

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.

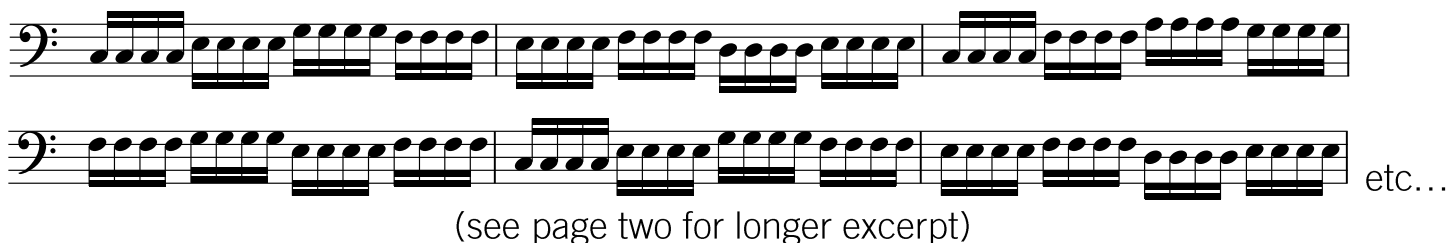
Here is her favorite exercise and instructions for practicing spiccato. Practicing études is one of the ways we learn our instrument. MuChen modifies a famous étude by Rodolphe Kreutzer to help develop the spiccato bow stroke.

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



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



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



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

Etude 2 by Rudolphe Kreutzer (excerpt):

The image displays a musical score for an excerpt of Etude 2 by Rudolphe Kreutzer, written in bass clef. The score consists of five staves, each containing a measure number and musical notation. The notation features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, creating a rapid, rhythmic pattern. The first staff begins with a measure number of 1. The second staff begins with a measure number of 4. The third staff begins with a measure number of 7. The fourth staff begins with a measure number of 10. The fifth staff begins with a measure number of 13. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and a final double bar line at the end of the fifth staff.