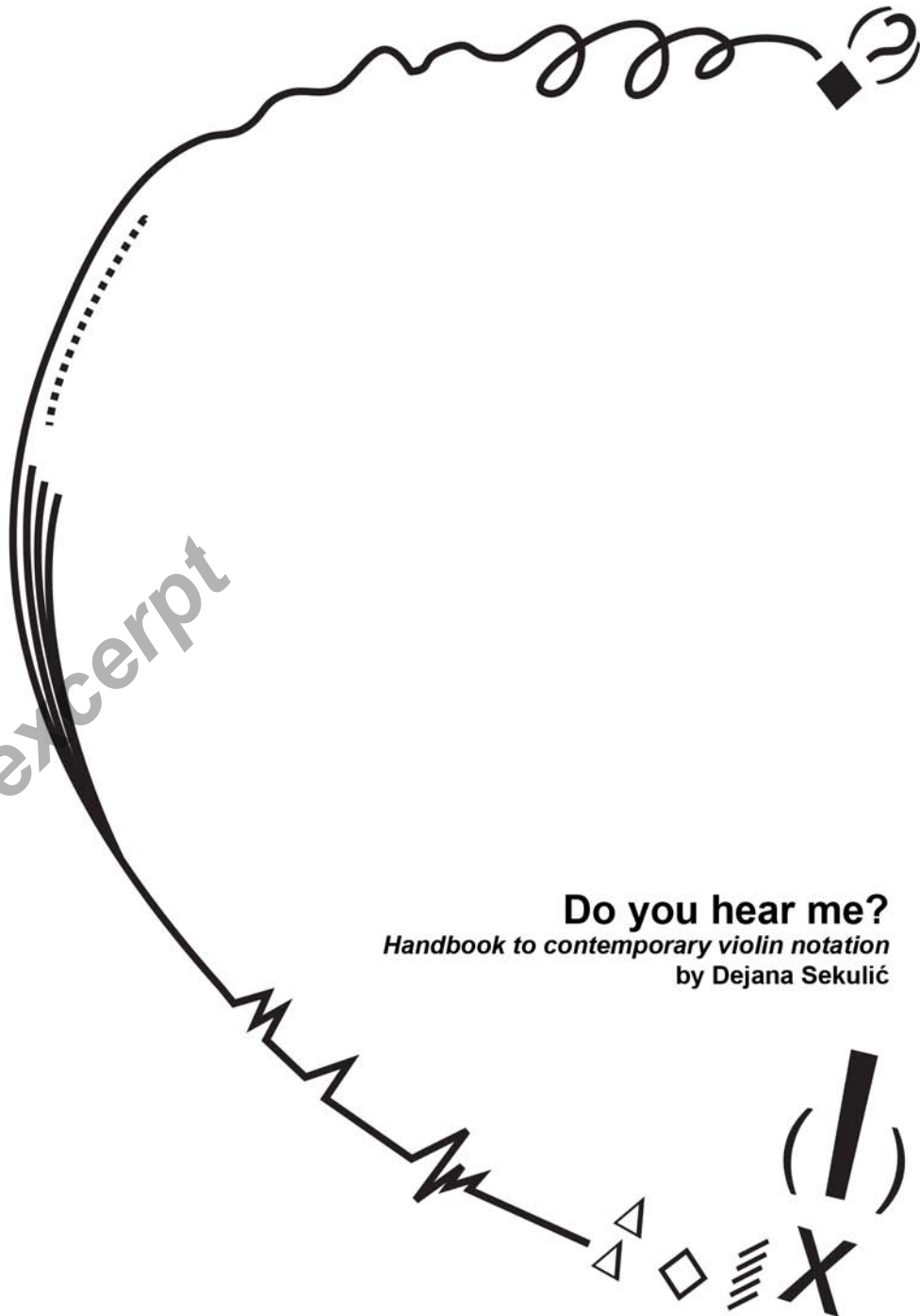


excerpt

Do you hear me?
Handbook to contemporary violin notation
by Dejana Sekulić



excerpt

Do you hear me?

Handbook for violin contemporary music notation

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Author's Note:

This might be a work with no end, as it is almost impossible to think of there could be an end of this research, and of this essay. Every new sign, sonority, color, timbre... experience in reading and playing, becomes additional material. With (almost) each new piece, there will be new additions, especially to the segment “Notation: see me-hear me-make me”. It is, as well, very likely that new chapters will arise, both on left and right hand technique, as well as marks on other sonority and timbre remarks. This publication captures this research at this point in time, and should not be considered as the ultimate statement, but the base on which the future findings will be added on. Special thank you to Barbara Maurer, Marc Danel, Graeme Jennings and Bart Bouckaert.

Brussels, 2013

This is an ongoing research, therefore the second edition of the essay is in preparation.

Revisions and new chapters currently in preparation:

John Cage

- Freeman Etudes

Brian Ferneyhough

- Unsichtbare Farben
- Superscriptio – Carceri

d’Invenzione I

Helmut Lachenmann (Extended)

Salvatore Sciarrino

- Sei Capricci
- Sound production (will include “Right hand” chapter, updated and expanded with:
 - *Prepared violin/sound producers beyond bow and right hand;
 - *Bow - point of contact and different pressures;
 - *Sound granulation;
 - *Movement - understanding new physical demands

Brussels, 2014

excerpt

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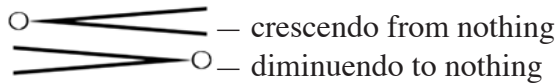
● *Right hand*

**Timbre*

Most common signs, for describing changes in timbre, place of the contact of the bow with the string include sul ponticello and sul tasto. Control of the bow, speed of the bow, pressure, division and contact point is of essence, especially when the music demands gradual change (in slow or fast tempo).



Example: Camden Reeves - Scordatura Squid II



nat. or ord. — normal bowing area

s.t. — sul tasto or tasto; playing over the fingerboard

m.s.t. — molto sul tasto; playing almost in the middle of fingerboard

flaut. or fl. — variation of sul tasto

s.p. — sul ponticello or pont. ; playing near the bridge

m.s.p. — molto sul ponticello; playing almost on the bridge

o.t.b. — sul legno da ponticello; on the bridge

Do you hear me?

It is very common to have a gradual change from extreme sul ponticello to extreme sul tasto, and it is mostly marked like:

P ———▷ SP ———▷ Ord ———▷ ST

c.l.b. — col legno battuto or L.B. : this technique demands playing with the wood of the bow, by “beating”, dropping the bow from the air on the string. If not comfortable for using a regular playing bow, it is advisable to use a bow of lesser quality, as sometimes the fear of not breaking the bow might interfere in quality of execution. It is not always necessary to drop the bow from very far, causing it to hit the string stronger. In fact, the more concentrated strokes give more energy, making the sound project better. It is not unusual to combine con legno battuto with tremolo, what gives a very special effect:

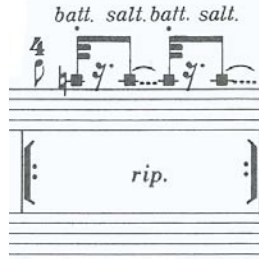
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Example#1: Sofia Gubaidulina - Der Seiltänzer



Example#2: Alfred Schnittke - Violin Sonata No.2



Example#3: Helmut Lachenmann - Toccatina

c.l.t. — col legno tratto or L.T. : this technique demands playing with the wood of the bow, but on the contrary to con legno battuto, where the player has to drop the bow, the demand here is to play as playing when using a regular bowing, just playing with the wood. Sometimes it is good to pull the bow slightly sideways, as it produces better resonance. In keeping the sound in longer notes it is advisable to keep extreme control, and staying on the upper half of the bow, closer to the fingerboard (if not indicated by the composer specifically on which part of the string to play). Also, octagonal bow is of better service for this stroke than round bow — as the possibility of flatter surface, gives a better and bigger surface to play with.

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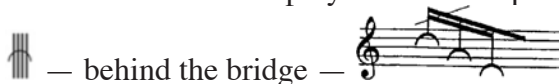
con crini legno or $\frac{1}{2}$ **legno tratto** or $\frac{1}{2}$

L.T.: play with the hair and the wood of the bow simultaneously.

Another point of contact is behind the bridge: **sub ponticello** or **dietro al pont.**

Do you hear me?

The specific characteristics of this technique is why it found its way to the contemporary music: non determinant pitch, production is only based on contact point — thus clarity and sound projection is more precise and brilliant, the various possible noise sounds, depending on the place of contact (closer or further from the bridge), and it should not be underestimated the fact that while producing this non-determinant pitch sound, left hand is free to employ other techniques.



Signs for different bow pressure (in front of bridge, conventional point of contact)

 — constant

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maximal, extreme bow pressure

(scratching); control and good sound is much easier achieved if using slow bow, closer to the bridge but not sul ponticello.

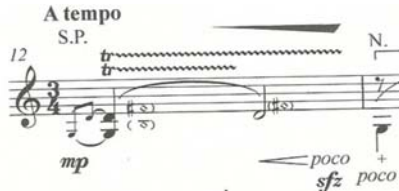
Use and pressure from index finger is very valuable. If it is indicated to play this in piano, it is amuch better effect if it is played on fingerboard, with almost non moving bow, using more side of the bow-hair and with extreme pressure of the index finger.

 — suddenly decrease
maximal, extreme bow pressure


 — gradually
increase bow pressure to maximal, extreme

 — gradually decrease
bow pressure form maximal, extreme to normal

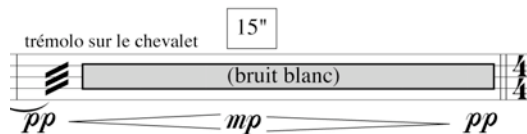
 — gradual change from normal to extreme, maximal bow pressure and back to normal



Example: Kaija Saariaho - "Nocturne"

 - **"bruit blanc"/"white noise"**; there are two ways of producing this sound. Some composers ask or it to be produced by playing on the bridge with the bow while some indicate that it should be played, with the bow, on the side of the body of instrument. "White noise" should be without pitch, therefore it is safer to play on the body of the instrument. If the strings are damped the effect is the same when playing on the bridge. It can be combined with tremolo.

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Example: Jean Lesage - "Ivresses sourdes nuits"

***Pizzicato**

Whether it is made by flesh of the finger, fingertips, nail, combination of flesh and nail or plectrum, the first rule of any

pizzicato is: be ready and start from the string, no matter what! Left hand and fingers always anticipate, followed by ready, on the string right/left hand plucking finger(s) moment before it is time for the note to sound. Very often, pizzicato, attention to it's sound and nuances is more neglected than for playing with a bow. But just as it is important for the sound how we deal with the bow (point of contact, place, division, pressure, speed...), the same goes for sound produced with plucking, with pizzicato. Beside horizontal movement of the finger, direction of the finger, quantity of fingertips used, it should always be taken in consideration place on the string where we pluck. As the tension of the string changes along the fingerboard, so does the sound produced — depending whether it is plucked closer to the bridge (sharper) or over the fingerboard (softer, but also broader if plucked in a right manner). If the tempo is fast, it is better to stay as close to strings as possible, making the contact and attack of the string more precise and synchronized. Also, when in a faster sequence or passage, end of the fingerboard (just where the place for bow starts) makes a good point of contact, as the tones are sharp and forte enough to be heard clearly, yet the amplitude with which the string vibrates as a result of plucking is not as wide, allowing better control and

faster return. Beside horizontal movement of the finger, in combination with slightly angled finger pluck, with direction of the angle either towards or opposite direction from the bridge depending on what sound we wish to achieve, there is much to think about for strong projecting forte pizzicatos by using a vertical plucking. By using the weight of the right arm when doing so, the natural weight and direction of the plucked string gives a very strong reaction, with strong and more powerful sound projection.

Another factor that should not be neglected is the role that the left hand has, not only for the quality of sound and sound projection, but even more for rhythm. As much as it is important how we block the string with left hand fingers for intonation it is equally important for sonority, sound production, length of pizzicato sound — for example stronger pressure gives longer resonance, stronger pressure with specific vibrato even longer, while semi harmonic pressure or faster lift shortens the note. Combining all this aspects makes for more clear, projecting and expressive pizzicato playing.

It is not uncommon to even use more than one finger when playing pizzicato — as some *fff* chords in pizzicato sound much better if played with equal

importance, at the same time. Also, it is practical when playing double stops, where one note lays unchanged while the other changes – giving the free sound to the laying note, unstopped by moving of the fingers.

The most common sign for pizzicato is simply “pizz.” (above or under the note from where the pizzicato is to be played). Further more, among different pizzicatos we distinguish some that are more common in practice. Like:

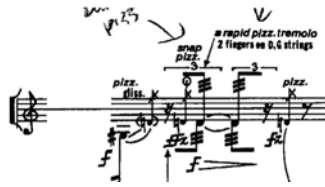
◆ Pulling the string to the side and releasing it

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◆ Bartók or Snap pizzicato: string is pulled up and away from the fingerboard with more flesh of the finger and upon it is released, it must hit the fingerboard making a “snap” like sound. This pizzicato made popular through Bartok’s music, thus it became known as Bartok pizz.

◆ Fingered tremolo: by using index and middle finger the sound and speed of pizzicato is immensely increased. It is possible to use even more than one finger. It is also possible to create tremolo with just index finger moving back and forth very fast.

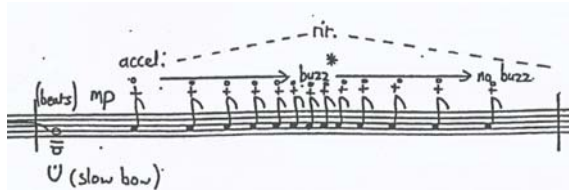


Example: George Crumb – Four Nocturnes

(buzz pizz.)



◆ **Buzz pizzicato:** after plucking, the string rebounds against the fingernail or against the side of the finger on the neighbor string creating additional buzzing noise to the pizzicato sound.



Example: Richard Whalley – Ad Infinitum

◆ **Touch pizzicato:** instead of pulling or plucking the string, the finger depresses and releases the string, creating with this upward movement a release of pressure that makes a sound. This minimal movement makes a very soft and rapid sound.*

* Ligeti called this "an echo of the pizzicato"

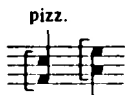
◆ **Thumb pizzicato:** pizzicato a la chitarra. Playing of this pizzicato demands a stroke of the thumb to be in the angle movement, towards the scroll. The round sound of this kind of pizzicato is very suitable for chords.



◆Fingernail pizzicato: executed by plucking the string with the fingernail.




◆Strumming, fast arpeggios: a pizzicato played with arpeggiated movement. Unless specified differently the movement starts from the lowest note. If indicated with both up and down arrows, the movement is from bottom to top and top to bottom note – like guitar.




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◆Two-finger pizzicato: a very useful and powerful for sound projection for chords. The chord/double stop to be played with two fingers has a mark “[“.

◆Glissando: glissando pizzicato can have

determined  and indeterminate

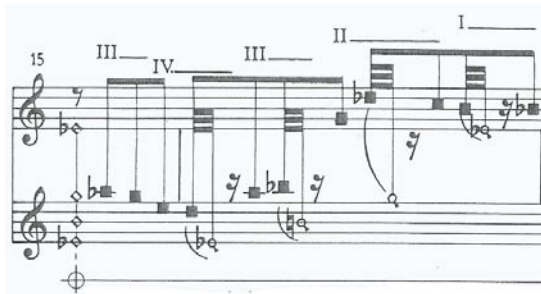
end . Left hand, immediately after the string is plucked, starts to slide in its indicated direction. If the arriving pitch is determined, the hand stops on that pitch. If it is an open end glissando pizzicato, the hand goes as high as possible (usually in this case the movement of the hand is much faster).



◆ Pizz+ Finger: no glissando, but after the plucked tone, the left hand finger is put on a different note, producing a new pitch.



◆ Pizzicato made by screw of the bow: by plucking the string by hitting it from above, and sliding of slightly to the side, hitting the fingerboard in the process. The pitch is approximate, determined with the place of the plucking, as well as by whether the strings are being stopped/muted or not.



Example: Helmut Lachenmann - "Toccatina"

****Irregular bow directions***



— irregular motion in form of an "eight"



— irregular circular motion; the circular motion can vary in its amplitude from very small to large from bridge to , it can be made with faster and slower motions, ranging from very wind like sound to distortion like sound; it can also be done in precise rhythmical patterns.

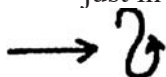


— oblique, “windshield-wiper” like, motion that moves back and forth from the bridge over the fingerboard

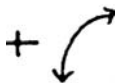
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— vertical motion, that moves backwards and forwards from bridge over the fingerboard, in a straight line; it can also be marked with the arrow just in one direction (↓ or ↑)



— the horizontal arrow before one of these signs means that the natural playing is to gradually transition to one of the irregular bow strokes.



— a plus sign before indicates that the motion should remain, but should become more intense

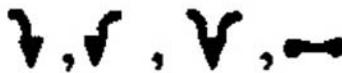


Example#1: Helmut Lachenmann – Toccata
-sweeping movement



Example#2: Helmut Lachenmann - Grand Torso

Another extended bow technique appears in John Cage's "Freeman Etudes" and it is marked with signs:



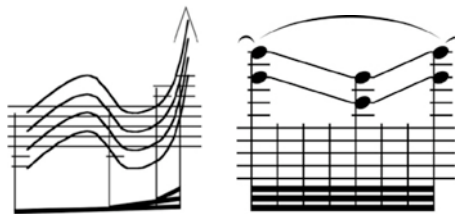
The four signs, with the name "martellato", represent a hammered stroke, and are described to be executed as:
"beginning in space, ending on the string",
"starting on the string, ending in space",
"beginning and ending in space, hammering the string between", "beginning and ending on the string".

***Arpeggio tremolo**

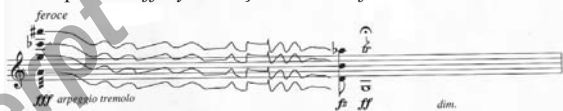
The arpeggio technique requires a lot of careful coordination and control of both the bow and the fingers. This technique is mostly used to express a gust and bustle

Do you hear me?

sound. In contemporary pieces, the pitch however is not the most important. It is the dramatic gesture and texture that it gives that is occasionally all that is needed. As the pitch became less important, notating the arpeggios started to be giving the direction of the movement.



Example: Geoffrey François - *Elles*, for solo violin

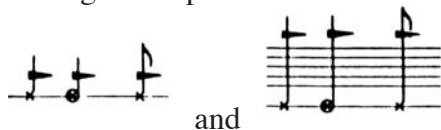


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Example: Krzysztof Penderecki - *Violin Sonata No.2*

***Tailpiece**

To indicate bow contact and playing on the tailpiece (beside bridge clef, about which more in chapter “Helmut Lachenmann”) it is possible to find other marks, like wedges through the stems. This notes are of course without a pitch, but their perfectly executed rhythm is of great importance.



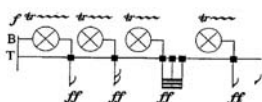
● Percussive techniques

More and more often composers bring tapping the instrument as one of the ways of expression. The tapped notes are usually notated with x shape note-head

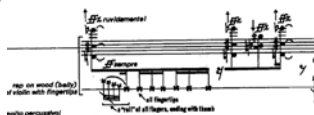
↓
note: **x**. Tapping can be produced with both left and right hand/fingers. If it is to occur on several places on the instrument, it should be notated in several line staff. Tapping can also be produced with bow and in combination with playing behind the bridge. Depending on the rhythm, the tapping sounds can be produced with one or with four fingers — for example is the rhythm is in triplets, it is much easier to employ using three fingers, tapping the body of the instrument with fingertips. If place on the body of the instrument is not specifically marked by the composer, performer should search for the best sound producing part of the instrument, finding just the right color for the piece and expressing its meaning. Depending on the quality of sound we want to achieve, we can choose whether to use fingertips, fingernail, knuckles or palm. And we can also use different kind of strokes, attacks, such as tapping, slapping, knocking, tremolo technique. If the place of contact is the fingerboard, when placing the finger on the fingerboard and tapping the string, there

Do you hear me?

is a certain pitch, depending on which place we tap the string. If the tapping should be without a pitch, but on the fingerboard the composer might ask for damping the strings.

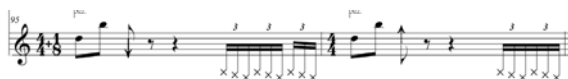


Example#2: Daniel Wyman - "The Shadow Nos"
-finger trills on the body and snaps on the bridge

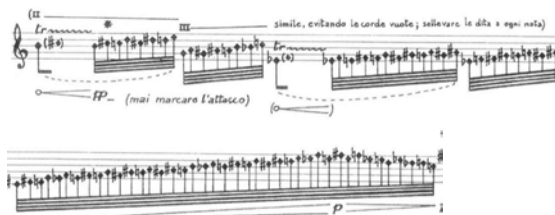


Example#3: George Crumb - "Four Nocturnes"

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Example#4: Aurélien Dumont - "Eglog"
-on the body of the instrument



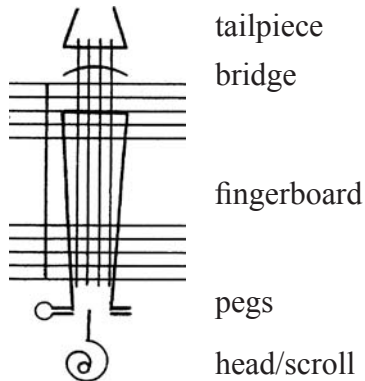
Example#5: Salvatore Sciarrino - "Sei capricci"
-on the fingerboard, with pitch

● Helmut Lachenmann

Music of Helmut Lachenmann is undoubtedly challenging for the senses: both for a performer and for the audience, and therefore opening a chapter dedicated just to him and his music seems like a most logical step. He explores and brings out completely new timbres from instruments, using a completely unconventional way of playing and extended technique that was at the time of composing certain pieces completely new. The pieces that mostly stand out (for violin and string instruments) are definitively *Toccatina* for solo violin (1986) and his string quartets, especially *Grand Torso*.

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● *Bridge key*



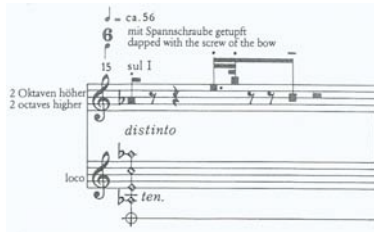
The bridge clef schematically reproduces the front of the instrument between the tailpiece up to the head/scroll of the violin. This allows the depiction of the point of contact of the bow on the instrument as well as its distance from the bridge, while it also indicates the direction of the bowing.

The variation of the bridge clef is the string clef, that illustrates the action on the four strings below the bridge, but it is a more common practice to use only roman numbers I, II, III and IV to indicate on which string the action is happening.

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● ***Bow technique - dabbing with the screw of the bow***

This technique is performed by holding the bow in a vertical position and dabbing the string with the screw of the bow from above, either staccato or tenuto. The pitch indicated shows the approximate place where the bow should touch the string – and if it would be played normally, this is where the fingers of the left hand would be placed.



Example: Helmut Lachenmann - "Toccatina"

Arising from the combination of left hand pizzicato and dabbing with the screw of the bow there is "pizzicato fluido", whose sound moves opposite to direction to the notated change.



excerpt

On a practical note: if possible, it is advisable to have a bow that has a screw that has a flat, not a round end. It is easier to control and have good contact with the string, without the crew sliding off the string (because of the curve). Another point to take in consideration is that the body of the screw is made in one piece, not having the middle part any other material, or structure. No matter how good and smooth the transition is, even the micro change of surface may bring difficulty when playing screw pizzicato with tap on the finger board. Since it is necessary to also catch the

Do you hear me?

string and pull the string upwards from the inner string, this micro change can damage the string, causing it to break.

(end of excerpt)