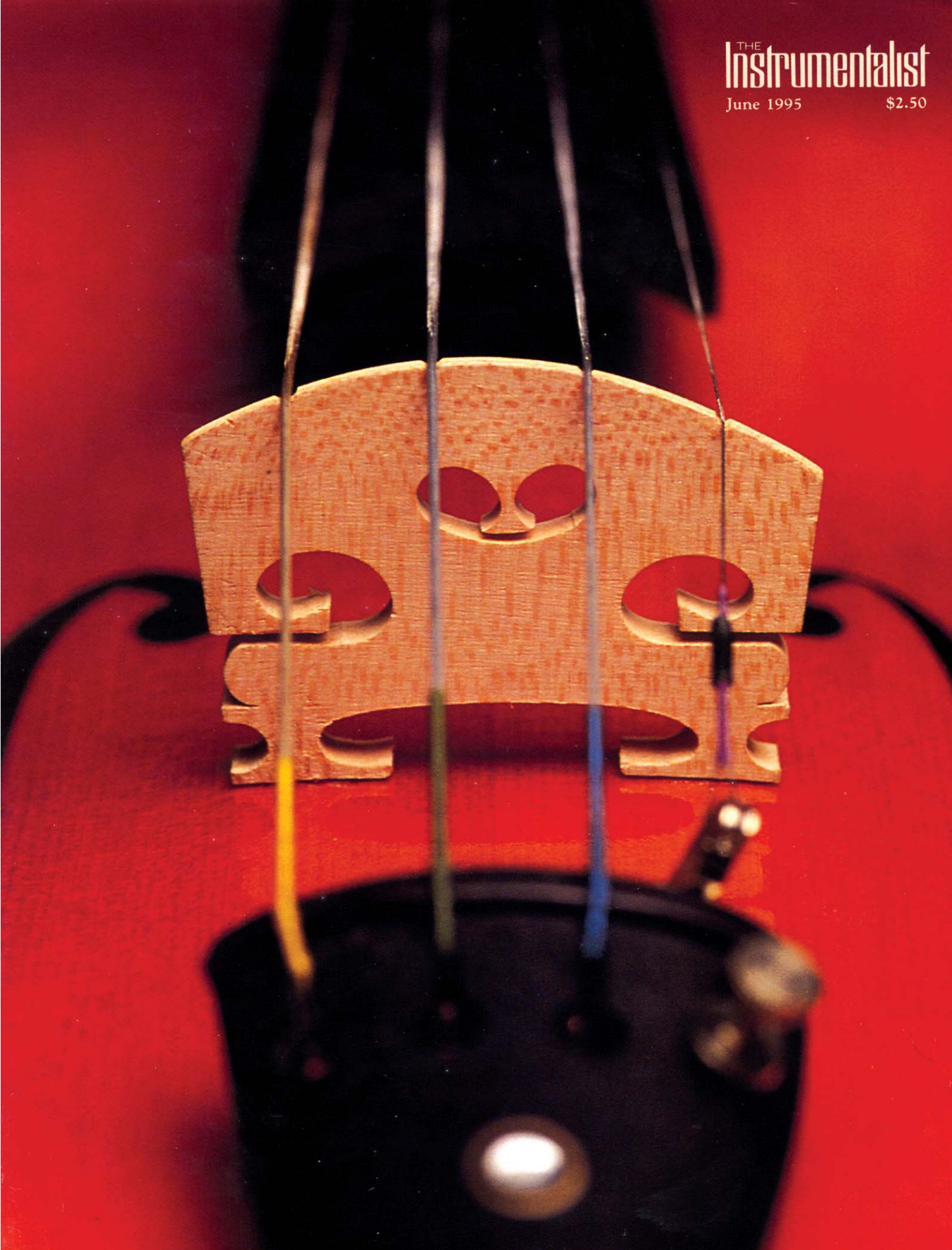


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Unusual Cymbal Effects

by Dave Black and Mitchell Peters

Most cymbal parts are quite traditional, revolving around standard two-cymbal and suspended-cymbal techniques. Periodically, composers ask for special effects, and players should know how to execute these properly.

The Slide

To produce a slide, percussionists should place the upper edge of the right cymbal against the inside surface of the left cymbal near its center, then slide the edge across the other cymbal's grooves. The final step is to separate the cymbals as they vibrate. Some people refer to this as a swish or scrape. The German term for this technique is *zischend*, which is occasionally found in orchestral repertoire such as measure 20 of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*.

Many times a slide is not indicated in the music, but conductors may ask for it. The one cymbal note in the last movement of Dvorák's *New World Symphony* is often played as a slide. Slides usually have to start before the beat for the cymbals to separate at the beginning of the printed note. Sometimes it is helpful to use a smaller cymbal in the right hand and a larger cymbal in the left hand; the longer the slide, the more appropriate it is for a larger cymbal in the left hand.

The Two-Plate Roll

There are two ways to achieve the two-plate roll. The more common method begins with the cymbals together but a bit off center. Some players variously hold the cymbals at a slight angle or parallel to the floor, like a hi-hat. While keeping the cymbals in loose contact, both hands rotate in a circular motion to produce the roll. The important aspect is holding the cymbals loosely, as excessive pressure decreases the vibration of the cymbal surfaces.

The size of the circles, the speed of the circular motion, and the looseness of



Cymbals at a slight angle



Cymbals parallel to the floor

cymbal contact are all factors that influence the dynamic control of this effect. The two-plate roll is not practical at a loud dynamic level; an example of where this effect works well occurs in Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin*.

Kodály uses the two-plate roll in an unusual fashion in the *Háry János Suite*, where a two-plate roll follows a regular two-plate crash. Percussionists should execute the crash in a normal manner, then place the cymbals together and begin the roll at the beginning of the fourth bar.

Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* provides yet another example of the two-plate roll. In this passage the circular motion starts immediately after striking the cymbals.

A cruder method of playing a roll is to repeatedly strike two cymbals together as fast as possible. This is physically tiring, but it creates a lot of volume. Conductors occasionally request this method in the "Bacchanal" from *Tannhäuser* by Wagner.

Delayed Separation

The best and clearest crash sounds come when players pull the cymbals apart immediately after contact, as this makes for a clean attack and produces a full tone. For certain notes, however,

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