



Spiccato with MuChen Hsieh, Principal Second Violin

By David Connor, Community-Embedded Musician

After watching her perform Schubert’s Second Symphony, I wanted to know how MuChen Hsieh practices her spiccato (off the string) bow stroke to get it to sound so clean.

Here is her favorite exercise and instructions for practicing spiccato. Practicing études is one of the ways we learn our instrument. MuChen modifies a famous étude by Rodolphe Kreutzer to help develop the spiccato bow stroke.

How to practice:

1. Make sure the right thumb is supple.
2. Drop your bow on an open string on a down bow and let the bow bounce by itself.
3. Play repeated bouncing notes, find a bouncy spot on the bow (every bow is different, but it should be somewhere near the middle of the bow). Find a tempo where the bow bounces effortlessly.
4. Play a G major scale, with your bouncing bow stroke: play each note 4 times

etc.
(2 octave scale) ↑↓

5. Use Kreutzer Etude no. 2 and/or no. 8, try spiccato, play each note 4 times

etc...

(see page two for longer excerpt)

6. After mastering the first version with repeating each note 4 times, try repeating 2 times

etc...

7. After repeating 2 times, try playing the original étude with the spiccato bow stroke.

Etude 2 by Rudolphe Kreutzer (excerpt):



4



7



9



11



13

