

theStrad

VOICE OF THE STRING MUSIC WORLD SINCE 1890

MARCH 2010

MASTERCLASS

Expert guidance for practice and performance

JULIETA GERVAINTES



Extending violin techniques towards rock and hip-hop

BY DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN

GENRE-CROSSING VIOLINIST, INNOVATOR, COMPOSER AND BANDLEADER

MUCH OF WHAT I DO with the violin is my response to what I hear and see in other musicians. I always wanted the violin to go beyond its accepted and natural sound: I wanted it to sound like an electric guitar, an electric bass, a drum kit. I don't consider myself an inventor and I'm not necessarily trying to create anything new. Rather, I'm simply extending the natural techniques of the instrument to reflect all the sounds and ideas that are buried in my imagination.

I'm constantly adding to my own library of extended techniques, but here I focus on four of them. Each one can be incorporated into any musical style and most genres of music. These techniques work well on acoustic instruments, but they are derived from working with electric instruments and other effects, and thus work best on electro-acoustic instruments – that is, an acoustic instrument with a pick-up, pre-amp and amplifier.

Light string playing



You can achieve an array of overtones, frequencies and soundscapes simply by placing the bow on top of the string. Lightly place the bow over the string so that a minimal amount of hair touches it. Placing the bow closer to the bridge, or even on the bridge, will give you a hauntingly thin sound that works best in soft, focused music.

Deep string playing



By using a tremendous amount of pressure you can create an intense, cracking, at times distorted sound. The general rule is to have the wood of the bow actually touch the hair of the bow. By slightly adjusting the pressure you can alternate between loud crackling sounds and pure, pitchless, distorted noise.

Phat pizzicato



There's a very percussive, full and loud pizzicato that I like to incorporate into standard types of pizzicato playing. For this particular type of pizzicato, I pull the string up and away from the fingerboard, and then allow it to 'snap' against the fingerboard. It's a very different sound from the typical Bartók pizzicato, in that you're trying to approximate the 'slap' of an electric bass. You can achieve a wonderfully rich and full sound if you understand your instrument and just how much strength and pull your strings can take.

WIN DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN'S NEW CD

We have ten copies of Daniel Bernard Romain's latest album, *Woodbox Beats & Ballady*, to give away. For a chance to win one, just answer the question below, sending it on a postcard marked 'Romain', with your name, address and telephone number, to the address shown on page 103, or enter online at www.thestrad.com. Closing date 30 April 2010

QUESTION

Where does Daniel Bernard Romain say to strike the violin to get a rimshot sound?

