

StraightFOURward:

A Practical Approach to Four-Mallet Technique

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majestic

VIC FIRTH



Holding the mallets

Start with "The Fonz"



Heyyyyy!

Inside mallet will rest on the first knuckle of the index finger (first knuckle is the "tabletop" – photo 1)

1.)



The index finger points across

End of the mallet shaft will follow the lifeline of the palm

Thumb will rest on the inside mallet w/ thumbnail pointing up (not sideways and no pressure – photo 2)

2.)



Holding the mallets, cont.

Middle finger – Spiderman



Middle finger touches the mallet shaft and keeps mallet from leaving – no tension (see photo 2)

Outside mallet – in between middle and ring fingers – place in webbing - .5 – 1” extended

3.) outside mallet isolated



4.) combined with inside mallet



Check to make sure wrist is in handshake position

Leveling the mallets – place mallets on bars, relax hands, let hands follow mallets, lift up

Interval changes

Inside mallet uses the index finger (index shuffle) – bend/extend

Outside mallet is an extension of the forearm. Forearm must shift (keep space between elbow & body)

Combine the two motions

5.) Closed interval spacing



6.) Open interval spacing



Larger intervals (above 5th) – roll the inside mallet between index and thumb

Index finger will point straight down the mallet shaft (photo 7)

7.)



Interval Changes, cont.

Middle finger is now the table top (photo 8)

8.)



Don't change the relationship of the pinky and ring finger

Avoid claw-like grip where thumb is in the middle (photo 9)

9.)



For fast changes – push down on the thumb and pull w/ index and middle; sets inside middle finger

Stroke Types

Double Vertical Strokes

- Motion is similar to dribbling a basketball
- Motion is down-up; NOT up-down-up. Prep strokes are for ensemble cues.
- Make a complete full stroke – don't stop the mallet
- Motion comes from wrist, not elbow



Single Independent Strokes

- Rotation – like turning a door knob
- Not a vertical stroke
- Think vertical along with rotation, so that the peak of the playing mallet is not over the unused mallet
- Unused mallet should hover and will turn/rotate
- Hold unused mallet to practice the feel
- Avoid teeter-totter
- Unused mallet is the axis point
- Focus on both the playing mallet and unused mallet when practicing
- Avoid using thumb to provide the stroke – should be a rotation that comes from the wrist



Single Alternating Strokes

- Rotation – like turning a door knob
- Performed as if they are alternating SI strokes, but without concern for motion in unused mallet
- SA strokes Consist of discrete side to side rocking motion of the hand
- Pivot point will change as the dynamics of the inside and outside mallet change (i.e. outside mallet dynamic increases, pivot point is closer to inside mallet shaft)
- Think of both mallets together as a unit, rather than each mallet individually (as found in SI strokes)



Double Lateral Strokes

- BOGO – one motion, two successive pitches
- Determined by tempo – DL strokes do not function slowly
- Should not feel like two SI strokes
- Begins as a DV stroke, ends like a SI stroke
- Down and scoop motion
- To help practice articulation in the second mallet of the stroke, hold the free hand a few inches above the first mallet of the stroke and focus on snapping the first mallet into the palm of the free hand. The harder the mallet hits the palm, the more articulate the second note will speak



Special Thanks



Jeremy Kirk is active as a performing artist, clinician, and adjudicator throughout North America and is currently Assistant Professor of Music at Southwestern College (Winfield, KS) where he serves as Director of Bands, Percussion, and Music Education. At Southwestern, Kirk directs the Symphonic Band, Jazz Band, Percussion Ensemble, Drumline, African Drum & Dance Ensemble and teaches courses in Percussion Techniques, Applied Percussion, and Music Education. Kirk has presented and/or performed at notable events such as the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, National Association for Music Education National Conference, and numerous MEA and PAS Days of Percussion across the United States. He frequently tours to universities and high schools to present recitals, master classes, and clinics on topics such as contemporary multiple percussion, marimba, orchestral percussion, timpani, marching percussion, percussion ensemble, world percussion, effective practice habits, and mental performance preparation. He has been blessed to share the stage with renowned musicians including Michael Burritt, She-e Wu, Dave Samuels, Ney Rosauero, Arthur Lipner, Sarah Evans, and Ralph Stanley, and groups including the Huntington Symphony Orchestra, Manheim Steamroller, and Flat Baroque (Mostly) Marimba Quartet.

Professor Kirk combines his traditional training in Western percussion instruments (snare drum, keyboard percussion, timpani, drumset, multiple percussion, marching percussion) with his extensive knowledge in world percussion including Ewe drumming, Shona mbria, North Indian tabla, Japanese taiko, Javanese & Balinese gamelan, and Caribbean steel pans to create a unique global perspective in his teaching and performing. He has taught at all levels including public school, collegiate, and drum corps, and draws upon his diverse experience to create meaningful and engaging learning opportunities for his students.

He holds a Master's Degree in Percussion Performance from Marshall University and Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from Glenville State College. His previous teachers include Leigh Howard Stevens, (marimba), She-e Wu (marimba), John McKinney (percussion), Ben Miller (percussion), Steve Hall (percussion), Mark Zanter (composition), Paul Balshaw (conducting and composition), Joe Porcaro (drum set), and Paschal Younge (African drumming and dance).

Kirk is an artist and clinician with Majestic Percussion, Mapex Drums, Vic Firth Sticks & Mallets, Sabian Cymbals, Remo Drumheads, and Black Swamp Percussion. He serves on the PAS Technology Committee and KSDE Higher Education Music Review Committee, and holds memberships in the Percussive Arts Society, National Association for Music Education, College Music Society, and American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. For more information, please visit www.jkpercussion.com