



DVD Video Instruction
& Performances

Roland **Vamos**

Exercises for the Viola in Various Combinations of Double-Stops

with Foreword by Rachel Barton Pine





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Introduction

There have been so many exercise books written for the viola that it may seem appropriate to justify yet another one. This one has evolved gradually over the years. Many original ideas have been deleted, and new ones added by a process of trial and error. At this stage I cannot conceive any new approach to developing double-stop technique that is more than a rehashing of concepts that have been thoroughly laid out by such revered pedagogues as Ševčík and Korguof.

Perhaps the most valid argument for a new book would be that as new music is written for the viola there is bound to be a need for new approaches that would facilitate the new technical and musical challenges that confront the performers. However, we must be careful not to completely abandon the old, tried and true technical methods because our performers must be able to handle all the problems found in the music of the past as well as the future.

So what exactly do I hope the student that *carefully* studies these exercises will accomplish? Perhaps the most important accomplishment is the development of a strong left hand that is set up so that the fingers rise and drop consistently landing on the same part of the finger. The first joint of each will hopefully develop strength and flexibility while the thumb gently supports the side of the neck without tension. These exercises, when practiced slowly and carefully, should also help to develop a keen sense of pitch and intonation.

I have found it helpful to introduce each position in which a pattern is to be done by first placing the fingers on the notes that are to be played. Each finger is then slowly extended up half a step and returned back to its original position four times using only the first joint of the finger. This is to ensure that the first joint of each finger is flexible. Once again, the fingers are placed on the original notes to be used. The fingers are then all lifted together to the surface of the string and pressed down together to the fingerboard. This is also done approximately four times. The purpose of this is to allow the fingers to memorize their positions on the fingerboard. We are now ready to do the actual exercise.

In the double-stop exercises that follow on page 5, the first two lines in each position are basically finger exercises. These are divided into seven finger patterns. The basic routine used in each pattern is as follows:

A) An introduction in which the notes of the pattern are introduced:

G and D Strings
1st Pos.

B) Four notes on the bottom string to one note on the top:

C) Four notes on the top string to one note on the bottom:

D) Two notes on the bottom string to one note on the top:

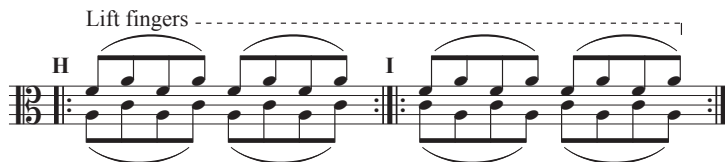
E) Two notes on the top string to one note on the bottom:

F) The notes going in the same direction:

G) The notes going in opposite directions:

In the above double-stop exercises, there are two fingers that act as anchors, and two fingers that are being placed on and lifted off the string.

H) and I) repeat examples F) and G), raising the fingers that are not being used.



The following line comprises bowing exercises based on F) and G), with two fingers acting as anchors, and the other two fingers being placed on and lifted off simultaneously or alternately.



These bowing exercises should be played with a relaxed right hand; the fingers must be relaxed so that the joints move with flexibility. There should be consistent contact of the bow on the string even when the bow smoothly changes direction and crosses strings. This component should be executed in each position, in three parts of the bow. The following pattern of rotation is suggested:

Day One

First position – Frog
Second position – Middle
Third position – Tip
Fourth position – Frog
Fifth position – Middle
Sixth position – Tip
Seventh position – Frog

Day Two

First position – Middle
Second position – Tip
Third position – Frog
Fourth position – Middle
Fifth position – Tip
Sixth position – Frog
Seventh position – Middle

Day Three

First position – Tip
Second position – Frog
Third position – Middle
Fourth position – Tip
Fifth position – Frog
Sixth position – Middle
Seventh position – Tip

At the end of three days, the finger exercises will have been played three times in each of the seven positions. The bowing exercises will have been played in each position at each part of the bow. The player is now ready to repeat this three-day routine as a part of his or her daily regimen. By striving to always have smooth and even sound the student will develop a control of the right hand in double-stops.

In the above bowing exercise, the bottom finger on each string should remain in place the entire time. Once the upper finger on each string is placed, it should remain on the string until it must be lifted in order to sound the note below it.

These double-stop exercises are not intended to be the only exercises to exploit double-stopping since they do not include three very important components of double-stop technique.

- 1) Double-stops in which you must shift from one position to another
- 2) Double-stops in which you must cross strings
- 3) Any and all combinations of the above

For these techniques, there are many excellent double-stopping exercise books and etudes.

—Roland Vamos, 2010
Evanston, Illinois

Foreword

I was 10 years old when I began studying with Almita Vamos and her husband, Dr. Roland Vamos. They taught as a team at the Music Institute of Chicago, then the Music Center of the North Shore. While I worked on repertoire with both of them, Dr. Vamos had the primary responsibility for my technical development. I studied every major etude and technique book (and many lesser-known ones) with him over the eight years I spent in their studio.

In one of my first lessons with Dr. Vamos, he handed me a one-page photocopy containing a set of double-stop exercises of his own devising. Little did I know that this innocent-looking little page was actually an entire exercise book, and that it would prove to be such a valuable tool in my technical development.

Roland Vamos's double-stop exercises fill a void in the literature of technical exercises for violinists and violists. Today there are many classic books with thirds, sixths, octaves, etc., by such composers as Schradieck, Ševčík, Flesch, and Dounis. However, none of these wonderful collections features a systematic series of fixed double-stops that enables the aspiring string player to practice and master every possible combination of finger patterns across two strings without shifting.

The diligent practicing of these patterns establishes the proper left hand set-up, strengthens the fingers (particularly the first joint), develops independence of the fingers, and trains coordination between the left and right hands.

As both a concert artist and as a teacher, I have found these exercises to be indispensable to the development of a complete technical command of the violin and viola. There is a Vamos exercise to fit almost any challenging spot encountered in the repertoire: Pattern III is the perfect solution for mastering the solo part in the third measure of the last movement of Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 26; Pattern II is the ideal tool for improving the scales of sixths in Ysaÿe's Sonata No. 6; and examples also abound in the viola literature.

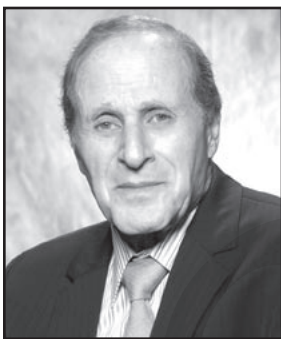
For many decades, Dr. Vamos's exercises have circulated as a one-page photocopy – a shorthand version of this book. Explanations of how to decipher and use it were passed by word of mouth from one player to another. In my travels throughout the world, I'm often handed a fuzzy version of that familiar photocopy and asked "Can you please show me what to do with these double-stop exercises?"

I am thrilled that this information, previously only available to a few, is now available to everyone. The inclusion of a companion DVD further enhances the information contained here, making these exercises crystal clear.

I hope that Roland Vamos's *Exercises for the Viola in Various Combinations of Double-Stops* will prove as useful and enjoyable to you and your students as it has to me and countless other Vamos students. Happy practicing!

— Rachel Barton Pine, 2012

About Roland Vamos



Roland Vamos graduated from the Juilliard School, where he received B.S., M.A., and D.M.A. degrees in violin and viola. He has held principal positions in the Denver, Houston, and Radio City Music Hall Orchestras. He was a member of the Morningside and Lydian Trios, Contemporary and Antioch String Quartets, and recorded for Coronet, Rizzoli, and with the Modern Jazz Quartet for the Atlantic label. He has performed and

conducted concerts in Taiwan, Korea, Greece, Australia, Iceland, and throughout the United States.

The students of Dr. Vamos have won top prizes in many international competitions including Gold Medals in the Tchaikovsky Youth Competition, Carl Flesch, Menuhin, Bach (Leipzig); Silver Medals in the Tchaikovsky, Szigeti, Kreisler, Nielsen; and Bronze Medals in the Paganini, Queen Elizabeth and Montreal Competitions. His students have won Grand Prize in national competitions such as WAMSO, Blount, Stulberg, Klein, Corpus Christi and Concert Artist Guild. Chamber music

groups he has coached have won prizes in the top chamber music competitions, including Fischhoff, St. Paul and Coleman. His former students are members of the New York, Oslo and Los Angeles Philharmonics; Boston, St. Louis, San Francisco, Washington, Minnesota, Chautauqua, Hong Kong Symphonies; and many other symphony orchestras around the world. Other former students have gone on to careers as concertmasters, concert violinists, members of renowned stringed quartets and university professors.

Dr. Vamos has won the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching four times, the ASTA Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award and has been featured on CBS "Sunday Morning." He has been professor at Western Illinois University, University of Minnesota, Oberlin Conservatory, and presently is Professor of Viola at Northwestern University. Dr. Vamos has taught at many summer festivals including Meadowmount, Bowdoin, Schlern International Music Festival, Niagara International Music Festival and Amati Festival. Dr. Vamos and his wife Almita were the co-founders of the Weathersfield Music Festival. Currently he teaches at the Chautauqua Institute of Music in the summer. Dr. Vamos is the conductor of the American Chamber Orchestra at the Music Institute of Chicago.

Exercises in Various Combinations of Double-Stops

Pattern I

Fingers 1 and 2 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified.

ROLAND VAMOS

G and D Strings
1st Pos. A 2 V B C D E

Lift Fingers F G H I vib. vib.

V * V * 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

† † † † vib.

2nd Pos. A 2 V B C D E

Lift Fingers F G H I vib. vib.

V * V * 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

† † † † vib.

- * Slur second time only.
- † Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 simultaneously while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure F.
- ‡ Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 alternately while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure G.

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Pattern II

Fingers 1 and 3 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified.

G and D Strings

* Slur second time only.

† Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 simultaneously while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure F.

‡ Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 alternately while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure G.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: asterisks (*) above notes, a 'V' symbol above a note, and triplets (3) at the end of the staff.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: a cross symbol (†) above notes, and a 'vib.' marking above the final note.

2nd Pos.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: letters A, B, C, D, E above notes, a 'V' symbol above a note, and a '1' below the first note.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: letters F, G, H, I above notes, a dashed line labeled 'Lift Fingers' above the staff, and 'vib.' markings above notes.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: asterisks (*) above notes, a 'V' symbol above a note, and triplets (3) at the end of the staff.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: a cross symbol (†) above notes, and a 'vib.' marking above the final note.

3rd Pos.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: letters A, B, C, D, E above notes, a 'V' symbol above a note, and a '1' below the first note.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: letters F, G, H, I above notes, a dashed line labeled 'Lift Fingers' above the staff, and 'vib.' markings above notes.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: asterisks (*) above notes, a 'V' symbol above a note, and triplets (3) at the end of the staff.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various articulations: a cross symbol (†) above notes, and a 'vib.' marking above the final note.

Pattern III

Fingers 1 and 2 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified.

G and D Strings

1st Pos.

2nd Pos.

* Slur second time only.

† Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 simultaneously while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure F.

‡ Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 alternately while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure G.

Pattern IV

Fingers 1 and 3 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified.

G and D Strings
1st Pos. A 1 V B C D E

F G H I vib. vib. vib.

Lift Fingers

* V *

† † † † vib.

2nd Pos. A 1 V B C D E

F G H I vib. vib. vib.

Lift Fingers

* V *

† † † † vib.

* Slur second time only.

† Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 simultaneously while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure F.

‡ Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 alternately while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure G.

The upper part of the page contains six staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff includes slurs and accents (*). The second staff features slurs, accents with a dagger symbol (†), and a vibrato (vib.) marking. The third staff is labeled "7th Pos." and contains measures A through I, with a "Lift Fingers" instruction and vibrato markings. The fourth staff includes slurs, accents (*), and vibrato markings. The fifth and sixth staves continue the pattern with slurs, accents with dagger symbols (†), and vibrato markings.

Pattern V

Fingers 1 and 2 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified.

The lower part of the page is titled "Pattern V" and is for "G and D Strings" in "1st Pos.". It consists of two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff includes measures A through E, with a "Lift Fingers" instruction. The second staff includes measures F through I, with vibrato (vib.) markings and a "Lift Fingers" instruction.

* Slur second time only.

† Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 simultaneously while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure F.

‡ Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 alternately while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure G.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: an asterisk (*), a 'V' symbol, another asterisk (*), and several triplet markings (3).

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: dagger symbols (†), double dagger symbols (‡), and a 'vib.' marking.

2nd Pos.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: 'A 2', 'V', 'B', 'C', 'D', and 'E' labels.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: 'F', 'G', 'H', 'I', 'Lift Fingers' (with a dashed line), and 'vib.' markings.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: asterisks (*), a 'V' symbol, and several triplet markings (3).

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: dagger symbols (†), double dagger symbols (‡), and a 'vib.' marking.

3rd Pos.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: 'A 2', 'V', 'B', 'C', 'D', and 'E' labels.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: 'F', 'G', 'H', 'I', 'Lift Fingers' (with a dashed line), and 'vib.' markings.

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: asterisks (*), a 'V' symbol, and several triplet markings (3).

Musical staff with bass clef, 3/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with various markings: dagger symbols (†), double dagger symbols (‡), and a 'vib.' marking.

Pattern VI

Fingers 1 and 2 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified.

G and D Strings

1st Pos.

2nd Pos.

* Slur second time only.

† Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 simultaneously while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure F.

‡ Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 alternately while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure G.

Pattern VII

Fingers 1 and 3 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified.

G and D Strings

1st Pos.

2nd Pos.

* Slur second time only.

† Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 simultaneously while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure F.

‡ Place and lift fingers 3 and 4 alternately while fingers 1 and 2 remain down, as in measure G.