

ZLATA M A BROUWER

MINI MASTERCLASS



5 BOWING SECRETS

to Create a

**PROFESSIONAL SOUND
ON THE VIOLIN**



Imagine your favourite violin soloist: What skill would you desire most for yourself?

Chances are you desire the beautiful sound, the clear resonance, the artistry and expression. Think about it... it matters more HOW you play than WHAT you play... That's tone creation, bowing technique and musicality and that's exactly what I am going to teach you about today.

Welcome to the five bowing secrets of creating a beautiful sound. In this mini masterclass you will learn to put artistry and expression in your playing by improving your bowing technique and tone production.

My name is Zlata Brouwer and I am a violin teacher specialized in bowing technique and tone creation. I teach students worldwide to get a professional sound... step by step. I am the creator of Violin Lounge TV and Bow like a Pro, where I share the best skills and knowledge from the greatest violinists.

In this masterclass I want to talk about five topics, which also form the five secrets that will help you create a professional sound.

- 1. Master the Basics of Bowing**
- 2. Create a Beautiful Tone**
- 3. Unveil the Spiccato Secrets**
- 4. Bow like a pro**
- 5. Choose a Good Violin Bow**

1. Master the Basics of Bowing

The first topic I would like to talk about is mastering the basics of bowing. A lot of people think that they have already mastered the basics. In my opinion, you can always refine and improve the basics, which will have a direct effect on your sound and your bowing in more advanced pieces. Lots of players struggle with advanced stuff, while their actual problem is in the basics.

It all starts with a flexible bow hold. That's not a rigid hold, but it is a description of the way you should move your fingers along with the bow motion. This can look very different for every player. Perhaps you have already noticed that looking at your favorite performers. When you are not using a flexible bow hold and you are moving the bow with a rigid hold, you will find that you are stopping the resonance of the violin. You are choking and stopping the sound.



Instead of this, you want to make sure your bow hold changes while playing and you are mainly bowing with subtle movements in your wrist and your fingers instead of larger movements with your arm. Remember to relax your arm and have a heavy feeling in your right arm. Your hand leads and your arm follows.

Do not hold your bow and violin too high, because it will result in a tensed sound and it will tire you out. It is important not to have a shoulder rest that is too high. Instead, use a higher chinrest if you feel you need to fill up more space. The relaxation and balance in your violin hold is crucial for your sound.

2. *Create a Beautiful Tone*

The second thing I want to talk about is how to create a beautiful tone. To achieve this, it is very important to bow smoothly and to have the right movement in your arm, wrist and fingers as we have already talked about. The first secret of creating a beautiful tone is that you have to make an eight with your elbow while playing. In down bow you are already make a round motion with your elbow and you prepare for the up bow. This way you are making the motion of an eight which gives the illusion of a seamless bow change.



The second secret to creating a beautiful tone is finding the balance between speed and weight. It is of key importance not use pressure, but to utilize the weight of your arm in your playing. There is a big difference between weight and pressure. When you are using weight, you are relaxing your arm and using the weight of your arm to create a deep sound in the string. When you are using pressure, you are choking and muting the sound. You can recognize someone who is using pressure by the way they hold their arm. When they hold it very high they are likely using pressure and pushing into the string with force and muscle power. When their arm is relaxed and their bowing looks effortless, they are probably using weight. The biggest difference is in the feeling you have and in the sound you make.

The combination of bow speed and weight determines the sound you create. By speed I do not mean the tempo in which you play a piece, but the speed of your bow stroke. When you are bowing too quickly, it creates a superficial sound. To avoid this, you want to match the speed to the weight you put into the bow. Most players will have to slow down their bow speed to create a full and deep sound. When you get some discipline in your right arm your playing gets way more expressive! Play around with these two factors and match the proportions to the piece you are playing and the sound you want to create. There is no right and wrong. What matters is the conscious use of the means of expression.

3. *Unveil the Spicatto Secrets*



The next thing I would like to talk to you about is the spicatto secrets. Where most people go wrong with spicatto, which makes it sound uncontrolled and unprofessional, is that they are almost throwing the bow on the strings with their arm or even their shoulder. Avoid this by holding your bow just above the strings and only use your wrist and fingers to put it on the strings. To practice this, you can do a very slow spicatto, which is called a put down spicatto. It is one of many spicatto exercises I teach my Bow like a Pro students. After practicing this in a low tempo, you can speed it up until you have a very clean and neat spicatto that you can adjust to the sound colors you want to create and the piece you play. You should not use the same sort of spicatto everywhere.

Another common mistake is that people bounce too high in the spicatto. This creates a sort of V-shape instead of the U-shape you want. You hear a small sound or just a scratch. Also you will lose control of the bow and you will not be able to do the spicatto regularly in the speed you choose. What you want to do is to stay close to the string and minimize the time your bow is in the air. Find a balance between what you do and the natural bounce of the bow. Feel how the bow reacts to the action in your fingers. In the end spicatto must sound like a little bow stroke with air between the notes. It should not sound like pizzicato, but it should have a healthy full sound with resonance. You should be able to not only control the speed of your spicatto, but also the height and adjust it to the piece you play.

4. *Bow Like a Pro*

The next topic is bow like a pro. I would like to share with you the difference between a typical amateur sound and a typical professional sound.

Amateur mistake nr 1: Shooting your bolt

You know you're creating an amateur sound when you are shooting your bolt. What I mean by that is that you bow too quickly, use too much bow and get a superficial uncontrolled sound without depth and character. A professional bows very carefully, knows exactly the right speed and weight to use and colors the sound constantly with his or her fingertips. Remember: your hand leads and your arm follows! A neat trick to get this deep sound is to imagine that the backside of your violin is resonating, and you want to reach the backside of the violin.



Amateur mistake nr 2: No regular sound (belly bowing) and no control

To create a professional sound, you want to make sure you clean up your bowing. Do that on an open string and really listen if you hear 'other stuff' going on that is not serving the music you want to make. An example is "belly bowing". This is when people try to smoothen their bow changes by lifting their bow at the frog and tip, which results in a distorted sound. The bow stroke sounds louder in the middle and with this it is really difficult to make musical phrases. It is like every bow stroke is a phrase, which sounds restless and lacks meaning. You want your dynamics determined by the music and not by each bow stroke. When you bow like a professional you are able to create phrases and musical sentences using the various aspects of bowing. Do you have irregularities in your bowing? Try to find out what you do unconsciously by making long bow strokes on open strings. Is there really a good quality regular tone with optimal resonance from your violin? Or can you clean up something to make space for real musical expression?

5. Choose a Good Violin Bow

The fifth secret is to get yourself a good bow that fits your needs and matches your violin and your playing. A lot of people who try out different bows for the first time, are amazed by the difference a bow can make in sound and ease of bowing. I see a lot of people use a bow that does not help them in any way and gets in the way of their progress. This does not necessarily mean that you have to buy a very expensive bow. You need a bow that fits you, your playing and your violin. You probably should not use the bow that 'came with' your violin almost for free. Use a bow that can do every bowing technique and really helps you in developing your technique.

I have an Arcus S9 bow myself that is over eight thousand dollars and it is worth every penny as it deepens my musical possibilities, makes lots of bowing techniques so much easier (I almost feel like cheating) and makes my violin sound better than ever. You do not have to go that far, but the more you develop as a violinist, the more important your bow becomes. Professional players would rather have a really good bow and a mediocre violin than the other way around. The bow is to a violinist what the voice and mouth are to a singer. Make sure that you have a bow that at least does not stop you in your development. [Click here](#) to check out if my own line of carbon fiber bows might be a good fit for you.



Yes, YOU too can make a professional sound!

If there is ONE thing I want you take a away from this mini masterclass it is this: Professional bowing technique and tone creation are learnable skills. All violin players can learn the techniques and apply them in beautiful music, expressing their emotions through the violin. You just need to know the exact steps to get there from the level you are currently at.

Do you have questions about this mini masterclass? [Join my Facebook group](#), jot down your question and I am happy to help you further.

This mini masterclass was just a little taste of my online masterclass program Bow like a Pro. Bow like a Pro is a beautiful place online where you can go anytime you want for step by step lessons and detailed practice plans to create a beautiful tone, learn all possible bowing techniques and express yourself through music.

Bow like a Pro gives you lifetime access to an ever-expanding online violin school, where you can focus on HOW you play instead of WHAT you play to boost your current practice routine and lessons.

Besides being a teacher specialized in bowing and tone myself, Bow like a Pro's guest teachers are top soloists sharing their secrets. We take countless examples from the greatest violinists of all time and break down how it is done and how you can do it too.

Stop struggling unnecessarily! [Click here](#) to read all about Bow like a Pro.

For now, I wish you joy and good results from applying what you have learned in this mini masterclass!

With love,

Zlata Brouwer
Your online violin teacher

