



Top Ten for Violin: Books 1–3

Georgia Vale

BOOK 1: 30PP ISBN 9790579983316 £8.95

BOOK 2: 30PP ISBN 9790579983323 £9.95

BOOK 3: 40PP ISBN 9790579983330 £9.95

SPARTAN PRESS

Georgia Vale's Top Ten series consists of miniature technical exercises for young violinists. Each of the three volumes comprises ten sets of ten exercises. Book 1 is for beginners up to ABRSM Grade 2; book 2 for grades 2–4; and book 3 for grades 4–6. A final book covering grades 7–8 will be published later this year.

As one would expect, the initial exercises for beginners are very straightforward, but pleasingly they introduce strong technical basics from the start. The first challenge asks the student to crawl up and down the bow, which strengthens right-hand fingers. The second focuses on left-hand pizzicato for the fourth finger, which helps to develop power and also a good early hand shape. The exercises get trickier as the student progresses, but all retain strong fundamentals of violin technique.

Each exercise is short, has a fun title (such as 'Walk like a lizard'), and includes advice on how to achieve the aim of the study ('Launch from the E string, land on the G string' for an exercise called Rocket). The series is given continuity by a stick man, who demonstrates, motivates, or accentuates the fun element of each exercise. He is the presiding genius of all three volumes and his presence never feels babyish or patronising.

Some exercises are presented as challenges with a metronome ('How many beats can you hold a long bow for?'). My five-year-old son loves these, and always wants to beat his personal best, which means plenty of rubbing out when he sets a new high mark. There is a good sense of progression as you go through the books. Each set is like a gym circuit (left hand and right hand are trained in each). The final exercise in each set is always called 'Top Ten' and draws together some of the separate skills previously tackled.

All basic aspects of violin technique are covered, including shifting and double-stopping, in imaginative and entertaining ways, making this collection a lovely addition to the selection of technical volumes aimed at children.

ALEX LAING