

MARIMBA: – IT’S NOT JUST A RINGTONE ON YOUR PHONE! FOUR-MALLET TECHNIQUE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

I. Research/Philosophy

- A. Brief Research Recap on four-mallet marimba literature
- B. Philosophy – start with a good foundation of all beginning topics instead of “piece-specific” techniques (only learning what you need for the piece you happen to be playing)
- C. Four-mallet technique/performance should not be a by-product of necessity

II. Introduction

- A. Stretches – larger muscles first, then smaller muscles
- B. Grips: cross grips = shafts touch; independent grips = shafts don’t touch
(check out doublemalletgrips.wordpress.com for descriptions of 10 different grips)
- C. Beginners usually find “Burton” the easiest grip to start with

III. Beginning Literature Stroke-types (as defined by LH Stevens in *Method of Movement*)

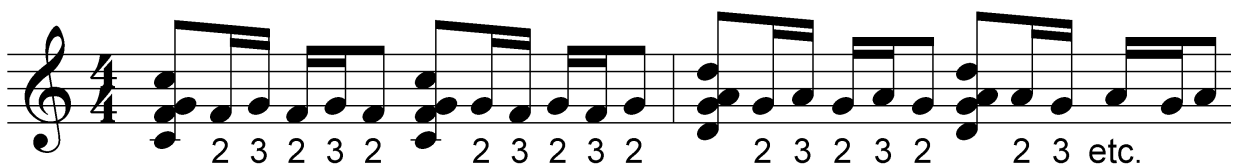
- A. **Double vertical:** two mallets in one hand both striking the bar vertically with the wrist producing two pitches at the same time
- B. **Single-independent:** two mallets in one hand with only one mallet (outside or inside) striking the bar in a rotated, vertical motion producing one pitch

IV. Beating Spot/Stroke: Double vertical

- A. Good up-stroke will fix any beating spot issues
- B. No rebound on marimba like on snare; you control the full up-stroke
- C. Start with “down-up” concept; stop where you started
(Lesson 1 in *Sequential Studies*)
- D. Intervals – 2nd-6th; special consideration for independent grip users
 - a. Elbow supports the wrist to maintain consistent beating spot
 - b. Elbow starts away from the body on the 2nd and moves toward the body as interval increases (see pg. 13 in *SS*); should eventually bisect the interval

V. Beating Spot/Stroke: Single Independent

- A. SI rotation strokes: “x-stroke” – very narrow; adapted from two-mallet tech.
- B. Exercise to practice SI beating spots with four mallets (from Lesson 6 in *SS*)



WHAT WE DON'T TEACH BUT SHOULD TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR BEGINNING LITERATURE.

VI. Motion

- A. Parallel (most commonly practiced) – both hands play the exact same notes an octave apart; standard, repeated DV exercise in 5ths
 - a. Need to do other intervals (2nds-6ths)
 - b. Need to do faster motion – stepwise and jumping (Lesson 2 and 3)
- B. Mirror – hands in opposite direction (Lesson 5)
- C. Independence - different stroke types and different rhythms
 - a. Lesson 4 – same stroke-type; different rhythms
 - b. Lesson 5 – mixed stroke-types and rhythms

VII. Incorporating the Upper Manual

- A. Body Movement – “your feet are not nailed to the ground”
 - a. one hand - splitting manuals IN, splitting manuals OUT
 - b. both hands – parallel, mirror, and split motion
- B. Elbow is critical in preventing injury when using the upper manual

RESOURCES

www.marimbalevels.com - list of four-mallet marimba solos at Levels 1-10

<http://vicfirth.com/education/keyboard/gaines.php> - video lessons of each lesson in *Sequential Studies*

Sequential Studies for Four-Mallet Marimba: Level 1 – In The Beginning by Julia Gaines
A four-mallet marimba technique book devoted to beginners including 8 beginning solos. (Available at Percussion Source, Lone Star Percussion, and Steve Weiss Music in addition to several music retailers around the country.)

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