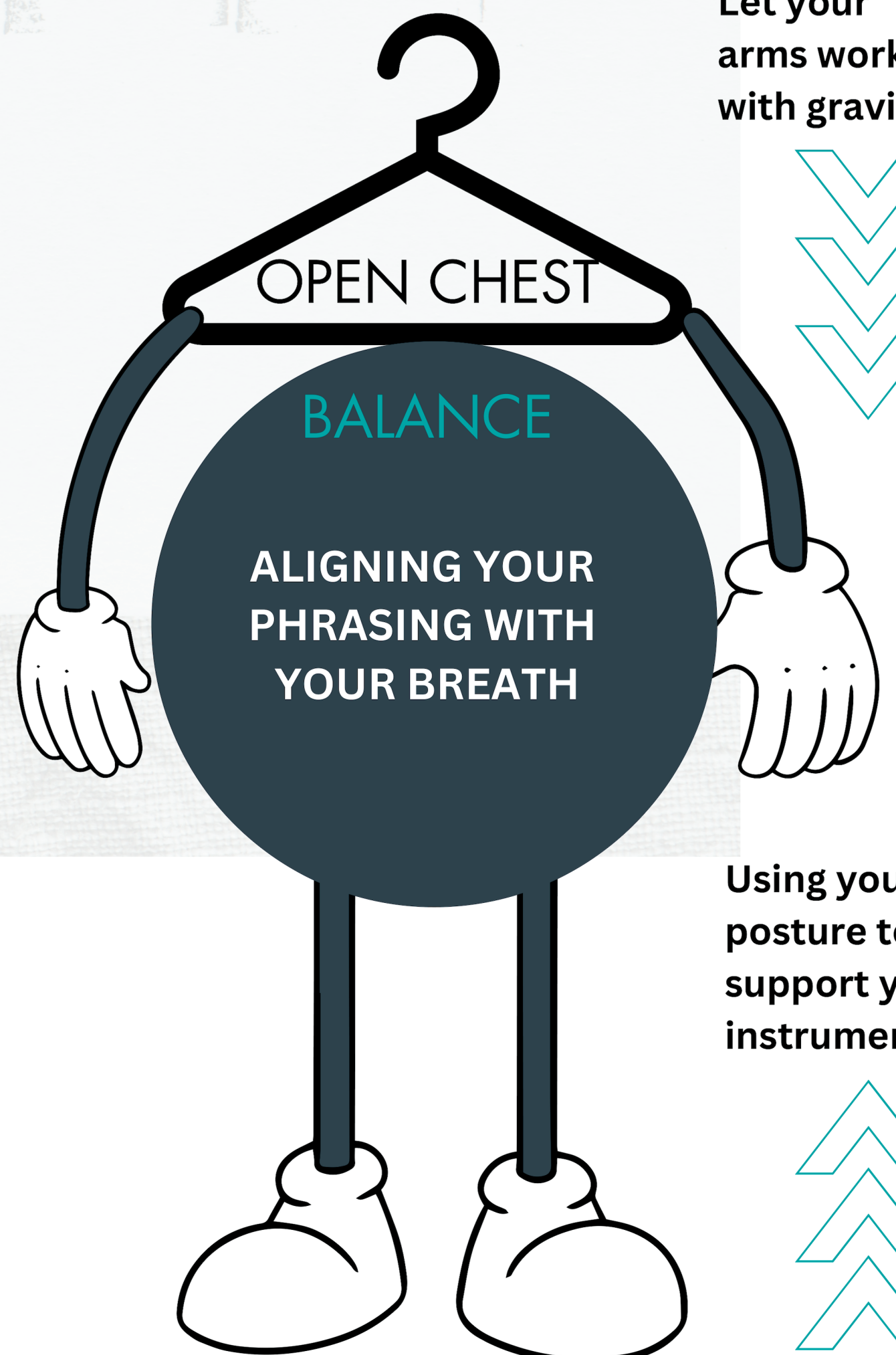
In Csikszentmihalyi's words, flow is "a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (1990).

Csikszentmihalyi talks about flow occurring **between** the state of *boredom* and *anxiety*.

For some, pain from ill-proper playing posture can cause anxiety in playing, **which may affect one's ability in entering their flow state**.

One of the main tenants of *flow* is **effortlessness and ease**. Having a balanced posture can help achieve this

Right Hand Bow Exercises & Sound



SLOW BOW EXERCISE :

"Deep Listening, Singing Slowly"

"How slow can you go??"

Slow practice may not be the most exciting practice tool, but is the one that brings the most awareness to our playing.

Before you jump into scales or a study, start by playing slow long tones on your open strings.

The goal is to play slowly, while still creating a consistent tone.

As you play, listen to your body:

Are there any areas of tension?

Are you breathing? If so, are you breathing from your diaphragm?

Start to experiment with changing the weight of the bow and the amount of bow hair you are using as you play.

What do you notice in the sound??

Slow Bow Exercise

For this exercise you will need:

- A stopwatch or timer

After the viola is balanced on the collarbone, practice playing one bow hold for the following lengths of time:

- 10 seconds
- 15 seconds
- 30 seconds
- 45 seconds
- 60 seconds

Through this exercise take care to:

1. Make sure that you are playing with a smooth consistent sound
2. Remember to BREATHE, we are holding our bow—not our breath
3. Continue to check in with your bow hand to see if there is any tension (particularly checking in with the base joint of the thumb, tension here can spread to the bow wrist and limit the use of your bow arm weight)

Right Hand
Bow
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Sound

TEETER-TOTTER BOW EXERCISE

Playing with a smooth bow is all about balance and weight transfer. Depending on where you are playing in the bow, will determine which fingers are responsible for holding the weight of the bow:

- At the frog the **pinky finger** side hold most of the bow weight
- At the tip, the weight transfer moves to the **index finger** side of the bow hand

To help maintain balance within the hand, check in with your joints to make sure there is a sense of openness and movement.

How to Do the Teeter Totter Bow Exercise:

1. Hold out your bow horizontally
2. Use the back of your left hand to balance the other side of the bow
3. Lift of the bow hand and pink and push down on the bow—the weight of the finger should cause the bow to raise
4. Release the pink and let the bow drop onto the back of the left hand

As you perform this exercise, keep in mind that:

1. Your bow wrist is open and free from tension
2. That the forearm is still as you perform this exercise—the motion should be in the bow wrist and fingers

Right Hand Bow Exercises & Sound

VISUALIZING THE SOUND YOU WANT

Connecting the Bow and the Mind

Often times as musicians, we think our sound comes from the execution or movements we take to engage our instruments, but in fact our sound and artistry has been created even before we play a note...

I once heard violist and pedagogue, Heidi Castleman say *“every note must have a path”*. Being clear in our minds about the ‘path’ we want our sound and phrasing to take is key in our execution.

Take some time away from your instrument and reflect on the following:

Your Sound:

How would you describe your sound? Sweet? Singing like? Strong? Rich? Connected? Assertive?

Write your responses in the column below on the left.

On the opposite column, write what corresponding technique you think contributes to this attribute (see the example below):

**there may be more than one attribute that contributes to this*

Example: rich sound: medium speed, wider, controlled vibrato

Right Hand Bow Exercises & Sound

HOW YOU WOULD DESCRIBE YOUR SOUND

Example: rich sound

TECHNIQUE USED TO ACHIEVE SOUND

Example: medium speed, wider, controlled vibrato

A Violist's & Violinist's Right Hand Bow & Sound Exercises

Integrating Activities into Everyday Practice:



SCHEDULE IT OUT

"Consistency Gives Results"

In our lives, we have schedules for many things. Our class schedule, rehearsal schedule, assignment/homework schedule of due dates...do you have a schedule for your musical practice??

Marking in your practice in your daily schedule will help ensure that it gets done. Not only do schedules create accountability, but it helps us to develop a habit of practicing.

To help see results, schedule the above exercises in your daily practice.



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

'Document the Journey'

To see if a new practice method is effective or to learn from the journey, we need to have a system of documentation. Whether that is by using your phone, or a digital recording device, recording our practice will give us a better sense of our sound and what we are communicating through our instruments.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

Change Comes In Small Steps--Not Leaps!

Last, but not least--remember to be kind to yourself!

Change does not happen over night. Take one practice session at a time. If you fall off track, set a new goal, schedule out your practice start the process again.

As much as we practice to achive an end result, it is the journey and process that is truly transformative.

About Kathryn Patricia Cobbler



[@kathrynpatriciaviolist](https://www.instagram.com/kathrynpatriciaviolist)



[@kpviolist](https://www.facebook.com/kpviolist)



[Kathryn Patricia Cobbler](https://www.youtube.com/Kathryn Patricia Cobbler)



www.kathrynpatricia.com



"for me, performing music is painting with sound,"

Hailing from Canada's Capital region, Loop pedal violist, composer, and educator Kathryn Patricia Cobbler has crafted a singular niche in improvisation and classical performance. She obsesses over creating uniquely arresting soundscapes, whether in solo recitals, composing for theatre, performing at art installations, and more. A recipient of one of Ottawa Arts Council's Emerging Artist awards, she has been featured in Canada's most notable Concert Series, including Chamberfest, Music and Beyond, NUMUS Music Festival, and the Ottawa New Music Creators' Analogue Series to name a few.

As a seasoned performer, speaker, presenter and workshop facilitator, Kathryn has given masterclasses at Carleton University and was a speaker for the Canadian Network for Arts and Learning Convergence Conference. As a performing artist and educator, Ms. Cobbler is an artist on the MASC Artist roster and Teaching Artist at the National Arts Centre. As a composer, Kathryn has been featured in the Boston based Concert series, Castle of Our Skin's Black Composers Miniature Challenge, which resulted in the world premier of her piece A Home Called 'Wander'. Kathryn continues to be inspired by the next generation of composers and improvisers, having served as an adjudicator for the Canadian Music Showcase and NUMUS Emerging Improvisor competition. Kathryn Patricia's most recent multidisciplinary collaboration was through an artist in residency with the Ottawa Dance Directive composing and collaborating for the premiere of Dream & True North envisioned and choreographed by Elizabeth Emond-Stevenson.

Initially a visual artist, Kathryn sees the world through shape and line—a vision that has laid the groundwork for many of her musical creative projects. Kathryn's current explorations of the loop pedal have led to the development of her workshop/concert, Sound In Living Colour, where she draws connection between the technical use of the paint brush and her viola bow, guiding her listeners through a music inspired painting experience. After switching to music as her artistic path, she would receive degrees in viola performance from Western University (B.M.) and the University of Ottawa (M.M.). Ms. Cobbler has also performed as an orchestral musician, appearing within the Toronto Symphony's Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Ottawa Symphony Orchestra, and the Ottawa Jazz Orchestra. A native of Windsor, Ontario, she makes her home in Ottawa. She performs on a viola by luthier Sibylle Ruppert and a Boss RC-30 loop pedal.