Maintenance Guide for the Violin

Violin maintenance is important for several reasons. Firstly, to keep your violin in good playing condition. Secondly, to ensure you get the longest lifespan out of the strings, bow hair and other parts of the instrument, and thirdly (and most importantly) to get the best possible sound out of your instrument.

Everyday Maintenance

- Before playing, apply rosin to your bow. Not so much that it creates a 'dust cloud' when you start playing, but enough to create friction between the bow and the string so the bow does not slip when you play. To test how much rosin is on your bow, hold the bow towards the light with one hand and place the index finger of your other hand between the wood and the bow hair. Flick the hairs of the bow upward. If you can see particles of rosin coming off the bow, then your bow has enough rosin. If not, run a little more over the bow hair. Remember - do not touch the hairs where they come in contact with the string! The natural oils on your fingers will soak into the hair, and after you have touched it a few times the bow will slip off the string when you play.
- Wipe down your violin after you play - especially the strings - to avoid rosin from building up a sticky residue on your instrument. The strings will not vibrate to their full potential with sticky rosin on them!
- Loosen your bow after playing. This will ensure the bow hairs are not under stress when they are not being played, causing less breakages. When a hair does break off, never pull or cut it at the very end, leave a 2-3cm end hanging off. The hair is raveled around, so if you cut it at the end, it is likely the hair will unravel.

Less Frequent or as needed Maintenance

As well as the everyday things, there are things we can do as it becomes necessary which are still just as important to the well-being and longevity of our instrument. Have a look below to see how many of these maintenance tips and tricks you know about.

- The inside of the violin is often neglected, as it is so inaccessible. However, when dust and occasionally spider webs build up inside, it can affect the sound dramatically. To clean the
inside of your violin, put half a cup of dry rice into the F holes, and shake or swirl the rice around inside. This loosens up the dust. Turn the violin upside down and shake the grains out, and the dust will come out along with it. Make sure to do this once every year or so, so the dust doesn't have a chance to build up!

- Are you finding it hard to turn the fine tuners, or to tighten your bow? Unwind the screws and grab a pencil. Rub the pencil lead up and down the threads of the screws. The graphite or lead from the pencil makes them easier to turn.

- Pegs can be equally as stubborn. When you change a string, take the peg out and rub chalk it where it usually comes in to contact with the scroll. The chalk on the joint will make the peg easier to turn.

- If you plan on leaving the violin for awhile, loosen the strings. This saves the bridge and strings from being under too much unneeded pressure.

**Slipping Strings**

Pegs that slip out of place, causing the violin to be out of tune, or pegs that will not hold in place are a common maintenance issue, especially in violins that have not been played for some time. The basic reason why this happens is that the pegs, (being cone-shaped) do not fit in the violin scroll far enough and slip loose. Sometimes the string that is wound around the peg loosens up, and the peg will not go in to the joint far enough because the string is taking up more room on the peg.

**To solve:** Unwind the peg so the string slackens off, enough so it is as loose as it can be without the string coming out of the peg hole. Wind the string back up, being careful to wind it around the peg as tightly and close-together as possible. When the string is almost wound to the correct tension, push the peg into the scroll while winding up to the correct note. This should tighten the coils of string around the peg, leaving more room for the peg to turn into the scroll.