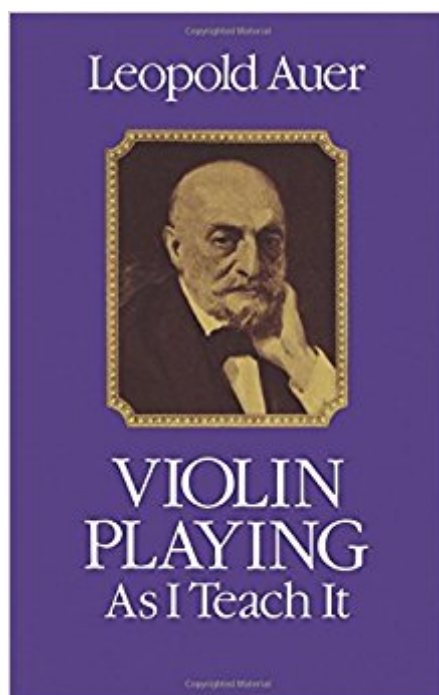


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# Violin Playing As I Teach It (Dover Books On Music)



## Synopsis

Leopold Auer (1845–1930) belonged to that select company of violin virtuosos who not only established the level of artistic excellence for the nineteenth century, but also trained many of the violinists who surpassed that level in the twentieth. Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz, and Efrem Zimbalist (Sr.) were among Auer's students. Himself a pupil of the great Joseph Joachim, Auer will always be regarded as one of the most important violin pedagogues in history. This exemplary collection of principles and guidelines was set down by the master after a lifetime of playing and teaching. Auer taught by example, and he directs violin teachers to inculcate the intricacies of execution by means of the violin itself, not simply by verbal instruction. He then devotes the rest of his advice to the violin pupil: how to hold the violin and bow, how to practice, and how to approach such matters of technique as tone production, vibrato, bowing methods including the legato, left-handed technique, double stops, trills, pizzicato, harmonics, and phrasing. In the concluding chapters Auer takes up the more general topics of style, stage fright, changes in the violin repertory, and, of great historical interest, his practical repertory hints what he gave his own students to play. Many of the book's chapters are illuminated by biographical details and anecdotes about famous musicians whom Auer knew: Davidov, Wieniawski, Seidel, Wilhemj, Sarasate, and von Bulow. Receiving poor direction at an early age is disastrous for a violinist. As Auer says, "There is no instrument whose absolute mastery at a later period presupposes such meticulous care and exactitude in the initial stages of study as does the violin." With this book every beginning violin student will have the benefit of the finest guidance.

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## Customer Reviews

Leopold Auer (1845–1930) belonged to that select company of violin virtuosos who not only established the level of artistic excellence for the nineteenth century, but also trained many of the violinists who surpassed that level in the twentieth. Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz, and Efrem Zimbalist (Sr.) were among Auer's students. Himself a pupil of the great Joseph Joachim, Auer will always be regarded as one of the most important violin pedagogues in history. This exemplary collection of principles and guidelines was set down by the master after a lifetime of playing and teaching. Auer taught by example, and he directs violin teachers to inculcate the intricacies of execution by means of the violin itself, not simply by verbal instruction. He then devotes the rest of his advice to the violin pupil: how to hold the violin and bow, how to practice, and how to approach such matters of technique as tone production, vibrato, bowing methods including the legato, left-handed technique, double stops, trills, pizzicato, harmonics, and phrasing. In the concluding chapters Auer takes up the more general topics of style, stage fright, changes in the violin repertory, and, of great historical interest, his practical repertory hints what he gave his own students to play. Many of the book's chapters are illuminated by biographical details and anecdotes about famous musicians whom Auer knew: Davidov, Wieniawski, Seidel, Wilhelmj, Sarasate, and von Bulow. Receiving poor direction at an early age is disastrous for a violinist. As Auer says, "There is no instrument whose absolute mastery at a later period presupposes such meticulous care and exactitude in the initial stages of study as does the violin." With this book every beginning violin student will have the benefit of the finest guidance.

This little gem of a book reads like a tip book, expose, soapbox, gossip column and memoir. Auer is witty and funny, sometimes he had me laughing in stitches. For example, his description of chronic vibrato, "this physical evil generally may be traced to a group of sick or ailing nerves, hitherto undiscovered." Another diatribe on the lack of standards for violin teachers: "Many are indeed desirous of doing their best, but alas, having themselves been ill-taught, they spread the poison of their own ignorance broadcast, a plague which carries off many hapless innocents, victims of their pernicious teaching methods." Auer was in the position to learn from, observe, and teach some of the best violinists of the last two centuries. He studied with Jacob Dont in Vienna and Joachim in Hanover, was a contemporary of Davidov, Wieniawski, Seidel, Wilhelmj, Sarasate, von Bulow, and

taught Elman, Zimbalist, and Jascha Heifetz. Who would have known that Joachim had such stage fright, or that Mischa Elman almost died of coal-gas fumes the night before his debut? The book has nice tips on fingering, bowing and tone production. He also devotes a chapter to nuance, the soul of interpretation and phrasing and another chapter to Style, where he wisely suggests that each generation interprets the music to suit the style of that era. No one really knows how Bach played baroque music, and no one can claim to be authentic to a time period that has long since passed away. "The musical spirit of Bach transcends all narrow limitations of period, and the artist of today who truly enters into this spirit will play Bach as he should be played, and will play Bach better because he will play him in the interpretative spirit of our own generation, not that of 1720." He deplores the blind upholders of "tradition" and insists that the violinist must form his own style, not just copy that of another. On the famous shoulder-rest controversy, Auer comes down strictly on the "no-shoulder-rest" school claiming that it makes the player lose a third of the whole body of tone. One look at a picture of Auer playing the violin and you can see why his physique is suited to no-shoulder-rest. He has no neck, a protruding chin, and a squat frame upon which he can rest the violin on his chest, with relatively short arms, so he can hold the instrument directly in front of him. He also insists that you hold the violin as high as possible, especially when playing on the G string. You can see the results with Jascha Heifetz, who holds his violin up high and uses no shoulder rest. Of course, men of those days had padded shoulders on their suits and tuxedos, so the violin fit right up there. This book is of interest in learning about violin pedagogy as taught in the Russian conservatories at the turn of the last century. And has valuable tips and technical aids. However, it does not substitute for a good teacher. And Auer would wholeheartedly agree, especially for beginners: "There is no instrument whose absolute mastery at a later period presupposes such meticulous care and exactitude in the initial stages of study as does the violin."

Auer was a very famous teacher in his day. He produced some of the most famous violinists of his time. Between this book, and his "graded course in violin playing", a student or teacher can get an insight into why his teaching was so successful. If you want practical exercises then look at his graded course. But for a general overview of the principles of teaching, and an awareness of which areas need to be focussed on, this book is great.

The teacher of Jascha Heifetz details in a straightforward, no-nonsense way, exactly what is required to properly learn an extremely difficult instrument. He makes clear from the start that the violin is not for everyone, rather, only for those who will dedicate a lifetime of careful, thoughtful

study and practice. Only those few will be adequately equipped to make the instrument "sing" the way it was intended.

Good book for learning the violin

It is very basic and clear textbook of teaching method. Professors doesn't like books but I have Yehudi Menuhin and Ivan Galamain's book. It is definitely not related with nation and racism, though the perspectives are quite different. Manheim school and Franco\_Belgium school is famous. Bohemian and Hungarian are deeper than that.

This book is not about Leopold Auer, teacher of great masters of the violin. It is Auer's actual teaching. As a violinist, I use it as a personal reference book. Great stuff! Auer explains some incredible exercises that I didn't even know could be done on the violin... and I'm pretty sure my violin may never get to do them.

This is a very good little book written by one of the great teachers This is a very good little book written by one of the great violin teachers of the late 19th./ early 20th. century period, and as relevant today as it was then. Different teachers have different methods, of course, but one of this man's pupils was Jascha Heifetz, and that speaks for itself.

I am really enjoying reading Auer's viewpoints on playing the violin. As a sort of violin "great-grandchild" of his, I can see where a lot of the things I learned came from. Good read, fantastic language.

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