

The Spivack/Wilson Approach to Technique

Part 3: Continuity and Chronological Order

by Richard Martinez and Kevin Crabb

To better understand what's presented in this third installment on the teaching methods of the legendary educators Murray Spivack and Richard Wilson, please reread the first and second articles (September 2011 and November 2011). In our last installment we discussed the importance that Spivack placed on understanding how the seven basic strokes are used to construct the rudiments and other strokes. In this article we'll demonstrate how strokes can be learned sequentially, in what Spivack called continuity (a continuous or connected whole) and what Wilson referred to as chronological order (from earliest to latest). This will help you see how strokes are put together or built upon one another.

To review, the seven basic strokes are the single stroke, double stroke (wrist-turn doubles), flam, wrist stroke (wrist turn), rebound, upstroke, and downstroke.

THROWING FOR REBOUNDS

To help students loosen up, Spivack and Wilson had them practice throwing for rebounds. A rebound is where you allow the stick to bounce one or more times. We previously discussed rebounds as wrist-turn doubles, which is where you turn your wrist once and allow the stick to bounce once.

While playing wrist-turn rebounds you'll note that when you turn your wrist (from parallel to the surface) your hand will open slightly when the stick strikes the surface. To get the best result, you'll need to allow the hand to remain open at the surface for as long as necessary to achieve the rebounds. Allowing the hand to remain open will also help the stick rock over the fulcrum evenly.

When throwing for rebounds, instead of turning the wrist we're going to use an "up" motion (the first half of the single stroke but without playing a note) and a throw. A throw is similar to the downward half of the single stroke, but rather than playing one note when we strike the surface we're going to allow the stick to bounce one or more times.

As you practice the following exercises, remember that when you arrive at the surface, it's important that you don't throw your fingers open but instead *allow* them to open as you would when turning the wrist for doubles.

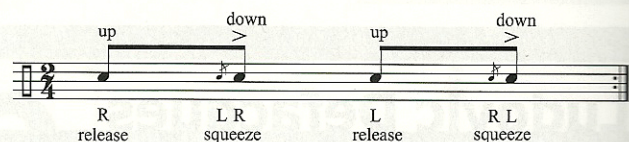


The following are examples of rudiments and strokes as played using one or more of the seven basic strokes. In some of these rudiments, smaller, uncomplicated strokes are joined together to form longer and more complicated ones.

FLAMADIDDLE

The flamadiddle is a good example of a pattern that consists of small, uncomplicated strokes joined together to create a longer and more complicated stroke. The flamadiddle can be thought of as a feint and flam plus two strokes, or as a flam, two wrist strokes, and a single stroke.

To demonstrate continuity, first let's play a feint and flam.

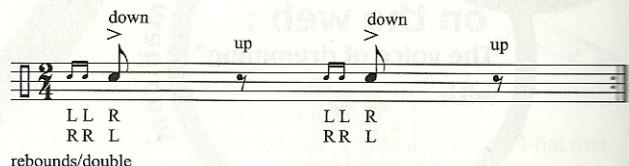


Now, add two strokes (wrist turns) after the flam and before the upstroke.



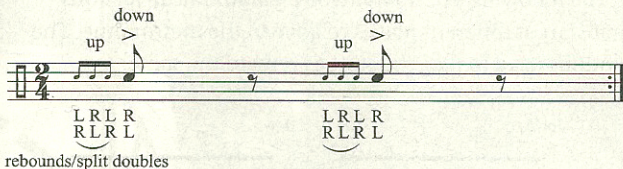
RUFFS (DRAGS)

Like flams, the ruff is played with a grace note and single strokes (up and down). The difference is that instead of playing one grace note before the accent, we play two notes (rebounds).



FOUR-STROKE RUFFS

A four-stroke ruff has a rebound double in one hand, while the other hand plays an upstroke into a downstroke (single stroke). The four-stroke ruff is interesting because you're actually splitting double strokes between the hands. After the first note of the first double is played, you play the "up" of a single stroke with the other hand. This is followed by the second double of the first hand and then the "down" of the single stroke with the other hand.



SINGLE RATAMACUE

The single ratamacue is created by playing a drag (two rebounds), then a single wrist turn, then the "up" portion of a single stroke, then another single wrist turn, and finally the "down" portion of the single stroke.



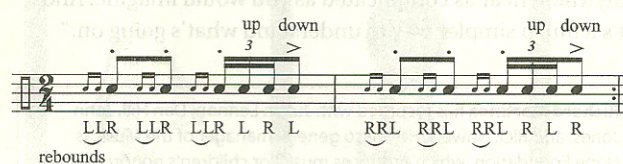
DOUBLE RATAMACUE

The double ratamacue consists of two drags followed by a single wrist turn, the "up" of a single stroke, another single wrist turn, and the "down" of a single stroke.



TRIPLE RATAMACUE

The triple ratamacue consists of three drags followed by a single wrist turn, the "up" of a single stroke, another single wrist turn, and the "down" of a single stroke.



FLAM ACCENT #2

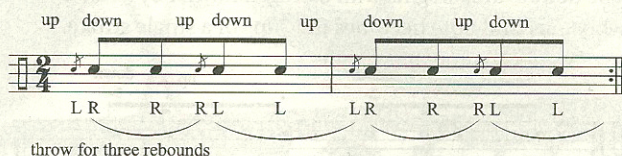
If you increase the speed of the ruff but slow down the rebound in the hand playing the grace notes, and you time the downstroke played by the other hand so that it lands earlier with the second beat of the rebound, you'll have what Spivack described as "ta thum." If you play "ta thum"

from hand to hand, you'll notice that you're still playing an upstroke and a downstroke. Release (loosen) on the way up, and squeeze (tighten) on the way down.



FLAM TAP

This stroke consists of a grace note followed by throwing for three notes (rebounds) and another flam. The cycle repeats from hand to hand. In the flam tap, the third note of the three rebounds is a grace note.



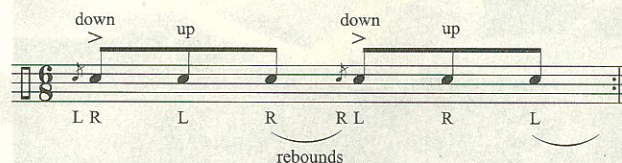
SWISS TRIPLET

If you allow the hand playing the downstroke in flam accent #2 to rebound once, you'll be playing a Swiss triplet.



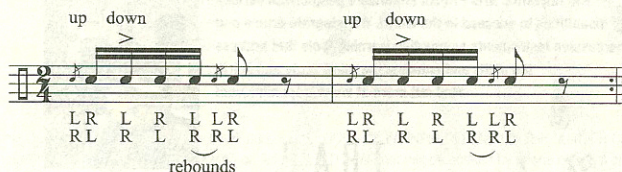
FLAM ACCENT #1

For flam accent #1, play a flam accent #2 and then play an upstroke in the opposite hand so that you play "ta thum-up." Now you're in position to play the same thing starting with the opposite hand.



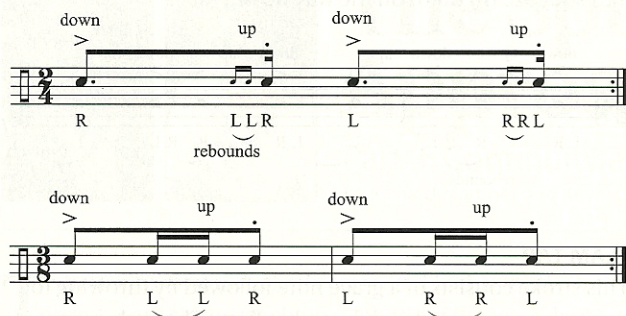
FLAMACUE

The flamacue begins with a flam where the grace note is also the "up" portion of a single stroke, followed by a wrist turn and a set of doubles in which the second note is the grace note of the final flam.



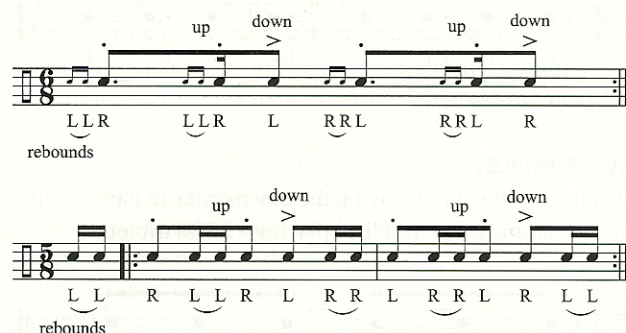
SINGLE DRAG

The single drag begins with a downstroke, followed by a ruff whose second note becomes the “up” of a single stroke.



DOUBLE DRAG

The double drag begins with a drag, followed by a ruff whose second note becomes the “up” of a single stroke.

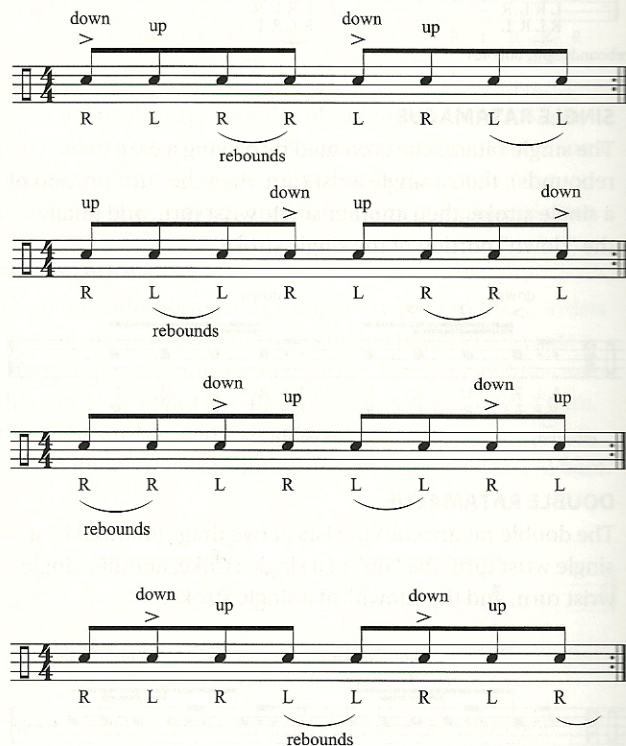


PARADIDDLE

Simply put, the paradiddle is composed of single strokes and a rebound double. In more detail, the paradiddle is a downstroke followed by the opposite hand playing the “up” of a single stroke and two rebounds in the other hand.

Wilson often stressed the importance of the “squeeze” on the downstroke or accent and the “release” on the rebound double. The squeeze and release is not something you actually do deliberately but is something you should simply notice happening. It’s a natural consequence of wrist turns.

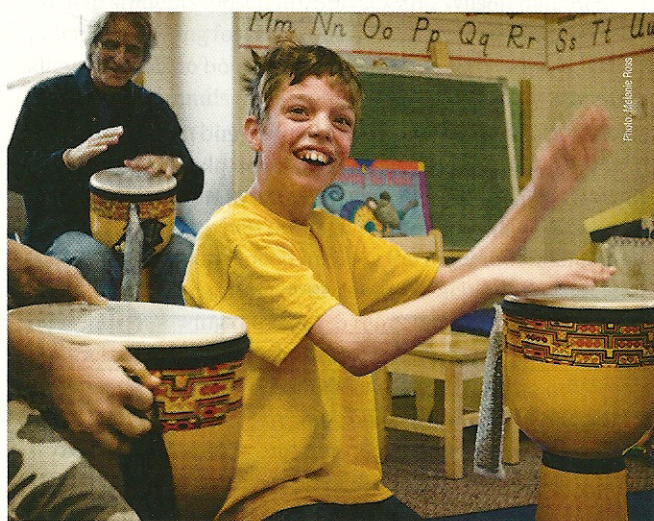
The following examples involve paradiddle inversions that start at different places relative to the metronome. The motions used to play the strokes remain the same.



SUMMARY

As you can see, it’s possible to derive many complex strokes from simpler ones when you keep continuity in mind. As Spivack explained, “It makes the whole thing much simpler because one stroke leads you into the next, so they don’t get anywhere near as complicated as you would imagine. And it’s a much simpler way to understand what’s going on.”

Richard Martinez has recorded with Julian Lennon, Dan Hill, John Jones, and Rick Nowels. He is also general manager of the Music Is Hope Foundation, which produces music for children’s nonprofit organizations. **Kevin Crabb** is a drummer/composer who has performed with Alphonso Johnson, John Beasley, David Garfield, and many others. His recent album *Waltz for Dylan* is available at kevincrabb.com.



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