



## Specific expert advice on viola technique for Level 2 and onwards:

In regard to practicing scales and arpeggios, the great violist William Primrose wrote *“Every possible form of what we understand to be beautiful playing should be applied to the practice of scales, and the student, while listening with the greatest concentration, should seek to vary the tone, the speed, the rhythm and as far as is within their inventive powers, invest this branch of study with musical richness.”*

In regard to tone production, he advised *“Besides using open strings liberally in scale playing, I keep as much as possible to first position until obliged to ascend into the upper range. The medium regions of the D and G strings can be a dull section on the viola. Staying in lower positions keeps the string length longer and helps maximize resonance and clarity on the viola”*. He was also very aware of championing the vital role of the bow, and as with many other great teachers, would often begin with open string work to teach new patterns. In discussing slurs across strings, he wrote *“For example, while the bow is on one string, it must approach the next string in such a manner that when the new string is reached, there will be scarcely a perceptible change in the level of the bow.”*

Whatever choices are made in technical work, his long-term advice was ***“Nevertheless, I would strongly advise the student not to be bound by any one system and that the more systems of fingering mastered the greater the ultimate command of the instrument”***.

As you progress, and even beyond Grade 8, consider the kind of technical work that will support you as you approach contemporary repertoire, as well as the more advanced technical demands in work from other eras. Exploring newer ideas in sound and technique can also enhance your playing in the broadest sense, as well as support explorations of less conventional textures (for example, the world of subharmonics, as outlined by Mari Kimura, Nathan Cole and others). Go to live concerts when you can. Always ensure instrument and bow are well maintained and set up for optimal sound. Check the bibliography and resources in the viola section of the Manual of Syllabus. Check out the many online resources, including all the international viola societies.



***‘The glorious individuality of the viola tone... is an inspiration of the highest order’ – Lillian Fuchs***

