# Simplifying the Task: The Violin Exercises of John Kendall

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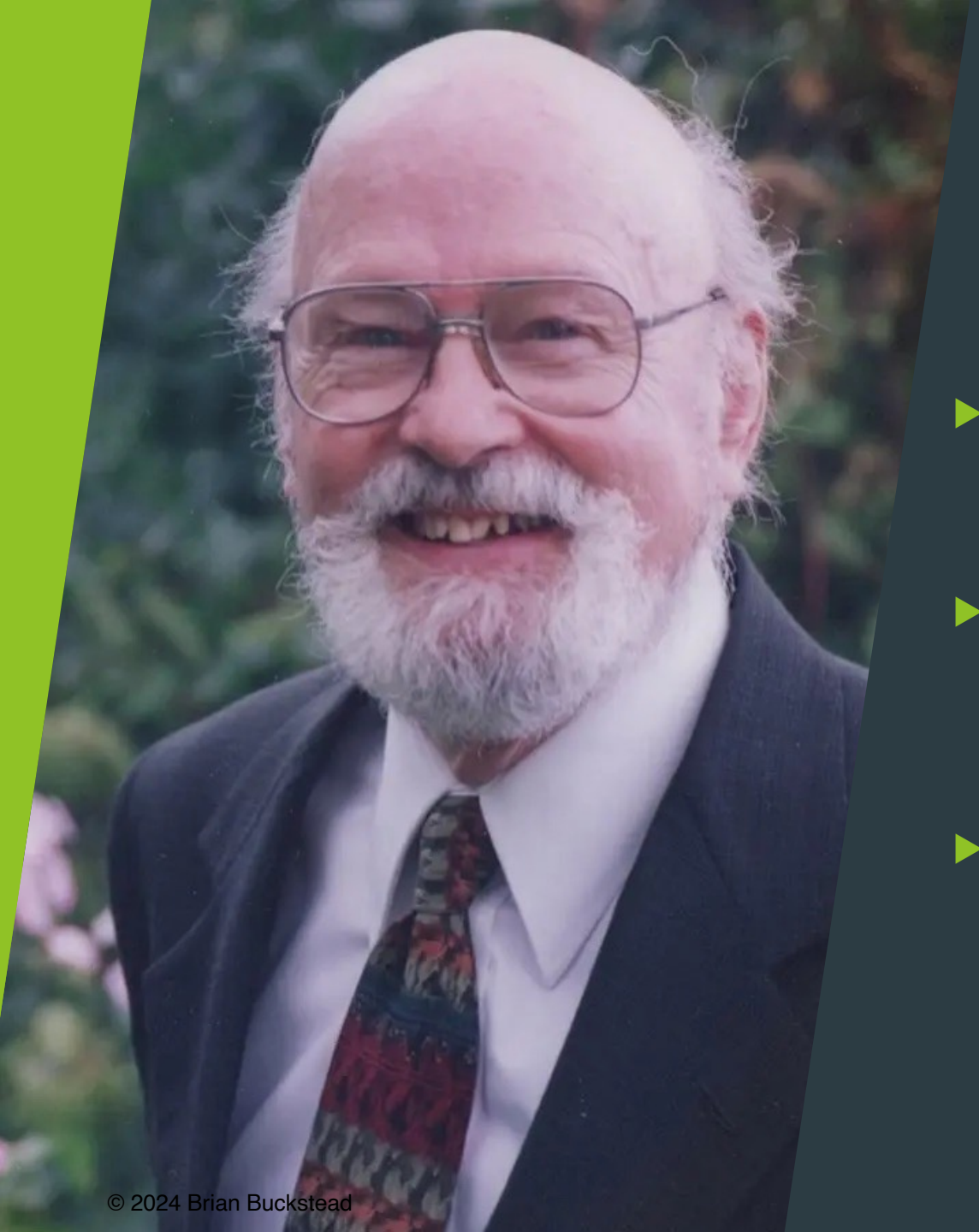

# John Kendall (1917-2011)

- Traveled to Japan in the late 1950s and early 1960s to observe and study with Suzuki
- Translated Suzuki's philosophy (Talent Education) into English and into the American culture (Listen and Play)
- Developed and directed the Suzuki program at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville from 1963 until his retirement in 1994

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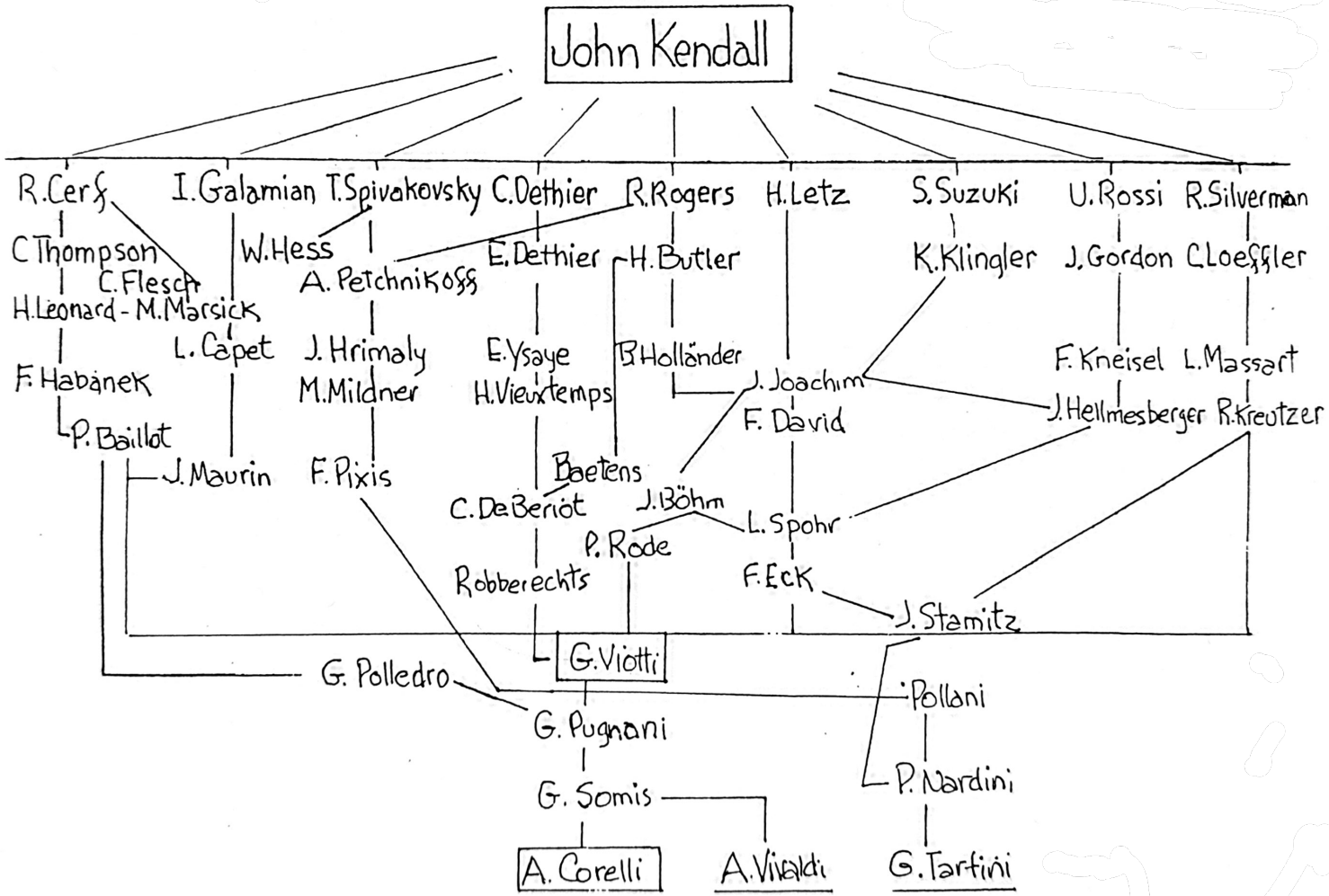


# John Kendall's Pedagogical Lineage

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# *Ideas for Teaching Violin: A Selection of Pedagogical Points from Corelli to 2000*

- Video series from 1991
- A compendium of Kendall's philosophy and pedagogy
- https://internationalsuzuki.org/john-kendall/video-index

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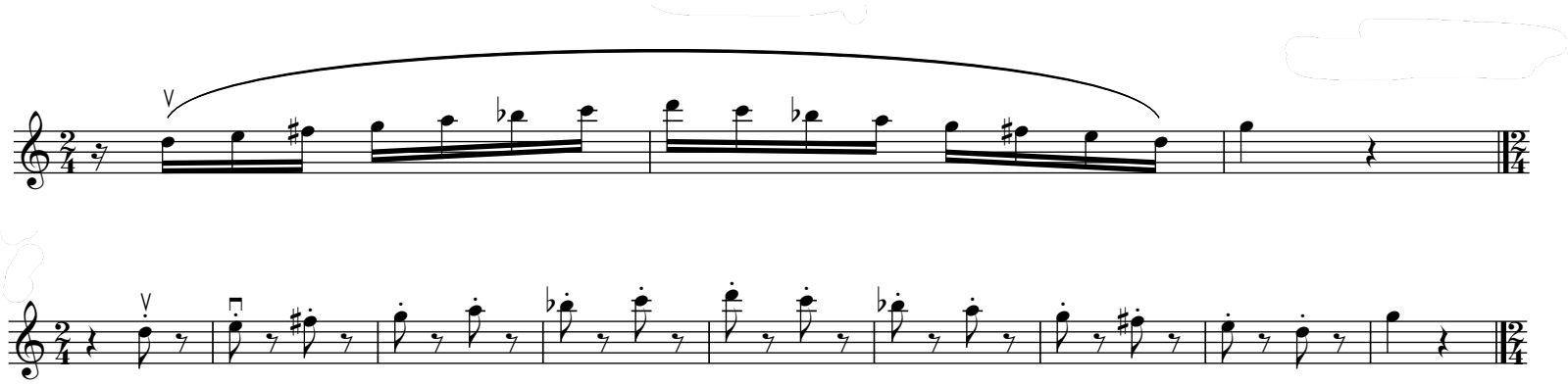
# Basic Practice Steps

## *First Family*

## Step One: One bow per note staccato

- Simplify the passage by giving every note a distinct “K” sound and an energetic bow stroke



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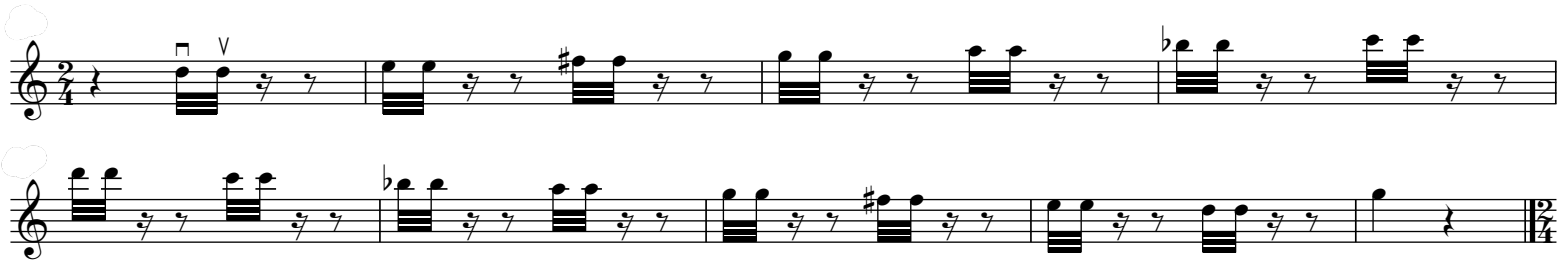
# Basic Practice Steps

## *First Family*

## Step Two: Hiccup bowing

- Reinforcement step
- Fingers first, bow ready, then play



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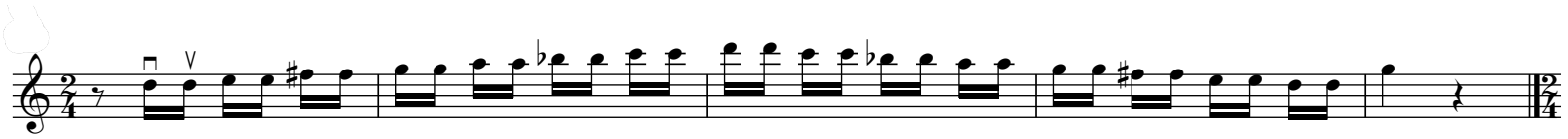
# Basic Practice Steps

## *First Family*

## Step Three: Doubles

- Faster tempo and less bow
- Precise, active fingers



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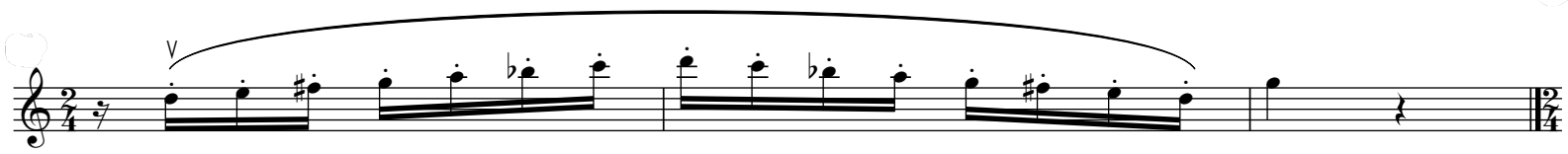
# Basic Practice Steps

## *First Family*

## Step Four: Staccato with slurs

- Contain the bow on rapid running passages
- Up-bow or down-bow staccato for bow distribution



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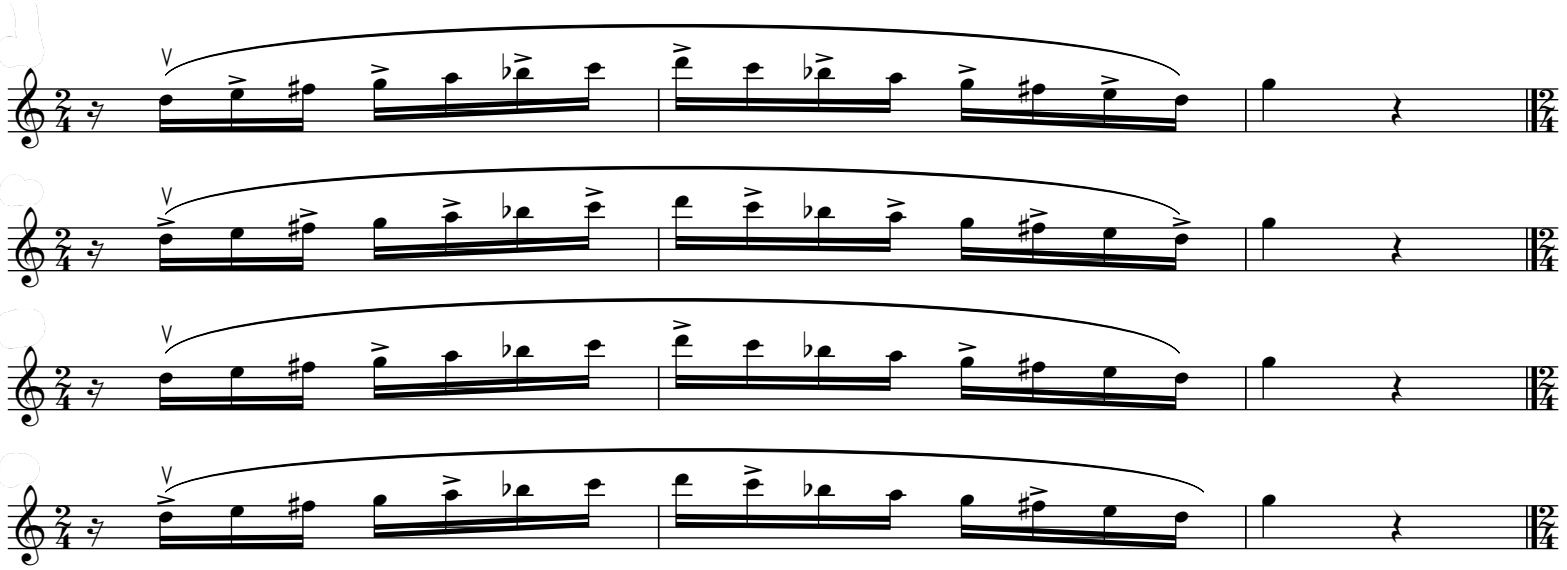
# Basic Practice Steps

## *Second Family: Accents*

- Alternating accents to help the left hand function
- Highlights weak fingers and puts an emphasis on note(s) that need attention



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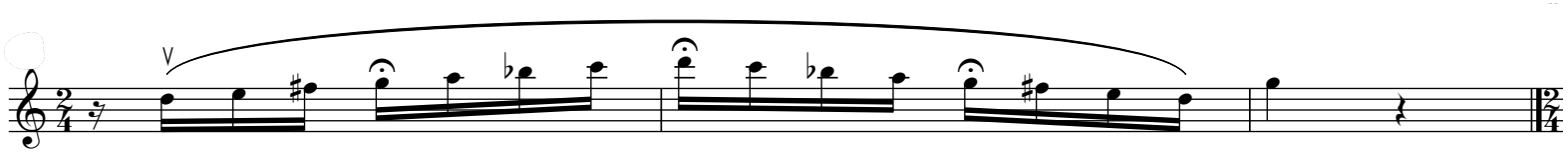
# Basic Practice Steps

## *Third Family: Holds*

- Alternating holds to help the left and right hands function
- Highlights individual notes and string crossings



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# Basic Practice Steps

## *Fourth Family: Rhythms*

- Use rhythms to force the fingers to be steady
- Helps rhythmically stabilize the run

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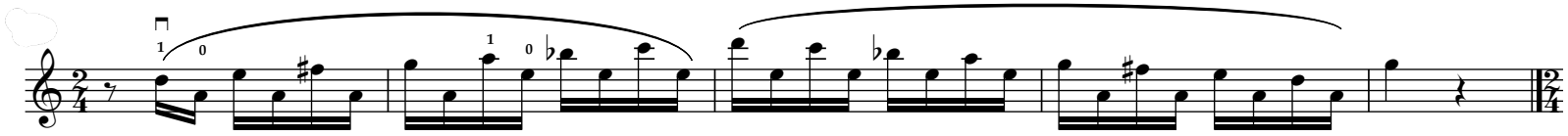
# Basic Practice Steps

## *Fifth Family: Tapping*

- Play the passage with open strings to liberate the hand and keep it from clutching up
- Reinforces precise note placement on the fingerboard



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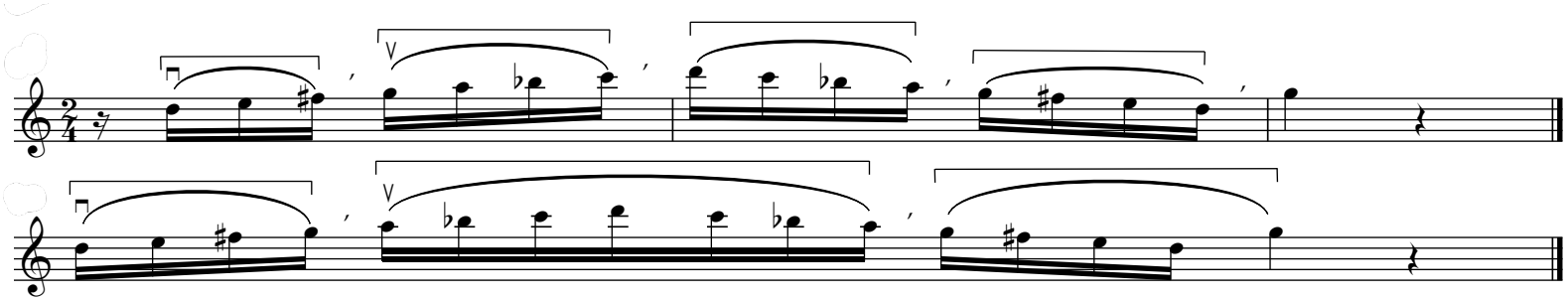
# Basic Practice Steps

## *Sixth Family: Units*

- Divide the passage up into units/groups (stop-think-organize-go)
- Units can be created from rhythmic groups, string crossings, positions, etc.



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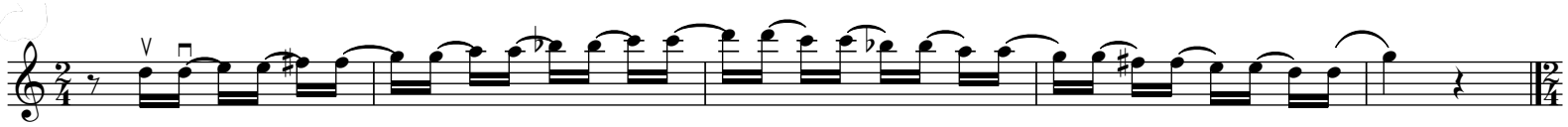
# Basic Practice Steps

## *Seventh Family: Bowings*

- Overlap bowing reinforces clarity, intonation, precision, and evenness
- Simple legato stroke in the middle of the bow, so the left hand is not inhibited by bow changes



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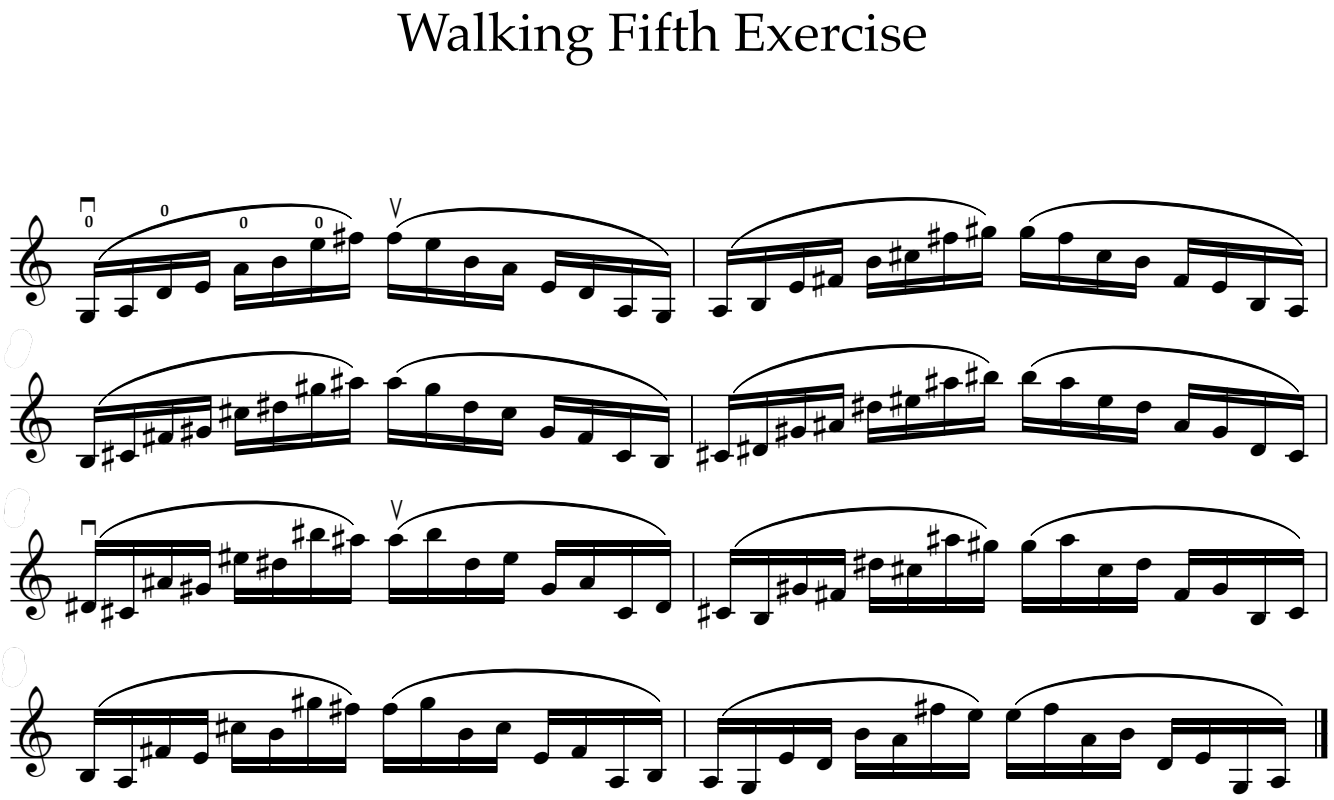
# Walking Fifth Exercise

- Derives from Suzuki's Position Etudes
- Promotes perfect fifths across the strings using a "walking" motion of the fingers and a natural swing of the arm
- Promotes a natural arc of the bow

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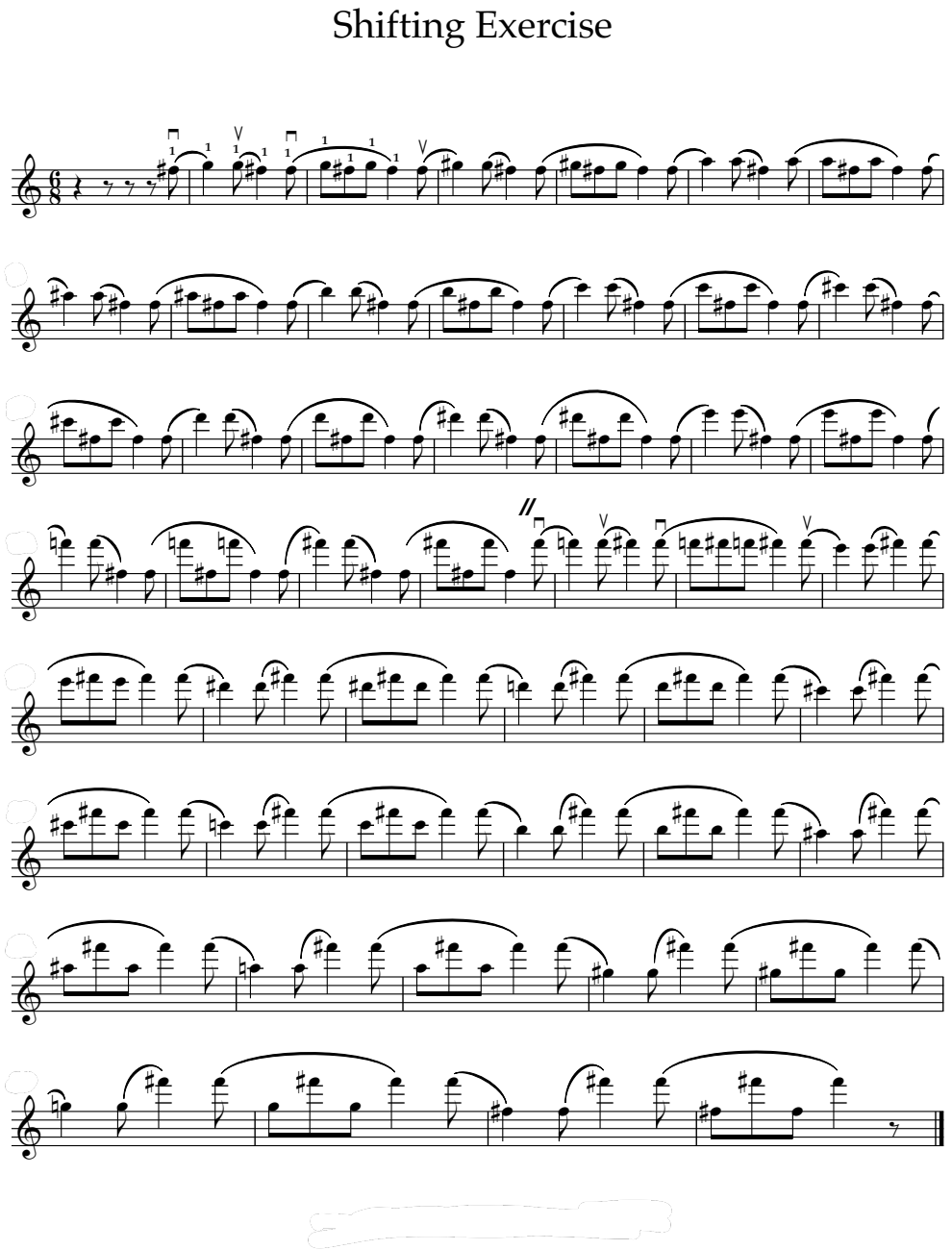
# Shifting Exercise

- A series of chromatically ascending (and descending) shifts
- Can be done on every string with every finger
- Highlights different shifting mechanisms:
  - arm motion
  - wrist and arm with thumb as a pivot
  - finger action at the top

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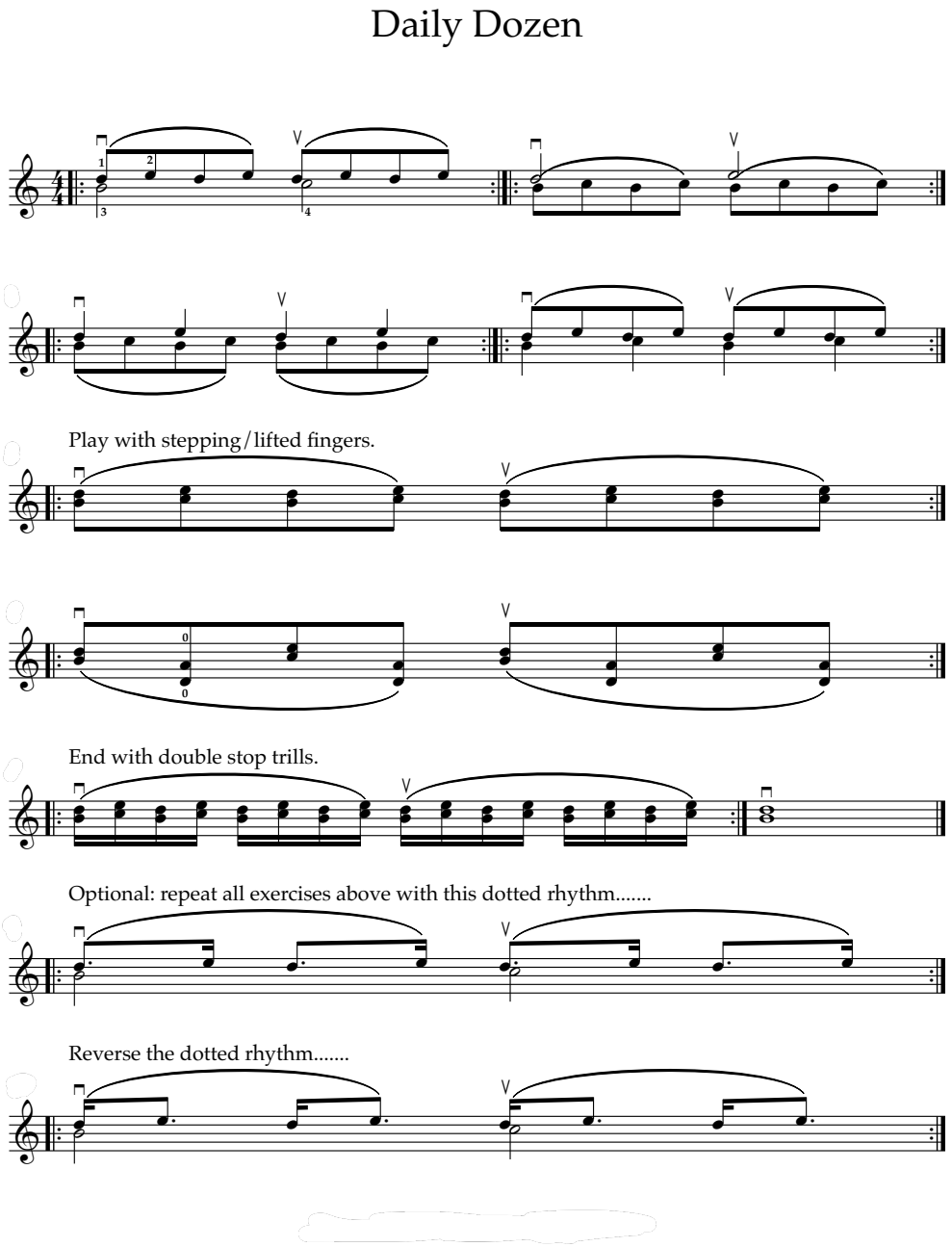
# Daily Dozen

- Double stop (thirds) exercise to promote good hand frame and independence of the fingers
- Can be transposed to any set of consecutive thirds in any position

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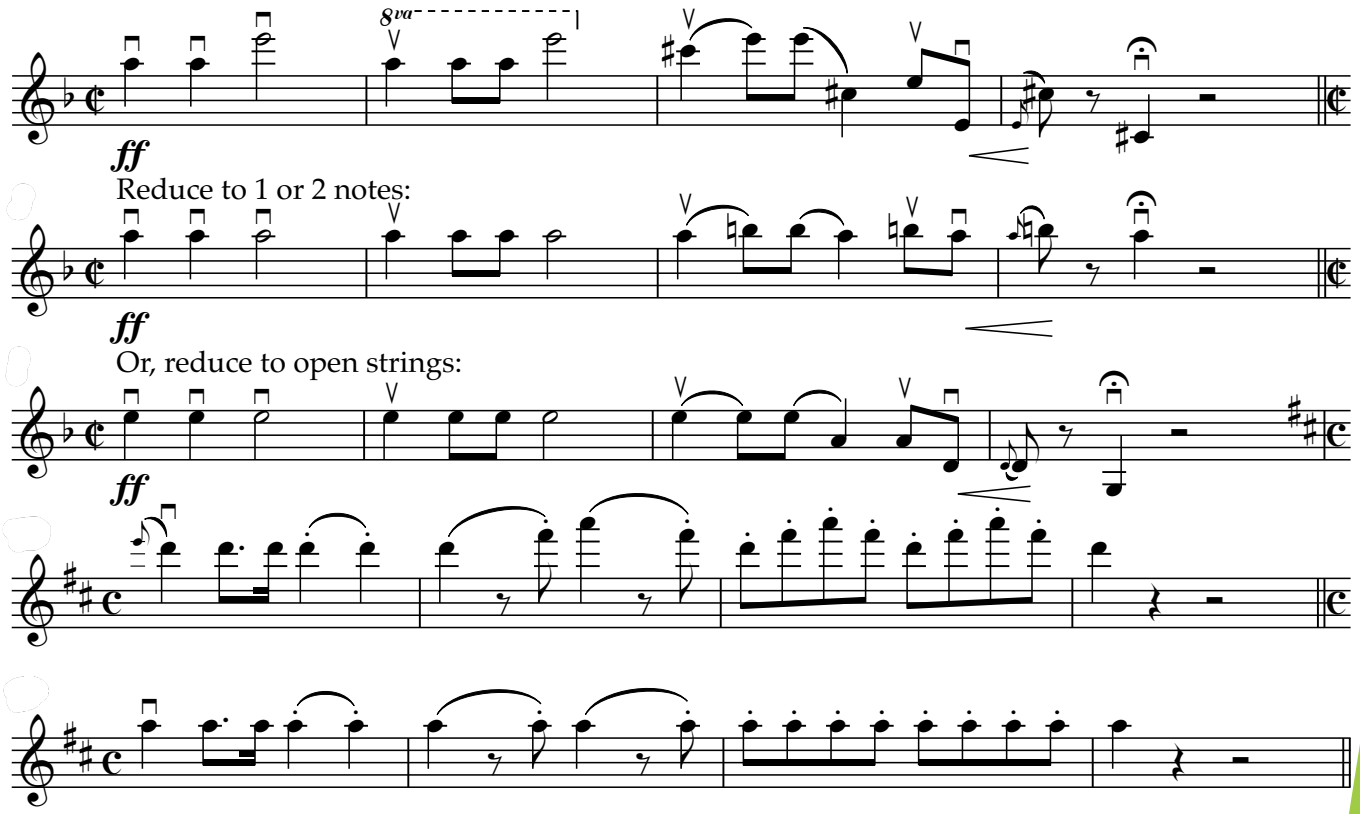
# Reducing a Passage to Teach Rhythm and Bowing

- “Train the big muscles first”
- Focus on bow speed, distribution, weight, articulation, etc.
- Tell the story with your bow

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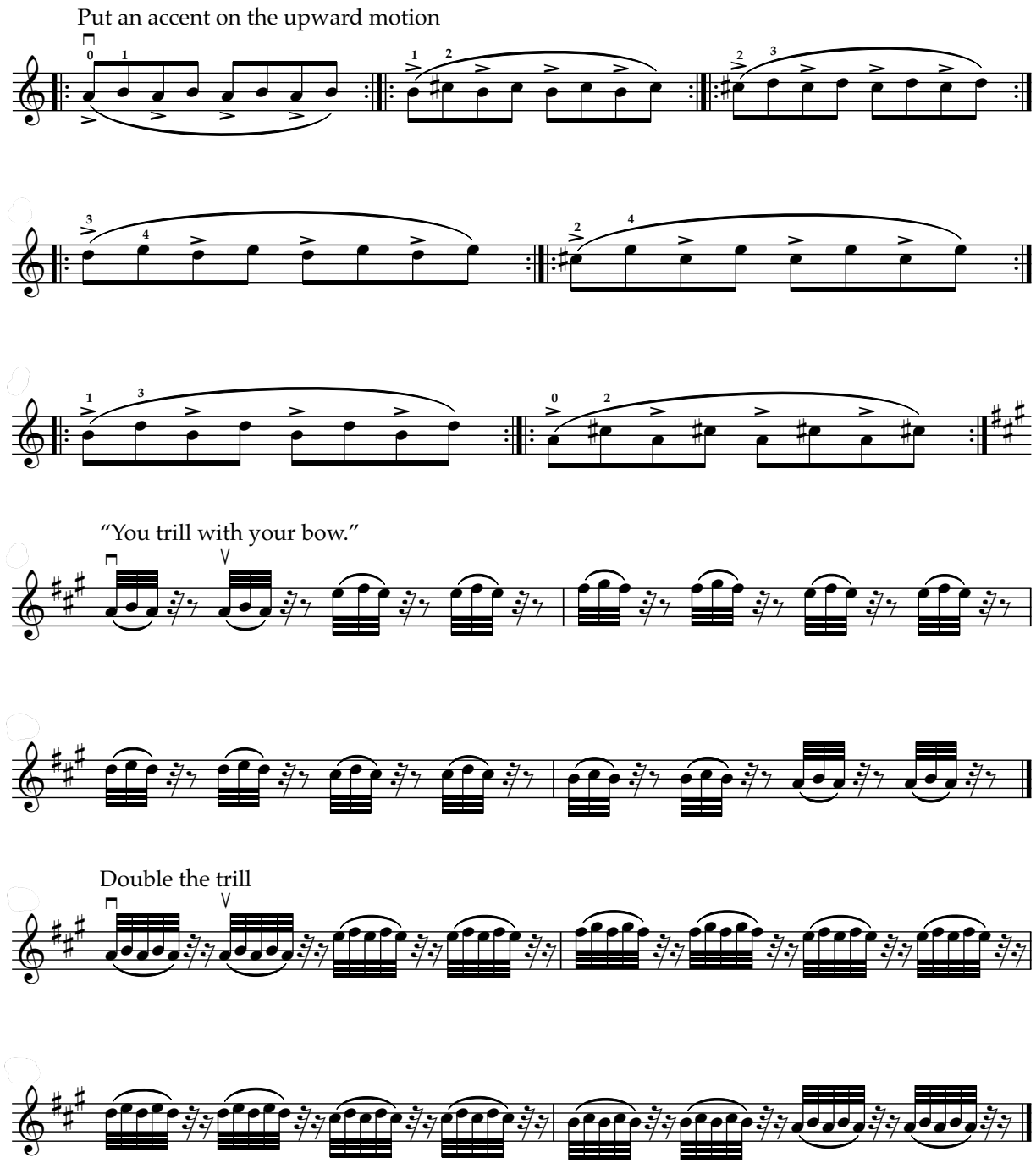
# Driving the Left Hand with the Bow

- The upward motion of the finger is important, especially for trills
- Activate that motion with bow accents
- The bow acts as a trigger for the left hand
- “You trill with your bow.”
- “Bite” with your bow at the beginning of a trill

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