

Teaching Philosophy

We believe passionately in the power of music to change lives. We take a holistic approach to string teaching which has led us to devise innovative teaching methods, informed by best practice in education, string pedagogy and the science of learning. BSA strives to provide a fulfilling musical experience for all, whatever their age or background, and to inspire each to reach their fullest potential.

"The enthusiastic and encouraging approach that I witnessed were like a breath of fresh air." Parent

Open to All

We cater for players of **all ages and levels of experience**, including adults. We believe that more and less experienced players can learn a lot from each other.

Those who are just starting out on their instruments are inspired by more experienced players who act as **role models**. Those who have played for longer can gain experience in **mentoring** and are asked to think about more demanding aspects of **technique**. Adults who may be returning to their instrument after a break will find a fun and supportive atmosphere in which to re-awaken their skills.

We use carefully differentiated arrangements of music in a variety of styles, and often commission arrangements specifically for these workshops. Sometimes it is not the music itself which is differentiated, but the area of focus for each player. We also run workshops differentiated by age and level of experience.

We are committed to inclusion and offer a bursary scheme to support those who may not otherwise be able to attend.

"It's great that there's such a drive to avoid a hierarchy (who's best? who's been playing longest? who's oldest?), and make sure everyone feels included and valuable irrespective of experience and ability, which makes it a very inclusive and welcoming event." Parent

Technique

We can all strive to improve, whatever our starting point. While a beginner may need to focus on successfully bowing on only one string at a time, a piece of music which uses only open strings is the perfect vehicle for more accomplished players to focus on particular aspects of their technique. For example, we may work on smoothness of bow changes, mindfully paying attention to the individual role of each right hand finger whilst maintaining flexibility, noting arm weight and checking elbow position at different points in the bow and so on. Professional players spend a lot of time playing open strings and simple scales to constantly refine their technique. We often joke that if it's "too easy", you're not doing it right!

Teamwork

Using a combination of simple repertoire in addition to more complex pieces also enables us to focus on the finer details of **ensemble playing**, such as how to sit comfortably and with consideration for your desk partner, maintaining a sight-line to the conductor, playing in the same part of the bow as your colleagues and finding a shared quality of sound. Achieving all of these at once requires acute concentration, even for the most advanced players. Too often in orchestral rehearsals there just isn't time to focus on these vital musical skills.

The emphasis is on developing our skills as **musical team players**, by listening, moving and breathing together and thinking as part of a group, all of which enable us to play better together.

Synchronisation

The laws of physics provide a useful metaphor for group music-making. The video below demonstrates how, when disparate bodies are able to transfer their energy to each other (coupled non-linear oscillators), they begin to move as one body and become perfectly synchronised. This is what we are aiming for in ensemble playing.

<https://youtu.be/W1TMZASCR-I>