



Summer 2024

Dear String Player:

As you spend your summer in Aspen, it is important to think about protecting your instrument. The unusually low humidity in Aspen means that your instrument must acclimate to the dry environment. In the more than thirty years that I have served as the violinmaker for the Aspen Music Festival and School, I have seen a considerable amount of unfortunate – yet very avoidable – damage occur. It is my hope that you will take the time to read and follow these simple suggestions to help prevent needless damage to your stringed instrument.

#### USE A DAMPIT!

Once in Aspen, your instrument will begin to react to the loss of humidity. It is recommended that instruments be kept at 50-52% relative humidity; in Aspen, however, the average humidity is only 25%, and there are wide variations! Most instruments will be coming from more humid climates, such as New York or Cincinnati where there is about 80% relative humidity. Consequently, your instrument will need to be humidified in order to prevent cracking, warping and glue failure. The best way to properly humidify your instrument while in Aspen is to use a Dampit. Note that Dampits must be used properly in order to be effective. That means they must be checked regularly and filled diligently – in Aspen this could mean twice a day. Dampits are ineffective if permitted to remain dry for periods of time; in fact, the instrument is placed at far greater risk of damage than if it were not humidified at all. Also, if overfilled, water can seep into the instrument, loosening the glue joints and ruining the label. I will have Dampits available for purchase in the shop.

#### SOUNDPOST ADJUSTMENTS

The body of the instrument will be shrinking slightly from loss of moisture; if the soundpost is not adjusted, it can become too tight, and result in a soundpost crack. If you have an older instrument, and are coming from a humid climate, you should have your soundpost checked and/or adjusted.

#### AMFS LUTHIER

During the Festival my shop is located in downtown Aspen, adjacent to the Incline Ski Shop in the lobby of the North of Nell Building. **My hours are 10:00 am – 12:00 pm and 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday.** The phone number is **(970) 920-2760**. I will carry a limited supply of strings and accessories at discounted prices. As in past years, there will be several unauthorized violinmakers and dealers who come to Aspen during the summer. Some are not reputable. Always check with your teacher or with me before purchasing instruments or services from another violinmaker or dealer.

If you have any further questions or problems, please feel free to drop by during business hours. I wish you and your instrument a safe and healthy summer!

Joan Balter, MAA Luthier