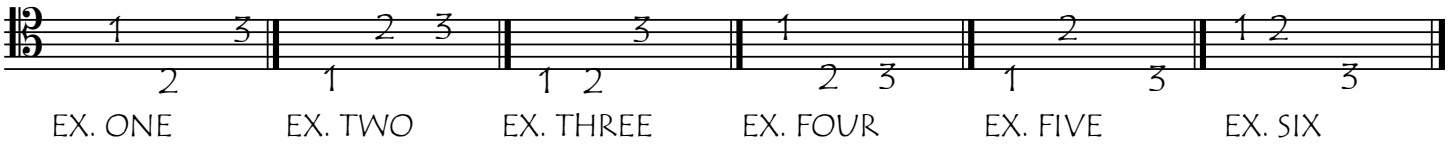
The Most Basic Intermediate Region Position Exercises

DOUBLE-STOPS: SNAKING AROUND

by cellofun.eu

The six possible finger combinations across any two strings are shown here in approximate order of difficulty:



For each of the six finger configurations we can practice several possible exercises in a progressive scale of difficulty (with respect to the need for extensions), moving up and down "snakewise" through the entire Intermediate Region. This will give us great comfort, familiarity and security in this region.

We will do a slow "trill" on the string on which we are using TWO fingers, while sustaining the note on the other string. The finger-position changes are done (where possible) with an audible glissando. If we place a fermata just before each position change, this allows us to better hear and control the sliding glissando shifts. All this is shown in the following example:

The first, easiest "A" exercises alternate the closed position (semitone between each finger) with the minor third hand frame. In the next (B) degree of difficulty we eliminate the closed position and only use the minor third frame. In the last, most difficult, exercises (C) we alternate the minor third and major third hand frames.

These are very progressive exercises. If the A and B variants are too "easy", we can just go straight to the C variants which work the hand more because of the major third extensions. As another means to make these exercises progressively more challenging, we can eliminate the fermatas, which obliges us to do the position changes faster.

This may seem like a lot of music (it was preferred here to be complete rather than concise) but we can actually move through these exercises quite quickly. This is mechanical, repetitive "training", meant to be efficient rather than entertaining.

In those cases where a finger combination exercise sounds particularly dissonant, we have not written it out because we have enough exercises here without bothering with the really unpleasant ones.

In the lower intermediate positions the fourth finger is used as well as the third. This may require the placement of the thumb against the cello rib rather than in the crook of the cello neck.

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