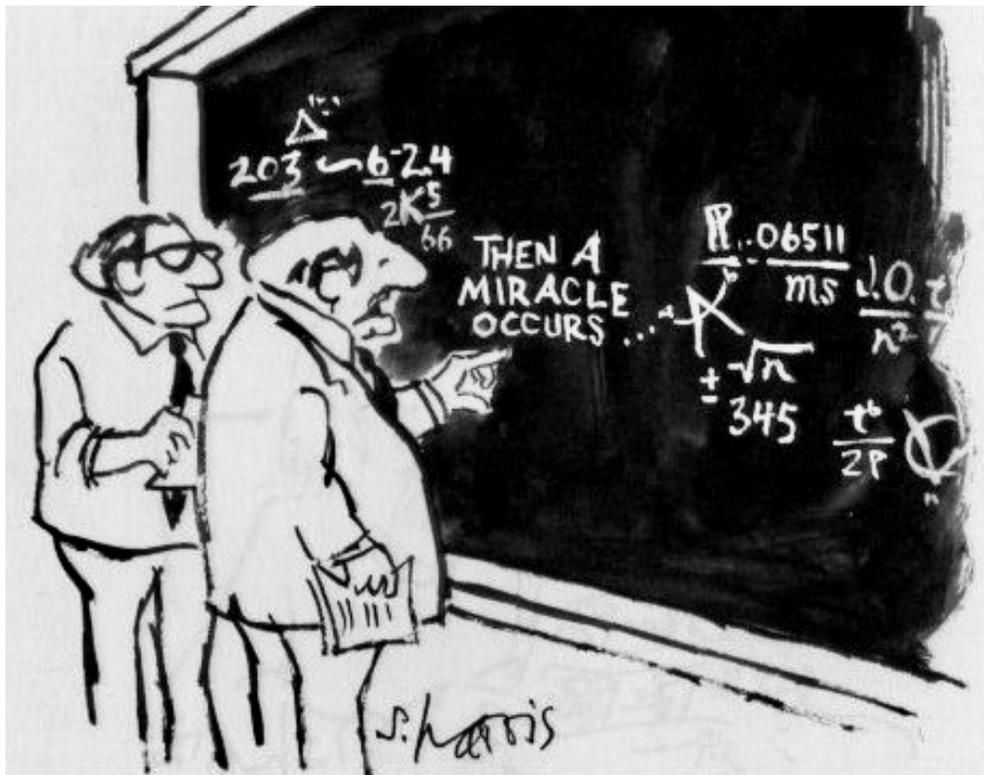


“Show Your Work”: Sequencing Pt. 2

As a young math student I was always frustrated by the constant admonition to “show my work” along with the solution to any problem with which I was presented. What does it matter if the answer is correct? What if I can just do it in my head? Is this just another burdensome anti-cheating strategy? The myopia of youth and my lack of aspiration to pursue future studies in mathematics blinded me to the wisdom and universal application of this strategy. The idea was actually less to show your “work” than to show your THINKING. How did you arrive at this solution? If the solution was incorrect, where did your process break down? Maths are reassuring in that there is always a correct or incorrect answer, but some of the same principles can be applied to instrumental performance.



“I think you should be more explicit here in step two.”

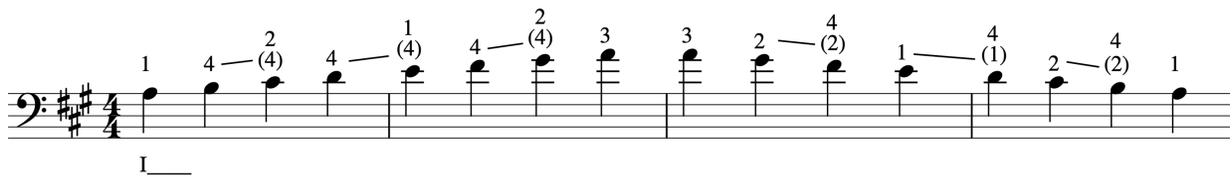
I will examine this concept in the context of shifting. All too often when I hear a student struggling with accuracy or connection in a shift it will quickly become apparent that they are not fully aware of the finger(s) used in the shift or on what bow (old or new) the shift occurs. We will focus primarily on left hand mechanics in this article. In preparation for showing how this manifests in the context of a scale, I would like to introduce you to an

exercise from François Rabbath's New Technique Vol. 2. This etude involves playing a series of unisons to practice the technique of "finger replacement". Each pitch should be performed without moving the thumb behind the neck. The repetitions of each note are played without releasing the string. Aim for consistent pitch and an undisturbed bow stroke.

If performed with absolute accuracy it should sound the same as a scale played in half notes. Be patient with this first exercise. The uninterrupted unison will be disturbed by the slightest deviation in pitch. Mastering it fully is a lifelong endeavor.



Now let us put this into the context of a scale on one string with a duple fingering (2 notes, shift, etc.). In this example, the sound of the shift should be an audible gliss with a finger replacement just at the moment of arrival of the new pitch. Begin with the gliss lasting for almost the entire duration of the note with the shift. Gradually delay the start of the shift while still allowing for maximum connection between the notes and maximum sustain of the note preceding the shift. Regardless of the speed, make sure that you really hear, feel, and experience the space and movement between the two notes in the shift. All too frequently, we move between pitches without knowing exactly how we got there. This should also increase the experience of the space between notes as a MUSICAL distance and not just a physical one. As the speed of the movement approaches performance tempo, gently lighten the contact between the string and the fingerboard so that the movement between the pitches is effortless, and only the desired amount of portamento is exposed. One of the goals is to create the desired connection between the notes with timing alone. I would also recommend beginning this exercise pizzicato before adding in the bow in order focus entirely on the left hand movement.



Scale-like passages are one of the most common sequences found in the repertoire. It is this type of high-to-low finger shifts while ascending and low-to-high finger shifts when descending that are frequently misunderstood. The timing of the bow changes will add another expressive and musical dimension. Experiment with being intentional with the timing of the bow changes. For example, choose to change to a new bow on the arrival of each new note allowing the portamento to occur at the end of the old note/bow. Alternately, change the bow before the shift so that the expression happens at the beginning of the new note. Try one way up and one way down. Reverse that choice. Alternate between timings every other shift. The idea is to not only master the concept technically but to experiment with new sounds and expressions that will help develop your individual voice and musical aesthetic.



Fractal Bassist



FRACTAL FRIDAY TOPICS!

Please submit comments or suggestions for future topics to davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com

FRACTAL FRIENDS FORUM (F3) #2 Featuring Scott Dixon on Intonation!

12/18 7PM PT

12/20 10 AM PT

Every Friday on Zoom at 7PM PT!

Every SUNDAY on Zoom at 10AM PT!

Visit www.fractalbassist.com to get the invite(s). Everyone is welcome at either or both times.

FRACTAL BASSIST Channel on YouTube (Coming Soon!)

This invite-only YouTube channel will be a continuation, development and place to share these ideas and principles. Although the entire Fractal Fingering course and samples are available online and at DiscoverDoubleBass.com, this channel will provide a forum for more in-depth content and to address questions on a more individual basis.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas you'd like explored, or inspiration you'd like to share please email: davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com.

With Love,

D