

Jacobus Gustavus de Wet's contribution
to violin pedagogy in South Africa

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

The South African violin pedagogue, Jack de Wet (born in 1927), is arguably the most well-known and influential figure in the South African string teaching community. He had a teaching career of more than 55 years during which he produced prodigies such as Jan Repko, Pieter Schoeman, and Avigail Bushakevitz. De Wet's current and former students describe him as "a genius" and define his way of teaching the violin as highly imaginative and wholly different to those of any violin teacher.

This study sets out to come to a better understanding of De Wet's life and work in the context of violin pedagogy in the twentieth century by answering the following question: "As a prominent and influential figure in the South African string community, what are De Wet's pedagogical methods, and how do these methods fit into the backdrop of violin pedagogy in the twentieth century?" The question has been answered in three steps.

Firstly, a biography of De Wet, which focusses on the musical influences that formed him as a violinist and discusses the course of his career, has been constructed. It shows De Wet as someone who questioned the accepted notions of how things should be done and continually searched for better ways of teaching. His impact in the classical music community in Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, Stellenbosch, and Cape Town includes not only the countless students whom he taught, but also the establishment of infrastructure that would support young musicians.

Secondly, the methods of Carl Flesch, Shin'ichi Suzuki, Ivan Galamian, and Paul Rolland have been discussed in order to come to a better understanding of the context in which De Wet developed his own teaching method. Thirdly, De Wet's own methods have been documented and discussed. When shown against the backdrop of the work of the abovementioned pedagogues, De Wet's methods seem to have been inspired by the scientific and systematic approach of Flesch, the discipline of Galamian, and the philosophy of Suzuki. Rolland's ideas, with the focus on balanced movement, rotary action, kinaesthetic awareness and subconscious atomisation, however, seem to have shaped most of De Wet's teaching methods.

Opsomming

Die Suid-Afrikaanse vioolpedagoog, Jack de Wet (gebore in 1927), is heel moontlik die invloedrykste en mees welbekende figuur in strykkersonderrig in Suid-Afrika. Gedurende sy onderrigloopbaan, wat oor langer as 55 jaar strek, het De Wet wonderkinders soos Jan Repko, Pieter Schoeman, en Avigail Bushakevitz opgelewer. Sy huidige- en oudstudente beskryf hom as “’n genie” en definieer sy manier van lesgee as hoogs oorspronklik en heeltemal anders as dié van enige ander vioolonderwyser.

Hierdie studie poog om tot ’n beter begrip van De Wet se lewe en werk binne die konteks van vioolpedagogiek in die twintigste eeu te kom deur die volgende navorsingsvraag te beantwoord: “As ’n prominente en invloedryke figuur in die Suid-Afrikaanse strykkersgemeenskap, wat is De Wet se pedagogiese metodes, en hoe pas hierdie metodes in die agtergrond van twintigste eeuse vioolpedagogiek?” Hierdie vraag is in drie stappe beantwoord.

Eerstens is ’n biografie van De Wet, waarin die musikale invloede wat hom as violis gevorm het asook die verloop van sy loopbaan ondersoek word, opgestel. Dit wys De Wet as iemand wat die aanvaarde manier van dinge doen bevraagteken het en aanhoudend na beter maniere van lesgee gesoek het. Sy impak op die klassieke musiekgemeenskap in Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth, Stellenbosch en Kaapstad sluit in\ nie net die studente vir wie hy les gegee het nie, maar ook die totstandkoming van infrastruktuur wat jong musici ondersteun.

Tweedens is die metodes van Carl Flesch, Shin’ichi Suzuki, Ivan Galamian en Paul Rolland bespreek om tot ’n beter begrip van die konteks waarbinne De Wet sy benadering ontwikkel het te kom. Derdens is De Wet se eie metodes gedokumenteer en bespreek. Wanneer De Wet se metodes teen die agtergrond van bogenoemde pedagoë se werk beskou word, kan hul invloed in sy metodes duidelik gesien word. Flesch se wetenskaplike en sistematiese benadering, Galamian se dissipline, en Suzuki se filosofie is herkenbaar in De Wet se metodes. Rolland se idees, met die fokus op gebalanseerde bewegings, rotasie, kinestetiese bewustheid, en outomatisering gereël deur die onderbewussyn, het egter tot ’n groot mate De Wet se metodes gevorm.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Aims of the study

The aim of this study is to (1) compile an up-to-date biography of Jack de Wet, and (2) explore his pedagogical methods in the context of international trends in violin pedagogy in the twentieth century.¹ Jack de Wet has had a very successful teaching career spanning more than five decades. During his career, he has directly and indirectly influenced countless violinists in South Africa. By documenting important biographical information about De Wet and analysing his pedagogical methods, this study illustrates De Wet's position within the South African violin community and contributes to a deeper understanding of his success as pedagogue.

1.2. Background

Jacobus Gustavus de Wet, better known as Professor Jack, is arguably the most well-known violin teacher in South Africa. In one newspaper article he is called “the most authoritative and loved violin pedagogue” in South Africa (Die Burger, 2007). This “internationally famed violin pedagogue” (Die Burger, 1987) holds an honorary doctorate in music from the University of Free State; an honorary professorship from the University of Cape Town; and an honorary licentiate from the University of South Africa (Die Burger, 2007).

Born on 25 August 1927 in Aliwal North, De Wet's musical talent was evident from a young age (Malan, 1979). Halbé Wissema, a Dutch violinist, taught De Wet throughout his school career (De Wet, 2014). After his matric year, De Wet had lessons with Editha Braham at the University of Cape Town and later Erwin Broedrich at the University of Pretoria. In 1950, De Wet was awarded a bursary enabling him to study in Amsterdam under Herman Leydensdorff and Oskar Back (Malan, 1979). During his time abroad, he visited England where he obtained the Licentiate of Trinity College London (LTCL) and the Fellow of Trinity College London (FTCL) diplomas. In 1956, De Wet returned to South Africa where he spent the next three years working as first violinist for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Orchestra in Pretoria.

¹ Pedagogy, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is “[t]he art, occupation, or practice of teaching” (Oxford University Press, n.d.). The term also specifically refers to a method of teaching based on certain theories or principals of education.

De Wet's teaching career officially began in 1960 when he was appointed as first violinist of the newly found Free State String Quartet. One of the duties of the quartet was to teach string students at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. In late 1972, De Wet started lecturing at the University of Port Elizabeth (Malan, 1979) where he was instrumental in the founding of the prestigious National Music Competition for High School Learners (Die Burger, 1999b). In 1988, De Wet accepted an appointment at the University of Stellenbosch (Die Burger, 1987) and in 1999, he was appointed at the University of Cape Town (Die Burger, 1999b). Since 2005, De Wet has been teaching privately at his home in Parklands, Cape Town.

Current and former students of De Wet all speak of his alleged imaginative approach to solving the problems of violin playing and describe him as a "remarkable man" and a "genius". One journalist defined his legacy as "a crowd of gifted pupils" ("*'n skare begaafde leerlinge*") (Die Burger, 2007). These pupils include, among others, Pieter Schoeman (Concert Master of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, UK), Jan Repko (currently on the faculty of the Royal College of Music in London, UK), Louis van der Watt (currently on the faculty at the University of Stellenbosch), Louise Lansdown (Head of Strings at the Birmingham Conservatoire, UK), Sarita Uranovsky (concert soloist and faculty member at Tufts University, Boston, USA), Amanda Goodburn (concert soloist and member of the Tokai String Quartet based in Toronto, Canada) and Avigail Bushakevitz (concert soloist, currently based in Germany).

The impression exists that De Wet's way of teaching the violin is wholly different to that of any other violin teacher. However, De Wet's methods have, as of yet, not been documented or explored in an academic context. Furthermore, only two substantial biographies of De Wet exist: *De Wet, Jack*, an encyclopaedia entry by Malan (1979), and *Jack de Wet – sy werk 'n roeping*, an article by Uys (1998), published in the *Musicus* journal. Therefore, claims about De Wet's teaching methods cannot at this stage be investigated or tested, as the literature on the topic is inadequate.

1.3. Problem statement

In light of the background given in the previous section, it can be presumed that Jack de Wet was a prominent and influential figure in the South African violin community. The descriptions of De Wet as a "genius" and his methods as "ground-breaking" points to the possibility of his work potentially being important to the field of violin pedagogy. However, the insufficient

literature on De Wet's life and his methods is problematic and stands in the way of De Wet's work making any possibly meaningful contribution to the field of violin pedagogy.

1.4. Research question

In an attempt to come to a better understanding of De Wet's life and work, this project aims to answer the following research question:

As a prominent and influential figure in the South African string community, what are De Wet's pedagogical methods, and how do these methods fit into the backdrop of violin pedagogy in the twentieth century?

1.5. Research design

This study is a qualitative research project which is exploratory and descriptive in nature. It endeavours to position Jack de Wet's teaching methods in the context of (a) his life, and (b) prominent trends in violin pedagogy in the twentieth century. The primary means of data collection were interviewing, analysis of primary documentation, and literature study.

An important source for this study was an interview conducted with De Wet in September 2014. In the first half of the interview, the author asked questions pertaining to De Wet's life, his teachers, his influences, his career as pedagogue, and his philosophy of teaching. In the second part of the interview, De wet clarified and demonstrated his ideas about specific technical elements of violin playing. Extracts from this interview can be found in Addendum A.

A selection of De Wet's study notes, made available to the author by Jane Price and Madelein van Rooyen, formed an important source for the discussion on his teaching methods. These notes consist mainly of exercises composed by De Wet to develop various technical skills. An interview with Jane Price, a former student of De Wet, conducted in July 2015, helped to clarify these notes.

On this point it should be noted that the author has never studied with Jack de Wet. On the one hand, this allows for a degree of objective distance in discussing his career and teaching methods. On the other hand, however, having not directly experienced De Wet as a teacher, the author can only comment on De Wet's methods from an outsider's perspective. In an attempt to broaden this perspective, it has been decided to interview a greater selection of De Wet's students. A questionnaire (see Addendum B) was set up and sent out to thirty of De Wet's

former and current students.² Seven of the students who were contacted to participate in the study completed the questionnaire.³ Effort has been made to interview some of De Wet's more well-known students, such as Jan Repko, Pieter Schoeman, and Avigail Bushakevitz, but this proved to be fruitless.

De Wet's teaching method underwent many changes throughout his teaching career. It is outside the scope of this study, however, to discuss the evolution of De Wet's technique over the past 55 years. Therefore, the discussion of De Wet's technique has been limited to his most recent ideas.

1.6. Chapter outline

The research is set out in three main chapters, each of which aims to answer part of the research question:

- (1) The first chapter, *Jack de Wet's life and career*, focusses on constructing an up-to-date biography of Jack de Wet. This chapter describes the influences which formed De Wet as a violinist and a teacher, and looks at the way in which De Wet's career unfolded.
- (2) The second chapter, *An overview of violin pedagogy in the twentieth century as exemplified by Carl Flesch, Shin'ichi Suzuki, Ivan Galamian, and Paul Rolland*, is a study of the literature on trends in violin pedagogy in the twentieth century. It has been narrowed down to the contributions of Carl Flesch, Shin'ichi Suzuki, Ivan Galamian, and Paul Rolland. These pedagogues have been selected firstly, because of their prominence in the international string community and secondly, because of their respective influences on De Wet's teaching methods.
- (3) The first two chapters serve as context for the third chapter, *Jack de Wet's Pedagogical method*, which explores De Wet's own teaching methods. In this chapter, De Wet's approach to violin playing is described and discussed.

² The questionnaire asked participants to describe the way in which De Wet taught a selection of technical aspects. Furthermore, participants were asked to describe De Wet's influence on their playing as well as give their opinions of what they saw as the positive and negative aspects of De Wet's teaching methods.

³ These students are: Madelein van Rooyen, Louise Lansdown, Piet de Beer, Xandi van Dijk, Lieva Starker, Jeffrey Armstrong, and one student who wished to remain anonymous.

2. Jack de Wet's life and career

2.1. Introduction

The evening of 30 August 2007 was a night to remember for violinists in and around Cape Town. On this night, 25 violinists performed J.S. Bach's *Concerto for Two Violins* in D minor, BWV 1043, accompanied by the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra. This mass performance was planned as a surprise gift to the then 80 year old Jack de Wet. It formed part of the De Wet Gala Concert which also showcased a number of De Wet's students as soloists. That concert stimulated the author's interest in this pedagogue. This chapter explores Jack de Wet's life, his musical upbringing, and the development of his career as pedagogue.

2.2. 1927 – 1944: Childhood to Matric

Jacobus Gustavus de Wet (Jack) was born on 25 August 1927 in Aliwal North in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. This small town on the Orange River is situated about 54km West of Lady Grey. He was the first of three children of Pieter Jacobus De Wet and Catharina Sybrandina Humphries.

De Wet remembers the first time he heard the sound of the violin (De Wet, 2014),

The sound of the violin was utterly attractive for me. I was around five years old and I could not stop listening if someone played the violin. It was the most beautiful sound.

De Wet's parents soon realized that he had an interest in the violin. They acquired an instrument for him and his mother started to teach him when he was around seven years old (Uys, 1998:46). According to De Wet, he showed promise and dedication as a young violinist (De Wet, 2014). Practising was part of De Wet's routine from the start, and he never saw it as a chore, because he truly loved to play the violin.

His parents decided to move to a farm outside Pretoria in order for him to be closer to a good violin teacher. Here De Wet began taking lessons with Halbé Wissema, a Dutch violinist. Wissema, De Wet remembered, had a big sign outside his place reading "Professor of the Violin". The young De Wet assumed that all violinists were called "Professor" and decided then and there that he would one day become a professor too. This is where his endearing nickname "Prof Jack", or simply "Prof", originated from (De Wet, 2014).

By 1938, De Wet was a member of the “Bondsorkes”⁴ in Pretoria. At just ten years old, De Wet was the only child-member of this orchestra which consisted mostly of amateur players. A few years later, while in high school, De Wet started participating in eisteddfods where he won various prizes. As a result, in 1942, he had the opportunity to appear on a series of radio programmes aired by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) (Uys, 1998:46). De Wet said that, in hindsight, participating in eisteddfods was very important for his development as a musician. He is of the opinion that performing in public under competition-like stress is a necessary part of the developmental process for every young violinist. He warned, however, that only those students who are ready to play should be exposed to “public scrutiny” (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet attended Pretoria Boy’s High where he was a top academic achiever. Despite his success as young violinist, De Wet strongly considered the possibility of a career in chemical engineering (De Wet, 2014). Still a student of Wissema’s, the violin took a back seat to academic work as a result of De Wet’s new-found interest in engineering. As quoted in Uys (1998:46), De Wet was fascinated by the experimental perspective of a degree in engineering:

I wanted to scrutinize with scientific rigour the changeability of everything in this world; the universe full of mystery.

This interest in a scientific approach and discovery through experimentation would become a trademark of De Wet’s teaching career.

At the beginning of his matric year in 1944, De Wet decided that he would play the grade 8 University of South Africa (Unisa) violin examination. Wissema did not want to enter De Wet for the exam, since he felt that De Wet did not have enough time to prepare for the exam. De Wet, however, strong-willed and determined, decided to enter for the exam nevertheless. As a result of this, he was kicked out of Wissema’s class. De Wet, however, was not discouraged by this and, instead, decided to commit himself to excel in the exam (De Wet, 2014). This decision proved to be an important turning point in his life.

A young school music teacher in Pretoria, whose name is unknown, offered to help prepare De Wet for the Aural and Theory parts of the exam (De Wet, 2014). De Wet successfully completed his Grade 8 examination through Unisa in 1944. He obtained the highest mark in a

⁴ The “Bondsorkes” was founded in the 1930s by a school teacher named Thomas Sarel Lessing (Geni.com, 2014).

Unisa practical exam that year and was consequently awarded a study bursary (Uys, 1998:46). De Wet (2014) recalled what happened next:

[Eric Grant, Dean and Director of the South African College of Music (SACM) at the University of Cape Town (UCT)] asked one of the Unisa examiners that year to name the three students with the most promising future. I remember the one was Stefans Grové... I cannot remember exactly who the other person was, but in any case... [The examiner] wrote down the student numbers of the three persons for Eric Grant and I was awarded the full bursary!

This bursary from the SACM covered all of De Wet's tuition and boarding fees. De Wet recalled that he *had* to accept the bursary for financial reasons (De Wet, 2014):

You see, the actual reason [I studied at SACM] was because it was for free. [I reckoned] I would go down to Cape Town for one year – swim a bit in the sea... But after the first week [at SACM] I wrote a telegram home: “I have found the right place”.

That grade 8 exam was a defining moment in De Wet's career as well as in his personal life. It opened the door to a career in music in which De Wet found fulfilment and happiness. In his own words: “I savoured the biggest sense of gratification through my work” (Uys, 1998:46). Even after his retirement, young violinists from around South Africa still flock to De Wet's Parklands home where he devotes his time to teaching the secrets of violin playing.

2.3. 1945 – 1950: University studies in South Africa

In 1945, De Wet found himself in the class of Editha Braham, an accomplished American soloist, at the SACM in Cape Town (Uys, 1998:47). De Wet found Braham inspiring as a person. Although he said “she was a very fine violinist”, De Wet added that Braham was not the ideal teacher for him (De Wet, 2014). According to De Wet, Braham and he did not see eye to eye on the subject of vibrato. De Wet recalls with a sense of mischief (De Wet, 2014):

[Braham] wanted me to use more arm in the vibrato [motion]. She demonstrated; I tried it for a couple of days, but then I thought: “this is a waste of time! I will rather go for a swim in the sea [than practice].” [...] The following week I went back to her for my lesson. She looked at my vibrato and said: “Yes! That's much better.” [...] By the lesson after that, [my vibrato] had [according to Braham] improved even more! That's when I thought: “when one doesn't practice, then [one's playing improves].”

De Wet, however, was still serious about violin playing and decided to investigate the technique of vibrato himself. After researching in the SACM library, he came across a book with photos of some of the great violinists of the day in action.⁵ He then proceeded to show Braham that Jascha Heifetz's vibrato was different from the vibrato she wanted him to do.⁶ Braham's reply, according to De Wet, was "Oh, that's interesting." After taking another look at De Wet's vibrato, Braham said: "Oh, but darling, that's fine!" That, for him, was the deciding factor to find a new teacher.

After his studies in Cape Town, De Wet returned to Pretoria where he studied under Erwin Broedrich.⁷ He found Broedrich's approach to violin playing very systematic, but he did not agree with Broedrich's technique (De Wet, 2014). Vibrato, again, was the main problem area. Broedrich advocated a vibrato originating in a back-and-forth arm movement, but the young De Wet was not convinced that this was the proper way to do vibrato. De Wet, however, said that he had no choice in the matter. He accepted Broedrich's way of doing vibrato and added that, in the end, "[Broedrich's method] worked!" (De Wet, 2014). Although he did not like Broedrich's teaching style or agree with his style of playing, De Wet learned much from Broedrich. Under Broedrich's guidance, De Wet completed the Unisa Performer's and Teacher's Licentiate. Broedrich appointed De Wet as his teaching assistant, giving him the opportunity to gain experience as a teacher.

2.4. 1950 – 1955: Studies in the Netherlands

In 1950, De Wet was awarded a bursary from the City of Amsterdam which enabled him to continue his studies in the Netherlands. He proceeded to study under Herman Leydensdorff at the Amsterdam Conservatoire for one year. Leydensdorff, according to De Wet (2014), "an exceptionally fine violinist", was a first violinist in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra from 1911 to 1915. He founded the *Hollandsch Strijkkwartet* and in 1918 became Professor at the Amsterdam Conservatoire (Anon., n.d.). De Wet, however, only studied under Leydensdorff for one year and does not see Leydensdorff as having had a significant influence on his violin playing. De Wet commented, "I don't even think you should include [Leydensdorff's] name" adding, "I had the dubious honour of being his only student" (De Wet, 2014).

⁵ According to De Wet, this was similar to S. Applebaum's *The Way They Play* (De Wet, 2014).

⁶ Jack de Wet had a great admiration for Jascha Heifetz – according to many the most technically perfect violinist to have ever lived – throughout his student days and teaching career. He would frequently refer to Heifetz's "flawless technique" when teaching (De Wet, 2014).

⁷ Broedrich studied in Berlin, Germany and was the first violinist of the Johannesburg based "City Quartet". Broedrich also taught at the University of Johannesburg.

In contrast with De Wet's indifference about Leydensdorff, his eyes lit up when he spoke about his next teacher, Oskar Back.⁸ Back had a noteworthy impact on De Wet's playing. De Wet, who studied under Back at the *Muzieklyceum* in the Netherlands, said, "I had learned incredibly much from Back" (De Wet, 2014). Back, yet again, had a different approach to violin playing than De Wet's previous teachers. This time, however, De Wet found the approach agreeable. The fact that a large number of the top young Dutch violinists were students in Back's class has, without a doubt, contributed to De Wet's respect and admiration for Back. What had made the biggest impression on De Wet, however, was Back's highly systematic approach to violin playing and his sensitive musicality. De Wet (2014) described Back's musicality and interpretive skills as "impeccable; of the highest quality", adding that,

[Back] was very systematic in everything that he did. [...] It was a different way of playing that I found right for me.

While studying under Back, De Wet came to the realization that violin playing "is not just about technique" (Uys, 1998:47). Instead, finding ways to translate the deeper meaning of music into sound became the goal. De Wet's playing and musicianship matured under the influence of Back.

Sparked by Back's artistry, De Wet started to experiment with new ways of playing the violin. He jokingly added that "that's where my problems started!" (De Wet, 2014). With "problems", De Wet probably referred to the reputation as maverick he started to develop in the early stages of his teaching career. As quoted in *Rapport* (2009), De Wet said, "People at that time saw me as a bit of a clown, especially when I decided to turn all the rules of violin playing on their heads and foolishly started to apply them".

In the four years that he studied under Back, De Wet regularly performed as soloist on Dutch Radio. For three of those years, he was a member of the (now defunct) Radio String Orchestra of the *Katholieke Radio Omroep* (Catholic Radio Corporation) in the Netherlands. De Wet also played in various other Dutch orchestras (Uys, 1998:47). In 1951, De Wet travelled to London to play the exams for the Licentiate of Trinity College London (LTCL) and the Fellow of Trinity College London (FTCL) diplomas at the Trinity College of Music. Both exams were on the same day; the LTCL exam was in the morning and the FTCL in the afternoon. De Wet

⁸ Oskar Back studied, among others, under Eugène Ysaÿe and Jacob Grün. Well-known throughout Europe at the time, Back was a prominent violin pedagogue. His students included Herman Krebbers, Theo Olof, Willem Noske, Jo Juda, Emmy Verhey, and Jean-Louis Stuurop, as well as "most of the leading Dutch violinists and orchestral leaders" of the second half of the twentieth century (De Leur, n.d.).

recalled playing, among other works, Paganini's notoriously difficult first violin concerto, Saint-Saëns' *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* and the *Chaconne* from the D minor partita for solo violin by J. S. Bach for these exams. He obtained both diplomas with distinction. In 1955, De Wet graduated from the *Muzieklyceum* with a diploma in Music Performance and Teaching (De Wet, 2014).

2.5. 1956 – 1959: Return to South Africa

De Wet returned to South Africa after his studies in the Netherlands in 1956. He took up a position as first violinist in the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Orchestra in Johannesburg. Although De Wet only played in the orchestra for three years, he felt that it was an important step in his career. De Wet regularly performed as a soloist with the orchestra and he also made radio broadcasts for the SABC during the late 1950s (Uys, 1998:47). According to De Wet (2014), the musicians in the orchestra were excellent players and he valued the exposure that playing in the orchestra offered. He said:

You see, it is absolutely necessary for a person to make music with others; to gain new insights; to not just make music for your own sake in your own little corner.

De Wet, however, did not feel that a career as an orchestral musician was the right one for him. His remark “[in the orchestra] I learnt many things – also how *not* to do things” (De Wet, 2014) not only shows that he did not particularly enjoy working in an orchestra; it also sheds light on his views of tradition and convention. De Wet did not like to conform to orthodox methods simply because they were the accepted ways. Instead, De Wet's curiosity drove him to experiment with alternative and perhaps better ways of doing things. This attribute would most likely have caused tension in an orchestra setting, where uniformity is an important component to the successful functioning of the ensemble.⁹ However, this trait of De Wet's personality has, as will be shown later in this chapter, played a big role in shaping his methods as a pedagogue. In a 2007 interview for *Die Burger*, De Wet reiterated the importance of experimentation in order to make progress, saying: “All of the great composers broke away [from tradition]. Today, there are new inventions; we know new things. One *has* to experiment with music” (Die Burger, 2007).

The extent of De Wet's experimental approach is highlighted in the following statement (De Wet, 2014): “Where [the orthodox methods] said do an up bow, [I would] do a down bow.” In

⁹ This is especially true for orchestral string players who have to play in a uniform way in order to produce a blended sound.

practice, De Wet changed his ideas on technique frequently, sometimes even from one lesson to the next (Price, 2015). Some of his students felt that this caused confusion (Anonymous, 2015; De Beer 2015, Lansdown, 2015). More than causing confusion, however, treating the student as a “test subject” is not in the best interest of the student.

2.6. 1960 – 1971: The Free State years

In 1960, De Wet became one of the founding members of the Free State String Quartet (FSSQ) in Bloemfontein.¹⁰ Together with Noël Travers (second violin), Francois Bougenon (viola) and Harry Cremers (cello), the FSSQ performed extensively throughout the Free State and also across South Africa. The quartet was founded to meet a perceived need in the Free State community: children did not have exposure to orchestral instruments, especially not string instruments.¹¹ In conjunction with playing in the FSSQ, De Wet also taught at the Department of Education and the Free State University (Uys, 1998:47). The formation of the FSSQ has undoubtedly had a big impact on music education in Bloemfontein. According to Uys (1998:47), “the Free State String Quartet became the point of departure to a lively interest in the symphony, opera and chamber music in [...] Bloemfontein [under De Wet’s incitement].”

De Wet was inspired by the enormous interest, ignited by the activities of the FSSQ, that young children in the community started to develop in string instruments. This awakened De Wet’s interest in and passion for violin teaching (Uys, 1998:47) and led him to establish the Free State Youth Orchestra (FSYO) in 1961, (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet remembered being unhappy with progress of the orchestra after the first year (Die Burger, 2007),

After a year, I was very displeased with the results. Then I realized that if you flip the year upside down, it still reads ‘1961’. That’s when I decided to systematically turn every rule in the book upside down.

The decision to turn the trusted methods upside down, however, paid off, as the orchestra experienced growing success over the following decade. The FSYO developed at an impressive

¹⁰ The FSSQ has been reborn as the Odeon String Quartet in 1991 and is the only quartet in residence at a university in South Africa at present.

¹¹ According to Van der Watt, Dirkie de Villiers, then inspector of music for the Department of Education, realized that in the Free State community, “taking music lessons” was synonymous with “playing the piano”. He identified the lack of exposure to orchestral instruments as the leading cause of the lack of diversity in this regard (Van Der Watt, 2014).

rate, growing from 25 members in 1961 to more than 150 in 1970. The orchestra gave many concerts and undertook nation-wide tours (Uys, 1998:47).

After 7 years of playing in the FSSQ, De Wet gave up the position to devote himself completely to teaching (De Wet, 2014). The interest generated by the success of the FSYO prompted young violinists to flock to Bloemfontein to study under De Wet. His class grew to over 80 students and in addition to violin, De Wet also taught viola and cello (Uys, 1998:47). To help teach his enormous class, De Wet was assisted by some of his older and more advanced students (Van Der Watt, 2014).

De Wet started gaining international recognition for his work with the FSYO and as pedagogue in the late 1960s. In 1969, he was invited to be a jury member at the International Youth Music Festival in St. Moritz. The following year, De Wet toured with the FSYO to St. Moritz to partake in the eponymous festival (De Wet, H., 2012). The orchestra won first prize in a special category at the festival and De Wet received high praise for the standard of the orchestra (Uys, 1998:48). In 1971 and 1972 De Wet represented South Africa as a jury member at the International Youth Music Festival in Lausanne (De Wet, H., 2012).

De Wet is of the opinion that it is important to keep up-to-date with the newest developments in the string teaching community. Referring to the beginning of his teaching career, De Wet (2014) said,

You see, I had this itch: if I heard about a new idea, I bought a ticket and off I went!

De Wet attended a symposium by the American String Teachers Association in Honolulu, USA, in the 1960's (Van Der Watt, 2014). There, he met the influential American pedagogue Paul Rolland. Rolland, himself a revolutionary in the field of string pedagogy, inspired many of De Wet's ideas on violin technique, as will be shown in the next chapter. Rolland's method was informed by new findings in the fields of kinesiology and human physiology (Perkins, 1995:92). This scientific approach resonated with De Wet.

Another pedagogue that had an impact on De Wet was the Japanese educator Shin'ichi Suzuki. Suzuki is best known for his radically innovative method of teaching the violin, known as the Suzuki Method (Shibata & Kanazawa, n.d.). The Suzuki method's principal goal is to "cultivate artistic appreciation in students in their formative years" and to allow them "to develop their artistic potential simultaneously with their technical skills" (Stowell, 1994: 229).

One of the hallmarks of the Suzuki method is the involvement of the young violinist's parents in the teaching process. Parents are expected to attend the lessons and help their children practise (Spencer, n.d.). De Wet realised that his own students made quicker progress when he too involved the parents in lessons (Uys, 1998:49). Inspired by this, De Wet travelled to Matsumoto, Japan, in the early 1970s to learn from Suzuki in person. Today, De Wet still expects parents to attend lessons with their children. He is of the opinion that “children and parents should form a team” (Steenkamp, 2012).

From Suzuki, De Wet learnt that the person is always more important than the music (Uys, 1998:49). He realised that music should, first of all, be a source of inspiration – mastering the music (or technical mastery) is a secondary goal. De Wet added: “Art is for people; not people for art” (Uys, 1998:49). On returning to South Africa, De Wet decided to be gentler in his teaching style. This gentler approach came as a surprise to some of his students. De Wet recalled, “Some of the parents phoned my wife and asked her if I was ill!” (Steenkamp, 2012).

De Wet also met the American pedagogue Aaron Rosand¹² whom he regards as “probably the biggest [violin] teacher” active today. According to De Wet, he met Rosand in the USA and immediately felt Rosand's ideas resonated with his own. Since then, Rosand has always visited De Wet whenever he toured to South Africa (De Wet, 2014).

When asked whether pedagogues like Rolland, Rosand and Suzuki influenced his own ideas on teaching, De Wet (2014) said:

One picks up many things from what other people teach – it influences one's own ideas. Perhaps one would not do it exactly the same [as they taught...] but it is stimulating – it stays interesting. [Moreover,] it also motivates one to be a bit creative – to not get stuck in old ideas.

One of De Wet's most successful pupils is Jan Repko. Repko started his violin studies with De Wet in 1963, at the age of five, and studied with him for over fifteen years (Volksblad, 1998). By 1978, De Wet felt that Repko was ready to start studying under a new teacher. Repko and his parents were at first hesitant about the idea of Repko studying with another teacher. They felt that there was no better teacher in South Africa than De Wet. De Wet, however, believed

¹² Aaron Rosand (1927 -) studied under P. Marinus Paulsen, Leon Sametini and Efrem Zimbalist. He made his debut at the age of 10 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, playing Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor and since then has had a very successful career as performer. Rosand was also influential as a teacher. From 1971, Rosand taught at the *Académie Internationale d'Été* in Nice and in 1981 he took up a prestigious teaching post at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, USA (Schwarz & Schwarz, n.d.).

that Repko was ready to enter into one of Europe's top conservatoires. He explained (De Wet, 2014):

I eventually arranged with the [Sweelinck] Conservatoire in Amsterdam – [Repko] initially did not want to go – but I sent in a tape recording of him and, even though they were already closed for the year, they accepted him.

The fact that Repko was accepted into the conservatoire even after the application deadline, shows that his level of playing was at least on par with the level of playing in Europe at the time. Repko graduated from the Sweelinck Conservatoire in Amsterdam with distinction and went on to become concert master of the Northern Philharmonic Orchestra in Groningen, Netherlands. Repko had a successful career as soloist and orchestral player. He later turned his focus to teaching and became a violin professor at the Sweelinck Conservatoire (Volksblad, 1998). Repko has since moved to England where he currently teaches at the Royal College of Music, Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Northern College of Music. His students have been prize winners at many international competitions including the Wieniawski competition in Lublin, Spohr competition in Weimar and the Sibelius violin competition in Helsinki (New Virtuosi International, 2010).

Other notable students from De Wet's Bloemfontein years are Suzanne de Villiers, Deon Schoombie (both former concert masters of the FSYO), Judy Schoombie and Pienaar Fourie (De Wet, 2014). Francois Henkins, also a student from De Wet's Bloemfontein years, is still active as violin teacher in Bloemfontein where he contributes to the musical development of Bloemfontein and the surrounding community through his involvement with the Bochabela community music project (Van Der Watt, 2014).

De Wet's time in Bloemfontein ended in 1971 when he was offered a professorship at the University of Port Elizabeth. In the eleven years he was active in Bloemfontein, De Wet made a big impact on the classical music community in the Free State. In 2004, De Wet was recognised for his contribution to violin teaching in the Free State with an honorary doctorate from the University of the Free State (Volksblad, 2004). He saw it as a great personal achievement to develop the string community in the Free State from a point where there was little interest under young musicians in string instruments to the point of international recognition (Uys, 1998:48).

2.7. 1972 – 1987: The Port Elizabeth years

De Wet took up a professorship at the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE), now known as Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, in October 1972 (Uys, 1998:48). At this stage in his career, De Wet was well known in the South African classical music community and in demand as violin teacher (Van Der Watt, 2014). This is in part due to his success in Bloemfontein with the FSYO – as shown earlier on, the orchestra’s European tour brought about much positive publicity for De Wet – as well as the success of students like Jan Repko, Deon Schoombie and Suzanne de Villiers.

A number of his Bloemfontein students, including Jan Repko and Danellus van der Watt, followed De Wet to UPE. Here, he founded his second youth orchestra with his students from Bloemfontein forming the core of this ensemble (Uys, 1998:48). This group, known as the UPE String Orchestra, rapidly developed into an excellent orchestra under De Wet’s guidance. Testimony to their high level of playing is the fact that in July 1980, the UPE String Orchestra was invited to participate in the final round of the World Youth Music Festival in Vienna, Austria. The orchestra toured throughout Austria, made radio broadcasts on Austrian Radio networks and took the overall second prize in the competition at the World Youth Music Festival (Smit, 1985:121).

De Wet regularly attended conferences and festivals abroad. In 1977, he was the South African representative at the Strathclyde International Festival of the Violin in Glasgow (Uys, 1998:50). He also met the American pedagogue Dorothy DeLay in this period.¹³ De Wet saw it as crucially important to exchange the newest ideas with peers, as evidenced by his involvement with various international festivals, symposia and conferences on violin playing and teaching. In this regard, he feels that he was ahead of his time in South Africa since, as he saw it, most music teachers in South Africa at the time felt it more important to stick to tradition than to explore and exchange new ideas about playing and teaching (De Wet, 2014).

¹³ Dorothy DeLay (1917 – 2002) studied with Raymond Cerf, Michael Press and Raphael Bronstein. Her ideas about teaching, however, were heavily influenced by Ivan Galamian. DeLay became Galamian’s assistant in 1948 and taught alongside him at Julliard for twenty years. In 1970, DeLay formed her own class at Julliard. DeLay held prestigious teaching positions at Meadowmount Music School, Philadelphia College of the Performing Arts, New England Conservatory, Royal College of Music, and Aspen Music School. Her students include Itzhak Perlman, Sarah Chang, Midori Goto, Nigel Kennedy, Shlomo Mintz, Gil Shaham, and Anne Akiko Meyers. The following awards recognised DeLay’s contribution as “one of the most outstanding violin teachers in the world”: Artist Teacher Award from the American String Teachers Association (1975), National Medal of the Arts (1994), National Music Council’s American Eagle Award (1995), and Sanford Medal from Yale University (1997) (Schwarz & Kovacs, n.d.).

During the 1970s, De Wet adjudicated music exams in Soweto (Steenkamp, 2012). Apartheid legislation made it illegal for De Wet to be in Soweto, but he wanted to make a difference in the lives of young musicians in South Africa of all backgrounds. In a 2012 interview for *ClassicSA*, De Wet recalled how he would stay hidden from the police: “they would put me in a taxi with two big men next to me, as to hide me. I would also wear a hat and a big coat as disguise” (ibid.). This, however, seems to be the extent of De Wet’s stance against Apartheid, at least in his professional capacity.

It has to be noted, however, that De Wet, as a white man, benefited from the institution of Apartheid. Under Apartheid government, the majority of South Africans did not have access to the resources and opportunities available to the white minority. Take, for example, the exclusive opportunities available to De Wet in terms of education and career opportunities. Pre-1994, only whites had access to such prestigious institutions as Pretoria Boy’s High, the University of Pretoria, and the University of Cape Town. Similarly, the opportunity to play in the SABC orchestra, or lecture at the Free State University, University of Port Elizabeth, and Stellenbosch University, as well as access to tuition with De Wet in the years prior to 1994, were only available to white South Africans or Europeans. De Wet’s success, as with the success of almost any white South African during the greater part of the twentieth century, cannot be looked at without taking cognisance of this situation. This, however, should by no means detract from De Wet’s achievements and success, but rather put it in its socio-political context.

In 1979, De Wet became head of the music department at UPE (Uys, 1998:48). In this capacity, De Wet had the opportunity to make bigger contributions to music education in Port Elizabeth. He was instrumental in the establishment of the KODUPE (*Kaaplandse Onderwys Departement en die Universiteit van Port Elizabeth*) music centre. KODUPE was officially founded in 1979 as a government subsidised programme involving the University of Port Elizabeth and the former Cape Province Education Department. The goal of KODUPE was to provide opportunities for children to have training in orchestral instruments. The success of De Wet’s UPE String Orchestra served as catalyst for the KODUPE music centre. By 1981, KODUPE provided music education to 189 students around Port Elizabeth. More than 60 of these students were violinists (Smit, 1985:121-122).

Another way in which De Wet had an impact in the South African classical music community, was his role in the establishment of the South African National Youth Music Competition

(SANYMC). In October 1984, De Wet and Michael Maas jointly founded the SANYMC as a platform for young musicians to showcase their skills, gain exposure, and experience performing under the pressure of a competition (The South African Society of Music Teachers, n.d.). The SANYCM was the first music competition in South Africa that was run in accordance with international rules. It consisted of an audition round and four subsequent elimination rounds (Die Burger, 1999a). The SANYCM was geared toward South African instrumentalists younger than 19 years and is still in existence today as the Artscape National Youth Music Competition. This competition has had a great impact on many young classical musicians in South Africa and most likely also on classical music education in South Africa. Many of De Wet's own students became prize winners at this competition, including Manu Berkeljon, Pieter Schoeman and Xandi van Dijk (Uys, 1998:50).

Thus, it can be concluded that, by this stage, De Wet was established as a violin pedagogue of note in South Africa. The Rector of UPE at the time, Professor E J Marais, noted the role which De Wet played since his appointment at UPE in 1972 in improving the level of education in especially orchestral instruments (Smit, 1985:116). Uys (1998:48) stated: "As teacher, Jack de Wet made nationwide headlines. Students would even fly to him [in PE] for a monthly lesson!"

One such student was Pieter Schoeman who, according to De Wet, was his biggest success story. De Wet (2014) recalled how the 11 year old Schoeman would arrive at his house after flying to Port Elizabeth from Cape Town:

He would arrive on Friday afternoon [...] then I would teach him for three hours. Saturday morning, we would do another three hours; Saturday afternoon [another] three hours and Sunday morning also three hours. Sometimes we would fit in another lesson on Sunday afternoon just before he had to go back to the airport.

This anecdote not only shows Schoeman's dedication and perseverance, but also De Wet's level of devotion to those students whom he believed to be talented and hard working. De Beer, one of De Wet's later students, for example, recalled that there were some weeks he would have nine hours of lessons with De Wet (De Beer, 2015).

Schoeman performed Bartók's second Violin Concerto¹⁴ with the Cape Town City Orchestra at age 14 (Rapport, 2009), a truly remarkable achievement. In typical De Wet unorthodox style,

¹⁴ Bartók's second Violin Concerto sets very high technical and musical demands to the soloist. The writing is highly chromatic and rife with unidiomatic sections and awkward passages. Furthermore, the concerto is

teaching Schoeman to play the Bartók violin concerto was done in an innovative way. After each monthly lesson, De Wet would hand Schoeman a couple of small cards with notes. Each card had short excerpts from the concerto. Schoeman had to learn the excerpts and bring it to the next lesson where he would receive a new set of cards. Before long, he could play the entire concerto (ibid.).

Schoeman won the SANYMC in 1984 and received a special prize enabling him to participate in the World Youth Symphony Orchestra (WYSO) course at the Interlochen Centre for the Arts in Michigan, USA. Here, Schoeman was the co-principal first violinist of the WYSO and he performed the Bartók violin concerto with the WYSO (Van Der Watt, 2014). Schoeman is currently Concert Master for the London Symphony Orchestra, UK. De Wet (2014) said that he was honoured to work with a talent as big as Schoeman's:

[Schoeman] had an enormous talent. He had an immense passion for the violin. He always did everything exactly as I showed him to and [he would not stop] working until it was perfect. You don't find a student like that every day.

2.8. 1987 – Present: Stellenbosch, UCT and retirement in Parklands

After retiring from his position at UPE, De Wet moved to Durbanville, Cape Town where he took up a teaching position at the University of Stellenbosch in 1987 (Die Burger, 1987). During this time, De Wet taught part time at the Stellenbosch University Music Department as well as privately at his home in Durbanville and later at his home in Stellenbosch. Students who studied with De Wet during this period include Amanda Goodburn, Louise Lansdown (Head of Strings at Birmingham Conservatoire, UK), Orit Feldman, Mark Uys, and Piet de Beer.

De Beer remembered that De Wet was “always enthusiastic about the craft [of violin playing]” (De Beer, 2015). He added that De Wet was constantly searching for new and better ways of playing the violin and teaching. It was De Wet's contagious enthusiasm for the violin that kept De Beer motivated through the five years in which De Wet “completely broke down [his technique] and built it up again” (De Beer, 2015). According to De Beer, he owes his abilities as violinist completely to De Wet.

musically complex - combining elements of Hungarian folk music with serial (12-tone) techniques – making it a challenge to interpret.

Referring to an incident that happened while teaching a violin methodology class at Stellenbosch University, De Wet (2014) said that “violinists can see better than they can hear”. He went on to explain what had happened on a particular day in the methodology class:

There was a disagreement in the class. I demonstrated certain movements and the class had to evaluate [which movements were balanced and effective and which were not]. Eventually, [after not reaching any agreement,] I decided to ask one of the cleaning ladies to judge the movements – she chose the correct movements!

According to De Wet (2014), the cleaning lady’s accurate observation proved his point to the class, which was that balanced and effective movements not only feel natural and easy, but also look that way.

In 1995, De Wet was invited to teach at the University of Miami, USA, as guest professor. This invitation substantiates the fact that De Wet was, at this stage of his career, enjoying some international recognition as violin pedagogue. De Wet, however, declined to take up the position due to personal reasons (Uys, 1998:48). According to Van der Watt (2014), De Wet felt that he would let down his students in South Africa by leaving the country.

Whether or not this was the real reason De Wet did not take up the position abroad, it illustrates his sense of loyalty toward his students. Armstrong, one of his later students, agreed with this assertion. He added that “[De Wet] always had [his students’] best interest at heart” (Armstrong, 2015).

By the end of 1998, De Wet resigned from his part time post at Stellenbosch University due to personal reasons. According to De Wet (2014), there were “changes in management at the *Konservatorium*” that influenced his decision to resign.¹⁵ This, however, may well not be the true reason for De Wet’s resignation at Stellenbosch University. When taking into consideration the lengthy procedures for setting up an honorary professorship, it is possible that De Wet would have been received the offer from UCT at least as early as 1987.

The next year, 1999, De Wet started teaching as Honorary Professor at UCT (Die Burger, 1999b). Some of his students at UCT included Xandi van Dijk and Jane Price. In the middle of the academic year in 2005, however, De Wet made the decision to break all ties with the SACM at UCT. This, again, was due to personal reasons and it had a big impact on his students

¹⁵ Hans Roosenschoon became the Chair of the Department of Music at Stellenbosch University in 1998.

at the time. According to Price (2015), De Wet's students were forced to choose between either studying with him, or finishing their studies at UCT with a different violin teacher. In the author's view, this contradicts the image of De Wet as a teacher who puts his students first, and instead, paints a picture of a teacher who, even after a successful career of more than 40 years, put his position as pedagogue before the success of his students.

After departing from UCT, De Wet taught privately from his home in Parklands, Cape Town where he continues to teach to this day (Die Burger, 2007). This is, in the author's opinion, admirable, considering that De Wet is currently 88 years old.¹⁶ It seems that De Wet's love for teaching, or as he put it, "my dream [...] to inspire people and to serve music through excellence and through experimentation" (Die Burger, 2004) keeps him motivated. Notable students from this period include Avigail Bushakevitz, winner of the 2009 Unisa National Strings Competition, Michael Duffett, Jacqueline Wedderburn-Maxwell, and Jeffrey Armstrong, the latter three overall winners of the 2007, 2008 and 2014 Artscape Youth Music Competition respectively.

Lansdown (2015) described De Wet's legacy in the South African classical music community as "[the establishment of] a violin teaching school and following [...] across South Africa." In October 2003, De Wet received an Honorary Licentiate from the University of South Africa which recognises his contribution to violin teaching in South Africa (Volksblad, 2004).

2.9. Conclusion

The description of De Wet's biography indicates that throughout his life he enjoyed the creative potential that came with teaching. He questioned accepted notions of how things ought to be done and challenged authority and tradition. De Wet saw the importance of creating an infrastructure that supports young violinists in their quest to become good musicians. Furthermore, his talent for teaching, what Van Dijk calls (2015), "his gift to teach pretty well anyone of any level to play the violin well", allowed him to create a legacy of excellent violinists who in turn, teach the new generation of South African violinists.

However, De Wet's reputation as foremost pedagogue coupled with his penchant to clash with authority, in the author's opinion, contributed to his less-than-pleasant departures from the music departments at both Stellenbosch University and UCT. In both instances his departure

¹⁶ The drive to keep on teaching is a trait that De Wet seems to share with a number of other pedagogues, most notably, Ivan Galamian, who taught daily until his death at the age of 78, Dorothy DeLay, who also taught daily until her death at the age of 84, and Shin'ichi Suzuki, who was active as a teacher up to well into his 90s.

caused great upset to the departments as his students followed him, even if it forced them to compromise their university education. His continued success with students, even in his advanced old age, however, confirms his standing as one of South Africa's foremost violin pedagogues.

3. An overview of violin pedagogy in the twentieth century as exemplified by Carl Flesch, Shin'ichi Suzuki, Ivan Galamian, and Paul Rolland

3.1. Introduction

This chapter has the function of setting De Wet's technique into the context of violin pedagogy in the twentieth century. The techniques, philosophies and influence of Carl Flesch, Shin'ichi Suzuki, Paul Rolland, and to a lesser extent, Ivan Galamian are discussed.¹⁷ These pedagogues have been selected, because they (1) represent the ideas which influenced De Wet's own pedagogical method and (2), they are the pedagogues who have arguably been most influential in shaping violin pedagogy in the twentieth century.

The abovementioned pedagogues are linked to De Wet in the following ways:

- Flesch is important to the discussion in two ways. Firstly, Oskar Back, De Wet's most significant teacher (De Wet 2014), and Flesch both studied under Jacob Grün who was an exponent of the Austro-Hungarian violin school. Furthermore, Flesch's other teachers were exponents of the French and Belgian violin schools, whereas Back's other teacher, Ysaÿe, was an exponent of the Franco-Belgian school. Therefore, it can be postulated that Flesch and Back would have had a similar approach to technique. Secondly, Flesch, as will be shown, had a significant impact on violin pedagogy in the twentieth century. De Wet was familiar with Flesch's works on violin playing and teaching and he used Flesch's material when teaching.
- Suzuki's ideas fascinated De Wet, especially in the early stages of his career (De Wet, 2014), and his philosophy about education shaped De Wet's own approach to teaching.
- Galamian was the leading figure in violin pedagogy from the 1940s to 1981. De Wet was familiar with Galamian's ideas and used some of his material when teaching. In addition, Dorothy DeLay, with whom De Wet claimed to have had discussions about teaching (De Wet, 2014), was Galamian's teaching assistant for twenty years. Although

¹⁷ Oskar Back, De Wet's most important teacher, cannot be discussed as there exists no scholarly writing about his techniques or pedagogical methods. As explained by De Wet (2014), however, Flesch's ideas are very similar to what Back taught during the time De Wet studied with him. Furthermore, as can be seen in , Flesch and Back shared a teacher (Jacob Grün). A discussion of Flesch's techniques will therefore suffice for the purposes of this study.

Galamian and DeLay differed on some minor points, DeLay's approach to technique was virtually identical to Galamian's.

- Rolland's approach to violin playing has arguably had the biggest influence on De Wet's teaching method. De Wet was familiar with Rolland's works on pedagogy and based most of his ideas about technique on Rolland's approach.

The first section of this chapter is a brief synopsis of the history of violin pedagogical literature and the establishment of various national schools of violin playing. It serves as background to the discussion of the selected pedagogues. Each pedagogue is discussed in terms of his biography, published work and pedagogical approach. The discussion of each pedagogue's pedagogical approach is divided into two main sections. The first section, *Philosophical background*, focusses on the core ideas that shaped the pedagogue's approach. This includes the pedagogue's understanding of physiological functioning, psychological functioning and teaching philosophy. The second section focusses on the violin technical aspects of the pedagogue's approach. This will be discussed only in as much detail as necessary to facilitate the discussion on De Wet's techniques in the following chapter.

3.2. Background

Although this literature review focusses on the contributions of Flesch, Suzuki, Galamian, and Rolland, it is necessary to put their work and lives (and therefore, also the work of De Wet) into the context of violin pedagogy as a whole. For the purposes of this study, a cursory overview of the history of violin pedagogy will serve sufficiently as background to the discussion of the selected pedagogues which follows.

Violin pedagogy as a systematic approach to teaching the underlying technical components of violin playing arose in the mid-eighteenth century. Francesco Geminiani's *The Art of Violin Playing*, first published in 1751, Leopold Mozart's *Versuch einer grundlichen Violinschule*, first published in 1756, and L'Abbé le fils' *Principes du Violon*, first published in 1761, saw the first attempts to formalize and methodise violin playing and teaching (Perkins, 1995:9). By this stage, the distinct regional styles of violin playing had begun to merge into a more uniform, international style.¹⁸ However, several national schools of playing developed and persisted into the twentieth century.

¹⁸ This, as many developments of the fifteenth century onwards, is linked to the invention of the printing press. Perkins (1995:8) writes: "Music printing, which began in 1501, had a dual impact on the development of violin

The establishment of the Paris Conservatoire in 1795 served as catalyst for the development of systematic treatises on technical and interpretative matters. In 1803, Baillot, Rode, and Kreutzer's *Méthode de violon* was published (Stowell, 2001:23). This work formed the foundation of the so-called French violin school. Mazas' (1830) *Méthode de violon suivie d'un traité des sons harmoniques en simple ou double-cordes* and Baillot's own (1835) *L'art du violon: nouvelle Méthode* built forth on this basis. Baillot's students Habeneck,¹⁹ Alard,²⁰ and Dancla²¹ furthered developments in this school by authoring their own treatises. Henryk Wieniawski and Eugène Sauzay were important exponents of the French violin school.

In Germany, Spohr became the most important exponent of the Manheim School. His *Violinschule*, first published in 1832, was widely influential. Another *Violinschule* appeared in 1864 authored by David, a pupil of Spohr. Joachim, who in turn was taught by David, and his student Moser authored a three-volume *Violinschule*, published in 1902 (Stowell, 2001:23). The technique used by Joachim, linking back to Spohr via David, falls into the so-called German violin school. Figure 1 shows Joachim's connection with some of the other pedagogues that will be mentioned in this chapter.

In Belgium, De Bériot (1858) and Léonard (1877) published method books forming the core of the Belgian violin school. Their ideas, although linked to the Italian violin school through Viotti (and his teachers Vivaldi and Corelli) (Perkins, 1995:15), broke away from the ideas of their contemporaries in Italy who were heavily influenced by Paganini's virtuosity (Stowell, 2001:23). Henri Vieuxtemps and Martin Marsick were important exponents of the Belgian violin school.

Eugène Ysaÿe,²² who studied under Vieuxtemps (Belgian school) and Wieniawski (French school), was the first violinist to integrate aspects of the Belgian and French violin schools. The Franco-Belgian violin school, as Ysaÿe's synthesis of the two schools became known as, came to dominate violin playing in the second half of the twentieth century (Schwarz, n.d.). De Wet's most influential teacher, Oskar Back, studied under Ysaÿe (see Figure 1).

playing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. [...] [T]he wider distribution and availability of music throughout Europe necessitated a certain uniformity."

¹⁹ *Méthode théorique et pratique de violon*, c.1835

²⁰ *Ecole du violon*, 1844

²¹ *Méthode élémentaire et progressive du violon* Op. 52, 1855; *Ecole de mécanisme* Op. 74, c.1882

²² Eugène Ysaÿe (1858 - 1931) was regarded by many of his contemporaries as "the king of the violin". He is seen as the pioneer of twentieth century violin playing (Schwarz, n.d.).

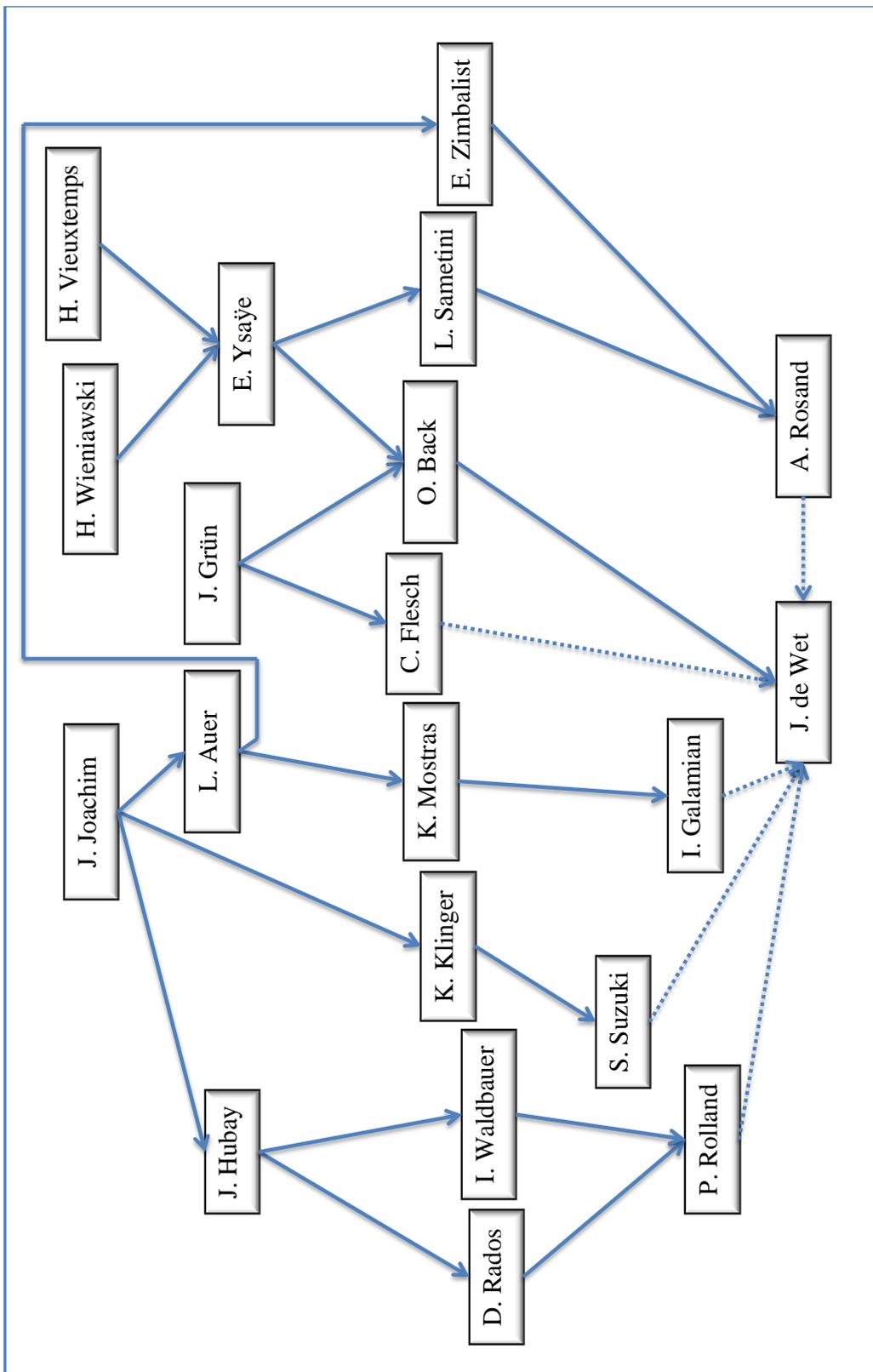
Dont, Schrädieck, and Ševčík each wrote important and influential method books and etudes in the late nineteenth century. They are among the violinists who formed the so-called Austro-Hungarian violin school. Jakob Grün, who taught Back (Figure 1) at the Vienna Academy of Music (De Jonge, 2013), was an exponent of this school. Leopold Auer,²³ who studied under Dont in Vienna, in turn founded the Russian violin school when he started teaching at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1868.

According to Perkins (1995:10), Flesch – an exponent of the Austro-Hungarian (through Dont), French (through Sauzay) and Belgian (through Marsick) schools – was the pedagogue that modernized and standardized violin playing technique in the first half of the twentieth century. His *The Art of Violin Playing*, first published in 1924, helped establish a truly systematic method for learning violin technique. Perkins added that “Flesch’s ideas about what constituted proper playing technique [...] have had a deep impact on most schools of violin training today” (1995:11).

See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the relationship between the pedagogues discussed in the next section and the figures discussed in the previous section. It is a “family-tree” that shows the genealogy of various pedagogues. Figure 1 shows the pedagogues’ relationship to each other as well as their relationship to De Wet. Solid lines indicate a teacher-pupil relationship (the arrow points toward the student), and dashed lines indicate a great degree of influence. For practical reasons, the names are not in strict chronological order from top to bottom. It is, however, an accurate depiction of the “generations” of pedagogues.

²³ Hungarian born Leopold Auer (1845 – 1930) studied under Jacob Dont and Joseph Joachim. Auer taught at the St. Petersburg Conservatory from 1868 to 1917 and was instrumental in establishing the Russian school of violin playing in this capacity. In 1918, Auer left Russia and settled in New York, USA, where he taught at Juilliard as well as the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Auer’s ideas on violin playing are set out in *Violin Playing As I Teach It* (1921). His notable students include Jascha Heifetz, Nathan Milstein, Mischa Elman, and Efram Zimbalist (Eanes, n.d.).

Figure 1: Jack de Wet's violin genealogy



3.3. Carl Flesch

Hungarian born Carl Flesch (9 October 1873 – 14 November 1944) left a considerable mark on the development of violin pedagogy. Eric Wen (1992:84) describes Flesch as “one of the [twentieth] century’s’ leading pedagogues”. Apart from having an impact as a world renowned soloist and teacher, Flesch wrote extensively on the topic of violin technique. His work comprehensively covers aspects of violin playing such as technique, performing, interpretation, and teaching. Flesch’s writings have influenced numerous violinists and pedagogues in the past century and his work is considered authoritative on the topic (Eales, 1992:92).

Flesch was five years old when he received his first violin lesson. In 1886, barely eight years later, he started his studies at the Vienna Conservatory under Jacob Grün²⁴ (Schwarz & Campbell, n.d.). After four years in Vienna, Flesch left for France to study at the Paris Conservatoire. During his time at the Paris Conservatoire (1891-1894), Flesch’s teachers were Martin Marsick²⁵ and Eugène Sauzay.²⁶ After graduating from the Paris Conservatoire in 1894 with a *premier prix*, Flesch made his *début* in Vienna and Berlin in 1895 (ibid.).

Flesch settled in Berlin in 1908 where he enjoyed growing international acclaim as a soloist, chamber music player, and teacher. Here he gave master classes at the *Hochschule für Musik* (1921 and 1922) where in 1928, he was appointed as professor of the violin. From 1924 to 1928, Flesch held the position as Head of the Violin Department at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, USA (Schwarz & Campbell, n.d.). This appointment undoubtedly played a major role in establishing Flesch as an important and influential pedagogue in the early twentieth century. Substantiating this is the success of Flesch’s private summer courses at Baden-Baden, Germany. These courses, held from 1926 to 1934, attracted an international group of young violinists. During the last years of his life, Flesch taught at the Lucerne Conservatoire, Switzerland (1943-1944), and kept performing up to his death in November 1944 (ibid.).

Throughout his career, Flesch was known for his flawless technique. However, unlike, for example, Heifetz, this technique did not come naturally and intuitively to Flesch (Schwarz &

²⁴ Grün, an exponent of the Austro-Hungarian violin school, studied with Joseph Böhm in Vienna – in turn, a student of one of the founders of the French violin school, Pierre Rode (Stowell, 2001:23). Grün was appointed as concert master of the Vienna Philharmonic in 1868 and stayed a member of the orchestra until 1909 (Prone to Violins, 2012). His students included Oskar Back, Oscar Morini, Erica Morini, Franz Kneisel, and Peter Stojanovic.

²⁵ Marsick, as mentioned in the *Background* section of this chapter, was an exponent of the Belgian violin school. His teachers included Rodolphe Massart and Désiré Heynberg. Jacques Thibaud and Georges Enesco were some of the notable violinists that studied with Marsick (Peir & Tardif, n.d.).

²⁶ Eugène Sauzay, an exponent of the French violin school, studied with Pierre Baillot at the Paris Conservatoire (Charlton, n.d.).

Campbell, n.d.). Flesch, however, developed his technique through a continual process of analysis and self-criticism. Schwarz and Campbell (ibid.) label Flesch's rational approach to technical and musical problems as "diagnostic ability" and cite this as the reason "Flesch [became] one of the greatest teachers of our time". This author is of the opinion that a so-called "diagnostic ability" and an analytical approach stand at the core of most, if not all effective and successful pedagogical approaches. Max Rostal, Szymon Goldberg, Ginette Neveu, Henri Temianka, Ida Haendel, Josef Wolfstal and Ricardo Odnoposoff are among the many of Flesch's successful students (Wen, 1992:85).

Flesch's arguably biggest contribution to the art of violin pedagogy, however, is five books on the subject of violin playing. These are: *Urstudien (Basic Studies)* first published in 1911; *Die Kunst des Violinspiels (The Art of Violin Playing)* first published in 1923; *Das Skalensystem (Scale System for Violin)* first published in 1926; *Das Klangproblem im Geigenspiel (Problems of Tone Production in Violin Playing)* first published 1931; and *Die Hohe Schule des Fingersatzes (Violin fingering: its Theory and Practice)* published posthumously in 1955. According to Schwarz and Campbell (n.d.), these books form the basis of modern violin playing.

Urstudien für Violine (Basic Studies) is meant as a series of daily exercises for violinists who do not have hours to spend on technique each day (Flesch, 1911:4). Flesch wrote *Urstudien* in reaction to the numerous "complete violin methods" that started to appear in the late 1800s. Without wanting to expand the already vast literature of studies and exercises, Flesch instead tried to reduce violin technique to its fundamental principles. By practising the concise series of exercises "forming a condensed extract of the mechanism of the violin" (1911:5), Flesch claimed that violinists could maintain their technical facility in just half an hour of *Urstudien*-practice each day.

The premise on which *Urstudien* is based, is summarised by Flesch in the foreword (1911:7):

Upon close examination of these Basic Studies (*Urstudien*) it will be seen that they contain all the anatomical movements which are employed in playing the most complicated passages. They constitute the raw material from which the intelligent artist will produce a work of art.

In other words, Flesch argued that violin playing in essence consists of a finite number of physical movements that have to be executed by the human body.

Urstudien is divided into two main parts, namely (1) “Exercises for the left hand” and (2) “Exercises for the right arm”. In the first part, Flesch breaks down left hand technique to five basic movements, namely: (a) “Falling movement” which develops strength in lifting and lowering the fingers from their base joints, (b) “Side movement” which develops the extension and contraction of the fingers along the length of the string, (c) “Movement for fingering chords” which develops the sideways motion of the fingers across the strings, (d) “Thumb movement” which develops flexibility in the thumb, and (e) “Combined movement of wrist and elbow” which develops shifting movements (Flesch, 1911).

The second part is divided into six basic movements of the right arm, namely: (a) “Almost horizontal movement of the upper part of the arm” which develops the motion for bowing sustained strokes in the lower half of the bow; (b) “Circular or rotary movement of the upper part of the arm from the shoulder” which develops the movement for string-crossings at the tip of the bow; (c) “Almost horizontal movement of the fore-arm” which develops the motion for bowing in the upper half of the bow; (d) “Circular or rotary movement of the fore-arm from the elbow” which develops the movement for string crossings at the nut; (e) “Vertical movement of the wrist” which develops off the string “springing” bow strokes; and (f) “Finger movement” which develops the *collé*²⁷ stroke (Flesch, 1911).

Flesch’s largest contribution to the literature on violin technique, *Die Kunst des Violinspiel* (*The Art of Violin Playing*) – according to Perkins (1995:10), the main factor in the standardization of violin playing technique during the second half of the twentieth century, helping to create a “systematic method for learning violin technique” – was intended to “not only [...] advise the teacher how to train his pupils most advantageously, [...] but also [...] to bring the violinist to a plane of development which, in time, will enable him to be his *own* teacher” (Flesch, 1930). Put differently, *Die Kunst des Violinspiels* was written from an educational or instructive perspective.

Die Kunst des Violinspiels is divided into two books. Book One is in two parts and covers *Technique in General and Applied Technique*; Book Two, only published in 1928, has the subtitle *Artistic Realization and Instruction* (Flesch, 1930:7), but lies outside the scope of this

²⁷ *Collé* refers to a bow stroke (or part of a bow stroke) that is initiated by the fingers. This stroke starts with the bow “stuck” to the string (*collé* is French for “glued”). The fingers then either push the bow upwards or pull it downwards in a quick motion, creating a well-articulated burst of sound.

study.²⁸ Flesch's logical and rational approach to technique is, however, evident throughout both books.

It is interesting to note that Flesch specifically grouped the technical aspects of violin playing together as a precursor to the expressive aspects of music making. Flesch's view was that "[n]ot until I control a perfect mechanism and am able to apply it in the right way, am I free enough, physically, to give myself up entirely to the spirit of the music, and to allow expression to rule a technique which now merely serves [the music]" (Flesch, 1930:8). This highlights his rational and methodical approach to violin playing which, as will be seen in the following chapter, De Wet shared with Flesch.

The first part of Book One, *Technique in General*, is broken down into five sections. In the first section, Flesch explained the set-up of the violin and gave guidelines to finding a fine instrument. The second section, entitled "The Position of the Body", gives Flesch's view on the violinist's stance, posture, and the way in which the violin should be held. Here, Flesch described in detail, with accompanying illustrations, the pros and cons of various sitting and standing positions, as well as various ways of positioning the violin on the left shoulder (Flesch, 1930).

The third and fourth sections of Book One are devoted to the left arm and the right arm respectively. Here again, Flesch explained at length and in detail the manner in which a violinist's two arms ought to function. The topics of intonation, shifting, vibrato, extended left hand technique, the bow hold, bowing, the bow change, string crossings, bow divisions, and various bow strokes are covered in these two sections (Flesch, 1930).

In the fifth section, entitled "Tone Production", Flesch discussed aspects of bowing which are not directly related to the mechanism of the right arm. This includes his opinions on matters such as the contact point between the bow and the string, dynamic variations, problems in tone production, tone colours, and tone as a means of expression. This section also includes "tone studies" – exercises which were meant to develop the violinist's pallet of and control over tone colours (Flesch, 1930).

²⁸ Book Two, *Artistic Realization and Instruction*, focusses on what Flesch called "violin-playing as an art" (Flesch, 1930:8) – that is to say, the expressive possibilities of playing the violin. Flesch gave advice on how to interpret a wide selection of excerpts from the repertoire. This lies outside the scope of this study which focusses specifically on the technical aspects of violin playing and teaching.

In *Applied Technique*, the second part of Book One, Flesch focussed on practice methods, fingering, and “Practice as a Means of Learning”. In the first section, Flesch explained that efficient practice is vital to making fast progress. This section, in this author’s view, could be seen as the theoretical complement to which *Urstudien* is the practical component. In the section on fingering, Flesch discussed the theory and practice of fingering as it pertains to the following topics: fingering in general, fingering as a technical means, fingering as a means of expression, and fingering and tone colours. In the final section of *Applied Technique*, Flesch touched on areas which are related to the philosophy of teaching and learning, namely: “Practice as a Means of Learning” and “Musical Memory”.

Flesch’s *Das Skalensystem (Scale System for Violin)*, first published in 1926 was meant to supplement *Die Kunst des Violinspiels*. It consists of scales, arpeggios, and various exercises in all the major and minor keys appended with Flesch’s suggested fingerings and bowing variations. Flesch advised that a new key ought to be practised every day in order to keep the violinist prepared for repertoire in any tonality (Flesch, 1926).

Das Klangproblem im Geigenspiel (Problems of Tone Production in Violin Playing) deals with the different musical and mechanical aspects of tone production on the violin. In the foreword to this work, Flesch wrote that his goal was to “isolate the problem of tone production upon the violin from other violinistic matters and to subject it to a more intense examination [than has previously been done]” (Flesch, 1934:4). Good tone production had up to that time been regarded as an “inborn, natural talent” and little literature existed on the “remedying [of] tonal shortcomings” (1934:5). Flesch applied his pioneering systematic and rational approach to cover the aspects of tone production in great detail. He discussed the mechanical as well as musical considerations of good tone production, thoroughly explaining the underlying principles thereof. *Das Klangproblem im Geigenspiel* could be seen as supplementary to Flesch’s discussion of the right arm and tone production in *Die Kunst des Violinspiels*.

Hohe Schule des Fingersatzes (Violin fingering: its Theory and Practice), only published in 1955 after Flesch’s death, is supplementary to the *Applied Technique* section of *Die Kunst des Violinspiels*. In this work, Flesch re-examined aspects of left hand technique such as shifting, double stops, and chords. The work contains Flesch’s suggested solutions to fingering problems found in copious musical examples from the violin repertoire. Furthermore, Flesch explained his motivation for these well planned fingerings (Flesch, 1966). *Hohe Schule des Fingersatzes* includes a chapter entitled *Fingering as a means of expression* which illustrates

the connection between the purely mechanical aspects of technique and the artistic aspects of expressive playing.

3.3.1. Philosophical background

As can be seen from the discussion about Flesch's works, the key to his method was in systematically breaking down aspects of violin playing to their fundamental technical elements. In the sections "Practice as a Means of Learning", and "Musical Memory" in *Die Kunst des Violinspiels*, Flesch extended this approach to the learning process (Flesch, 1930). In other words, Flesch believed that the learning process had to be guided by analysing problem areas and systematically working towards solutions.

Flesch believed that the violinist had to be in total control of every element of his or her playing in order to do justice to the music (Flesch, 1930:8). To achieve this level of control, Flesch saw it necessary to practice all the main technical aspects of technique every day (see the discussion of *Urstudien*). With this information, it can be deduced that Flesch viewed violin playing partly as a mechanical skill requiring continual up keep and refinement.

Although Flesch's method was highly systematic, he did not believe that just any student could become a good violinist. This is deduced from the fact that Flesch refers to "gifted" students, or students who possess an inborn ability to acquire technical skill with ease (Flesch, 1930:21). This implies that Flesch based his methods on the presumption that talent plays an important part in determining the success of a violinist.

3.3.2. Bowing

3.3.2.1. Bow grip

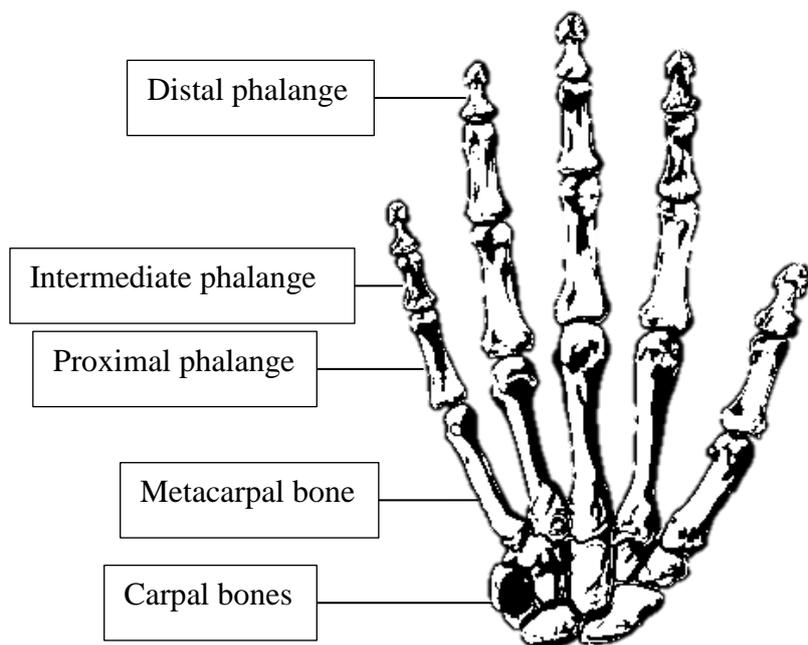
Flesch advocated the so-called Russian bow grip (see Figure 2). In this grip, the index finger touches the bow at the crease²⁹ between the proximal and intermediate phalanges (see Figure 3 for clarity). Depending on what type of bow stroke is being executed, the intermediate and distal phalanges of the index finger will either curl around the bow stick, or extend away from the hand, provided that the hand is sufficiently relaxed. The thumb, which is only slightly bent, supports the bow with its tip. Flesch stressed the importance of the thumb being flexible and relaxed while holding the bow (Flesch, 1930:51). Together, the index finger and thumb form the basis of this bow grip.

²⁹ *Crease* refers to the underside of a joint.

Figure 2: The Russian bow grip



Figure 3: The bones of the hand



The placement of the remaining three fingers is obtained by dropping them lightly onto the bow stick. Depending on the size of the hand, this will result in the middle finger touching the bow on its intermediate phalange; the ring finger touching the bow on the crease between its

intermediate and distal phalanges; and the little finger touching the bow lightly with its tip. The position of these fingers, however, varies considerably during bowing. Most notably, the little finger, which rests slightly curved on the bow stick while playing in the lower half, will straighten out and lift off from the bow stick while playing in the upper half of the bow (Flesch, 1930:51).

When viewed from the front, the fingers are almost at a 45 degree angle with the bow stick and the knuckles form a line at a circa 45 degree angle with the bow stick. As a result of the positions of the fingers on the bow stick, the wrist is bent quite sharply, especially when playing in the lower half of the bow.

3.3.2.2. *Sound production*

Flesch believed that good sound production depended on the upper arm being free (Perkins, 1995:10). From this, it can be understood that Flesch involved the whole arm in the bowing movement. Therefore, the down bow movement, starting at the frog, will originate in the upper arm by opening the shoulder joint. As the middle of the bow is reached, the upper arm will stop moving and the elbow joint will open. Conversely, the up bow, starting at the tip, will be initiated by the closing of the elbow joint. As the bow reaches the middle, the upper arm will join in the movement.

In addition to the opening and closing of the shoulder and elbow joints, Flesch taught that the forearm should rotate during the bowing motion. In a down bow, the forearm will pronate, gradually adding more pressure on the bow through the index finger. In an up bow, the forearm will supinate, gradually lessening the pressure exerted on the bow through the index finger (Perkins, 1995:30).

In order to make a smooth bow change at the frog (from an up bow to a down bow), the wrist and elbow have to be lifted above the level of the hand before the change to a down bow. This lifts enough of the weight of the bow away from the string in order for the string to still resonate while the bow changes direction. Flesch advocated that the elbow should lead the change of bow in a circular motion. A supple wrist helps making the bow change at the tip inaudible (Flesch, 1930).

3.3.3. Posture, stance, and violin hold

Flesch advocated a symmetrical stance where the body weight is distributed equally between the left and right legs. He called this the “spread or straddling leg-position” (Flesch, 1930:14). Flesch noted that the posture should be “upright” but not ridged.

The violin is placed on the left collarbone and the weight of the head pressing down on the chinrest should keep the violin in position. In other words, the violin is mainly held in place by two contact points: the collarbone and the lower jaw. According to Flesch, the left arm only plays a minor role in holding the violin. The left thumb, however, offers “light and uncramped support of the neck”. Its position, according to Flesch, should be similar to when it is “in a state of rest”. The index finger’s base joint will naturally touch the neck of violin. Flesch, however, warned that this could lead to the left hand “clamping” around the fingerboard (Flesch, 1930:17).

3.3.4. The left arm and hand

3.3.4.1. Posture of the hand and fingers

According to Flesch, the thumb, while supporting the violin, should have the same shape as when it is in a state of rest, or what he calls “a ‘natural’ position” (Flesch, 1930:17). This position of the thumb, together with the side of the joint between the index finger’s metacarpal bone and proximal phalanx, should enable the hand to lightly support the neck of the violin. The four fingers of the left hand should always be curved (ibid.).

3.3.4.2. Intonation

In *The Art of Violin Playing*, Flesch showed that it is physically impossible to put one’s finger down on the string exactly in tune for every single note. For example, when playing in the higher positions, semitones can be so close together on the string that the fingertips have to push each other out of the way in order to play in tune. Thus, without the possibility of hitting every single note perfectly in tune, Flesch concluded that “we must be content to arrive at a final establishment of the pitch by means of acute listening, and immediately subsequent, and as far as possible unobtrusive, correction” (Flesch, 1930:27).

Flesch theorised that the corrective movement of the finger on the string is triggered by an intense feeling of dissatisfaction which comes from hearing the out of tune note (Flesch, 1930: 21). A gifted player experiences a strong “disagreeable” sensation which compels him or her to correct the pitch. In other words, the student should make his or her sense of hearing so acute

as to make the “disagreeable sensation” as intense as possible. This in turn, will trigger the corrective motion quicker. Flesch understood that “consciousness judges whether the tone is true or false”.

3.3.4.3. *Shifting*

Flesch distinguished between three types of shifts. The first is a shift with the old finger (shifting to the new position with the finger that played the note before the shift, or “departing finger”), the second is a shift with the new finger (shifting to the new position with the finger that plays the note directly after the shift, or “arriving finger”), and the third is a shift using a combination of these two methods (Neumann, 1969:98). In upward shifts, Flesch advised that the left hand and thumb move as a unit. In downward shifts, however, he taught that the thumb should anticipate the movement and arrive in the lower position before the hand (1949:88-89). When shifting into higher positions, Flesch advised bringing the elbow to the right (in relation to the middle of player’s body) and turning it inward (Flesch, 1930:17).

3.3.4.4. *Vibrato*

Flesch distinguished between three different types of vibrato. These are the finger vibrato, the wrist vibrato, and the arm vibrato. According to Flesch, the only satisfactory vibrato is one that combines all three of the abovementioned types (Flesch, 1930:36). Flesch did not elaborate on the mechanical detail of the vibrato motion. He did, however, comment on ways in which to produce different kinds of vibrato. Vibrato can be varied by changing either the amplitude, frequency, or both. Flesch explained that finger vibrato alone is too fast and narrow. On the other hand, wrist vibrato alone, which is caused by the oscillating wrist joint, is unsatisfactorily slow. Combining finger vibrato with wrist vibrato speeds up the oscillation and produces a satisfactory sound. According to Flesch, arm vibrato, which is caused by the “oscillations of the lower arm in the elbow-joint”, typically produces a fast and intense pulsation, and should only be used when the music requires similarly intense expression (Ibid.).

3.4. Shin’ichi Suzuki

The Japanese violin teacher and educator Shin’ichi Suzuki (18 October 1898 – 26 January 1998) is best known for his radically innovative method of teaching the violin known as the Suzuki Method or Talent Education (Shibata & Kanazawa, n.d.). The violinists Toshiya Eto, Takeshi Kobayashi, Koji Toyoda and Hidetaro Suzuki were all taught by Shin’ichi Suzuki (Suzuki, 1983:23). They, however, represent countless others who were taught in the Suzuki method.

Born in Nagoya to a violin-maker father (Masakichi Suzuki, founder of the Suzuki Violin Seizo Company), Suzuki attended the Nagoya Commercial School. He graduated in 1915 after which he started working in his father's business. While studying in Nagoya, Suzuki took violin lessons with Ko Ando.³⁰ In 1921, he travelled to Berlin where he was introduced to violinist Karl Klinger (Shibata & Kanazawa, n.d.).³¹ In Berlin, Suzuki studied with Klinger privately until 1928 after which he returned to Japan (Suzuki, 1983:75).

Suzuki's career as educator started in 1930 when he became president of the Teikoku Music School. He introduced Baroque music to Japanese audiences through the Tokyo String Orchestra which he founded and conducted in the 1930s (Shibata & Kanazawa, n.d.). In 1933, Suzuki had the revelation that talent was not inborn, but rather a result of the child's environment and education. In his words (Suzuki Association of the Americas, Inc., 1997):

Musical ability is not an inborn talent but an ability which can be developed. Any child who is properly trained can develop musical ability, just as all children develop the ability to speak their mother tongue. The potential of every child is unlimited.

This stands in direct opposition to Flesch's thinking on the matter. Flesch, as most of the Western world at the time, regarded musical talent as something special or out of the ordinary – that is to say that only the truly gifted student could be expected to play an instrument well. Suzuki, on the other hand, compares musical ability to something we take for granted: the ability to speak one's mother tongue fluently. With the “mother tongue approach”, as Suzuki's method is also known, he tried to teach music following the same patterns according to which a child learns language.

Suzuki explained the “mother tongue approach” in *Ability Development from Age Zero*. In the chapter *Ability Breeds Ability*, which sums up the core idea of the method, Suzuki explained the way in which a child learns to speak (1981:6):

Let us consider, for instance, the number of times a baby hears the Japanese word “*Uma, Uma*”, before he begins to say it, and what form the acceleration curve for word acquisition takes until he begins to say other words such as *Mama* or *Papa*. From this

³⁰ Japanese violinist Ko Ando (1878 - 1963) studied with Rudolf Dietrich at the Tokyo Music School (graduating in 1896) and with Joseph Joachim at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Berlin in 1900. She was appointed professor at the Tokyo Music School in 1903 (taito-culture.jp, n.d.).

³¹ Karl Klinger (1879 - 1971) was a German violinist and pedagogue. He studied at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Berlin with Joseph Joachim (violin) and Max Bruch (composition). In 1904 Klinger became the second concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. He became Joachim's successor at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Berlin in 1910 (Potter, 1994).

we can see that there is an almost uncountable number of times that the baby will hear “*Uma, Uma*” before he is able to say it. Then that ability must grow a great deal more before he can say *Mama* or *Papa* and have a three word vocabulary. While practicing these three words, his ability must again grow a great deal so as to add a fourth word, and yet again to add a fifth. Here we can see that ability is breeding ability.

In the first *Suzuki violin school*, Suzuki gives five conditions for development of ability, namely: (1) an early start (that is to say, start as young as possible); (2) a superior environment (that is to say, a safe, loving, and nurturing environment in which all of the student’s basic needs are met. Such an environment will be conducive to positive learning.); (3) a commitment to practice; (4) a superior instructor (in other words, a teacher who is trained and qualified to teach); and (5) a thorough teaching method (Suzuki, *Suzuki Violin School*, 2007:4).

In his semi-autobiographical *Nurtured by Love*, Suzuki (1983:17) stated that “every child acquires ability through experience and repetition”. He firmly believed that any and every child could acquire the ability to play the violin well provided that the way it is taught followed the principles of “natural human development”. It should be noted that the majority of Suzuki’s ideas have very little to do with violin playing *per se*. Instead, his thinking was concerned with the philosophy of education.

In 1948, Suzuki, in cooperation with the Hongo Primary School in Matsumoto, Japan, started an experimental class of 40 students (Shibata & Kanazawa, n.d.) which served as testing ground for his philosophy on teaching. Pupils in this class received tuition in various subjects such as languages and mathematics. They were taught according to the principles that Suzuki had developed. The considerable success of this class led Suzuki to found the Saino Kyoiky Yoji Gakuen in 1950.³²

At the Saino Kyoiku Kenkuyu-kai School³³ in Matsumoto, Japan, Suzuki started to apply his philosophy of education to teaching the violin. By 1972 more than 200 000 young children had taken the course developed by Suzuki at this school during the 1950s (Shibata & Kanazawa, n.d.). As a direct result of the great number of children taking up the violin, became a regular feature in Japanese musical life. These concerts were held in venues like the Tokyo

³² The Saino Kyoiku Yoji Gakuen is a school where a class of 60 children aged three to five are taught according to Suzuki’s method. Pupils at the school receive instruction in Japanese pronunciation, Chinese letters, calligraphy, drawing, conversational English and gymnastics (Shibata & Kanazawa, n.d.).

³³ *Saino Kyoiku Kenkyukai* is the Japanese name of Talent Education Research Institute.

Gymnasium and featured more than a thousand young children on stage (Suzuki, 1983:100). The Saino Kyoiku Kenkyu-kai currently has 83 branches in Japan.

Suzuki compiled ten volumes of violin repertoire, titled *Suzuki violin school*. The idea was that each Suzuki learner starts with book one and works his or her way through to book ten in well-graded steps.

The first three volumes of the *Suzuki violin school* (or “Suzuki books” as they are colloquially known) consists of transcriptions of the classical repertoire, folk melodies, and original compositions by Suzuki (Barber, n.d.). The first volume has the famous variations on the popular English lullaby *Twinkle, twinkle little star* as the first piece. These variations mainly develop various bowing patterns and bow strokes (Suzuki, 2007).

Volumes 4 to 8 consist of standard violin repertoire ranging from an intermediate to more advanced difficulty level. These books include sonatas by Händel, Corelli, and Veracini as well as concertos by Vivaldi and Bach. Volumes 9 and 10 consist of Mozart’s *Violin Concerto No. 5* in A major and his *Violin Concerto No. 4* in D major respectively.

Everything in the Suzuki method is taught following three main steps, namely: (1) listening, (2) tonalisation and (3) playing (Stowell, 1994:229). The first step, listening, develops musical sensitivity. According to Suzuki, children should be immersed in music in the same way they are immersed in language while learning their mother tongue. In a general violin lesson this usually translates to the teacher having to first demonstrate what a certain melody, exercise, or even piece sounds like before moving on to the next step.

Tonalisation is Suzuki’s term for the development of tone production. It is equivalent to the singer’s vocalisation exercises (Solomon, n.d.). Tonalisation exercises, which usually involve only open strings or a few notes from a scale, focus the student’s attention on sound quality. It gives the student a chance to refine his or her sound production before attempting the next step.

Playing, the third step in the Suzuki method, develops artistic and technical abilities. The method’s principle goal is to “cultivate artistic appreciation in students in their formative years” and to allow them “to develop their artistic potential simultaneously with their technical skills” (Stowell, 1994:229).

3.4.1. Philosophical background

As stated before, the core philosophy of Suzuki's method is that any and every child has the ability to learn to play the violin well. The learning process, however, is very important and needs to be carefully guided by the teacher. Certain aspects of the learning process stand out in his approach. Suzuki (1983:17) stated that "every child acquires ability through experience and repetition" and according to Cary (2011:404), "repetition is the main factor of achievement in [Suzuki's] philosophy [of] string teaching". In Suzuki's approach, students continually have to review work that has already been learnt. Suzuki believed that "working for perfection on the previous piece is the most important point for cultivating abilities" (ibid.).

Furthermore, Suzuki believed that it is crucial for the student to make music with other students, hence one of the hallmarks of the Suzuki method is group teaching. Suzuki explained that "because the student will hear and play with more advanced students than himself, his own playing will improve greatly" (Suzuki, 2008:5).

This links to another feature of the Suzuki method which is the supporting role parents are expected to play in the teaching process. Parents are required to attend lessons and support their children's practising (Spencer, n.d.). Suzuki believed that the "constant encouragement" from the parents was very important in keeping the student motivated (Cary, 2011:404).

Suzuki saw it as crucially important that the student stayed motivated throughout the learning process. He held that this could be achieved through constructive support and regular encouraging feedback (Cary, 2011:404). In other words, the student has to be continuously made aware of improvements in his or her playing. This would lead to the student believing that further improvement is not only possible, but also achievable and to be expected.

Suzuki firmly believed that daily practice according to a set schedule was the key to making progress. He said that practice time should be increased gradually, but more importantly, practice sessions should not be spent wastefully, but rather with "proper focus on key points" (Suzuki, 2007:4). In other words, Suzuki believed that discipline is an important factor for success.

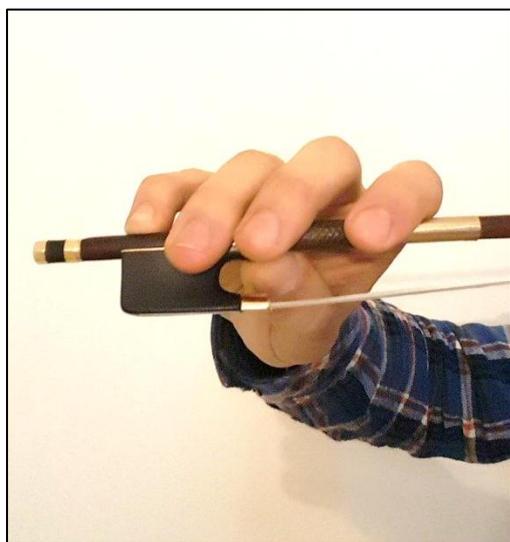
In Suzuki's method, practice time is usually divided between exercises that develop bow control, exercises that develop the left hand, the learning of new repertoire, and the perfecting of familiar repertoire (Suzuki, 2007:4).

3.4.2. Bowing

3.4.2.1. *Bow grip*

The bow grip advocated by Suzuki is related to the so-called German bow grip (Perkins, 1995:151), and stands in contrast to Flesch's bow grip (see Figure 4). In this grip the index finger, middle finger and ring finger all touch the bow at the crease between their intermediate and distal phalanges. The thumb and little finger are bent and the little finger stays on the bow at all times (Perkins, 1995:45). The four fingers are at a circa 90 degree angle with the bow stick and the knuckles form a line parallel to the bow stick. The fingers are held closely together and stay in relatively fixed positions during bowing.

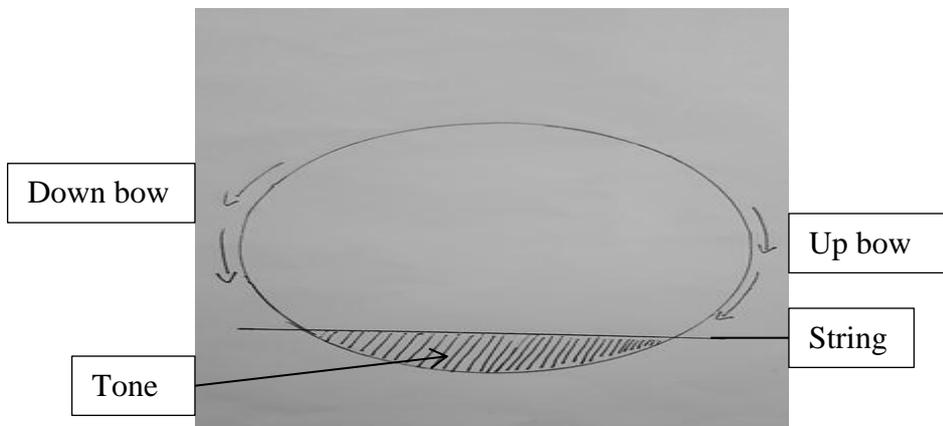
Figure 4: The German bow grip



3.4.2.2. *Sound production*

Suzuki described the movement of the bow and the right arm in terms of a circle. He stressed the fact that the bow “does not move on top of the string in a horizontal line” (Hermann, 1981:195) but rather, in order to produce a warm and deep sound, the elbow has to move in an inverted arch. Suzuki used the image of the bow being drawn “under the string” (ibid.). See Figure 5 **Error! Reference source not found.** for clarification.

Figure 5: Drawing the sound “under the string”



In Suzuki’s method, the right arm and elbow relative to the level of the bow is quite low (see Figure 6) (Hermann, 1981:196). According to Perkins (1995:44), this low arm position is one of the most controversial aspects of Suzuki’s technique. This position of the right arm during bowing, however, originates with Joachim (i.e., the German school).

Figure 6: The low bow arm



Taken from Shinichi Suzuki: *The Man and His Philosophy* (Hermann, 1981:196)

Suzuki saw the thumb as the fulcrum on which the bow pivots. The middle finger and ring finger exert force on opposite sides of this fulcrum. In order to achieve the same sound quality on a down bow and up bow, Suzuki taught that pressure should be added with the ring finger on a down bow and with the middle finger on an up bow (Hermann, 1981:206).

In order to make a smooth bow change at the frog, Suzuki advocated that the wrist should make a rotary action (Perkins, 1995:44). The right hand fingers, however, stay relatively stiff and do not actively participate in the bow change.

3.4.3. Posture, stance, and violin hold

In the Suzuki stance, the body weight is placed on the left foot (Perkins, 1995:177). The feet form a V-shape with the left foot somewhat in front of the right foot (1995:198).

The violin is held in a similar way to what Flesch taught. In Suzuki's method, the violin is supported by the player's chin and collar bone (Perkins, 1995:178). This tends to be a rather firm hold.

3.4.4. The left arm and hand

3.4.4.1. *Posture of the hand and fingers*

Suzuki taught that the left hand should be held high in relation to the fingerboard, preferably with the knuckles above the level of the fingerboard (Perkins, 1995:143). This hand position is achieved, in part, by bringing the left elbow underneath the centre of the body of the violin (in other words, the elbow is brought to the right) (1995:179). The thumb should be relaxed and opposite the first finger (Suzuki, 2007:23). Similar to what Flesch advocated, in Suzuki's method, the wrist is kept straight and turned toward the body of the violin (ibid.).

3.4.4.2. *Intonation*

Suzuki did not discuss the mechanism of intonation in great detail. From his method, however, it is clear that finger frames,³⁴ i.e. the pattern of whole tones and semitone spacings between the fingers, formed the basis of secure intonation (Perkins, 1995:46).

3.4.4.3. *Shifting*

In the Suzuki method, shifting is only taught after first position playing has been thoroughly learned (Perkins, 1995:146). Suzuki did not go into much of the finer technical aspects of shifting. He did, however, recommend that the left arm should lead the shift (ibid.).

³⁴ The term "finger frame" refers to the pattern of spacing of the fingers in relation to each other. It is a device used to simplify the learning of intonation and pitches on a fretless instrument. There are four basic frames in which the fingers are spaced at the following intervals (starting from the space between the first and second finger): semitone – whole tone – whole tone; whole tone – semitone – whole tone; whole tone – whole tone – semitone; and whole tone – whole tone – whole tone.

3.4.4.4. *Vibrato*

In Suzuki's method, no clear description is given of the mechanics of the vibrato motion. Suzuki did, however, give exercises to develop vibrato. From these exercises, his concept of the vibrato movement can be deduced. According to Suzuki, vibrato is a back and forth movement of the hand which suggests a wrist vibrato. He called this oscillatory movement "rocking back and forth" (Suzuki, 2008:9).

3.5. **Ivan Galamian**

Born in Tabriz, Iran, but of Armenian descent, Ivan Galamian (23 January 1903 – 14 April 1981) studied at the School of the Philharmonic Society in Moscow with Konstantin Mostras from 1916 to 1922. In 1922, Galamian went to Paris to study with Lucien Capet for a year (1922-1923) where he made his début in 1924 (Schwarz & Campbell, n.d.). As a performer, Galamian struggled with nerves and health issues which prevented him from having a career as concert soloist. It is as a teacher, however, that he left a remarkable legacy in the international string community. Galamian held honorary doctorates from Oberlin College, the Curtis Institute of Music and the Cleveland Institute of Music; he was made an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Music in London in 1965; and in 1956, Galamian received the Master Teacher Award of the American String Teachers Association (Schwarz & Campbell, n.d.). His ideas on violin playing and teaching are set out in two method books: *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, and *Contemporary Violin Technique*.

Galamian's pedagogical career began in the 1930s, when he became a faculty member at the Russian Conservatory in Paris (Katz, 1994:428). In 1937, Galamian moved to the USA, settling in New York where he opened a private music school. By this stage, he had given up performing and focussed solely on teaching. In 1944, Galamian was appointed at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, USA. Later that year, he founded the Meadowmount School of Music in New York where he taught during the summers. In 1946, he was appointed at the Julliard School of Music in New York where he taught until his death in 1981 (Katz, 1994:428).

Galamian's students dominated the international violin competition scene for four decades. According to Schwarz and Campbell (Galamian, Ivan, n.d.), every major international violin competition from 1940 to 1980 had laureates taught by Galamian. Some of his notable students include Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Kyung-Wha Chung, Ida Kavafian, Philippe Djokic, Glenn Dicterow and Michael Rabin (Stowell, 1994:228-229). The equally renowned

violin teacher Dorothy DeLay, who De Wet claimed has influenced some of his ideas, was also one of Galamian's pupils.

According to Stowell (1994:228), Galamian's teaching method "embraces the best traditions of the Russian [Mostras] and French [Capet] Violin schools". By this, it should be understood that Galamian's approach was not a rigid one, but instead flexible and adaptive. Schwarz and Campbell (n.d.) stated that Galamian strived to develop the individuality of each student. According to Galamian, the teacher should be devoted to find what is natural, comfortable, and efficient for a particular student. In other words, "naturalness" should be the first guiding principle in any technique (Galamian, 1985:1).

Similar to Flesch, Galamian was very analytical and rational in his approach to violin technique. As Schwarz and Campbell (n.d.) put it, "[Galamian gave] minute attention to every technical detail." The key to technical mastery, according to Galamian, was mental control over physical movement, or in his own words (Galamian, 1985:5):

Technique is the ability to direct mentally and to execute physically all of the necessary playing movements of left and right hands, arms, and fingers. [...] In short, it is the complete mastery over all of the potentialities of the instrument. It implies the ability to do justice [...] to each and every demand of the most refined musical imagination.

Galamian's *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, first published in 1962, is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of violin technique, and according to Swarts (2003:30), it "looms as one of the greatest violin treatises in the literature". The work is divided into four main sections that cover technique and interpretation in general, left hand technique, right hand technique, and Galamian's thoughts on practising. In *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*, Galamian gave advice on how to approach a myriad of technical problems together with clear explanations of the mechanical, physical, psychological, and musical aspects of various techniques (Galamian, 1985).

Contemporary Violin Technique, first published in 1977, was intended to serve as a "method of study covering the essential elements of contemporary violin technique" (Galamian & Neumann, 1977:ii). It is comparable to Flesch's *Das Skalensystem* in respect to the fact that both works are based on scales. Galamian, however, wrote over a hundred pages of bowing variations, rhythmic variations, exercises, and practice techniques as supplement to the scales.

3.5.1. Philosophical background

Underlying Galamian's approach to teaching is his definition of technique as mental control over physical movement. In order to develop this control, Galamian believed that practice should be disciplined, structured and clear, and involve mental planning. The latter is crucial to the learning process because it involves problem solving. In Galamian's words (Galamian, 1985:99):

The mind, which has to be able to anticipate the action, must have a clear picture of the motion involved, of its technical timing, and of the anticipated sound in order to give its commands with clarity and precision.

The notion of discipline and structure was of great importance to Galamian. Of equal importance to him, however, was the adaptability and flexibility of technique. He believed that not only should the technique be adapted to suit the student's physical specifications, but that the student should also be able to adapt his or her technique to the requirements of the music.

3.5.2. Bowing

3.5.2.1. *Bow grip*

Galamian taught the Franco-Belgian style bow grip,³⁵ although he did not advocate a single, fixed bow hold. Instead, he held that the bow grip is "subject to constant modification as the bow moves from one end to the other and as the player changes his dynamics, bowing styles, and tonal qualities" (Galamian, 1985:45).

3.5.2.2. *Sound production*

Galamian envisaged bowing technique as a system of interconnected "springs" with the bow hair, bow stick, fingers, thumb, hand, wrist, elbow, and shoulder each forming one of the "springs" (Galamian & Neumann, 1977). Throughout the bowing movement, some "springs" become tighter while others become looser. In order to get the best possible sound, the arm has to move in a coordinated way so as to prevent certain "springs" becoming too tight while others become too loose. In other words, every part of the arm needs to constantly adjust in reaction to movement in any other part of the arm in order to keep the whole system in balance. All bowing techniques, therefore, always involve the whole arm.

³⁵ This bow grip is described in detail under heading 3.6.2.1.

The “springs” in the fingers are chiefly responsible for creating seamless bow changes. Bow changes involve active participation of the fingers which Galamian developed through *collé* exercises.

As stated before, Galamian believed that discipline was important to developing successful technique. With regard to sound production, he said that “[a] well-controlled and logical division of the bow is of the greatest importance” (1985:60). This implies that the student has to always be aware of where in the bow he or she is playing and which part of the arm or hand is responsible for the movement of the bow in that part.

Galamian believed that bowing motions are sequential and that anticipation is the key to certain techniques such as string crossings. The elbow, for example, has to lead a string crossing, arriving on the plane of the new string ahead of the hand and the bow (Galamian, 1985:73).

Of the four pedagogues discussed in this chapter, Galamian gave the most attention to the topic of sounding point in his work.³⁶ He stressed that bow pressure, bow speed and sounding point are interconnected aspects of sound production. All three of these factors need to be in balance with each other in order to create a good sound. In other words, changing one of the factors will necessitate a change in at least one of the other two factors (Galamian, 1985:55).

3.5.3. Playing posture, stance, and violin hold

Galamian did not prefer one stance over another. Instead, his main concern was that the player should be at ease. He did, however, caution against exaggerated body movements while playing (Neumann, 1969:129), adding that an upright, or “straight-line stance will nurture a posture, which generates freedom and movement” (Galamian, 1985:14).

Galamian had a flexible approach to the violin hold, but maintained that the violin ought to be supported by the “double contact” between the left hand thumb and base of the index finger (or thumb and palm of the hand when playing in higher positions) (Neumann, 1969:129). The most important factor, according to Galamian, was the “naturalness” of the violin hold to the player. He preferred a slightly raised position of the instrument and cautioned against a position where the scroll points downward (1969:13).

³⁶ Sounding point, or contact point, refers to the point of contact between the bridge and fingerboard where the bow contacts the string.

3.5.4. The left arm and hand

3.5.4.1. *Posture of the hand and fingers*

Galamian's primary concern was that the hand should be in as natural a position as possible (Galamian, 1985:100). Therefore, the posture of the hand should be largely determined by the build of the player. Galamian, however, taught that the fingers of the left hand should be curled and kept close to the string while playing, remaining at the same time relaxed and without tension.

3.5.4.2. *Intonation*

Galamian taught that good intonation is "dependent on the utilisation of a gentle and sensitive action of touch (Galamian, 1985:22). He stressed the importance of not only listening, but also *feeling* the position of a note with the hand and finger. To facilitate the ability to sense the pitch of a note through touch, Galamian believed that the hand should always be in contact with the violin – either with the thumb and base of the index finger in lower positions, or with the thumb and the palm of the hand in higher positions (ibid.). He warned that excessive pressure from the thumb would inhibit the sensitivity of the hand, thereby resulting in less secure intonation (1985:17).

Additionally, Galamian believed that intonation could be made more reliable by keeping the fingers in a finger frame at all times (1985:20). Moreover, Galamian advised that the fingers should be kept down on the string as far as possible,³⁷ especially in passage work (1985:28). Every finger that is kept down on the string functions as a reference for the placement of any other finger. This relates to Galamian's disciplined and structured way of teaching and playing.

Figure 7: Keeping the fingers down



³⁷ In other words, as a general rule, a finger should only be lifted if and when it is necessary to do so. See Figure 7 for a practical example of what is meant by this. A line indicates that the finger should be held on the string. Double lines indicate that the finger should be held over two strings.

3.5.4.3. Shifting

Galamian distinguished between two categories of shifting. The first category, “complete shifts”, involves shifts where the whole hand and arm moves to the new position. Galamian divided this category into three different types of shifts. The first two types are identical to Flesch’s “shift with the departing finger” and “shift with the arriving finger”. The third type, however, involves a change of position where the finger stretches to the new position after which the hand follows. This type of shift avoids the *glissando* sound associated with the other two types of shifts. The second category, or half shifts, does not involve the hand or arm moving to the new position. Instead, only the fingers move to the new position by means of stretching or contracting (Galamian, 1985:24).

Galamian taught that particular attention should be given to the elbow while shifting. He maintained that the change in the angle of the elbow could gauge the distance of the shift. In other words, the shift should not only be heard by the ear and felt by the hand and fingers, but should also be measured by the change in the angle of the elbow as it opens and closes during shifting (Galamian, 1985:20)

3.5.4.4. Vibrato

Galamian stressed the importance of having control over the vibrato motion (Neumann, 1969:123). He advised that the student practise controlling the width and speed of the vibrato using exercises he developed in *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* (Galamian, 1985).

Similar to Flesch, Galamian emphasised the importance of developing arm, wrist, and finger vibrato (Neumann, 1969:121). He realised that the different ways of producing the vibrato motion results in different colours of vibrato. Furthermore, in order for vibrato to truly be an expressive means, the player should be able to adapt the type of vibrato to suit the style of the music (Galamian, 1985:37).

3.6. Paul Rolland

Hungarian-American violinist and violist Paul Rolland (11 November 1911 – 9 November 1978) left a considerable legacy in the field of beginner string pedagogy and received numerous recognitions for his contribution in raising the standards of string teaching in the USA (Fanelli, n.d.). Rolland had a great interest in applying new findings from the fields of physics and kinesiology to his teaching method (Perkins, 1995:92). This set his approach apart as one that was scientifically, rather than technically or philosophically based (Stowell,

1994:229). Rolland's ideas about human physical movement, or what he called "action", stand at the core of his method.

Rolland began his violin training at the age of eleven in his native Hungary (Perkins, 1995:24). At the age of eighteen, however, Rolland started taking lessons with Dezos Rados,³⁸ who completely transformed his playing, at the Fodor School of Music in Hungary (1995:27). Rados taught Rolland the principals of "body-mechanics" and relaxation. Under Rados, Rolland's playing improved enough that he accepted into the class of Imre Waldbauer³⁹ at the prestigious Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest (Fanelli, n.d.). According to Rolland, Waldbauer placed particular emphasis on a player's motion patterns, comfort, and relaxation (1995:27).

In 1938, Rolland too immigrated to the United States with the Pro Ideale Quartet. The quartet disbanded two years later as a consequence of financial and personal difficulties. Rolland, who had had a keen interest in teaching since his late teens, decided to completely give up performing and pursue a career as pedagogue instead (Perkins, 1995:25). This is, in the author's opinion, one of the many parallels that can be drawn between the careers and lives of Rolland and De Wet.⁴⁰

Rolland's first teaching appointment was at Simpson College at Indianola, USA, from 1940 to 1945 (Fanelli, n.d.). From 1944 to 1945, he also taught at the University of Iowa. At this stage, Rolland was fairly unknown and he only had a few students. He was adamant, however, to build a string department. Rolland approached the local schools and started a class of young beginners. This beginner class was where Rolland could test out his ideas on string pedagogy. Rolland, for example, started teaching students in groups, or what he called "class teaching".

³⁸ Dezos Rados, a student of Gyula Mambriny (who had been a student of Jenő Hubay) and János Koessler, believed that the body of the violin and the bow must be organically connected with the human body. As a teacher, Rados built on the work of the pedagogue József Bloch – a pioneer of Hungarian violin pedagogy and teaching methodology. Rados regarded good tone production as the most important aspect of violin playing. He encouraged his students to analyse all aspects of music maintaining that a crucial part of being a good artist is the ability to analyse not only musical, theoretical, and aesthetic aspects of repertoire, but also the technical and physical aspects of playing the violin. (Anon., n.d.).

³⁹ Imre Waldbauer studied with Jenő Hubay. He taught violin and viola at the Music Academy in Budapest and was a founding member of the Hungarian String Quartet. His notable students include Kato Havas, Vilmos Tátrai, Robert Gerle and Dénes Zsigmondy (Quick, 2010).

⁴⁰ Other similarities in the lives and careers of Rolland and De Wet include: the fact that their first teachers laid down a less than excellent technique (in the case of Rolland, this is deduced from the fact that Dezos Rados, his second teacher, "completely overhauled" his technique); both De Wet and Rolland gave up their performing careers after only a couple of years, in favour for teaching. This suggests that, not only might they not have been the best performers, but also that they had passion for (or obsession with) teaching; De Wet and Rolland both had a love for investigating the newest developments in violin playing as well as in science; both pedagogues started their teaching careers in places where string playing was either unknown or at a very low level; and both pedagogues applied "new" or "revolutionary" ideas to their teaching methods, sometimes going against the orthodox methods of the day.

This was a novelty in the USA at the time, but would become one of the hallmarks of Rolland's method (Eisele, 1980). Rolland's method of violin teaching is geared toward the beginner (Eales, 1992:92) and aims to utilise the natural physical responses of the human body in violin playing (Perkins, 1995:94).

In late 1945, Rolland, at this stage having made a name for himself, accepted a position as Chair of the string division at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a position which he held until 1968. From 1968 until his death in 1978, Rolland was Professor of Violin at the same university (Fanelli, n.d.).

In his capacity as Chair of the string division, Rolland had access to resources enabling him to conduct ground-breaking research into string pedagogy as well as a platform from which to disseminate his findings.⁴¹ The American String Teachers Association (ASTA), founded by Rolland in 1946, and the subsequent journal *American String Teacher* (first published in 1950), exposed American music teachers to the newest ideas in string pedagogy (Perkins, 1995:25). ASTA was meant as an organization to help string teachers of all levels refine and develop their careers through regular workshops and networking opportunities (American String Teachers Association, n.d.). The organization is still active today and the *American String Teacher* journal is published four times a year.

Apart from numerous articles published mainly in the *American String Teacher*, three works authored by Rolland stand out. These are *Basic Principles of Violin Playing*, first published in 1959, *The Teaching of Action in String Playing*, first published in 1974, and *Action Studies*, also published in 1974.

Basic Principles of Violin Playing (1959), is a pamphlet intended for violin teachers in schools, dealing with teaching basic violin technique as well as more intermediate and advanced level technique (Eisele, 1980). It is divided into two sections. In the first section, titled *Teaching Violin Fundamentals*, Rolland gave detailed instructions on how to establish the correct bow hold and violin hold. He also discussed the violinist's general posture and stance. The rest of this section is devoted to exercises which develop the movements necessary to play the violin.

⁴¹ Rolland believed that the existing methodologies were unsuccessful in conveying what the student had to do physically and intellectually to play the violin. Eisele (1980) stated that "Rolland was possessed by the desire to improve string pedagogy". Rolland analysed every possible movement in string playing and strived to find the most fundamental method to convey his findings.

These exercises show the connection between everyday movements and those used in violin playing.

The second section, *Intermediate – Advanced Level*, deals with more advanced violin technique. In this section, Rolland discussed technical aspects such as vibrato, tone quality, articulation, bow pressure, bow speed, and different types of shifting. Rolland gave various exercises to develop these techniques, again stressing the fact that these movements, although they might be more complex, are in essence of the same nature as the movements in the first section (and in turn, similar to the movements one makes in everyday life) (Rolland, 1979).

According to Perkins (1995:33), Rolland was influenced by the ideas of F. M. Alexander.⁴² In *The Use of Self: Its Conscious Direction in Relation to Diagnosis, Functioning and the control of Reaction*, Alexander wrote: “The unity of the human organism is indivisible”. That is to say that the human body functions as a whole. In Alexander’s (1932) words: “The parts of the human organism are knit so closely into a unity that any attempt to make a fundamental change in the working of a part is bound to alter the use and adjustment of the whole”. Rolland’s ideas resonated with Alexander’s mission which was to train people to improve their body alignment through simple everyday actions (Perkins, 1995:33).

Not only was Rolland committed to the research activities of other string pedagogues, he was also, as Perkins (1995:92) put it, “keenly interested in applying new scientific information from the fields of physics and kinesiology to his method”. In 1966, Rolland initiated the Illinois String Research Project to conduct further research into violin playing and teaching (Fanelli, n.d.). The project, which lasted from 1966 to 1970, led to Rolland’s *The Teaching of Action in String Playing* and an accompanying series of seventeen films which cover the topics of string instruction for the first two years of study (Stowell, 1994:229).

In *The Teaching of Action in String Playing*, Rolland discussed the principles of movement as applied to violin playing. Rolland analysed each detail of basic violin technique and showed how it should be taught (Eisele, 1980). The work includes sections on rhythm training, bow hold, general left hand technique, finger placements, shifting, and developing flexibility (Rolland, 1986). Throughout the book, the focus is on movement and the development of good

⁴² Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869 – 1955) was an Australian actor who theorised that people, due to a variety of factors, have lost the ability to use their bodies optimally (even in everyday activities). He developed a technique, known as the Alexander Technique, to help restore this lost ability by re-educating the body to become aware of itself. With his technique, it is possible to reduce undue muscular tension and strain through a continuous process of self-monitoring (awareness), inhibition of harmful habitual movement patterns, and discovering of improved “use of self” (Alexander, 1932; Bloch 2011).

motor skills. Rolland believed that good motor skills in any activity (e.g. violin playing) requires coordination, timing and patient practice (Stowell, 1994:229), and that tension could be eliminated by “total body action” to allow for real physical involvement with the music (Eisele, 1980).

The first part of *The Teaching of Action in String Playing* was authored by F. A. Hellebrandt, a medical doctor. Titled *Control and regulation of voluntary movement: application of newer knowledge to violin pedagogy*, it is an examination of the physiological basis of movement in violin playing. Hellebrandt showed how a better understanding of physiological processes exposed shortcomings in certain pedagogical methods (Rolland, 1986). By including this chapter in *The Teaching of Action in String Playing*, Rolland showed his commitment to ground his method in scientific understanding.

Rolland’s *Action Studies* (1974) is a compilation of “movement studies” that focus on cultivating free movement, healthy tone production, accurate rhythmic responses, and correct posture (Stowell, 1994:229). Rolland believed that tension in the body could be “dissolved by movement” (Perkins, 1995:93). These studies are meant as developmental and remedial technique builders (Drees, 1994:298). *Action Studies* is divided into the following chapters, each focussing on a different aspect of technique: *Movement and violin support*; *Movement and bowing*; *Movement in swing, pushed, and sustained strokes*; *Movement in shifting*; and *Movement in vibrato* (Perkins, 1995:93). The “movement studies” are designed to help transfer the weight of the violin into the muscles of the back, which in turn frees up the arms to do their tasks more efficiently.

Rolland devoted much of his instruction to the physical factors of tone-quality (Eales, 1992:104). This focus on the physical side of violin playing is typical of Rolland’s view of the human body as a “violin-playing machine” (Perkins, 1995:92).

3.6.1. Philosophical background

Rolland argued that “the basic formula for technical success is naturalness” (Rolland, 1979:8). Although this is similar to Galamian’s idea of naturalness, Rolland, however, delved deeper into the physiological implications of the term. He believed that the movements used in violin playing should, similar to everyday movements, be well-coordinated and free of undue tension. The violinist should also strive to obtain the maximum results with the minimum expenditure of energy (ibid.). In other words, violin technique should be natural and energy efficient.

In order to develop the natural “body responses” (Perkins, 1995:94) in violin playing, Rolland believed that the body should be viewed as a whole where “all parts of the body [...] are ideally in fluid motion” (Rolland, 1979:8). In other words, Rolland held that movements in one part of the body should be seen in connection to the movement of the body as a whole.

Furthermore, Rolland believed that the movements in violin playing become automatic after enough repetition, that is to say technique is eventually controlled “below the level of conscious awareness” (Rolland, 1986:17). Therefore, the “rich and abundant muscle feedbacks” that relay information directly to the subconscious mind, should be utilised to regulate the execution of technique. In other words, the kinaesthetic sense of the body should be exploited in violin playing.

3.6.2. Bowing

3.6.2.1. *Bow grip*

Rolland recommended a Franco-Belgian style bow hold (see Figure 8), and used very precise language to describe it. In this bow grip, the index finger “rather passively rests on top of the bow”, touching the bow somewhere near the middle of its intermediate phalange. The thumb, touching the bow with the right corner of its tip, and little finger, touching the bow with its tip, should be rounded at all times.

Figure 8: The Franco-Belgian bow grip



An important feature of this bow hold, in the author’s opinion, is the type of contact that the middle and ring fingers have with the stick, which Rolland called “clinging support” (Perkins, 1995:116). The middle finger touches the bow stick with the crease between its intermediate and distal phalanges, whereas the ring finger “rests on the side of the frog or stick (or both)”

with the main point of contact being the pad⁴³ of its distal phalange, pulling the bow gently toward the palm (Rolland, 1979:8). When viewed from the front, the fingers form a circa 70 degree angle with the bow stick. The knuckles form an almost parallel line with the bow stick and are close to the level of the bow stick.

3.6.2.2. *Sound production*

Although Flesch, Suzuki, and Galamian advocated the use of circular movements in bowing, none of them applied the concept of rotary motions in bowing to the extent that Rolland did. In *The Teaching of Action in String Playing*, Rolland described the exact sequence of arm movements for a down bow and up bow as well as the bow changes.

Rolland believed that the down bow should be initiated by the shoulder blade muscles. As the arm moves from left to right during a down bow, the upper arm should rotate from the shoulder joint in a counter-clockwise direction. This will cause not only the forearm, but the whole arm, to pronate as the bow moves toward the tip. As a result, the index finger and middle finger will exert more pressure on the bow, compensating for the loss of power in the upper half of the bow. In addition to the opening of the shoulder joint and elbow joint and the pronation of the arm, the elbow should be pushed slightly forward. This will cause the bow to travel at a slightly greater than 90 degree angle with the string.

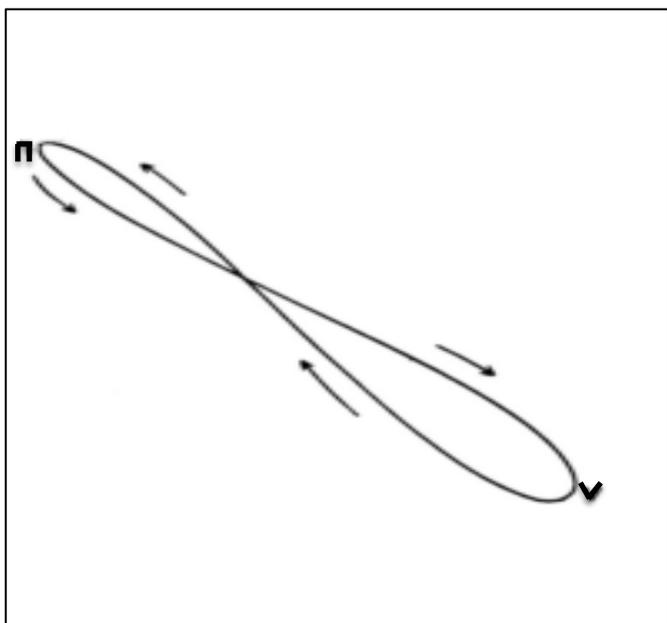
In an up bow, the closing of the elbow joint and shoulder joint is accompanied by a clockwise rotation of the arm from the shoulder joint (Rolland, 1986:173). This will cause the arm to supinate as the bow moves toward the nut. As a result, pressure is removed from the index finger and middle finger and transferred to the ring finger and little finger, consequently removing some of the weight of the bow from the string. Accompanying these movements, Rolland advised that the elbow should be pulled slightly in, resulting in the bow traveling at a slightly less than 90 degree angle to the string.

Rolland taught that bow changes are sequential movements initiated by the muscles in the shoulder and back. In other words, the change of bow is anticipated by a change of direction in the upper arm, followed by the forearm, and then the hand. Lastly, the fingers of the right hand change direction, bringing with it the bow. Rolland called this a “follow-through” movement (Perkins, 1995:122). Furthermore, the bow change does not involve any part of the arm or the bow ever coming to a complete stop. In two successive bows, every part of the arm and the

⁴³ *Finger pad* refers to the underside of the distal phalange.

bow instead describe a sideways figure 8 when viewed from above (see Figure 9). This means that the change of direction always occurs over two planes (in a bow change on one string, the first plane is left to right and the second plane is back to front – both planes are on a horizontal axis) and therefore never involves a stop and start motion.

Figure 9: Sideways figure 8 described by all parts of the arm and bow during bowing



3.6.3. Playing posture, stance, and violin hold

Rolland taught an upright stance with the weight of the body balanced over both legs. The body weight should be continuously shifted between the left and right legs while playing (Rolland, 1979:13). This shifting of weight is a reaction to the movement of the arm during broad bowing motions. Rolland stressed the fact that the knees should not be stiffened while playing (ibid.).

The position of the violin in Rolland's method is determined by the player's build. The violin should be at an angle which makes it possible to play at the tip and the heel of the bow, with the bow forming a 90 degree angle with the strings, without creating discomfort (Rolland, 1979:10). The left hand should also be able to reach the higher positions without strain. The violin is balanced between six contact points, namely the collar bone, chin, left hand thumb, left side of the left hand index finger, and the fingertips (Perkins, 1995:100). In positions higher than the 4th position, the inside of the wrist or palm of the hand replaces the side of the index finger as contact point (ibid).

Rolland pointed out that the weight of the violin should not only be supported by the shoulder muscles, but that the weight of the instrument should also be channelled to the muscles of the back. According to Rolland, the diaphragm also plays a role in supporting the violin (Rolland, 1979:13).

3.6.4. The left arm and hand

3.6.4.1. *Posture of the hand*

Rolland recommended that the violin should rest on the thumb's intermediate phalange. The position of the thumb, however, is not fixed and depends largely on the size and shape of the player's hand. Rolland added that the thumb should always "seek for the best possible foothold" while playing (Rolland, 1979:19). Nonetheless, the thumb usually falls naturally between the 1st and 2nd fingers (Rolland, 1986:90).

Rolland taught that the knuckles of the left hand should be in an almost parallel line to the fingerboard. To achieve this, he taught that the forearm had to be rotated clockwise (supinate) (Rolland, 1979:19). The left hand should also be raised in order to bring the knuckles high in relation to the fingerboard. The wrist should remain straight and should form an unbroken line from the forearm to the hand (1979:18).

3.6.4.2. *Intonation*

Rolland believed that a balanced left hand was a prerequisite to secure intonation. In such a position, all four fingers are able to reach upcoming notes without strain (Rolland, 1986:105). Secondly, Rolland believed that the tactile senses of the fingers had to be exploited. In other words, the violinist needs to feel the position of a note as well as hear it (1986:98).

3.6.4.3. *Finger action*

Rolland discussed the action of the left hand fingers in detail. According to Rolland, the finger action could be divided into three phases. Firstly, the finger drops to the string; the second part of the action is the finger keeping the string down; and thirdly, the finger leaves the string (Rolland, 1979:45). Rolland described the dropping of the fingers as a "live spring-like action" and cautioned that the initial contact with the string should not be slow as this will result in a blurred sound. However, in slow, lyrical passages, the fingers should be "placed rather than dropped". After the finger has hit the string, it should relax and be allowed to vibrate. The finger has to leave the string in a very quick and springy movement, similar to that of the

attack. To do this, the finger is pulled back in a quick movement from the base knuckle⁴⁴ (1979:45)

Rolland believed that the “method of finger application” has an influence on the quality of tone (Rolland, 1979:45). According to him, the left hand fingers should land on their pads and not on their tips. Furthermore, the string should touch the finger pad slightly to the left of the centre.

3.6.4.4. *Shifting*

Rolland’s views on shifting are in essence the same as those of Flesch (Neumann, 1969:131). For Rolland, the key to successful shifting lies in a dynamically balanced and mobile left arm (1969:109). Rolland, however, stressed the fact that shifting, like bowing, is a sequential movement (Perkins, 1995:108). The arm initiates the shift by “leaning in the direction of the new position” (Rolland, 1979:31). This causes the wrist to lean in the same direction which, in turn, moves the finger to the new position. Rolland described the finger as first “resisting” the shift before releasing and moving with the wrist and arm (1979:31). With this type of sequential movement, in order to arrive on the new note on time, it is important that the shift is anticipated.

Rolland recommended that the thumb should be very flexible during shifting and lean in the direction of the shift before the hand actually moves to the new position. The thumb, in other words, also anticipates the shift (Rolland, 1979:19).

Interestingly, Rolland said that the left elbow should swing to the left in long ascending shifts, and to the right in long descending shifts (Perkins, 1995:109). This is contrary to what Flesch and Suzuki taught, and as will be explained in the next chapter, similar to the way in which De Wet taught this aspect. Flesch and Suzuki taught that in upward shifts, the elbow should swing to the right, and to the left in downward shifts. This results in the elbow and hand moving in the same direction relative to the body of the violinist when shifting which, in turn, causes the balance of the arm to change. (In an upward shift, the elbow and the hand would both move toward the body of the violinist as well as from left to right). In Rolland’s method, however, the elbow and the hand move in opposite directions in relation to the body of the violinist. (In an upward shift, the hand would move toward the body of the violinist and from left to right. The elbow, on the other hand, would move from right to left and away from the body of the

⁴⁴ *Base knuckle* refers to the top side of the joint where the finger joins with the hand.

violinist). In other words, Rolland believed that shifting should incorporate rotary movements from the shoulder joint. (In a downward shift, the arm rotates counter clockwise, and in an upward shift, it rotates clockwise).

Rolland described shifting as a way of “measuring” (Rolland, 1979:30). When practicing a shift, the player should carefully judge and measure the distance travelled by the arm, hand, thumb, and fingers.

3.6.4.5. *Vibrato*

Rolland viewed the vibrato motion as cyclic, rather than oscillatory as Suzuki viewed it. Examples of cyclic movements, according to Rolland, are scratching, using a salt shaker, and clapping. The key aspect of cyclic movements is that they are continuous. Rolland gave the example of turning a switch on and off as a non-cyclic movement (Rolland, 1986:223).

Rolland disagreed with the classification of vibrato in three types (arm, wrist, and finger). According to Rolland, the finger, wrist, arm, and even shoulder are always involved in the vibrato movement. Rolland went further to say that there are, in fact, two types of arm movements in vibrato. The first is the back and forth movement of the arm (flexion-extension), and the second is the rotary motion of the forearm (pronation-supination). These rotary movements, however, are passive (Rolland, 1986:223).

Rolland, interestingly, claimed that the impulse for vibrato is on the forward/upward motion. This is contrary to Suzuki’s method where the impulse is on the backwards motion. According to Rolland, the vibrato cycle starts with the flattened fingertip lightly touching the string, and the arm and hand leaning back in the direction of the scroll. The finger then presses down onto the string, pulling it upright (to the in tune pitch), bringing the arm and hand with it. Next, the finger immediately relaxes and falls back to the starting position. This movement, according to Rolland, is self-generating. In other words: “Good vibrato movements are cyclic; forward and return movements should form an unbroken unit, consisting of an impulse and a passive return” (Rolland, 1986:223).

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has set out to describe trends in violin pedagogy in the twentieth century as exemplified by Carl Flesch, Shin’ichi Suzuki, Ivan Galamian, and Paul Rolland. These pedagogues show, to a certain extent, an evolution of the thinking about technique.

Flesch's contribution to the literature was widely influential on the development of violin pedagogy. His systematic and analytical approach to the technical elements of violin playing was a first step toward a better understanding of violin playing. Suzuki, on the other hand, was important for his contribution to the philosophy of teaching. He believed that every child could learn to play the violin well. His methods were largely shaped around this aspect of teaching, rather than the technical details of violin playing. Galamian, a dominating figure in violin pedagogy for a large part of the twentieth century, based his approach, similarly to Flesch, on system, logic and discipline, while at the same time being flexible and adaptive. He highlighted the fact that good technique is the ability to have mental control over physical movement. Perhaps the most ground-breaking in his approach, was Rolland who applied findings from the field of kinesiology to his method. Rolland highlighted the importance of using the whole body in an integrated and coordinated way. Furthermore, he showed that this "natural" way of playing can be learnt through simple everyday movements.

4. Jack de Wet's Pedagogical method

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, De Wet's teaching method is explored and discussed. Throughout the discussion, references will be made to the techniques and pedagogues discussed in the previous chapter. Although the aim of this study is not to critically assess the validity of De Wet's methods, but rather to establish what his methods are and how these methods relate to the pedagogical literature, a critical look at some of De Wet's ideas has been undertaken.

4.2. Philosophical background

De Wet believed that violin playing should be approached scientifically and methodically. He was of the opinion that the problem with violin pedagogy in South Africa was that "so many musicians [...] exchange ideas which are not founded on a scientific basis" (De Wet, 2014). To safeguard against this shortcoming, which according to De Wet was so prevalent in the classical music community, he continually researched the fields of human physiology, neurology and anatomy (Lansdown, 2015; Starker, 2015). Whenever De Wet came upon a new discovery in one of these fields, he would scrutinize his own ideas and adapt them, where needed, to fit his understanding of the scientific field better.⁴⁵ In this regard, De Wet echoed Rolland's approach.

In addition, De Wet not only applied scientific rigour to his own ideas, but also taught his students to be "methodical and scientific in [their] approach towards mastering the violin" (Armstrong, 2015). In other words, he emphasized the importance of having "an analytical approach to solving technical problems" (Van Dijk, 2015). Van Rooyen (2015) and Lansdown (2015) indicated that this facet of De Wet's approach had a significant impact on the way they would later teach.

De Wet (2014) believed that technique, or as he defined it, "control over the instrument", is of cardinal importance to a violinist, but that it cannot be built up through repertoire. In other words, he held that mastering progressively more challenging repertoire would not necessarily result in a reliable technique. Therefore, he addressed technical issues "directly and abstractly" (De Beer, 2015). Part of De Wet's motivation for separating technique from music was his

⁴⁵ De Wet said that "every idea you have is only an idea once it is written down" (De Wet, 2014). With this he meant that in order to develop an idea systematically and test its scientific basis, the idea has to be clearly documented first. De Wet recalled that many of his later successful approaches to technique developed out of ideas that originally were "completely flawed" (De Wet, 2014).

belief that the sub-conscious is “switched off whilst reading music” (Armstrong, 2015) and that technique can be developed in a much more focussed manner once it is isolated from the musical context.

Some of De Wet’s students, however, felt that this approach created a gap between their technical ability and their musical and expressive abilities (Armstrong, 2015; De Beer, 2015; Lansdown, 2015; Van Dijk, 2015; Starker, 2015; Van Rooyen 2015).⁴⁶ Furthermore, some of De Wet’s students are of the opinion that he did not focus enough on developing the expressive aspects of violin playing, such as phrasing and exploring tone colours. In fact, repertoire was often neglected in favour of developing and refining some technical aspect (Price, 2015).

De Wet (2014) believed that “balance [is] essential for control of movement”. He taught that the body should continuously be in motion in order to find the right balance and release tension, and held that “standing still is also a form of movement”. Tension in the body, he argued, was “the enemy” of good violin playing. One of De Wet’s many “commandments” of violin playing was: “Relaxing is natural – tension stifles”. Undue pressure or tension, De Wet reasoned, would obstruct the sensitivity of the senses, especially the sense of touch. Tactile sense, as will be shown further on in this chapter, plays a crucial role in violin technique as De Wet taught it. He said, “Don’t hear the music; *feel* it [...] with your fingers directly on the vibrating string” (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet believed that “performance consists of a series of subconscious clusters activated by occasional conscious stimulation” (De Wet, 2014). Put differently, playing the violin should happen as automatically as, for example, walking – an action that is governed by the subconscious, but which can be directed from the conscious mind. He based this approach on the notion that conscious brain functioning is never final. Instead, the subconscious always adjusts and regulates movement. Therefore, De Wet argued, reflexes are more efficient in violin playing than movements directed by conscious thought processes (De Wet, 2014).⁴⁷ This is similar to Rolland’s thinking on the matter.

⁴⁶ The unbridged gap between technical and musical aspects could, in the author’s opinion, be a consequence of De Wet’s shying away from etudes. Etudes form the logical “middle step” between abstract technique and repertoire as etudes usually focus on a limited number of technical problems in a musical context. Some of De Wet’s students agree that the lack of playing etudes is a deficiency in his method (Lansdown, 2015; Starker, 2015).

⁴⁷ This is substantiated by research in the field motor learning. Grandjean stated that the ability to perform a skilled task requires the formation of new reflex pathways. These reflex pathways function without conscious guidance and are regulated by the subconscious (Grandjean, 1969:301). When applied to violin playing, this

In order to get to the point where playing the violin is as instinctive as an everyday activity, De Wet believed that one must learn to programme the subconscious mind. He described the “programming of the subconscious” in three steps: firstly, reflexes are programmed; secondly, series of reflexes are combined to form new “reflex programmes”; and thirdly, the “reflex programmes” are activated by will (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet demanded an intense practice regime from his students. He argued that talent alone was not enough to become a great musician, adding that the student has to be willing to work hard (De Wet, 2014).⁴⁸ He believed that perfection could be achieved “through meticulous and focussed practice” and tried to transfer this aim for perfection to his students (Starker, 2015). In this regard, De Wet’s ideas seem to resonate with those of Suzuki who said that one should strive to “play any piece well” and not “rush ahead, but [...] dedicate oneself to attaining [excellence]” (Suzuki, 2007:4).

De Wet aimed to choose repertoire that was within reach of the student’s technical capabilities at the time, therefore making “perfection” always an attainable goal. Armstrong (2015) said that, “De Wet was very wary of me tackling challenging works”, and De Beer (2015) said that “never did [De Wet] give me pieces to perform in public that were too difficult”. Van der Watt (2014), however, is of the opinion that the repertoire De Wet chose for his students did not follow a logical system from a pedagogical point of view. According to him, De Wet struggled to choose repertoire where each piece builds on the previous one, forming a graded system incrementally more challenging pieces.

4.3. Bowing

4.3.1. The bow grip

De Wet modelled his bow grip on the Franco-Belgian grip as taught by (specifically) Rolland (refer to Chapter 3.6.2.1). In De Wet’s grip, the thumb and middle finger form the core of the grip. The middle finger touches the bow stick with the crease between the intermediate and distal phalanges. The thumb is also rounded and touches the underside of the bow stick with its

means that while performing the skilled task (for example, executing difficult technical passages), the player’s subconscious regulates the movements leaving the conscious mind to focus on aspects such as musical expression.

⁴⁸ De Wet demanded an intense practice regime from his students. It could be argued that the number of hours and level of dedication De Wet expected from his students would be enough to guarantee success. From the responses in the questionnaires, it can be gathered that De Wet expected his students to spend between 2h30mins and 4 hours on technique and an additional 1h30mins to 3 hours on repertoire per day.

tip. These two fingers form an almost closed circle (see Figure 10) and are in what De Wet called the “total grip” position.⁴⁹

Figure 10: The “total grip”

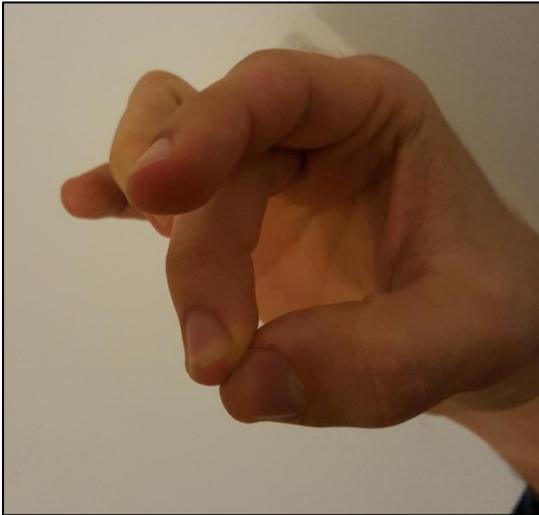
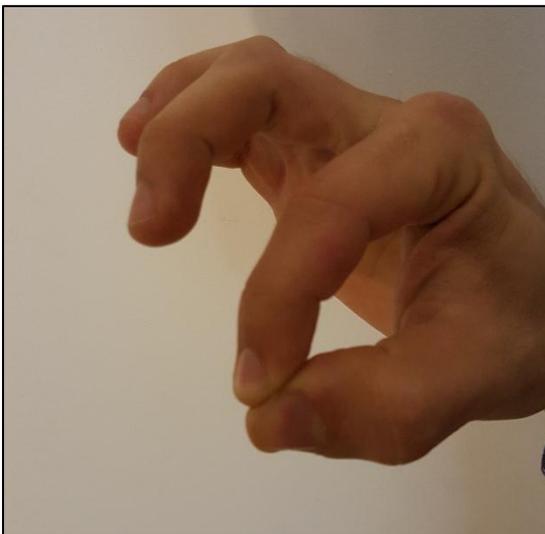


Figure 11: A tense grip



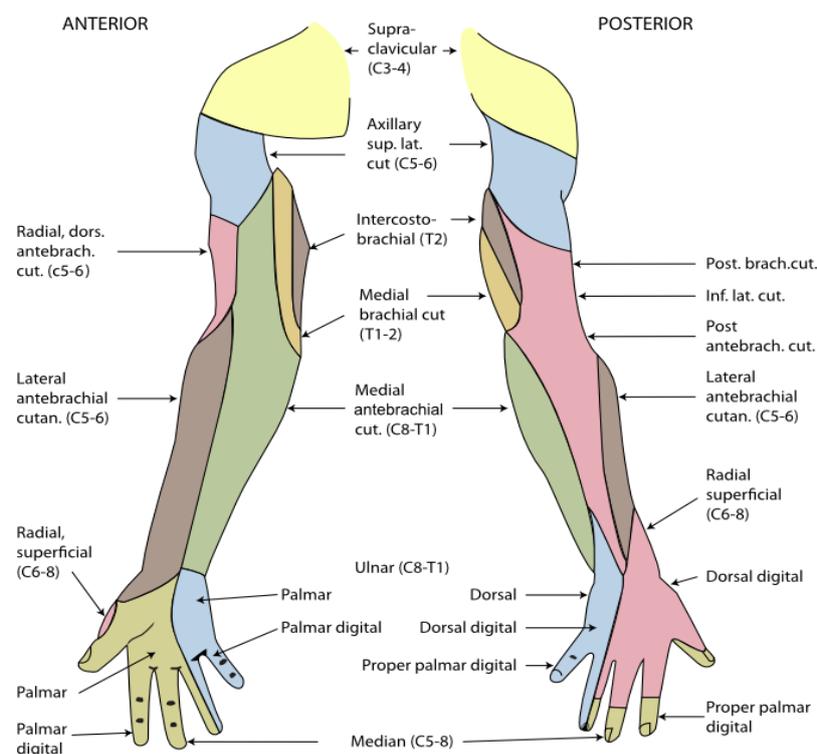
The index finger lightly rests on the bow near the middle of the intermediate phalange. De Wet stressed the importance of this finger being completely relaxed, saying that “any pressure [from the index finger] will immediately stiffen [and] close off the finger from the hand”. This, De Wet warned, will lead to a choked sound (De Wet, 2014).

⁴⁹ “Total grip” is the term De Wet used to refer to a grip in which the hand makes a fist. According to De Wet, the strongest and most natural grip will occur when the thumb and middle finger oppose each other as can be seen in Figure 10. This grip, in De Wet’s opinion, is stronger than a grip in which the thumb opposes the index finger (see Figure 11 **Error! Reference source not found.**). The “total grip” allows the hand to have a very firm and strong hold on an object, while at the same time remaining soft and relaxed (De Wet, 2014).

The little finger, always rounded, rests passively on its tip. Its role is to help balance the bow. De Wet, however, emphasized that the little finger should never press down on the bow. Instead, the weight of the hand should be allowed to flow through the little finger into the bow stick. This, according to De Wet, will ensure that the little finger stays supple and relaxed and therefore also sensitive (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet taught that the ring finger forms “the soul of the sound” (Van Dijk, 2015) and therefore has the most important function in the bow grip. It touches the heel of the bow with the finger pad, allowing the biggest possible surface area to be in contact with the bow. This position of the finger allows the violinist to take full advantage of the sensitivity of this finger “working on two [nerve] systems” (De Wet, 2014).⁵⁰ De Wet’s ideas about the importance of the ring finger contact in bowing is in line with Rolland’s approach (see Chapter 3.6.2.1).

Figure 12: Nerves supplying the fingers



4.3.2. Tone production: the mechanics of the right arm

De Wet focussed strongly on rotary movements in bowing. He felt that it was crucial for the bowing movement to originate from the muscles in the back (not in the upper arm) and the

⁵⁰ De Wet based this notion on the fact that the ring finger is supplied with nerves from both the Median Nerve (which connects to nerves from the little finger) and the Ulnar Nerve (which connects with nerves from the middle finger, index finger and thumb) (see Figure 12). This, according to De Wet, means that the ring finger is uniquely sensitive, because it is supplied with two nerves (De Wet, 2014).

back of the shoulder (trapezius muscles). This will ensure that the entire arm rotates during bowing. He warned that relying on the bicep-triceps muscle pair (flexion-extension movements) will lead to exhaustion and uneven bowing as these two muscles are unequal in strength. In contrast, rotary action, De Wet (2014) said, “always stays in equilibrium”.

Interestingly, De Wet believed that the wrist of the right hand should always be kept straight (Armstrong, 2015). This is an idea De Wet credited to Rosand. According to De Wet (2014), keeping the wrist straight opens up the possibility for the whole arm to work as a unit – in other words, the whole arm can react to the bowing movement. He likened this to polishing a flat surface with a cloth. In such a movement, the wrist does not bend up and down, but stays straight.

With regard to the movement of the arms during violin playing, De Wet used the image of a pendulum. He believed that pendular movements, assisted by gravity, form the essence of relaxed and controlled motion. He likened the right elbow to the weight at the bottom of the pendulum which is mainly driven by gravity. The elbow should be allowed to swing freely in reaction to the bowing movements (De Wet, 2014). Rolland used similar language to describe the movement of the right arm during certain bow strokes (Rolland, 1986).

De Wet believed that the ball of the thumb functions as the “steering apparatus” of the bow. According to De Wet, this part of the hand functions as a nervous “sub-station” of the brain. The most effective way to control (or steer) the bow, would be by focussing on the ball of the thumb, as this part of the hand has the strongest connection to the brain due to its rich supply of nerves. Once the ball of the thumb “knows” where to go, the arm should follow without giving any resistance. This will naturally result in the rotary movements as described above (De Wet, 2014). The idea, however, that there is some sort of “intelligence” in the ball of the thumb seems fanciful in the author’s opinion, as there seems to be no literature in the field of human physiology that supports it. Nevertheless, the concept of steering the bow with the ball of the thumb might still be useful as a pedagogical device.

With regard to bow strokes such as *spiccato* and *saltato*, De Wet believed that the whole arm should be involved in the bowing motion. He rejected the idea of the so-called “finger stroke”, insisting that the fingers are too weak and small to play an active part in sound production. He likened the “finger stroke” to scratching for fleas (De Wet, 2014). In this respect, De Wet’s ideas contradict those of Flesch, Suzuki, Galamian, and Rolland who held that certain bow strokes involve the fingers actively.

4.4. Posture, stance, and violin position

De Wet believed that balance is essential for controlled movements, an idea he shared with Rolland. With regard to posture, De Wet said that “standing still is also a form of movement”, implying that the body should continuously shift to find the right balance. He added that “a series of continuous motions allows the body to release tension” (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet strongly believed in playing without a shoulder rest.⁵¹ He believed that sound vibrations can be transmitted from the body of the violin directly through the collarbone and into the nervous system – bypassing the outer ear and middle ear. In this way, according to De Wet, the vibrations are directly converted into nerve impulses to which the subconscious mind can react. This, he argued, is a quicker and much more direct way of “hearing” than listening to the violin with the “unreliable ear” (De Wet, 2014). Although this theory holds little water in terms of its scientific truth, De Wet maintained that the shoulder rest blocks these vibrations and thus, inhibits the player’s sensitivity.

Furthermore, De Wet believed that a shoulder rest would alter the angle at which the violin is held in relation to the player. This, he argued, would affect a myriad of technical aspects, including bowing, shifting, and vibrato.

4.5. The left arm and hand

4.5.1. “The spring”

De Wet’s approach to left hand technique is based on a concept which he called “the spring” (De Wet, 2014). Price (2015) explained “the spring” as the mechanism that keeps the hand in a constant dynamic balance and allows the hand to be in a state of “readiness to move”. The basic principle of “the spring” is that tension (in the sense of spring that is being pulled taught, or “springiness”, as opposed to undue muscular contraction leading to stiffness and fatigue) is created in the hand by pulling it in two opposite directions. The hand is pulled backwards (toward the scroll of the violin) by the arm, while at the same time being pulled forward by the finger.

This stands in contrast to the traditional view which is that the finger pushes the string down and this downwards pressure is counteracted by the upward pressure of the thumb. In other words, when using “the spring”, force is applied in a plane that is close to parallel to the

⁵¹ Throughout his teaching career, however, De Wet has changed his mind about the use of a shoulder rest more than once – sometimes to the frustration of his students. De Wet named American pedagogue Aaron Rosand as inspiration for finally deciding against the use of a shoulder rest in all cases (De Wet, 2014).

fingerboard, whereas in the traditional methods, force is applied in a plane close to perpendicular to the fingerboard.

This, in the author's opinion, is a noteworthy concept which links to De Wet's comment about posture, or "standing still is also a form of movement" (De Wet, 2014). It implies that even when the hand appears to be totally static, it is never a dead weight on the fingerboard and therefore always ready to make minute adjustments. Furthermore, as will be shown in 4.5.5 and 4.5.6, "the spring" forms an integral part of De Wet's concept of shifting and vibrato.

4.5.2. Posture of the hand

The key to skilled left hand technique, according to De Wet, is balance. To achieve a hand position that is always balanced, the wrist has to be kept as straight as possible and the arm has to react to every movement that the hand makes (De Wet, 2014). In other words, the arm and hand should form a unit that is able to move freely around the neck of the violin.

Furthermore, De Wet cautioned against a too high hand position. He preferred a position of the hand in which the knuckles are below the level of the fingerboard. This will prevent the fingers from landing on their tips, instead allowing the violinist to play more on the pads of the fingers (De Wet, 2014). His reasoning for this, as explained by Bennell (2004:13), is "that the pulp [of the finger pads] has the greatest sensory potential and [...] will therefore assist the entire sensory feedback process of motor learning".

In fast passage work, however, De Wet advised that his students play with a higher hand position. In other words, the knuckles have to be brought up high above the finger board (Van Dijk, 2015). This will naturally result in the fingers landing more on their tips which, in turn, will improve articulation.

4.5.3. Intonation

De Wet believed that good intonation was the ability to instantly adjust the finger to the correct pitch after stopping the string. Therefore, he focussed on developing the ability of the violinist to make these instantaneous adjustments – a process which, according to De Wet, is governed by the subconscious (De Wet, 2014). To illustrate the way in which the subconscious eventually takes over the process of pitch correction, De Wet described the development of good intonation in three stages (as explained by Price):

- (1) In the first stage, the pitch correction happens after the player has listened to the note, registered that it was out of tune, and decided to correct the pitch by moving the finger

on the string. This process is so slow that the out of tune note (and the correction of the faulty intonation) is audible to both the player and the audience.

- (2) By the second phase, the player again realises that the note is out of tune and decides to correct it. At this stage, however, the correction happens much faster than in the first phase. This type of playing will sound in tune to the audience, but the player will still be consciously aware of correcting the out of tune notes.
- (3) By the third phase, pitch correction happens automatically. The finger corrects the pitch even before the player has had time to register that the note was out of tune. In other words, the subconscious regulates and controls the process of pitch correction (Price, 2015).

De Wet claimed that reaching this phase, where subconscious correction takes place, was “a prerequisite to satisfactory musical interpretation” (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet argued that the third stage of intonation relies on constant sensory feedback from the finger pads. To maximise the amount of feedback, and therefore improve the accuracy of intonation, he taught that one must play, as far as possible, with the pads of the fingers. He reasoned that, because the finger pads have the greatest sensory potential, they would supply the optimum amount of feedback to the subconscious and thereby optimise the automatic response of pitch correction (De Wet, 2014).⁵²

Furthermore, De Wet believed that playing on the fingertips was not only physiologically, but also mechanically more disadvantageous to the process of pitch correction than playing on the finger pads. According to De Wet, the mechanism of “the spring”, which keeps the hand in a constant state of motion or readiness for motion, does not function when one plays on the fingertips. Instead, when stopping a string with the fingertip, the pressure exerted by the finger on the fingerboard (counteracted by the upwards pressure of the thumb on the neck of the violin) locks the hand in place. In order to move the finger from this “locked” state, this force needs to first be overcome, resulting in the unnecessary expenditure of energy (De Wet, 2014).

⁵² This idea is validated by the work of Magill who argued that the increased sensitivity of the finger pads, and the greater surface area of the finger that is in contact with the string when playing on the finger pads as opposed to the fingertips, would lead to more sensory impulses being sent to the brain. This chain of sensory feedback is what speeds up the process of skilled motor learning (Magill, 1998:39).

4.5.4. Finger action

De Wet taught that the fingers should move from their base joints and that this movement should be very quick and lively. In other words, the fingers have to be thrown onto, and lifted from the string with great speed. The impact of the finger hitting the string should be absorbed by collapsing the joint between the finger's intermediate and distal phalange as soon as it hits the string. The mechanism of "the spring", however, is immediately activated and the collapsed finger is pulled upright (De Wet, 2014). De Wet likened this to the way a cat's paws give way when it lands on the ground after a jump (De Beer, 2015).

4.5.5. Shifting

De Wet stressed the importance of rotary movements in shifting. Similar to Rolland, De Wet taught that the arm should rotate clockwise for an upward shift and counter clockwise for a downward shift (see Chapter 3.6.4.4), and that this movement originates from the muscles in the shoulder and back. De Wet argued that shifting in this manner would allow the left arm to always stay in balance (De Wet, 2014).

De Wet taught that the thumb has to anticipate the shift. By doing so, the thumb is used to keep the violin stable while the hand moves to a new position. This is especially important in downward shifts where the hand essentially pulls the violin away from the body of the violinist. When the thumb, however, anticipates the downward shift, it can be used to keep the violin in position by pushing the violin toward the neck of the violinist while the hand and arm travels in the direction of the scroll (Armstrong, 2015).⁵³

The mechanism of "the spring" also has an influence on shifting. "The spring" is wound up, or stretched out, by the arm pulling the hand and fingers (which resist this pulling by exerting an opposite force) in the direction of the new position. "The spring" is then released as the finger stops resisting the force of the arm pulling in the direction of the new position, causing the finger to "fly" effortlessly to the new position (De Wet, 2014). This is similar to what Rolland taught (see chapter 3.6.4.4)

⁵³ When the thumb anticipates the shift in the manner described, it will rotate against the neck of the violin as the hand "catches up" with it. According to Bennell (2004:22), this allows the thumb to supply "further sensory feedback messages to the sensorimotor areas of the brain", which will assist the process of "automatic pitch correction".

4.5.6. Vibrato

De Wet believed that “vibrato is [...] a rotary action of the fingertip” and that it should always involve the whole arm (De Wet, 2014). The vibrato motion is connected to “the spring”. As soon as the finger hits the string and collapses, “the spring” is activated and the finger is pulled upright. This forms the first impulse for the vibrato. In other words, similar to what Rolland taught (see Chapter 3.6.4.5), the vibrato movement starts from a flattened position of the finger after which the finger is pulled upright by “the spring”. It is important to note that whereas Flesch and Suzuki emphasised the back-and-forth movement of the finger (i.e. oscillatory movement), De Wet stressed that the finger moves in an ellipse (i.e. cyclic movement).

De Wet taught that vibrato should be used on every note. His reasoning was that vibrato keeps the hand “alive” and the fingers sensitive. The vibrato motion is a cycle of tension and release which De Wet believed heightened the sensory awareness of the fingers. Furthermore, De Wet was of the opinion that the “throbbing sound” created by vibrato is crucial in keeping the listener’s subconscious stimulated and interested in the sound (De Wet, 2014).

4.6. Conclusion

The discussion of De Wet’s teaching methods highlighted the fact that, although unique in some ways, his methods do not stand in isolation from the trends in violin pedagogy in the twentieth century. De Wet’s methodical and systematic approach to violin technique mirrors that of Flesch, Galamian, and Rolland. Rolland, however, has without a doubt had the biggest influence on De Wet’s methods. The key aspects of De Wet’s approach, namely balanced movements, rotary action, freedom from tension, and kinaesthetic awareness, can all be traced back to Rolland’s work.

Apart from Suzuki’s philosophy of striving for excellence and perfection, his notion that anyone has the ability to play the violin well, seems to have inspired De Wet. De Wet, however, applied this notion in a different way. He reasoned that the human *body* has an infinite capacity to learn. Therefore, in order to play the violin well, or develop control over fine motor skills, one must tap into this capacity.

Although most of De Wet’s ideas seem to be grounded in logic and a scientific understanding of human physiology, some of his ideas seem fanciful. His concept of “hearing through bone”, for example is unlikely to hold up under scientific scrutiny. However, De Wet’s concept of “the spring” is, in the author’s opinion, a valuable contribution to the understanding of violin left hand technique.

5. Conclusion

This study was set out to explore the life and work of South African violin pedagogue Jack de Wet. Up to this stage, De Wet's methods, life and work have not been extensively explored or documented. As a result, his work cannot make a potentially meaningful contribution to the field of violin pedagogy. In order to move to a better understanding of De Wet's life and work (in light of his possible contribution to the field of violin pedagogy) the study sought to answer the following research question:

As a prominent and influential figure in the South African string community, what were De Wet's pedagogical methods, and how do these methods fit into the backdrop of violin pedagogy in the twentieth century?

The research question has been answered in three steps. Firstly, an up-to-date biography of De Wet has been compiled. This biography not only focussed on the development of De Wet's career as teacher, but also looked at the influences that shaped his early years as a violinist. It has been shown that De Wet indeed had a very successful teaching career spanning more than five decades. During this career, he has directly and indirectly influenced countless violinists in South Africa. His students, many of who became successful performing musicians, went on to teach in various parts of South Africa (Anne-Marié Swanepoel, Louis van der Watt, Francois Henkins, Madelein van Rooyen and Ezaan Coetzee, among many others) and abroad (Pieter Schoeman, Jan Repko, and Louise Lansdown), thereby spreading his ideas. Furthermore, De Wet was instrumental in the creation of infrastructure that supports young violinists in South Africa. He established youth orchestras in Bloemfontein and in Port Elizabeth, and co-founded a youth classical music competition that still runs to this day.

The biography also showed that De Wet had a passion and a talent for teaching. Furthermore, his obsessive drive to discover alternative, and perhaps better, ways of doing things, led him to experiment with violin technique. This has sometimes caused controversy and has contributed to his image as a maverick. Nevertheless, De Wet's standing as one of South Africa's foremost violin pedagogues is confirmed by his continued success with students, even in his advanced old age.

Secondly, the pedagogical methods of Carl Flesch, Shin'ichi Suzuki, Ivan Galamian, and Paul Rolland have been discussed. These pedagogues have been shown to be prominent figures in the twentieth century violin teaching community. Flesch's biggest contribution to violin

pedagogy was a systematic and analytical approach to the technical elements of violin playing. This had a great impact on the standardization of violin playing technique across the world and formed a first step toward a better understanding of violin technique. Galamian was shown to be a dominating figure in twentieth century violin pedagogy. In a similar way to Flesch, his methods were grounded in logic and discipline. Galamian, however, stressed that technique should be flexible, adaptable and should suit the build of the player.

Suzuki, on the other hand, was shown to be important for his revolutionary philosophy of teaching. He held the belief that any and every child could learn to play the violin well. In other words, he disregarded the notion of talent, or musical gift, and the effect it was thought to have on learning to play the violin. His methods are known as “talent education” or the “mother tongue approach”.

Rolland was shown to be ground-breaking in his approach to the technical elements of violin playing. He applied findings from the field of kinesiology to his methods and was committed to ground his method in a proper understanding of human physiology. Rolland showed how the movements used in violin playing are connected to movements used in everyday life. Furthermore, he believed that the body should be used in an integrated and coordinated way and that this should be taken into account when teaching specific techniques on the violin.

Thirdly, De Wet’s own teaching methods have been documented and discussed. The impression that De Wet’s way of teaching the violin as “wholly different” was shown to be inaccurate. Although De Wet had a unique approach to certain technical elements, most of his ideas are based on the work of Rolland. De Wet believed that balanced movements, rotary action, freedom from tension, and kinaesthetic awareness played an important part in playing the violin well. At the core of De Wet’s method, however, is the notion that reliable technique is dependent on subconscious control. Some of De Wet’s ideas have been shown to be idiosyncratic or fanciful. In the author’s opinion, however, this, coupled with his penchant for experimentation, has contributed to his reputation as, not only a genius, but also an eccentric.

Given the current lack of academic writing on violin pedagogues in South Africa, the author hopes that this study has shown the importance of documenting and exploring the teaching methods of important South African violin pedagogues. This could lead to a better understanding of violin playing and teaching in South Africa which, in turn, will make it possible to improve the way in which future generations of violinists are taught.

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Addendum A

The following 19 extracts are from an interview with Jack de Wet conducted by the author on 15 September 2014. These extracts were freely translated by the author from the transcript of the interview in Afrikaans. Effort has been made to keep the translation as close as possible to the original verbatim transcript. Sections that compromise the privacy of some individuals, as well as sections not directly related to the focus of this study, have been left out.

Extract 1

De Wet: My first violin teacher was Halbé Wissema.

Bester: Was he Dutch?

De Wet: Yes.

Bester: And was this in Pretoria?

De Wet: Yes.

Bester: OK. Roughly how long did you take lessons from Wissema?

De Wet: Well, I stayed with him until my matric year.

Bester: In other words, your entire school career?

De Wet: I almost finished my matric year with him... But he refused to enrol me. [This was clarified later on in the interview.]

Extract 2

Bester: So, to clarify, you had lessons with Halbé Wissema throughout your school career. And then professor moved to Erwin Broedrich?

De Wet: [Broedrich] was in Johannesburg. No, actually, also in Pretoria.

Bester: Was this at university?

De Wet: No, it was still... I studied at UCT for a while.

Bester: OK.

De Wet: Music was not my intended course of study. That is why I stopped practicing the violin in my matric year. I wanted to study engineering at WITS. I was focussed

on that and the violin took second place. For some obscure reason, I suddenly decided to... Oh yes, I played my grade 8 exam. Then I realised that I would in fact, or should consider music [as a career]. I enrolled for the grade 8 exam, but this was without a teacher. My teacher [Wissema] showed me the door. He didn't... Because I didn't work towards the exam throughout the entire year, and I didn't even have the music, he said that he wouldn't allow me to enrol under any circumstances!

Bester: OK. So he withdrew all support in the middle of your grade 8/matric year?

De Wet: Yes, it was in matric – around April. When he told me that he wouldn't let me play under any circumstances... That's when I bought the books and, um, a school teacher – a pianist based in Pretoria – was willing to help me with the aural tests. I also had to do the theory exam. I don't know... I don't exactly remember what happened with the theory. And that was the first time in my life that I started to work hard.

Bester: Really?

De Wet: I worked constantly every afternoon. I attended boarding school. I practiced 3 hours every day for 6 months. I was completely on my own.

Bester: But that did the trick?

De Wet: Yes, and I enjoyed it very much. In any case, a couple of months after the exam I received a letter from the University of Cape Town. They offered me a full scholarship – academic as well as for boarding. All costs were covered. This was, of course, based on my grade 8 marks.

Extract 3

Bester: Which lecturer [at UCT] had the most influence on your playing?

De Wet: You see, the actual reason [I studied at SACM] was because it was for free. [I reckoned] I would go down to Cape Town for one year – swim a bit in the sea... But after the first week [at SACM] I wrote a telegram home: "I have found the right place".

What actually happened was that the head of music [at UCT], an Englishman, asked one of the Unisa examiners that year to name the three students with the most promising future. I remember the one was Stefans Grové... I cannot remember exactly who the other person was, but in any case... He wrote down the student numbers of the three persons for Eric Grant and I was awarded the full bursary! [...] But the teacher [at UCT, Editha Braham,] was not a very good teacher... Or rather, she was not the ideal teacher for me. There were certain things, um, she wasn't the ideal teacher because she didn't like my vibrato.

Bester: If I may ask, what was the problem with the vibrato?

De Wet: She wanted me to use more arm in the vibrato. She demonstrated; I tried it for a couple of days, but then I thought: "this is a waste of time! I will rather go for a swim in the sea." The following week I went back to her for my lesson. She looked at my vibrato and said: "Yes! That's much better." By the lesson after that, it had improved even more! That's when I thought: "when one doesn't practice, then it improves."

Bester: I just need to double check – was this Editha Braham? I could not find any information on her.

De Wet: Yes, she was a very good violinist.

Bester: But you would say that she was not the right teacher...

De Wet: No, you see, after the second time I had "improved", I told her that Heifetz did not vibrate as she showed me. She then asked me where I came up with that idea. I told her that I looked it up in the library. She then wanted to see it. I then went to the library and showed her the book – it was about the vibratos of different players. But her vibrato was definitely not Heifetz's vibrato! When she saw that, she said: "Oh, that's interesting!" Then she said: "Let me see your vibrato again." I showed her and then she said: "Oh, but darling, that's fine!" That was the final straw. Then I went to Pretoria to study with Broedrich and his vibrato was also [like Braham's].

Bester: And was that not also a problem for you?

De Wet: I did not like it... but I became his assistant.

Extract 4

- De Wet: [After studying with Broedrich in Pretoria] I received a bursary from the city of Amsterdam. I studied in Amsterdam for 5 years.
- Bester: OK. If I am not mistaken, the bursary was awarded by a foundation for culture in Amsterdam?
- De Wet: Yes, my fees were paid by the city of Amsterdam. Tuition fees.
- Bester: How long did you study with Broedrich in Pretoria?
- De Wet: Probably two or three years. He was a very systematic person, but it was a different way of playing. I accepted his method – I did not have a choice – and it worked!
- Bester: OK. Once you arrived in Amsterdam, you had lessons with Oskar Back?
- De Wet: I had lessons with Leydensdorff. But I don't think you should even put his name down, because I only studied with him for one year. [...] I had the dubious honour of being his only student... [...] I then went to study with Oskar Back. [Back] was in the Netherlands. Herman Krebbers and Theo Olof – all the major violinists of that time were students of his.
- Bester: What would you say you have learned from Oskar Back?
- De Wet: You see, he was very systematic in everything that he did. Systematic, interpretation... and the fact that most of the exceptional young Dutch violinists were students of his – that says a lot. He studied in Hungary. He was Hungarian.
- Bester: He had lessons with Ysaÿe? And is there anything, in connection with your teaching method, that you learned directly from Back?
- De Wet: Yes, you see, we learned incredibly much from him. His musicality was impeccable – it was of the highest quality. It was a different way of playing that I found right for me. But that's where my problems started! I started to experiment...
- Bester: Only then?

De Wet: Yes, I truly started to experiment then. When he wanted me to do something like this – and I don't know on what authority I would have done something like this, it's a strange thing, in any case – everything that he did, I had to do the opposite. I just had to see for myself. And sometimes you make a mistake and stumble across the right thing by accident. [...] I was always investigating – always curious.

Bester: What was Back's view of your curiosity? Did he have time for it, or did he prefer a student who would do as he said?

De Wet: He always listened to his students, gave criticism, and [his opinions were] usually right. And I would not have stayed with someone whom I didn't trust completely. [...] I studied with him for four years.

Extract 5

Bester: Can you tell me more about the time in the SABC orchestra. If I am not mistaken, it was from 1956 to 1959.

De Wet: Yes, 1959 is correct. And then I went to Bloemfontein.

Bester: In 1960?

De Wet: 1960 yes – to play in the string quartet.

Bester: So, you were a first violinist in the SABC orchestra. Was this a good experience? Or did you see it as more of a job?

De Wet: You see, it is absolutely necessary for a person to make music with others; to gain new insights; to not just make music for your own sake in your own little corner. [...] In those days [the orchestra] had money. They brought famous conductors to South Africa and there were more than a hundred members in the orchestra. It was a magnificent orchestra. We learnt many things – also how *not* to do things.

Extract 6

Bester: From what I could gather, you received two diplomas from Trinity College [LTCL and FTCL]. Can you tell me more about these qualifications?

De Wet: I played the licentiate... I went over to London and played the performer's licentiate in the morning. They then allowed me to play the subsequent exam.

Bester: When did you play the second exam?

De Wet: The very same day. [...] It was very interesting – they told me that should I not pass the licentiate exam in the morning, I would not be allowed to play the fellowship exam.

Bester: Do you still remember which repertoire you played for these exams?

De Wet: One of the works was – I will never forget this – the work that I started with, was the Bach Chaconne. And I also played Rondo Capriccioso by Saint-Saëns, Hindermith solo sonata and, um, Paganini.

Bester: Solo caprice?

De Wet: Paganini violin concerto. Number one.

Extract 7

Bester: In 1960 you started working at the University of the Free State.

De Wet: That's when they started that string quartet.

Bester: You were one of the founding members?

De Wet: Yes, I was. I was a senior lecturer at the university and leader of the quartet.

Bester: Were you in any way involved with the initiative behind the founding of the quartet?

De Wet: No.

Extract 8

De Wet: Wissema had a big sign hanging outside in Andries [unclear] Street in Pretoria: "Professor of the violin". And that was very... because the sound of the violin was utterly attractive for me. I was around five years old and I could not stop listening if someone played the violin. It was the most beautiful sound.

Bester: Is that still the case?

De Wet: Until I began playing myself! (laughs)

Bester: But was it ever a struggle to play? Did you ever find it a chore to practice?

De Wet: No, not in the least. You see, my parents in fact moved from the Northern Cape because I was so [unclear].

Bester: You did eventually become a professor of the violin at the University of Port Elizabeth. But in 1989 you resigned to move to Cape Town. Is that correct?

De Wet: Yes. I came down to retire. I also had a couple of students in this area that were very promising. Pieter Schoeman was one of them. And, um, one [of these students] is now the concert master of an orchestra in Sweden, and one is in America... They all took lessons with me privately. We lived in Durbanville... And then Stellenbosch [university] approached me. Why don't I bring my students to them?

Bester: OK.

De Wet: I was there [at Stellenbosch University] for about four years. Then there were changes in the management there and... And I've already retired twice, maybe I should... But I began to doubt, because Jürgen Schwietering was senior lecturer at UCT and I knew him... He suggested that I go to UCT. So after six years at Stellenbosch, I thought that I would go to UCT for a change. I was there for six years before I finally retired.

Extract 9

Bester: You were head of the music department in PE.

De Wet: Yes, but not initially. There were three professors, but they eventually appointed me. We had a trial period of sorts. After a year or two, they appointed me as head.

Bester: This was in the same time that Jan Repko studied with you. How long did he study with you?

De Wet: I worked it out the other day: he was 16 – he left when he was 21 or 22 – so he was with me for 15 years. That's when I said that he had to go. His parents did not want him to leave – he had to stay. But I eventually arranged with the

[Sweelinck] Conservatoire in Amsterdam – [Repko] initially did not want to go – but I sent in a tape recording of him and, even though they were already closed for the year, they accepted him. [...] The one that had the biggest impact on music is Pieter Schoeman.

Bester: But he was only later?

De Wet: Yes, that was in Cape Town. No, he travelled to PE from Cape Town.

Bester: He overlaps – he was in Port Elizabeth and later in Durbanville.

De Wet: You see, what happened is this. Dorothy DeLay, the famous teacher from Julliard, gave master classes in Stellenbosch and I brought my students. By the end of the week, she compiled a programme of all the outstanding students – and coincidentally, virtually all except one were students of mine. [...] Pieter Schoeman was not studying with me at that stage. He was a young boy of 11 years, and he stopped playing the violin – he was very fond of the violin according to his parents. And, um, he stopped playing and said that he will never play again.

Bester: Was this after the [DeLay] concert?

De Wet: Yes. [His parents] tried everything. [...] When his dad asked him if he would reconsider if they send him to PE once a month [to have lessons with me], he said “yes!”

Bester: So that’s how it started!

De Wet: That’s how it began... And it is remarkable... It was a wonderful experience to have a student like him. He was 11 years old... He would arrive on Friday afternoon with the plane, then I would teach him for three hours. Saturday morning, we would do another three hours; Saturday afternoon [another] three hours and Sunday morning also three hours. Sometimes we would fit in another lesson on Sunday afternoon just before he had to go back to the airport.

Bester: That’s around 12 hours of lessons!

De Wet: And I found out years later that when I went to rest, he went over to the studio and practiced what we did in the lesson. He would practice for the entire afternoon. He just couldn't stop!

Bester: So he had a drive and passion from a very early age...

De Wet: Yes, he had an enormous talent. [...] But he had an incredible passion for the violin. But he did everything exactly like I taught him. He was very precise. You don't come across a student like that every day.

Extract 10

Bester: Can you tell me more about the influence of Suzuki on your teaching method? I know you met him in Japan.

De Wet: I was still in PE. I went to Japan during my last years at PE. You see, I had this itch: if I heard about a new idea, I bought a ticket and off I went! I ended up in the strangest places from time to time – Scotland, USA, Hawaii, Honolulu, the American String Teachers Association. I met Aaron Rosand, probably the biggest teacher today, and Antje Weithaas... I visited him twice and when he came to South Africa, he always visited me in Bloemfontein. That was a real inspiration! He had this new – at least it was new for me – way of playing... Wrist stroke, the free forearm action and the upper arm action... These motions should not be used in isolation. [...] It is a peculiar thing – if you want to survive in the music world, you have to be a bit eccentric. Where the books said do an up bow, I said do a down bow.

Extract 11

De Wet: This is one of the cornerstones of science: nothing is ever final. It has to be tested again and again.

Bester: That is how science moves forward...

De Wet: Sometimes you move backwards. [...] You see, the violin represents the female voice. The female character is unpredictable. Very sensitive, but unpredictable... And the moment you think you know them, then you're making a big mistake! But that is the joy of playing the violin. The closer you get [to understand it], the farther you move away... After you have said everything and

heard everything, you come across something which you couldn't believe even existed. It is fascinating!

Extract 12

De Wet: The interesting thing is that, if you are an artist, then you have it. You instinctively have a certain feel. You pick up things very easily by listening to other people, or by reading about it. But the control over the instrument – technique – is of cardinal importance. Without that technique... Take for example – there was this trend in Europe to practice passage work in rhythms. I did it for years. And one year I was examining licentiate exams with Hennie Joubert [unclear]. He could coax the sweetest sound from a piano. [...] I always admired that. Then I asked him, your playing is so smooth and sweet – you see, most pianists play percussively [*meeste pianiste is drukkers*] – so I asked him if he ever does rhythms. He said “never!” I asked him “why not?” And he said that it brings irregularity to one's playing. Unevenness.

Bester: In other words, it does the opposite of what it is supposed to do?

De Wet: Yes, and it is in fact unmusical. It contributes to unmusical playing. [...] In fact, it came as a shock to me, because I did it for so many years, even in Europe.

Bester: So what would be the alternative to rhythms?

De Wet: When you do rhythms, there is a moment of standstill. [...] And that moment brings unevenness to one's interpretation and sound. Because that moment of stoppage – you don't have any control over it. You fly over the notes [that] go by uncontrolled. Something is stagnant – it doesn't flow. How do you want [to create] a musical line with stops? And I also asked other people about this. Aaron Rosand agrees. [...] There are more cons than pros... It brings stiffness to one's playing.

Extract 13

De Wet: The one thing which I feel is essential is that you have to be systematic. Every idea you have is only an idea once it is written down. You have to write down what you think in that moment in order to refer back to it at a later stage – in order to make comparisons. [...] There has to be a starting point. Sometimes

you make a mistake, but in fact, that mistake stimulates a new idea which could be very fruitful. [...] The day that you did not learn something is a day wasted. You have to make comparisons – it has to be in writing. There is no such thing as a fact – it is only a fact once it is written down.

Extract 14

De Wet: When you practise the violin, you are programming the subconscious. [...] In order to programme the subconscious, you need electric force. [...] Sound traveling through the air is very slow. Light is, of course, very fast. [...] Now the eye is very unreliable. The ear is very unreliable. [...] But the skull is directly connected to the electrical stream. [...] In other words, your body is an electrical apparatus. It gets stimulated by the electrical signals which travel throughout your body to make the necessary adjustments. But everything that you do is stimulated electronically.

Extract 15

De Wet: Remember we talked about the arm functioning as a whole. It is managed by the brain. [...] The fingers feel the result [of the movement of the arm]. They are too small to be active on their own. They do not have the momentum... The movement comes from the back – the trapezius. [...] Now I don't know if wedding rings are still in fashion, but the Romans wore wedding rings – made from iron, I suppose – but in any case, they wore wedding rings. And a marriage in those days lasted longer than the ring! But the wedding ring – why did they put it on that finger [ring finger]?

Bester: I think the idea was that the ring finger of your left hand is directly connected to your heart...

De Wet: That is partially true. Let's divide this finger [lengthwise] in two. This finger is working on two systems. [De Wet demonstrates and explains his understanding of the nerves that supply the ring finger.] [...] So what does this have to do with violin playing? This finger [the ring finger] lies on the bow stick. The pad of the finger feels the vibration of the wood. Its function is stability, not movement. [...] The little finger is for balance, and the balance comes from here [points to the arm], and not here [points to the finger itself], because this is weak. [De Wet

demonstrates the position of the other fingers on the bow stick.] [...] There should not be any pressure. The moment you start pressing it becomes like when you grab someone around the neck. Any pressure [from the index finger] will immediately stiffen [and] close off the finger from the hand. Your movement is the ball of the thumb – that is your steering apparatus. Your brain and this [points to the ball of the thumb] is one.

Extract 16

De Wet: Too much input for too little output. Most violinists have that problem. Greatest output from the least input – that is the aim. [...] This happened at Stellenbosch in the methodology class. There was a disagreement in the class. I demonstrated certain movements and the class had to evaluate. Eventually, I decided to ask one of the cleaning ladies to judge the movements – she chose the correct movements! Because the eye can see when a movement is balanced. [...] You know, most violinists can see better than they can hear. [...] But the general public also see better than they hear.

Extract 17

Bester: It seems that many of your principles are in line with the ideas of FM Alexander. Has the Alexander technique had a big influence on your teaching method?

De Wet: I have had many discussions about [the Alexander technique], but my knowledge is too superficial to make any contribution. [...] But if you see yourself as a scientist – all violinists are scientists; they always think that they know better – but when you really sit with a problem, you sometimes come across something which no one else has thought about. And there you already have a starting point. [...] I have heard lots of positive feedback about the Alexander technique, but I am not an expert. [...] One picks up many things from what other people teach – it influences one's own ideas. Perhaps one would not do it exactly the same [as they taught...] but it is stimulating – it stays interesting. It also motivates one to be a bit creative – to not get stuck in old ideas. There is a past – maybe someone who thought differently...

Extract 18

De Wet: Do you use a shoulder rest? When did the shoulder rest come into use?

Bester: I am not sure.

De Wet: Do you know that many of the great artists play without shoulder rests? [The shoulder rest] only touches [your body] in one or two places, but the violin – the entire back of the violin – vibrates on the collar bone and [the vibrations] immediately travel to the brain. The vibration is in immediate contact with the brain, because it travels through the bone. The rest is obstruction. Now if you look at... One of the greatest teachers in America is Aaron Rosand – he plays without a shoulder rest. And remember, he is “mister big” in America. One doesn’t get near his class. I had the privilege to meet him when he toured in South Africa. And I visited him in New York. He has so many ideas. He inspired me – the straight arm [he refers to the right arm working as a unit]... At that stage I still played with a shoulder rest. [...] But what stayed with me is the straight arm. It makes all other movements possible. If you look at athletes – there is always a swaying motion. There are no straight lines in violin playing, everything follows a curve. This adjusts to that. The same is true when you draw, or paint graffiti... For every action there is a reaction. And that is extremely important.

Extract 19

De Wet: One day I sat down and told my wife that I will write down the ten most important things about violin technique. [De Wet reads from a list] “1: The pendulum is more efficient if initiated in a downward impulse. [...] In other words, gravity is [unclear]. 2: Memory is the first step of learning. 3: Conscious brain function is never final; the subconscious always adjusts and arranges, therefore, reflexes are more efficient through subconscious thought processes.” That was part A. B is “Therefore, interpretation of a great artist is instinctively created and varied.” I thought that was the end, but then I pondered more about the ten most important... [...] “Swift movements stimulate proper circulation of blood and replenishing of energy. Follow-through allows the body to rest. Continuous movement would deplete the body’s energy resources. The heart beats at three eighths per second... The listener also needs to rest.” Have you

ever thought about that? [...] “Throbbing sound stimulates – allows for brief release.”

Addendum B

The following is a list of the questions used in Questionnaire 1. This questionnaire was sent out to a number of De Wet's present and past students. The respondents had the option of remaining anonymous and were encouraged to elaborate on their answers as much as possible.

Questions

- 1) When did you study with Jack de Wet (e.g. 1995-2001) and how old/what level of playing were you at the time?
- 2) How long have you been playing the violin (and how many teachers did you have) before starting lessons with De Wet?
- 3) How many hours per day did De Wet expect you to practice? (If possible, please break this down into subsections, for example: 1 hour of scales + 1 hour of exercises + 1 hour of repertoire.)
- 4) How would you describe De Wet's influence on your playing?
- 5) How did De Wet approach the following technical aspects of violin playing?
 - a. Scales
 - b. Studies/Etudes
 - c. General left hand technique (including aspects such as vibrato and shifting.)
 - d. General right hand technique (including aspects such as sound production and tone colours.)
- 6) How did De Wet approach repertoire?
- 7) Are there any of De Wet's ideas on violin playing with which you do not/did not agree?
- 8) What are, in your opinion, De Wet's weakest points as a teacher (and why)?
- 9) What are, in your opinion, De Wet's strongest points as a teacher (and why)?
- 10) What do you think is De Wet's contribution to violin pedagogy in South Africa?