

Shifting



Johannes Moser

In this lesson, we learn concepts about shifting. Moser places an emphasis on the physical mechanisms that must function properly in the left arm and hand. Much of this has to do with the left elbow, which must serve as a lever of sorts to get the arm around the bout of the cello into the higher positions. We also study the role double stops have in deterring correct positions.

Shifting

Long-distance shifting involves the whole arm. The left elbow acts as a lever to get the arm around the bout of the cello.

Anticipate the movement in the left elbow:

- First, determine where your left elbow will need to be at the end of the shift. Practice the shift in reverse: for example, when shifting upwards, play the top note comfortably; the height of your left elbow at that moment is — no more, no less — the target, the position you want to be in when you initiate the shift.
- Then, determine exactly when you will move your elbow into this target position.
- For example, in the following shift from Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*, Professor Moser lifts the elbow into the new position right as he plays the low C-sharp:



Rather than thinking of a shift as a movement from finger to finger or from note to note, think of it as a movement from position to position.

- You can practice this by adding double stops. Using the same example from Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*:



Practicing shifts in double stops has many advantages:

- **Accuracy:** double stops secure your understanding of the fingerboard.
- **Time efficiency:** you indirectly improve other shifts between the same positions, which you will utilize in the future!



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