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**The most important change to the violin in 400 years**

## **PLEASE READ BEFORE PLAYING INSTRUMENT**

*Instructions for the Proper Care and Handling of  
The 4, 5, 6 and 7-String Viper Violin/Stingray/Sabre*

Welcome to the elite growing family of Wood violin owners! You are now participants in a vision that is sure to affect the violin world at large. This instrument was made entirely by hand and not by machine and each instrument has its own personality. Feel free to keep in touch as your thoughts and suggestions are valued and welcomed. Also, I would love to hear the different types of playing styles on all of these instruments so please send recordings (and pictures!).

**IMPORTANT:** I personally play and fine-tune every instrument we sell to conform to my high standards; however, since each player has their own approach to playing their instrument, you may find you have your own preferences regarding string action, nut spacing, bridge height, etc. Feel free to do any fine-tuning yourself *as long as you use a professional violin shop to make these minor adjustments.*

**VERY IMPORTANT:** When unpacking violin, be careful of the bridge. I pack all my instruments with strings tightened just enough to show you where the bridge is supposed to be. Please make sure that you don't overtune the instrument because the strings will pop from too much tension. The strange angle of the bridge on the fretted 6 and 7-string Vipers is supposed to be that way to ensure proper intonation, similar to the way in which the bridge on an acoustic guitar functions. If bridge has fallen or shifted for some reason, there are small indents in the body where the feet of the bridge should be placed.

**ALSO VERY IMPORTANT:** Be sure to visit the Wood Violins message board online ([www.woodviolins.com/wvmb](http://www.woodviolins.com/wvmb)) - it is packed with all sorts of great information relating to electric strings – from equipment choices to music discussions, we have players from all over the world networking and contributing their thoughts and ideas.

**REALLY IMPORTANT:** DO NOT DISCARD THE PACKING BOX AND PACKING MATERIALS - STORE IN A SAFE, DRY PLACE.

**\*\* SECTIONS 1 & 2 BELOW ARE FOR VIPER PLAYERS ONLY – PLEASE READ THOROUGHLY AND REFER TO ATTACHED ILLUSTRATION PAGE TO ASSIST YOU IN SET-UP OF CHEST SUPPORT SYSTEM. \*\***

**\*\* SABRE AND STINGRAY OWNERS, PLEASE CONTINUE ON TO SECTION 3 ON NEXT PAGE.**

**1. Placement of the Instrument on Chest (Vipers only):**

Hold the right wing of the instrument in your right hand and take the strap in your left hand and throw it behind your left shoulder. Place the instrument under your chin with left wing curvature comfortably resting against your neck and hold it with your left hand at the neck of the instrument. Place right arm and hand behind your back, grabbing the strap and pulling it under your right arm to attach it to the strap knob on the right wing. The strap and chest support system is fully adjustable.

**2. Adjusting the Chest Support Mechanism (Vipers only):**

Feel free to experiment with adjusting the mechanism to suit your particular build (usually, once this is set, you should not have to touch this again).

- a. Finding the small notch in the ball joint of the chest support, place the paddle part under your armpit. When it feels like it's in the right place, tighten the mechanism. If there is a chain attached to chest support, use it to position the chest support. **Note: Make sure you loosen this knob before you attempt to move it into position and DO NOT OVERTIGHTEN. The knob should face away from your body when placed in correct position.**
- b. A small chain comes with Vipers with guitar machines to help stabilize and hold the chest support in place. When in place, the chain should be tight and taut. This can also be adjusted by adding or subtracting links from chain (using a needle-nose pliers which can be purchased at any hardware store). When in the correct position, the chain "noose" around the stem of the chest support system should be right next to the ball joint, away from the paddle.
- c. Since the instrument is self-supporting, always be aware of your left-hand movements. Any extra pressure or tension that is usually associated with holding an acoustic violin should not be experienced with the Viper – you need only enough pressure to push the string 1/8" to the fingerboard. Also, keep your neck and back straight and relax; the instrument is self-supporting. The chest support system is designed to support *only the weight of the instrument*.

**3. The Pickups:**

If you have purchased a Schatten pickup, you will need a preamp to boost the output frequency and tone controls. The Barbera pickup does not need a preamp. For more information on the Barbera pickup, please visit their website: [www.barberatransducers.com](http://www.barberatransducers.com). Any instrument can be upgraded to a Barbera at any time. On the Barbera, if any piezio stops working, we suggest you go to a guitar repair shop and have them carefully remove the back plate (which is located by the volume knob) and unsolder the pickup wire and send back to Barbera for repair. **IF YOUR INSTRUMENT HAS A BARBERA PICKUP, PLEASE AVOID UNNECESSARY CONTACT WITH THE TOP OF THE PICKUP AS THIS CAN DAMAGE THE PIEZIOS.**

**4. Bridge Maintenance:**

As time goes on and as you change and tune strings, eventually the bridge may start to tilt and get pulled forward towards the nut. It is a good idea to check the angle of your bridge from time to time to ensure that it is in its proper position, which is perpendicular to the instrument (or standing straight up). If the bridge has tilted forward, simply brace your instrument against your abdomen while seated (with the neck facing out parallel to the floor) and with both hands, gently pull the top of the bridge towards you and back into place.

## 5. **The Frets:**

Fretted violins have to be played a certain way to ensure pitch accuracy. Finger must be placed **on top of the fret**, not behind the fret (like a guitar). I suggest doing slow scales up and down the instrument until fully comfortable. As you can see, the frets do not prevent violin players from playing violin repertoire (i.e., fiddling, jazz violin, classical violin, etc.). As violin players, we can still do slides, glissandos, vibratos, and other "fretless violin-type" techniques. I liken the concept of frets on a violin to the utilization of a seeing-eye dog. It ensures complete accuracy without in any way hurting the beauty of a violin. A personal favorite warm-up book with excellent exercises is "Sevcik Op. 8 Shifting the Position for Violin."

**Intonating fretted instruments:** Like guitars, string length affects intonation of the frets. When the instrument arrives, the bridge should be in the correct position (unless it has shifted during shipping). You can check and maintain the intonation as follows: Pluck the harmonic at the 12<sup>th</sup> fret and then press the string down to that specific fret - the pitches should be very close. If the fretted note (fingered pitch) is sharp in relation to the harmonic, you must carefully move the bridge further away from the nut, lengthening the string. This movement should be very slight (1/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch or so). If the fretted note (fingered pitch) is flat in relation to the harmonic, then you must shorten the string length by moving the bridge slightly towards the nut. Intonation is not an exact science – unlike an electric guitar which has a movable bridge for each string so that you can fine-tune the distance individually, the violin bridge is more like an acoustic guitar bridge in that it is all in one piece. Having said that, having played a fretted violin for over 25 years, I have found that you can get your pitch pretty darn close by following the steps I outlined above.

**If you have problems with string fraying:** Very rarely, during the "break in" period (generally it takes a couple of weeks of playing to smooth out the frets), one or two strings may fray at certain frets. If, after a couple of months of playing, there seems to be a very specific fret and string area that consistently cuts into the string, please take a 220-grauge sandpaper and lightly sand that specific area. We do extensive customizing of the frets for our violins including filing down the frets on the side with the higher strings almost to the level of the fingerboard itself but occasionally one or two frets may need further fine-tuning. Try replacing the A and D string with D'Addario Helicore strings – they tend to last longer with fretted instruments.

**NOTE FOR FRETTED VIPER OWNERS:** One of the beauties of the Viper is that it is a self-supporting instrument, which means that your left hand approach to the frets and fingerboard requires a very light touch and much less pressure on the grip of your hand to the neck. Make sure your left hand grip on the neck of the instrument is as little as possible - just enough finger pressure to press the string down to the fret and that's all. If you find that you are pressing too hard and gripping too much, these actions may cause more unnecessary wear and tear on the strings (and on you!). As tempting as it is to jump right in, allow yourself the time to get comfortable with your Viper. Start by doing slow scales (making sure that your fingers are on top of the frets) and make sure that your body is as relaxed as possible. In fact, every five minutes or so in the beginning, drop both arms to your side and allow your brain to digest the information about the self-supporting concept; there should be no tension in your neck and your arms when you're playing the Viper.

***Relax and enjoy!***

6. **Sabres and Stingrays:** We recommend using a shoulder pad.

7. **The Fingerboard:** It's a good idea to use a furniture oil on the fingerboard once a year to keep the wood from cracking.

8. **Cleaning Your Instrument:** We recommend cleaning your instrument with furniture polish and a soft cloth.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** If you are using alcohol to remove rosin buildup from the strings, make sure the body of the instrument is protected so the finish is not harmed.

9. **Changing Strings:**

In general, violin strings don't need to be changed as frequently as guitar strings. Usually, every six months is a good guideline unless, of course, a string breaks. When changing strings, make sure you change **one at a time** so that the bridge is kept in a stable position and string pressure is still present on the bridge. You can use any set of violin and viola C-strings that you are comfortable with and feel free to experiment. The Viper you have purchased has Pirastro Chromcor strings on it, as these are my personal favorite. SuperSensitive Strings have designed a special Viper 6-string set. They also manufacture the special F-string for the 6-string violins and Bb-string for 7-string models. You will be able to deal with me directly for the purchase of custom Viper strings.

10. **Tuning:**

7-String: From high to low: E-A-D-G-C-F-Bb

6-String: From high to low: E-A-D-G-C-F

5-String: From high to low: E-A-D-G-C

4-String: From high to low: E-A-D-G

11. **The Case:**

If you've purchased a soft case, Viper placement in the soft case is better if done **after you've put your bow in the sleeve outside the case first**, then place the violin with chest support loosened and planted firmly against the back of the instrument with end pieces tightened. It will fit snugly at first but eventually the case will relax and conform to the instrument.

12. **Special Mark Wood Secrets:**

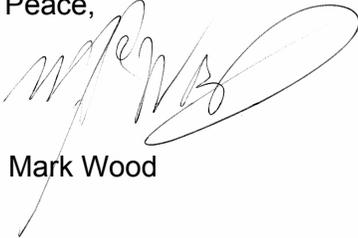
This is not for everyone but I feel it is important to share my personal discoveries on the Viper so use this information however you see fit.

- a. For my own personal reasons, I glued a thin piece of foam on the back of the flat piece of wood (the paddle) because sometimes I perform without a shirt and it's more comfortable this way.
- b. For best output response of pickup, I always keep the volume knob up all the way when playing.
- c. I play through a lot of distortion. I have found the need to dampen the six strings so I can play cleaner. To accomplish this, I put a thin piece of foam or rubber right up against the nut, under the strings. This is quite effective, although most of my customers don't feel the need to do that.
- d. Every player has their own tastes when it comes to their personal sound. My rig basically consists of a volume and wah-wah pedal, as well as a processing unit for echo, flanging, etc. plugged directly into the amplifier. I have also found that using 75-watt speakers in my cabinet helped immensely with the clarity of my low end when playing at a very high level of volume.
- e. Also, I use a right angle guitar jack to plug into the instrument.
- f. For all 6 string and 7 string players, I suggest using Bass rosin with your bow. The hairs can grip strings better.

Be sure to check out my new book "Electrify Your Strings" which will give you tons of great information and really get you "electrified." And sometime in the near future, I will be producing an in-depth instructional DVD for "Improvising Violin / Rock Violin / How to Play the Viper" etc. I'll keep you informed as that becomes available.

Again, thanks for purchasing this hand-built, made in the USA, custom electric violin. May this inspire you to explore new territories of chords and solo playing on an instrument built specifically for the new generation of electric violin players.

Peace,



Mark Wood

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**Limited Warranty:**

*Wood Violins are warranted for one year to the original owner against defects in materials and workmanship. Exceptions to this warranty are parts not manufactured by Wood Violins and parts that are subject to normal wear. Damages due to negligence, misuse, exposure to extremes of humidity and temperature are not covered. Any defects will be corrected at no cost to customer.*

**Return Policy:**

*Once you receive your instrument, there is a 15-day trial period during which, if not satisfied, you may return it in perfect condition to qualify for a refund (minus a 15% restocking fee). We do not issue refunds for instruments kept beyond the 15-day trial period. NOTE: You must contact us (via e-mail or telephone) prior to returning instrument to obtain return shipping instructions.*

Be sure to register your new instrument online at:

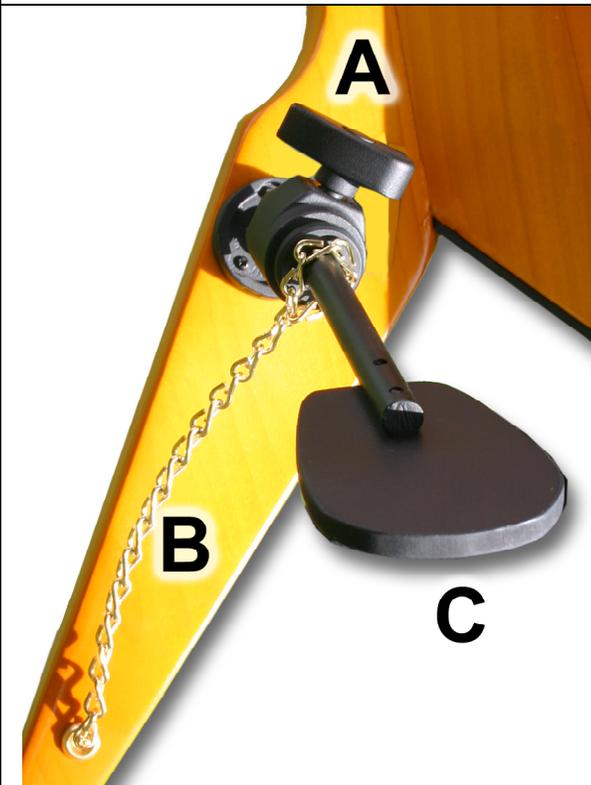
[www.woodviolins.com/warranty](http://www.woodviolins.com/warranty)

Once we receive your registration, we will email you with unique login info so you can access a special web page with sheet music, play-along tracks and more created by Mark Wood just for our customers!

## HOW TO SET UP THE CHEST SUPPORT SYSTEM SO IT'S JUST RIGHT FOR YOU!



This is what the chest support system looks like when it arrives to you.



Gently loosen the ball-joint knob (A) and move entire mechanism out and away from Viper body until the chain (B) is tight. Paddle (C) should be facing player's chest and the knob of the ball-joint should be facing the opposite way (knob is pointing in opposite direction from face of paddle). Temporarily re-tighten the knob on the ball joint to stabilize chest support system before positioning Viper on your body.

Please note: What's shown in the illustration to the left is *exactly* what the set-up should look like.



Holding right wing of Viper, swing instrument over your left shoulder and let the strap fall behind your back (not shown). Grab loose Viper with your left hand and with your right hand reach behind your back for the strap which is to be pulled under your right armpit and attached to the strap knob. Once Viper is securely fastened to your body, loosen ball joint of chest support and make whatever adjustments necessary to make the paddle conform to your body – once you are satisfied, tighten the knob (A- above). Viper should be firm but not too tight on your body. Lengthening and shortening the strap pulls the instrument closer to or further from you. Illustration to the left shows proper positioning of Viper on body.