

LESSON NOTES

Barber Concerto · All Movements

STUDENT	DATE	DURATION
Sebastian	February 19, 2026	01:33:56

THIS LESSON

- Barber Concerto — movement 1
- Barber Concerto — movement 2 opening
- Barber Concerto — movement 3 articulation and stroke
- Progress: vibrato, phrase line

I

Keep the sound alive all the way through

The main idea across the lesson was **not letting notes die before the next event**. The teacher kept returning to this in different forms: vibrato should keep living through the line, shifts should either be *hidden* or clearly *expressive*, and the bow should keep carrying momentum instead of restarting the sound.

In the first movement opening, the vibrato was praised as **richer and more connected to the music**. The adjustment was to avoid a stark switch from non-vibrato to vibrato: let it “**blissom**” **organically**. The phrase should feel like **one wave**, with momentum already prepared in the up-bow instead of suddenly waking up the bow.

A few concrete reminders came up repeatedly:

- **Intensify into the arrival**, especially the D to E motion
- On slides, **do not stop the vibrato first**; otherwise the shift sounds clinical
- If a shift is audible, either **hide it** or make it clearly expressive, even “**Kreisler style**”
- **Never stop the bow** in the middle of an expressive gesture

- In quieter moments, keep an “**intense whisper**” with micro-vibrato rather than letting the sound go blank

The same principle applied later in the movement: smoother string crossings, less separation, and transitions that feel “**like butter.**” When a note leads to a slide or bow change, keep listening to the **last instant before the move** so the sound does not get cut off early.

II

Bow distribution creates the phrase

A second big thread was **bow planning**. Many problems were traced not to the left hand, but to running out of bow, using the wrong part of the bow, or losing intensity at the tip.

In movement 1, this showed up in hairpins, top-note connections, and the approach to the high E. The teacher asked for:

- **half a bow** where full bow was unnecessary
- moving fully into the **frog** before the next gesture, so there is no need to lift
- keeping the **flat hair** on the last note for stability
- exaggerating hairpins under tempo so some of that shape remains in tempo

Rhythm also needed more discipline in the agitated passagework: **three against four** had to stay accurate, and triplets should not turn into sixteenths. The quarter note needed more **electricity** and some articulation from a slightly more **vertical** attack instead of doing everything manually.

III

Style changes with the stroke

In the last movement, the teacher said the most important issue was the **stroke**. For sound and coordination, the bow arm needed a clearer contrast between:

- **compact, off-the-string spiccato**
- **expanded détaché** with more bow and forearm opening

The spiccato was tending to stay too much *in* the string. The fix was a looser wrist — “**flop, flop, flop**” — practiced slowly, even slower than performance speed, so the wrist learns the motion. In crescendos, the bow could come more onto the string, but the basic character should still stay clear and buoyant.

For bigger effects, especially in the triplet writing, the détaché had to **open**: more bow, freer forearm, no shoulder gripping, and a move into the **upper half** when expanding the stroke. Then contract back to the smaller piano spiccato. That contrast is what gives the passage character instead of sounding like endless triplets.

IV

Movement 2: vocal, nostalgic, connected

At the opening of the second movement, the teacher wanted a more **sonorous, nostalgic, elegant, reserved** sound. The instruction was to **spin something out of the line**, not just place notes. Sixteenths were too fast at first, and both notes in double stops needed to speak.

IMPORTANT DETAILS

- let the **rocking motion** guide rhythm and articulation
- stay **in the string** for connected détaché passages
- do not let the **top E die** because you are already preparing the next down-bow
- use **whole bow** and make the line more **operatic** and vocal
- on the wolf C-sharp, try **more bow speed, less pressure, and farther from the bridge**

V

Practice priorities

- Practice key passages **under tempo** and listen to the transition between every note.
- In movement 1, isolate the approach to the **top E** and the final two bows so there is **no lift**.
- Practice slides with vibrato continuing **until the very end of the note**.
- In movement 3, practice **slow spiccato at different speeds** to free the wrist.
- In all movements, ask constantly: **am I sustaining the line, or restarting the sound?**