

THE MANDOLINE.

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The Mandoline, although of ancient origin, had been left almost untouched for a number of years. Mandolines were formerly made of different shapes and sizes, no uniformity being adopted; some had six, nine, and twelve strings; in fact, all instruments having about the shape of the present instrument were called Mandolines, whether played like the Luth or Guitar. These are the ones that were used in former times as accompaniment to the voice. The Mandoline of to-day, however, is not at all adapted for accompanying the voice, it being a solo instrument. Mozart's beautiful serenade, "Don Juan," written with accompaniment of the Mandoline, is unfortunately too often poorly imitated by leaders of Orchestra, by the "pizzicato" of their Violins, or by a Guitar, which spoils the effect entirely. Fig. 3 represents the exact Mandoline. Flat bottomed Mandolines are not to be used.

SECTION I.

OF THE STRINGS.

The Mandoline has four double metallic strings, two strings being tuned in unison. The 4th or G string must be of steel wire, covered with silver or silvered wire; the 3d or D string the same as the G, only thinner; the 2d or A string must also be of steel, not covered; the 1st or E is the same as the A, only thinner.

SECTION II.

OF THE LEFT HAND, OR THE MANNER OF HOLDING THE NECK.

The neck of the Mandoline must lie in the palm of the left hand, resting upon the first joint of the forefinger, supported by the thumb, which must take its position above the first fret. The palm of the hand must not be kept against the neck, as playing in positions or shifting would be impossible. The left elbow must be kept close to the body.

SECTION III.

OF THE SHELL OR PICK, AND MANNER OF HOLDING IT.

The Mandoline is played with a small, flat piece of almond-shaped tortoise-shell (Fig. 1). Horn or an ostrich quill is sometimes used, but tortoise-shell is far more preferable; having more consistency of body and elasticity, it produces a much clearer sound. I would caution the pupils against using hard shells, as the trill can never be played as regular and with as much effect as with a flexible one. Of course the flexibility of shells is a mere matter of taste, and different players will use shells of different strengths. When playing with a tortoise-shell pick it is sometimes apt to turn in your fingers, but this is easily remedied by applying a little rosin on your fingers.

SECTION IV.

OF THE RIGHT HAND AND ARM.

The hand must be gently curved so as to play a little below the bottom of sounding hole. Hold the shell between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand. The other fingers of this hand should be somewhat open, the little finger resting upon the Harmonic board or Rosette, moving it gently according to the motion of the wrist. The forearm must rest on the edge of the instrument, so that the wrist may be flexible and free.

A very effective and flute-like sound may be obtained by playing just below the 17th fret, or above the sounding hole.

SECTION V.

ON THE MOTION OF THE FINGERS OF THE LEFT HAND.

The hand must be turned so that the fingers are bent downwards, and a little apart from each other, in order to be right above the strings, holding them gracefully, and placing them firmly on the strings. The middle end of the fingers should fall on the strings with much suppleness, and rise just enough to give them a new start. This must be carefully practiced, in order to keep always the fingers directly above the strings. The greatest evenness must be observed in moving the fingers up and down, and their pressure upon the strings must be stronger than that of the shell, or at least equal to it, when playing with much strength. The wrist and palm of the hand must in no case participate in the motions of the fingers.

SECTION VI.

OF THE ATTITUDE IN GENERAL.

The Mandoline is played sitting. The chest must be well out, and the attitude in general graceful. Let the head be erect, particularly avoiding to follow with it the motions of the music; this habit, though quite common, is nevertheless very ridiculous. The right leg must be thrown over the left knee, as in Fig. 2. I have seen a number of pictures of the position, but have not found a single one correct. Fig. 2 represents the only exact and correct position. The front of the Mandoline must be turned partly from you. To ladies playing the Mandoline I would suggest a stool placed under the right foot.