

BOOKS

**Viola for Violinists - The Conversion Kit**  
**Dwight Pounds**

(In cooperation with The American Viola Society).  
www.sharmusic.com, \$19.99

This book appears a good idea, but fails to do justice to its cause. It is strongest on the 'mechanical' side, although many exercises are based on studies by Franz Wohlfahrt (which are not familiar to me on this side of the Atlantic). In adapting to the alto clef one is expected to play the same musical patterns on both violin and viola. There are strange gaps in Dr. Pounds' book: the fact that alto and treble clef are a 7th apart is not mentioned; the effort needed to support the weight of the more extended left arm isn't identified; what many find the major reading difficulty of confronting the treble clef (with its old violin associations) and especially changing from one clef to the other is also ignored. In short, I doubt if this book will find an enthusiastic response outside America - perhaps not outside The American Viola Society. CHRISTOPHER WELLINGTON



**Principles of Double Bass Technique**  
**Michael Barry Wolf**

Schott ISBN 9 783795 787325, 24.95 euros

This is a comprehensive book on the principles of double bass technique that any serious student of the double bass would be well advised to read thoroughly. The text is in both German and English. It begins with considerations of

the best use of the body - posture, body weight and movements, and then amplifies this with a series of well-illustrated arm and finger exercises.

The chapter on bowing considers first how a string vibrates and then the ways to get the best tone. The illustrations all show a German bow, but the principles remain the same whichever bow is used. Various types of bow stroke, martelé, spiccato and sautillé are considered in detail. Mr. Wolf explains and advocates the four-finger system for the left hand, which I believe to be little used in the UK apart from when making 'extensions' at the neck. In thumb position he follows the positions identified by Franco Petracchi in his *Simplified Higher Technique* (Yorke Edition). There are exercises for strength and every sort of fingering combination as well as advice on fingering choices in relation to style, articulation, key, rhythm, motion, tempo and ultimate effect.

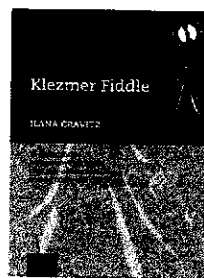
The chapter on shifting goes into the detail of the shifting mechanism and how to use the bow in long shifts. On vibrato he looks at both arm and finger action in vibrato and also the relationship between vibrato and shifting. Given the need for the left and right hand sides of the brain to work well together in order to co-ordinate the bow and left hand, a chapter is devoted to exercises to help develop this.

The book concludes with chapters on intonation, fingerings for scales and modes and some good hints on how to get the best out of practice. Mr Wolf addresses common problems in intonation and gives some useful tips on tuning the bass; the scale fingerings are only really useful if you use the four-finger system while the advice on practice will have universal application.

If there were any lingering doubt over the development of technique on the double bass in comparison to other string instruments, this book surely dispels it. Whether you agree or disagree with Mr. Wolf's assertions it would be hard to criticise the scope of the book or the need to address the issues he raises.

CATHY ELIJOT

VIOLIN



**Klezmer Fiddle: a how-to guide**  
**Ilana Cravitz**

Oxford ISBN 978-0-19-335584-2, £13.95  
Violin + CD, Violin 2, Cello/Bass  
Approx. Grade: 6+

This book is really exciting. An in-depth exploration of klezmer music, it gives a CD with historic and modern recordings, and the reader is encouraged to listen and sing along with the tunes at the start of the learning process. The tunes are set out in order of technical difficulty (the reader is advised to work through the book and not skip any), and each one has a 'workshop' giving exercises to cement skill and understanding, with very clear guidelines on how to succeed. Accompanying violin (rhythmic chords, so not for beginners) and bass parts are included in pull-out booklets, each explaining accompaniment styles. There's an in-depth study of the klezmer tradition, its music, and advice on notation and playing style.

Ilana provides a series of perfectly delivered lessons, with a fabulous collection of recordings, to facilitate immersion into the music. Klezmer tends to be a minority interest, but if you or your higher grade pupils have even a remote interest in the music, order this book and get stuck in immediately - it's one of the best I've seen. An ideal antidote to course work and exams, and klezmer bands are in great demand!

SUE RIVETT



**The Sassmannshaus Tutor**  
**Egon and Kurt Sassmann**  
Bärenreiter vol.1. ISMN M-006-  
vol.2. ISMN M-006-53641-2,  
vol.3 ISMN M-006-53642-9,  
vol.4. ISMN M-006-53643-6, £8  
Approximate standard: beginne

Reviewed as 'the most serious method in Germany' this tutor has now been translated into English, but English as spoken in the UK. It is a beautifully laid out and suitable for either single tuition, with a suggestion of four years old. There are ten hints on how to go about it (and videos on [www.violinmasterclass.com](http://www.violinmasterclass.com)) in depth explanation of individual teacher. Repeating forward in small steps behind the enthusiastic comments. The authors obviously have experience in teaching children. The first two volumes are in large print, and initially a song (all the notes have vowels) is introduced per page. Enriched by colourful European pictures. Starting on opera using four basic rhythmic patterns sensibly avoiding semibreves slow whole bows, which cater to a small person's enthusiasm attention is paid to the basic movements of bow division string crossing.

A strong, workable left hand is introduced by commen