

Bowing Skills

Biting Bow Strokes



Martelé = (French for “hammer”) press-release action; the bite should start with a small application of arm weight (or index finger pressure), *before* the stroke starts. As the stroke starts, release the weight (to the point of having a good sound).

Pique = (French for “spurred”) “pinching” the string with a very fast extension-contraction movement of right-hand fingers



Collé = (French for “glued” or “sticky”) press-lift action, often in “anacrusis” (pick-up) notes. All three of these biting bow strokes are notated by using a dot, or with a dot + accent.

Connected Bow Strokes



Détaché = (French for “separate”), the usual push/pull or down/up “bread and butter” of string playing in the German (usually no markings) form with a singing connected sound.



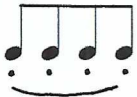
Détaché porté = articulated with tenuto markings, deep “in the string” yet smooth bow style that often requires concealed bow changes. Keep weight of the entire arm and movements of the forearm and wrist “in the string.” It has been described as “slight swelling at the beginning followed by gradual lightening of the sound. There may or may not be slight spacing between notes.”



Legato = slurring two or more notes in one bow stroke

Disconnected Bow Strokes

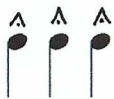
Staccato = (Italian for “discontinued” or “separate”)



Connected Staccato = a succession of several short and clearly articulated bow movements performed using one bow direction. Usually used in fast and virtuosic passages.



Simple Staccato = each movement requires a different bow direction. Staccato bowing are notated with dots above or below the notes. The weight of the bow is applied throughout the bow movement (unlike release of the Martelé).



Marcato = (not a bowing term, refers to musical character) sharp stroke, well marked; played more forcefully than surrounding notes.



Louré or Portato = a series of slurred, slightly separated détaché porte bow movements in which the bow never fully stops. Portato finds its place in pieces with a cantabile character.



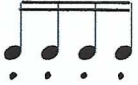
Détaché Lancé = a short, quick stroke characterized by great *initial* speed and slows down. Generally there is a clear break between notes.

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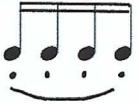
Off-string Bow Strokes



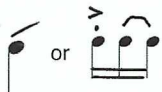
Spiccato = (Italian for “with a sense of humor”) short, off-the-string bowing executed at the balance point of the bow stick with individual drops and lifts. May have markings, such as dots above and below note heads. The tempo and character of the music will determine whether dots imply spiccato or staccato.



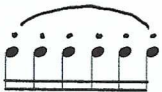
Sautillé = (French for “little bounce”) may be described as “uncontrolled” or “natural spiccato.” Its rapid speed eliminates the individual drops and lifts that are characteristic of spiccato. This bowing usually does not have a marking, but the tempo and style will determine whether a passage should be played with spiccato or sautillé.



Ricochet = (French for “rebound”) consists of a series of two or more fast bouncing notes caused by only one down-bow impulse. It is executed in the upper two-thirds of the bow with the stick directly above the non-tilted bow hair. The notation shows a slur and dots above or under note heads or just the word ricochet.



Fouetté or Whipped Bow = derived from accented détaché, the accent is produced by quickly (and barely) lifting the bow off the string and striking it down again with suddenness and energy. Performed in the upper half to the bow, mostly starting up-bow, it provides a quality of biting incisiveness. It also helps in accenting short trills.



Flying Staccato and Spiccato = derived from staccato, it is performed with same motion as connected staccato, except that the pressure is lightened and the bow is permitted—and encouraged—to leave the string after each note. This lifting should be very slight and the motion remains a horizontal one without interruption in its continual forward flow.

Coloring Bow Strokes

Sul tasto = (Italian for “fingerboard”) requires the bow to be over the end of the fingerboard, producing a soft and gentle sound.

Sul ponticello = (Italian for “bridge”) requires the bow to be very close to the bridge, producing a characteristic glassy sound.



Tremolo = (Italian for “to shake”) consists of rapid repetitions of a pitch and is executed by quickly waving the wrist while the bow is positioned in the upper middle or tip area of the bow stick.

Col legno = (Italian for “the wood”) is a bow stroke that produces a characteristic percussive sound. It is executed by striking the string with the wood part of the bow.



Bartok pizzicato = produces a percussive sound and is executed by the right hand finger pulling the string up high so that when the string is released it hits the fingerboard with a loud, percussive sound. “snap”

Sources:

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Galamian, Ivan. *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962, 64-84.

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