

GUIDE TO PURCHASING A BOW

Prepared by Dr. Braun

For students in Churchill Orchestra, I recommend buying an upgraded bow instead of purchasing another "beginner" level bow that comes with most rental instruments and outfits (instrument, bow, & case sold together). A better quality bow will allow students to produce a more mature, full sound than is possible with a "beginner" bow. The size of the bow correlates to the size of the instrument, so a student who plays a full size violin or cello will need a full size bow. Violas over 15" use a full size viola bow. Bases more than ½ size use a ¾ or full size bow (¾ & full size mean the same thing for bass bows.) Bows can either be haired with synthetic horsehair or genuine horsehair. In either case, as the bow is used, the hair begins to wear out and must be replaced (rehaired) every couple of years.

BOW MATERIALS

Fiberglass: Beginner level bow made of fiberglass with a plastic frog. Fine for young players, but not responsive enough to play more advanced bowing techniques required for older students.

Brazilwood: There is a wide range brazilwood bows currently on the market. Those that come with inexpensive outfits are often of extremely poor quality, warp easily, fall apart, or snap because the wood is very brittle. Higher quality brazilwood bows can be appropriate for intermediate level players. The only way to know if a brazilwood bow is of good quality is to actually try it out. Bows of better quality will have leather or nickel-silver windings (instead of plastic) and a frog made of ebony with decorative mother of pearl inlay (as opposed to plastic) and have nickel or silver fittings.

Pernambuco: As with Brazilwood, there is a wide range of pernambuco bows on the market, from very inexpensive (but inferior quality) to incredibly expensive (professional level). Pernambuco is a very strong, dense, yet flexible wood, perfect for making superior quality bows. Pernambuco is becoming increasingly rare, as it is harvested from South American rainforests. As with brazilwood, a performer needs to try out the bow before purchasing it. Because pernambuco is so expensive, the windings and frogs are of a superior quality (ebony wood; mother-of-pearl, silver, or gold inlay). Unless the bow is going to be used by a very advanced player (and you are willing to spend hundreds of dollars on a pernambuco bow!), I suggest trying either a carbon fiber or composite bow.

*****Carbon Fiber and Composite Bows: (my recommendation)**

These relatively new types of bows are becoming very popular because they are not only durable, but have the responsive quality of more expensive wood bows. For older students, I recommend getting a carbon fiber or composite bow instead of a fiberglass or brazilwood bow. Carbon fiber & composite bows are strong, flexible, and don't warp as much as brazilwood, plus produce a better tone quality than fiberglass. A better quality bow will last a student through high school and beyond.

BRANDS OF BOWS

Listed below are examples of bows that are appropriate for the average Junior High/High School player. Very advanced students will probably want to invest in either a good Pernambuco bow or one of the new "Coda" brand bows. There are numerous vendors selling bows in brick-and mortar music stores and in online stores. I buy my personal stringed instrument supplies from either Southwest Strings swstrings.com or Shar Music sharmusic.com. Amazon.com also carries string supplies and bows from various resellers. For a more extensive list of vendors, check my website for a list of music instrument dealers and repair shops in the Central New Jersey area.

Note: The descriptions listed below were downloaded from the vendors' websites in September 2016. Check with the vendors for current prices and availability

VIOLIN BOW EXAMPLES

VENDOR: Southwest Strings swstrings.com

Arco Nouveau Round Carbon Fiber Violin Bow, GP-VB72

\$89.00

"The Arco Nouveau is an affordable and well-balanced carbon fiber violin bow with a beautifully finished black stick. This violin bow is a good choice for beginning to advancing players. The Arco Nouveau has horsehair on a round carbon fiber stick, ebony frog fully mounted with nickel-silver, Parisian eye, three-part adjuster and faux whalebone winding with leather grip. Stamped: Arco Nouveau"

VENDOR: Shar Music sharmusic.com

Presto® Audition Carbon Fiber Violin Bow, Item# CPV126

SHAR Price: \$129.00

"PRESTO® Performance Series carbon fiber bows have gained a loyal following among players and teachers alike. Combining modern, strong, state-of-the-art materials with traditional handcraft, these bows are as impressive and beautiful to look at as they are to play. Agile handling, arrow-straight tracking and full tonal power are hallmarks of these fine bows. Decidedly stunning in appearance due to the open weave carbon cloth, these bows are far better suited for severe performance conditions than wood bows, including pernambuco. And, as the world's supply of expensive pernambuco wood disappears, PRESTO® Performance Series bows deliver more performance for your dollar than any fine bow on the market today. PRESTO® bows are only made with aerospace-grade fibers and resins. The engineering process guarantees longevity by eliminating "creep," a flaw in carbon-fiber manufacture that can warp a bow or diminish camber over time. All bows are thoroughly inspected, meaning only bows with the best craftsmanship are sent to our customers. Nickel mounted, open weave back carbon-fiber finish."

VIOLA BOW EXAMPLES

VENDOR: Southwest Strings swstrings.com

Arco Nouveau Round Carbon Fiber Viola Bow, GP-VOB72

\$99.00

"The Arco Nouveau is an affordable and well-balanced carbon fiber viola bow with a beautifully finished black stick. This viola bow is a good choice for beginning to advancing players. The Arco Nouveau has horsehair on a round carbon fiber stick, ebony frog fully mounted with nickel-silver, Parisian eye, three-part adjuster and faux whalebone winding with leather grip. Stamped: Arco Nouveau"

VENDOR: Shar Music sharmusic.com

Presto® Audition Carbon Fiber Viola Bow, Item# CPA126 X 44

SHAR Price: \$149.00

"PRESTO® Performance Series carbon fiber bows have gained a loyal following among players and teachers alike. Combining modern, strong, state-of-the-art materials with traditional handcraft, these bows are as impressive and beautiful to look at as they are to play. Agile handling, arrow-straight tracking and full tonal power are hallmarks of these fine bows. Decidedly stunning in appearance due to the open weave carbon cloth, these bows are far better suited for severe performance conditions than wood bows, including pernambuco. And, as the world's supply of expensive pernambuco wood disappears, PRESTO Performance Series bows deliver more performance for your dollar than any fine bow on the market today. PRESTO® bows are only made with aerospace-grade fibers and resins. The engineering process guarantees longevity by eliminating "creep," a flaw in carbon-fiber manufacture that can warp a bow or diminish camber over time. All bows are thoroughly inspected, meaning only bows with the best craftsmanship are sent to our customers. Nickel mounted, open weave back carbon-fiber finish"

CELLO & BASS BOWS

Like violin and viola bows, there are many choices in carbon fiber and composite bows. Popular brands include Glaesel, Glasser, Arco Nouveau, Hans Kroger, and Coda. Cello and bass bows are more expensive than violin and viola bows because the stick is made thicker and stronger to play on the thicker, low-pitch strings.

CELLO BOW EXAMPLES

VENDOR: Southwest Strings swstrings.com

Arco Nouveau Round Carbon Fiber Cello Bow, GP-CB72

\$109.00

"The Arco Nouveau is an affordable and well-balanced carbon fiber cello bow with a beautifully finished black stick. This cello bow is a good choice for beginning to advancing players. The Arco Nouveau has horsehair on a round carbon fiber stick, ebony frog fully mounted with nickel-silver, Parisian eye, three-part adjuster and faux whalebone winding with leather grip. Stamped: Arco Nouveau"

VENDOR: Shar Music sharmusic.com

Presto® Audition Carbon Fiber Cello Bow, Item# CPC126 X 44

SHAR Price: \$169.00

"PRESTO® Performance Series carbon fiber bows have gained a loyal following among players and teachers alike. Combining modern, strong, state-of-the-art materials with traditional handcraft, these bows are as impressive and beautiful to look at as they are to play. Agile handling, arrow-straight tracking and full tonal power are hallmarks of these fine bows. Decidedly stunning in appearance due to the open weave carbon cloth, these bows are far better suited for severe performance conditions than wood bows, including pernambuco. And, as the world's supply of expensive pernambuco wood disappears, PRESTO® Performance Series bows deliver more performance for your dollar than any fine bow on the market today. PRESTO® bows are only made with aerospace-grade fibers and resins. The engineering process guarantees longevity by eliminating "creep," a flaw in carbon-fiber manufacture that can warp a bow or diminish camber over time. All bows are thoroughly inspected, meaning only bows with the best craftsmanship are sent to our customers. Nickel mounted, open weave back carbon-fiber finish"

BASS BOW EXAMPLES

NOTE: Bass Bows come in two styles: French or German. Check with your child's teacher to determine what style of bass bow to purchase.

VENDOR: Southwest Strings swstrings.com

Arco Nouveau French or German Round Carbon Fiber Bass Bow, GP-BB72

From \$169.15

"Arco Nouveau bows are well balanced with excellent playability. Clean workmanship, nicely finished, well priced. An exceptional value. Round carbon fiber stick. Nickel fully mounted, German or French style, ebony frog, Parisian eye. Faux whalebone winding with a leather grip. Tip similar on both styles. Stamped: Arco Nouveau. Size: 3/4
French style: three-part, adjuster.
German style: standard, solid adjuster."

VENDOR: Shar Music sharmusic.com

Presto® Carbon Fiber Double Bass Bow

Item# CPB120

Updated 9/13/2016

SHAR Price: \$199.00

Sale Price: \$179.00

“Enjoy the benefits of a carbon fiber bow - laser-straight tracking, excellent control and unparalleled durability - all at a great price. The perfect bow to teach young players correct technique, the Presto bow is also used by many advanced players for outdoor or pit work, or as a backup bow. PRESTO® bows are only made with aerospace-grade fibers and resins. The engineering process guarantees longevity by eliminating "creep," a flaw in carbon-fiber manufacture that can warp a bow or diminish camber over time. All bows are thoroughly inspected, meaning only bows with the best craftsmanship are sent to our customers. Black with finished stick, ebony frog with Parisian eye (bass bows with pearl eye).”