

# Henry Bischofberger Violins, LLC

## Voted Evening Magazine's Best of Western WA

[www.kirklandviolins.com](http://www.kirklandviolins.com)

425 822-0717

### How to Care for Your Instrument

By Henry Bischofberger, Violin Maker

Your instrument is a sensitive wooden musical instrument, carefully carved and created for the best sound production and sound quality possible. With the proper care and handling, your instrument can last many lifetimes. Below are some important steps to remember in order to keep your instrument in good condition.

*Always keep your instrument and bow in a safe place or in the case when it is not being played. Make sure the case is latched and/or zipped.*

**The Bow:** Do not touch the hair of the bow with your fingers. There are oils in your skin that get on the hair and ruin it. Do not over tighten the hair of the bow. The bow should still be curved inward when the hair is tight. Loosen the hair before returning the bow to the case. It is not necessary to rosin the bow every time you play as over rosinning can cause a scratchy sound and limit performance. Cellists: Never put your bow in your padded case when it is empty. Put the cello in first, then the bow. When removing, remove the bow first, then the cello. The bow can snap if left in the case by itself because the case is soft.

**What is Rosin?** Rosin is made from resin collected from pine trees. Rosin is applied to the hair of the bow to act as a gripping agent which causes the strings on the instrument to vibrate, thus producing sound. There are many brands of rosin available varying only slightly from the basic formula for making this product.

**The Bridge:** Check the bridge occasionally. The back of the bridge towards the fingerboard should be perpendicular to the top. If it begins to tilt toward the fingerboard, notify the teacher or a violin maker. This happens naturally over time and is easily fixed.

**Tuning:** Beginners should not attempt to tune their instrument. Leave it up to the teacher until the student has been taught how to do this properly. Incorrect tuning leads to broken strings. When you do learn to tune, do not turn the fine tuners all the way down as they can scratch the top of the violin. Use the pegs for large adjustments in pitch and the fine tuners for smaller changes.

**Occasional Repairs:** Never try to repair your violin yourself, even for minor adjustments. Talk to your Teacher first, and if s/he can't help, take the violin to your Violin Maker.

**Temperatures:** Wood constantly adjusts to changes in temperatures and humidity. If the instrument is subjected to drastic changes in temperature, it will crack. Do not leave the instrument in the car overnight, or by a heat vent or in the sun. Keep it dry (for the most part it is an inside instrument). High heat (leaving it in the car in summer) will melt the varnish and cause irreparable damage. The glue holding your violin together is a special hide glue that is strong enough to hold the seams together, yet can be removed by the violin maker if repairs are needed. Temperature changes can cause the seams to crack and open up. Do not try to repair these on your own; your violin maker will need to use the correct glue and his/her expertise to fix open seams.

**Strings:** Your strings are made from a core material called Perlon, and then wrapped with a fine wire made from either aluminum or silver. The quality of the strings can affect your instrument's sound. If your strings begin to fray, they need to be replaced. Ask your teacher or violin maker to replace strings for you until you have been taught how. Since your instrument constantly adjusts to temperature and humidity, you may open your case one day and find your strings loose. If this happens, do not worry, it is simply the wood expanding and contracting. Bring your instrument in to the violin maker or your teacher for tuning.

**Cleaning Your Instrument:** Wipe your instrument down with a soft cloth after each use. Keep this cloth in your case for regular use. It is especially important to wipe off the top of the instrument directly under the strings, and on the fingerboard and strings to remove all rosin dust. If removed after each playing, rosin dust comes off easily. If left to build up, it becomes hard and sticky and almost impossible to remove. Polishes should be use sparingly.

And finally, even with careful care, accidents happen and instruments occasionally sustain damage or need repair. Please remember that your violin maker is your (and your instrument's) best friend! Take any repairs or questions to him/her first no matter how small you might think it is. Doing this will prevent further damage and ensure a long life for your instrument.

**Henry Bischofberger** is a third generation Violin Maker located on Seattle's Eastside! He learned his trade at the Violin Making School in Brienz, Switzerland and has been in business for over 35 years. Henry has violins, violas, cellos and bows in all sizes for sale and rent. Contact him at [www.kirklandviolins.com](http://www.kirklandviolins.com) by phone 425-822-0717 or email [henry@kirklandviolins.com](mailto:henry@kirklandviolins.com).