

Horacio **Contreras**

Exercises for the Cello in Various Combinations of Double-Stops

Based on the Work of
Roland Vamos

with Forewords by
Roland Vamos and **Richard Aaron**

CARL FISCHER®

Introduction

When I first became familiar with Roland Vamos' *Exercises*, I was impressed with its clarity and effectiveness. The book focuses on a few important fundamentals of string playing, and it is accessible to students of every age. Moreover, its tonal organization in C major makes it simple and easy to understand. I recognized the potential this book could have for cellists, and after spending several months working on an adaptation, I witnessed its results in building and maintaining important fundamentals of technique.

Mr. Vamos' *Exercises* is comprised of simple patterns of double-stops in seven positions. There are two basic groups of variations: seven double-stop variations in different combined rhythms that develop finger coordination and independence of the left hand, and nine bowing variations that use *détaché* at the frog, middle and tip of the bow to work on string crossings, coordination, and balance of the bow. The whole work provides training that improves intonation, sound, and ease of playing in all positions and all parts of the bow.

In order to adapt Mr. Vamos' book for cello, I needed to make some modifications to the original. To address the different needs of the neck and the thumb positions, I chose to write two separate books. I kept the original ascending stepwise motion for subsequent variations in Book I by following a diatonic scale on the top line of the patterns. However, I modified the tonal framework to adjust to the more limited range of the cello. Therefore, unlike in Mr. Vamos' book, variations in Book I do not ascend through the positions in a uniform pattern. I also switched the order of patterns to create a gradual increase in difficulty. In Book II, I added options that work on the fourth finger and an extended left hand frame, and at the end, I included five sets of variations with different bowing alternatives.

Mr. Vamos provides a number of specific instructions regarding left hand technique in his exercises. For his original version, two fingers must remain down for almost the entire set of variations, providing a solid reference for the frame of the hand. In variations H and I, he instructs students to lift these fingers when they are not being used. In the case of thumb position on cello, lifting the thumb could make the hand unstable; therefore, I suggested that the thumb remains down while the other fingers are lifted alternately in H and I. I have found this exercise quite useful to work on thumb independence and relaxing the thumb while using other fingers.

Mr. Vamos gives precise instructions for the bowing exercises as well. Following his directions, the exercises should be performed with a relaxed hand and flexible fingers. The notes should be consistently connected even when crossing strings. The bowing patterns should be performed at the frog, the middle and the tip of the bow in every position.

The following chart, inspired by Mr. Vamos' ideas, was prepared in order to organize daily practicing of the bowing patterns:

Book I Neck Positions

Day One

First Position - Frog
Second Position - Middle
Third Position - Tip
Fourth Position - Frog
Fifth Position - Middle

Day Two

First Position - Tip
Second Position - Frog
Third Position - Middle
Fourth Position - Tip
Fifth Position - Frog

Day Three

First Position - Middle
Second Position - Tip
Third Position - Frog
Fourth Position - Middle
Fifth Position - Tip

Book II Thumb Positions

1 - Tip
2 - Frog
3 - Middle
4 - Tip

1 - Middle
2 - Tip
3 - Frog
4 - Middle

1 - Frog
2 - Middle
3 - Tip
4 - Frog

Because there are more positions and a longer set of exercises on the cello, more practice time is necessary. Even though the daily practice of all of the variations in the nine positions would be ideal, students could save time by abbreviating the number of variations they visit every day. The routine can be abbreviated by dividing the practice of the bowing variations in the following way:

Book I Neck Positions

Day One

First Position - Frog
Second Position - Middle
Third Position - Tip
Fourth Position - Frog
Fifth Position - Middle

Day Three

First Position - Tip
Second Position - Frog
Third Position - Middle
Fourth Position - Tip
Fifth Position - Frog

Day Five

First Position - Middle
Second Position - Tip
Third Position - Frog
Fourth Position - Middle
Fifth Position - Tip

Book II Thumb Positions

Day Two

1 - Frog
2 - Middle
3 - Tip
4 - Frog

Day Four

1 - Middle
2 - Tip
3 - Frog
4 - Middle

Day Six

1 - Tip
2 - Frog
3 - Middle
4 - Tip

When students know all of the patterns, they can start every day on a different pair of strings and then switch pairs of strings for every position. At the end of a three-day cycle playing the longer routine, the player will have executed both the double-stop and bowing variations once in every one of the nine positions on every pair of strings at every part of the bow. At the end of a six-day cycle playing the abbreviated routine, the player will have visited the double-stops variations twice at every position and on every pair of strings, while the bowing variations will have been played once in every position at every part of the bow.

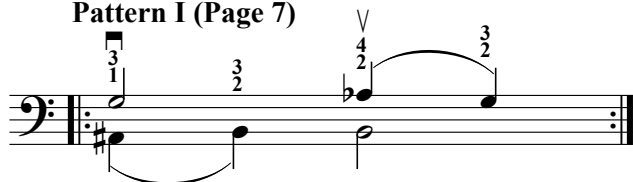
The daily execution of these exercises is an excellent way of gaining control over sound production and intonation in double-stops while also nurturing coordination, finger independence, string crossings, bow balance, and hand frame for a wide range of positions. The daily strengthening and maintenance of these techniques through practicing the exercises in this book can help any cellist to overcome the challenges of the repertoire.

—Horacio Contreras, 2017
Appleton, Wisconsin

Index of Basic Patterns

Book I – Neck Positions

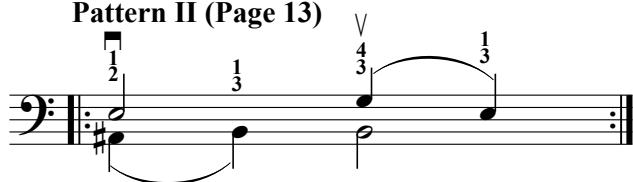
Pattern I (Page 7)



Pattern IV (Page 25)



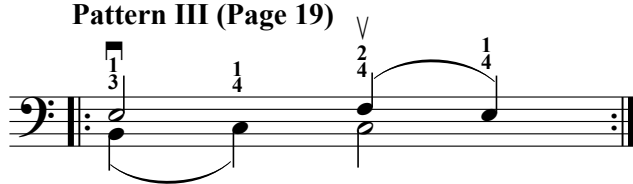
Pattern II (Page 13)



Pattern V (Page 32)



Pattern III (Page 19)

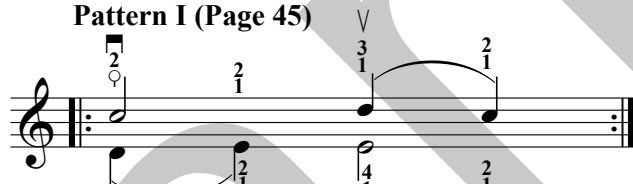


Pattern VI (Page 38)



Book II - Thumb positions

Pattern I (Page 45)



Pattern IV (Page 54)



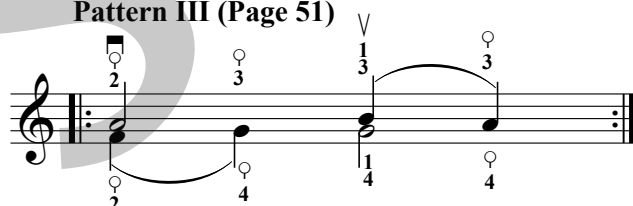
Pattern II (Page 48)



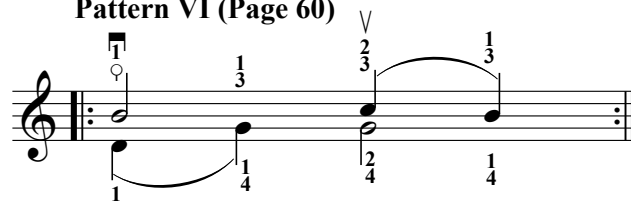
Pattern V (Page 57)



Pattern III (Page 51)



Pattern VI (Page 60)



Exercises in Various Combinations of Double-Stops

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Book I - Neck Positions

HORACIO CONTRERAS

(based on exercises written by Roland Vamos)

Pattern I (1st to 5th positions)

Fingers 1 and 3 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified

G and D strings

1st Pos.

3rd Pos.

* Slur second time only

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

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

4th. Pos.

A $\begin{matrix} \blacksquare \\ 3 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} \blacksquare \\ 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} \vee \\ 4 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ B C D E

F G H I

Lift Fingers

vib. vib. vib.

4th. Pos.

A $\begin{matrix} \blacksquare \\ 3 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} \blacksquare \\ 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} \vee \\ 4 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ B C D E

F G H I

Lift Fingers

vib. vib. vib.

5th. Pos.

A $\begin{matrix} \blacksquare \\ 3 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} \blacksquare \\ 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} \vee \\ 4 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$ B C D E

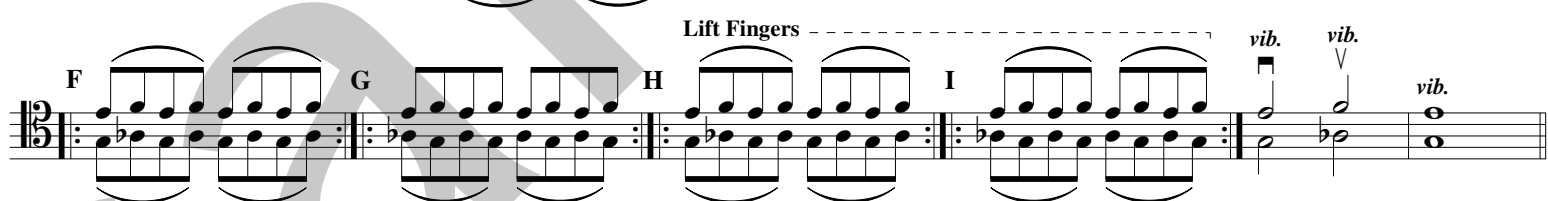
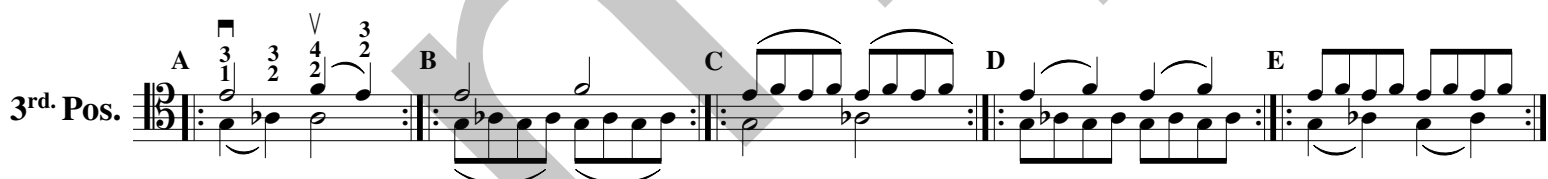
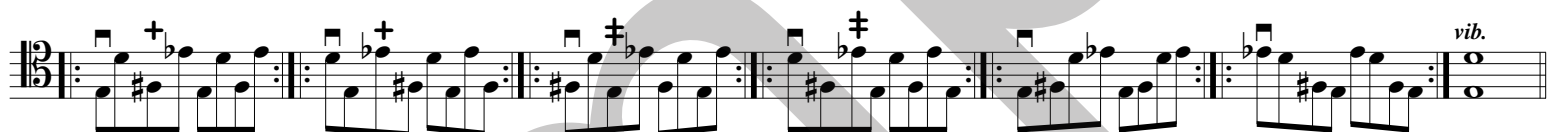
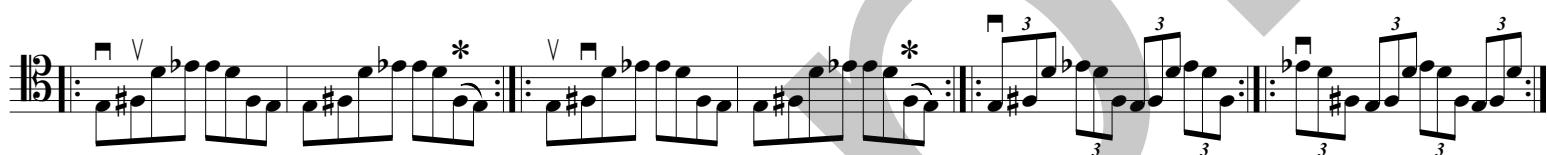
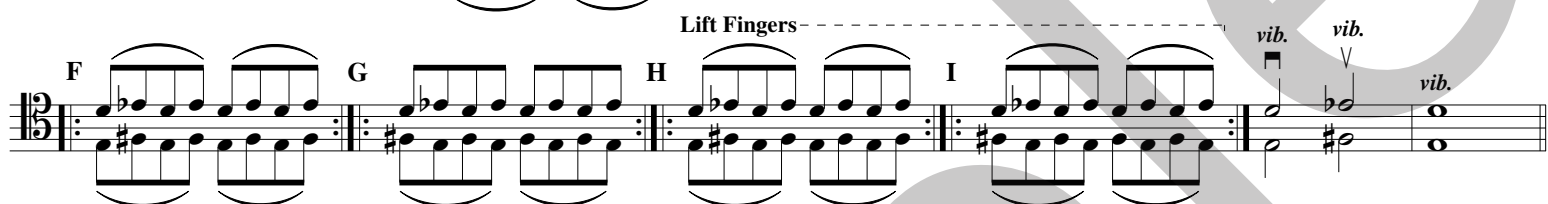
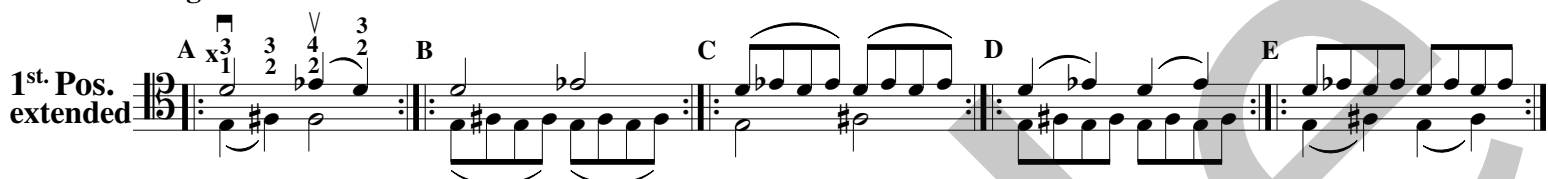
F G H I

Lift Fingers

vib. vib. vib.



D and A strings



Exercises in Various Combinations of Double-Stops

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Book II - Thumb Positions

HORACIO CONTRERAS

(based on exercises written by Roland Vamos)

Pattern I (thumb position)

Thumb must remain down. Finger 2 should not be lifted unless otherwise specified

D and A strings

1.

2.

Lift finger 2 while thumb remains down - - - - -

* Slur second time only

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

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

3.

A $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ \circ \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 3 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ B C D E

F G H I *vib.* *vib.* *vib.*

Lift finger 2 while thumb remains down - - - - -

4.

A $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ \circ \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 3 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} 2 \\ 1 \end{matrix}$ B C D E

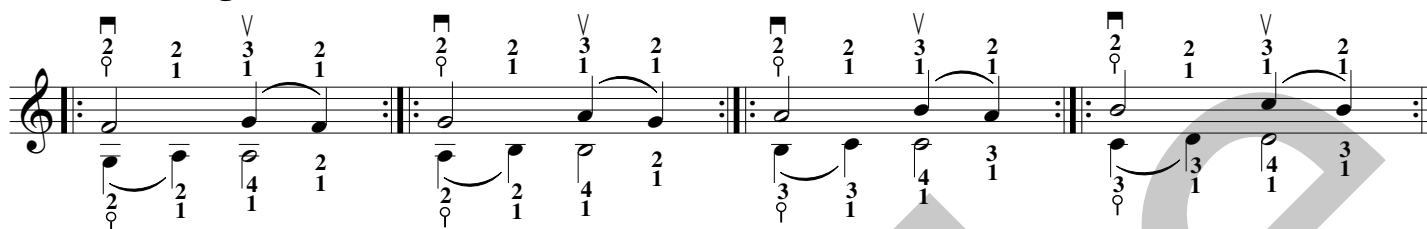
F G H I *vib.* *vib.* *vib.*

Lift finger 2 while thumb remains down - - - - -

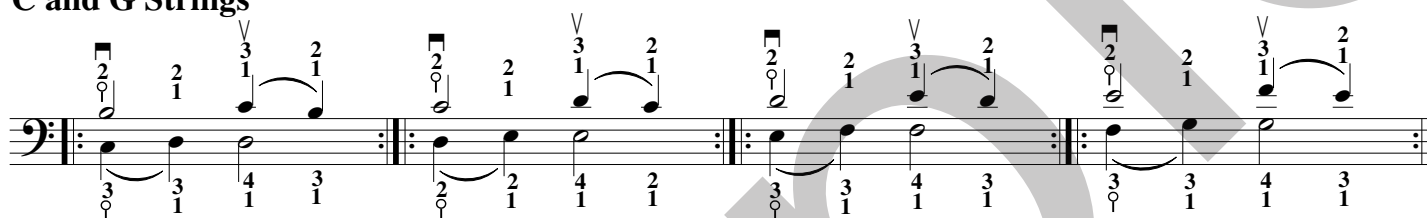
Pattern I - Alternative Versions

The first pattern should be practiced in every pair of strings

G and D Strings



C and G Strings



It is also very useful to practice the first pattern with an extension between the thumb and the second finger

D and A strings Extended

