

The **Karen Tuttle** Legacy

A Resource and Guide for Viola Students,
Teachers, and Performers

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Preface

Throughout her stellar career as a teacher and performer, Karen Tuttle was a life-altering force and guiding light for generations of musicians. Her uniquely impactful approach to teaching and making music was transmitted through a loving and nurturing personality that left everyone she encountered profoundly changed.

Each musician who passed through her viola and chamber music studio over the years was invited to explore what she considered to be an essential “Truth” in music-making. She called that “Truth” Coordination. Of course, any attempt to write about music and pedagogy is to a certain extent inherently flawed, due to the absence of sound, live demonstration, and personal interaction. Karen Tuttle’s Coordination is no exception. Nevertheless, we feel it is important, as we approach the centennial of her birth and the tenth anniversary of her passing, to introduce her legacy to a larger audience through this book.

While Coordination is not only for violists, much of this book is viola-specific. Its format was inspired by a chart Karen Tuttle created (see Appendix G), which addresses various aspects of viola technique and includes suggested studies, etudes, and repertoire to support intermediate to advanced-level students as they develop each technical skill. Mastery of the various aspects of technique listed in Karen Tuttle’s chart and discussed by each of us in Chapters 1–14 of this book may be considered a preliminary activity or even an essential foundation for the understanding and implementation of Coordination, which we discuss in Chapter 15. In other words, in order to manifest Coordination successfully, we must have a technically sound and ergonomically healthy physical approach to playing our instrument. Karen Tuttle taught for most of her career at the collegiate level, but many of these concepts for healthy playing can be taught to beginners and intermediate level players as well, and she strongly encouraged this.

Karen Tuttle’s genius as a teacher included an extraordinary ability to address the individual needs of the person in front of her at any given moment. She also, of course, grew and evolved as an artist over time. Those of us contributing to this book experienced her teaching at different times in her career. We are also, of course, transmitting our thoughts on these topics through the individual lenses of our own life experiences and personalities. For all of these reasons, you will see some diversity of interpretation as you read the book, but you will also see a very clear common thread of Tuttle Truth connecting each of our contributions.

Our lives and careers were profoundly and irrevocably shaped by Karen Tuttle’s example, teaching, and love. Our hope is that this book will inspire you to explore these ideas in your own playing and teaching, thereby joining the Tuttle Family in a life of joyful, creative, and pain-free music-making. We invite you to explore these concepts in more depth by having a lesson or class with a Tuttle “descendent” at some point as well!

Chapter 1

Author Introductions to Karen Tuttle and Biographies

Jeffrey Irvine

Introduction

I studied with Karen for a number of summers at the Aspen Music Festival, after I had finished college. She had also been my chamber music coach when I was studying at the Philadelphia Musical Academy. Karen was the last teacher that I had, and she magically tied everything together for me and at the same time introduced me to a whole new world of viola playing and music making. She was an amazing person and teacher, and what an inspiration! I always played better for her than I did in the practice room – my subconscious knew that she believed in me 100%, and that enabled me to play better than I thought I could. I miss her greatly, and think of her quite often as I'm teaching my students. I started the Karen Tuttle "Coordination" Workshop in 2001 to expose more violists to her vision and principles. For many years she taught at the Workshop, providing inspiration and guidance for all of us.

Biography

Jeffrey Irvine joined the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music as the Fynette H. Kulas Professor of Viola in September of 1999 and is currently Co-Head of the Viola Department. He was Professor of Viola at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music from 1983 to 1999. His students have gone on to major orchestral, teaching and chamber music posts across the country and around the world. His students have often been First Prize Winners in major viola competitions, including the Primrose Competition, the ASTA National Solo Competition, and the Washington International Competition.

Mr. Irvine has been on the Artistic Advisory Board of the *Journal of Performing Arts Medicine*. He has published numerous articles on viola pedagogy in *American String Teacher* and the *Journal of the American Viola Society*.

Mr. Irvine is well known as a violist and a chamber musician. As a member of the New World String Quartet, Mr. Irvine performed throughout the United States and Europe, including concerts at Carnegie Recital Hall and the Kennedy Center.

During the summer, Mr. Irvine is on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival. He has also taught at the Bowdoin International Music Festival, the Perlman Music Program, the Heifetz International Music Institute, ENCORE School for Strings, the Meadowmount School of Music, and the Castleman Quartet Program.

The first-prize winner in both the 1979 Aspen Music Festival Viola Competition and the 1976 Cleveland Quartet Competition (as a member of the Carmel Quartet), Mr. Irvine received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Philadelphia Musical Academy and his Master of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music.

He is married to violist Lynne Ramsey with whom he has two children, Hannah and Christopher. He plays a viola by Hiroshi Iizuka, made in 1993. He is also an avid runner.

Jeffrey Irvine's personal website: jeffreyirvine.com

Kim Kashkashian

Introduction

Karen Tuttle appeared in my life as a north star: magnet, focus and savior. Many years after our direct student-teacher relationship ended, and a period of relaxed mentorship had ensued, she told me that when

Chapter 2

Stance

Jeffrey Irvine

During the era that I studied with Karen, she suggested that we stand with one foot slightly in front of the other. She said either foot could be in front, whichever was more comfortable for us. She characterized violinists as generally standing with their weight on their toes, and she said that violists needed to have their weight balanced between their toes and their heels, but definitely more “back” than “forward.” She said “don’t stand like a violinist, stand more like a jazz player” (as she imitated one) (Fig 2.1) . She also wanted us to have our knees slightly bent, so that our backs would be aligned. Overall, it was meant to be a relaxed and inviting posture.



Fig 2.1 – Karen Tuttle Stance, as taught to Jeffrey Irvine.

Karen asked me to play with my head upright, facing straight ahead (Fig 2.2). She had me feel what it was like to twist my head to the left, and asked me to imagine walking around like that for five hours a day or more. She anticipated my worries about not looking at my left hand, saying I could look out of the corner of my eye if I needed to, and besides, it wouldn’t help me anyway because the perspective was too long. She insisted that my kinesthetic sense was what enabled me to play in tune. I was nervous about it at first, but she convinced me to try it, and I know now that she was right. My conviction that she was right was proven to me when I had a blind student who had excellent intonation!

Karen also had to convince me to give up “dipping down” or hunching over as I went to the top of a phrase or to a musical arrival point. Even though I could tell that there was significant benefit to keeping my shoulders upright and open, it felt so right to dip down. I felt like I was losing an old friend! But she was right. I’m much better able to arrive musically if I keep my shoulders open, release, and refrain from collapsing my chest.

Kim Kashkashian

Close your hands without contracting them. (Figs 3.2, 3.3) Observe how your fist gently closes: where is your thumb in relation to the fingers? Notice the difference in the feel of the forearm when you have your wrist bent outwards, straight or inwards. Use the posture that is causing the least muscular contraction.



Fig 3.2

The shape of the left hand on the fingerboard should imitate the natural closing gesture of the fist and stay round, with the palm relaxed and open.



Fig 3.3

Notice, too, the inherent strength of your fourth finger when it closes into the palm. Aim for the same palm-wrist support of the fourth finger on the fingerboard as well. A supported fourth finger position defines where your arm should be. For most people, the left hand functions well when the balance of weight is in the knuckle of the third finger.

Carol Rodland

When assisting students with the exploration and development of an efficient, accurate, and comfortable left hand technique as inspired by Karen Tuttle's precepts, I find it important to remind them regularly to remain aware of the "macro" while exploring the "micro." In other words, as we focus on expanding and refining specific left hand skills, we must continually cultivate a larger awareness of the full support, ease, balance, and nourishing energetic flow from the entire body, so that the complete system of playing is fluid and organic, and so that small muscles and tendons which are prone to overuse are as consciously well-supported as possible.

With that larger perspective in mind, prior to delving into the more specific study of left hand intricacies on the viola itself, we experiment with various sensations away from the viola. First we do some arm-swings to cultivate freedom in the shoulder joint and to explore range of motion. (Karen Tuttle encouraged us to see what our "turn-out" was in the upper arm and not force a torque beyond that.) Next, we place the upper arm along the side of the torso and assume a "begging puppy dog" position (Fig 3.10), from which we initiate and explore the radius-ulna rotation in the elbow with passive wrist and hand following. We alternate between that "begging" position and a natural "giving" position in the hand (Fig 3.11) (our ultimate goal), thus encouraging the hand's optimal sense of balance and ease in that often awkward position in which we must play our instrument.



Fig 3.10



Fig 3.11

Kim Kashkashian

Finger action originates in the base knuckles, which release in two directions; horizontal and vertical. In both cases, the first knuckle in each moving finger will release on the diagonal from the fingerboard.

- 1) The horizontal release (making space between the knuckles) can be practiced by stretching (gently and softly!!!) a double stop configuration of fourths or sixths from a contracted (half step) position through the whole step until you have reached the expanded minor third distance.

This unit can be practiced with all pairs of fingers on all strings. This exercise is great for double-stop work, too.

- 2) The vertical release happens before transferring to any new finger as if jumping from one foot to the other. This jumping analogy describes the strength of your initial motion into the fingerboard, and also the consequent immediate release of weight. This happens naturally when going from a higher to lower finger, but we must think about the timing of this release when moving from a lower to a higher finger! If you succeed in creating this timing, it gives a great articulation and breathing feeling between each pitch.
- 3) It is also important to understand that the basic “bridge shape” the finger makes should not get distorted when releasing the base knuckle!

Suggested etudes:

Level 1)

Kayser, 36 Etudes, Op. 20, Nos. 4, 9, 22, 30

Fiorillo, ed. Vieland. 31 Selected Studies for Viola, Op. 3, Nos. 12, 19

Mazas, 75 Etudes, Op. 36, No. 13

Level 2)

Kreutzer, 42 Etudes, Nos. 9, 27, with reverse patterns (upper finger first in each case)

Rode, 24 Caprices, No. 4

Palaschko, 20 Etudes, Op. 36, No. 14

Level 3)

Dont, 24 Etudes, Op. 20, No. 2, 3

Schradieck, *School of Violin Technics*, Bk 1: Ex. I, nos. 1-25; Ex. II, nos. 1-12 (Also practice with lowered 2nd finger.)

Michelle LaCourse

Fingers “release” a bit up/back from the base knuckles before “bouncing” down onto the string. We called this “Release-aim-plop.” The release lets go of any “holding” between base knuckles and gathers energy (somewhat like a rubber band - pulling back before springing forward) for speed of bouncing onto the string, as opposed to pressure, banging, or hammering. This provides greater freedom and accuracy with the independent fingers, as one builds a physical memory of each note’s “home” on the fingerboard (also incorporating all other tactile information from feeling the width and depth of the neck and curvature of hand, finger, and bend of elbow). The springy, bouncy landing also functions as part of a general vibrato feeling even when there is no time for oscillation on a given note. Karen was adamant that we should generally not keep fingers down unless returning quickly and immediately to the finger.

Chapter 5

Fingerboard

Kim Kashkashian

We have three points of reference for fingerboard and intonation:

- 1) Distance traveled (motion recognition).

Practice moving (shifting) as if you were playing a slide in harmonics, releasing the finger weight and thumb completely, but with full bow weight for distance traveled. If you do this correctly, you will get a scratchy sound!

- 2) Interval (sound recognition).

Practice singing the note you are moving towards for interval recognition.

- 3) Point of arrival (geography).

Practice the move to your arrival note on the fingerboard from a neutral place (such as the arm hanging down or on the scroll) to the point of arrival.

My favorite ways to practice for fingerboard knowledge are:

- 1) Play a scale across all strings without shifting, then while staying in the key, move up one step to 2nd position and play across all strings, following this pattern until you have reached the tonic pitch three octaves up. Then work your way down.
- 2) Play a one octave scale on one string with all possible finger patterns.
- 3) Do the same with arpeggios!

Continue to top C,
then work downwards.

Michelle LaCourse

All of Karen's finger action and shifting concepts combined with string crossing skills were constantly monitored as we explored command of the fingerboard. We first used Primrose scales and Flesch scales and arpeggios (single string, one octave routines as well as the 3 octave sections). Karen then assigned Campagnoli 41 Caprices, Op. 22, Nos. 15, 24, 18, 25, 3, 31, 11, 19 and 20, and Fiorillo Nos. 7, 10 and 13 from 31 Selected Studies, Op. 3. I later brought her selected movements from the Campagnoli 7 Divertimenti, Op. 18 to explore extended playing that stays in high positions.

With my students I also start with scales and arpeggios for fingerboard development (with the same physical issues constantly monitored), adding obvious varied bowing and rhythm patterns, Gingold's scale bowings and rhythms, and some variations of my own design depending on a student's needs. I assign many of the Campagnoli 41 Caprices, Op. 22 assigned by Karen (I love No. 18, perhaps because she encouraged me to be bold and gutsy, and play with lots of *rubato* and an attitude pretending that it was all simple, in this one!)

While Karen never assigned me etudes beyond part of my first year of study with her, I've always found them a great way to stay in shape, get back in shape after a break, and build confidence on the instrument, as

they challenge all fingers, positions, bowings, and points of technique more evenly than the repertoire does. I especially like reviewing the Campagnoli 41 Caprices, Op. 22 as well as the 7 Divertimenti, Op. 18; Fuchs 15 Characteristic Studies; Uhl 20 Etudes and 30 Etudes for viola, and Palashko Etudes Opp. 36, 49, 55 and 62. KT insisted on the Primrose edition of the Campagnoli 41 Caprices, Op. 22 with its more challenging fingerings that frequently climb into high positions on low strings. I also prefer to use this version with my students.

Karen Ritscher

Karen Tuttle recommended learning the geography of the fingerboard through the Primrose scales. The fingerings of these scales stay in lower positions and then shift up the A string. She said that was good practice since the viola can be muddy in higher positions on the lower strings. She particularly liked *spiccato* scales. She advocated singing the intervals before playing to establish a good ear/hand connection. She always spoke of a “delicious” feeling of the fingerboard and to always “taste” your intonation.

In our lessons, we worked through many of the Kreutzer 42 Etudes as well as Rode 24 Caprices and Gaviniès 24 Etudes. She insisted on approaching scales and etudes through the lenses of her Coordination method. In her mind, technical study was not ever separate from accessing musical impulses. She herself maintained a life-long discipline of practicing scales and arpeggios every day.

Carol Rodland

In order to navigate the fingerboard fearlessly and fluidly, I advocate the cultivation of an inchworm-like sensation in the hand and fingers (Figs 5.2) in addition to the previously discussed finger action technique. This is helpful both in order to traverse larger distances with ease and confidence as well as to rebalance comfortably within one position. Flexibility within the hand as well as with the individual joints of each finger must be developed in order for everything to function fluidly. I find this approach to be especially important for smaller hands, but ultimately beneficial for everyone. It is very much related to Karen Tuttle’s sensuous approach to shifting, but again, with smaller hands it can occur within a position while navigating between lower fingers (1–2) and higher fingers (3–4). To work on this skill set, I like to use *The Dounis Daily Dozen*, Op. 20, No. 3 (see Appendix B), as well as Rode 24 Caprices, No.3 and Fuchs 16 Fantasy Etudes, No. 3. I can still picture clearly Karen Tuttle talking to me from her teaching chair while holding her viola in her lap and joyfully crawling up and down the fingerboard!



Fig 5.1



Fig 5.2

Chapter 8

Trills

Kim Kashkashian

A trill action is a normal finger action; releasing each knuckle before moving to the next note. The only difference is that you are going back and forth between two pitches! A knuckle release that does not require the finger itself to lift. Your base finger can stay on the string while the knuckle releases.

Suggested etudes:

Level 1)

Fiorillo, arr. ed. Vieland. 31 Selected Studies for Viola, Op. 3, No. 6

Kayser, 36 Etudes, Op. 20, No. 14

Mazas, 75 Etudes, Op. 36, No. 14

Level 2)

Rode, 24 Caprices, No. 1

Kreutzer, 42 Etudes, Nos. 15, 17

Level 3)

Dont, 24 Etudes. Op. 35, Nos. 6, 9, 15

Herold, Etudes for Viola, No. 6

Michelle LaCourse

Karen taught that healthy, bouncy finger action and freedom from unnecessary tension were the most important requirements for good trills. Rather than assigning specific trill etudes to me, she advised exploring each joint and every segment of the fingers, hand, arm, neck, torso, and legs, discovering that tension in any area could inhibit trill motion. Also vital was to monitor how light the finger that is held down could remain. I sometimes assign Kreutzer trill etudes (from 42 Etudes) with specific variations of the number of trill notes or starting with top versus bottom pitch, or make trill variations out of scales, always with those same principals in mind.

Carol Rodland

Developing brilliant and comfortable trills can involve much the same technical approach to speed and release as was previously discussed in Chapter 4 – Finger Action, the one difference being that the base note of the trill can remain lightly on the fingerboard throughout the trill. Practicing can entail once again a build-up of speed involving one rapid oscillation, then full relaxation, followed by two, etc. I think it is also important to practice the stop-release technique on both the top and bottom notes of the trill for the build-up of optimal comfort.

In addition to basic self-created trill exercises between all fingers, I often assign Kreutzer 42 Etudes, Nos. 15, 16, 18 and 19 to work on this skill. When beginning to explore stylistic trill questions in the Baroque and Classical periods, I also like to assign the Hoffmeister 12 Etudes as well as various smaller Baroque-era pieces such as the Telemann 12 Fantasias for Violin (Viola editions available). It is also important to address passages in the basic viola repertoire from these periods, such as the Hoffmeister Concerto in D Major; Stamitz Concerto in D Major, Op. 1; Telemann Concerto in G Major for Viola and String Orchestra with Basso Continuo, TWV 51:G9; Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra in Eb major, K. 364 and J. S. Bach's 3 Sonatas for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord, BWV 1027-9.

Musical Works Mentioned in Chapter 8 — Trills

	Composer, arr., ed.	Title	Section	Viola edition
1)	Bach, Johann Sebastian	Sonata No. 1 in G Major for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord, BWV 1027		yes
2)	Bach, Johann Sebastian	Sonata No. 2 in D Major for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord, BWV 1028		yes
3)	Bach, Johann Sebastian	Sonata No. 3 in G Minor for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord, BWV 1029		yes
4)	Dont, Jakob	24 Etudes or Caprices for Violin, Op. 35	Nos. 6, 9, 15	yes
5)	Fiorillo, Federigo; arr. ed. Vieland, Joseph	31 Selected Studies for Viola, Op. 3	Nos. 6	IMC
6)	Herold, Jiri	Etudes for Viola	No. 6	Bärenreiter Praha
7)	Hoffmeister, Anton Franz	12 Etudes for Viola		yes
8)	Hoffmeister, Franz Anton	Concerto in D Major for Viola and Orchestra		yes, w/pno. red.
9)	Kayser, Heinrich Ernst	36 Elementary and Progressive Etudes, Op. 20	No. 14	yes
10)	Kreutzer, Rodolphe	42 Etudes or Caprices for Violin	Nos. 15-19, all 11 trills exercises	yes
11)	Mazas, Jacques Féréol	75 Études mélodiques et progressives for Violin, Op. 36, Études spéciales (Bk. 1, nos. 1-30) Études brillantes (Bk. 2, nos. 31-56) Études d'artistes (Bk. 3, nos. 57-75)	No. 14	yes
12)	Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola and Orchestra in E \flat major, K. 364		yes, w/pno. red.
13)	Rode, Pierre	24 Caprices for Violin	No. 1	yes
14)	Stamitz, Carl Philipp	Concerto in D Major for Viola and Orchestra, Op. 1		yes, w/pno. red.
15)	Telemann, Georg Philipp	12 Fantasias for Violin without Bass, TWV 40:14-25		yes
16)	Telemann, Georg Philipp	Concerto in G Major for Viola and String Orchestra with Basso Continuo, TWV 51:G9		yes, w/pno. red.