

The Spivack/Wilson Approach to Technique

Part 2: The Seven Basic Strokes

by Richard Martinez and Kevin Crabb

The first article in this series on Murray Spivack and Richard Wilson's technique appeared in the September 2011 issue of *Modern Drummer*. For a quick recap, here's what we covered:

The grip. Spivack focused on teaching a three-fingered grip with a narrow fulcrum.

Fulcrums and lever systems. A fulcrum is part of a lever system. The parts of the system are resistance, force, the lever arm, and the fulcrum.

Wrist turn/wrist stroke. To develop these, we played basic exercises focusing on singles and doubles.

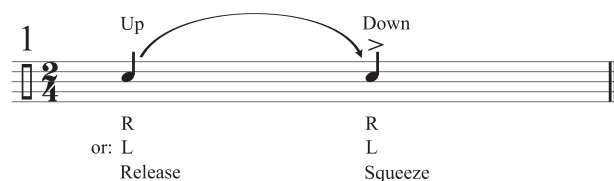
The Basic Strokes

The wrist turn/wrist stroke (turning the wrist for one note) and the double stroke (turning the wrist twice) are two of what Spivack called the seven basic strokes. Murray placed a great deal of emphasis on learning these strokes. Each involves a motion that's applied to various other strokes and rudiments.

The seven basic strokes are the single stroke, double stroke (also known as wrist-turn doubles), flam, wrist stroke (or wrist turn), rebound, upstroke, and downstroke.

Single Stroke

One of the first strokes Spivack would teach was the single stroke. It combines the upstroke and the downstroke, the latter of which Wilson called "the throw."



Although Spivack talked about the upstroke and the downstroke separately, he felt that the two were intimately connected as a primary component for many other strokes and rudiments, so he taught them as one individual stroke: the single stroke.

The first part of the single stroke is the upstroke. To play it, go from a low position to a high position while making a low tap. In matched grip, you make the low tap by merely bending the wrist forward. You'll strike the drum because you're so close to its surface that you can't avoid it. Bending the wrist forward motivates the upward motion of the forearm

and causes the elbow or upper arm to move slightly outward from the body.

In traditional grip, think of making the tap in the left hand by bending the wrist toward the right hand.

Note: It's very important to lead with the wrist and not the arm. If you lift the forearm and/or purposefully move the elbow out, you're not leading with the wrist.

After bending the wrist slightly and making a tap, follow the stick and turn the wrist toward the ceiling. In matched grip, when you reach the top of the stroke you'll see that the stick is now away from the palm. In traditional grip, the stick moves away from the fourth finger. In either grip, the stick should point toward the ceiling.

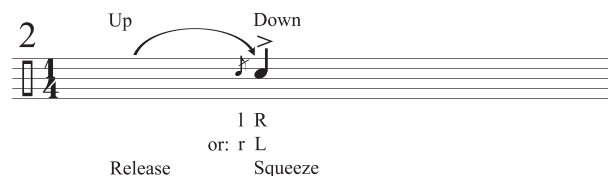
Now cock the wrist a bit and determine how much thrust (force) you want to add to the next stroke, which will be an accented downstroke. The wrist should move back a little further, which automatically causes the arm to come back down.

The wrist adds the majority of the thrust for the stroke, while the arm adds momentum. In matched grip, the middle finger should move in toward the palm, adding its own amount of thrust. In traditional grip, the first finger moves toward the thumb. If handled correctly, the stick will stay aligned throughout the motion (up and down). The stick should not move out to the side or shift forward or backward. Also, depending on the speed or dynamic level at which you're playing, you can allow the body to adjust the motions to become correspondingly larger or smaller.

Now let's put the single stroke to work in rudiments that exemplify its use. These were among the first things Spivack and Wilson taught to their students.

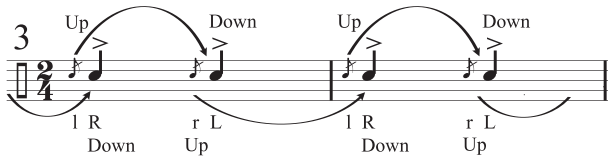
Single Flam, Alternating Flam, and Feint and Flam

The single flam is made with a downstroke in one hand preceded by a grace note made with a small wrist stroke in the other hand.

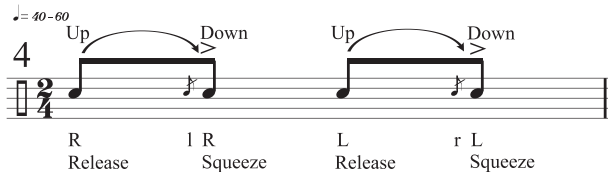


The alternating flam is played with alternating single strokes. The grace notes are made with a low upstroke, and

the accents are made with downstrokes.



The feint and flam is the combination of an upstroke and a downstroke with one hand and a low wrist stroke (for the grace notes) with the other.



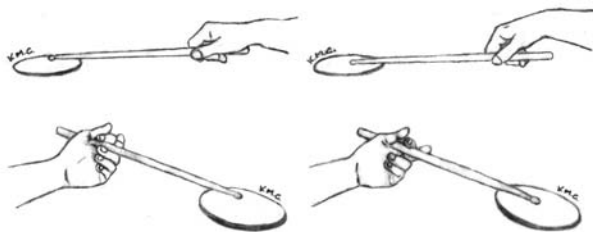
Rebounds

A rebound is where you turn your wrist once and then allow the stick to bounce one or more times. When playing rebounds, you have to pay attention not only to the fulcrum in the wrist but also to a second fulcrum in the hand. Spivack and Wilson taught very specific hand fulcrums. In matched grip, the palm faces down and the hand fulcrum is the first joint of the middle finger. In traditional grip, the hand fulcrum is between the first finger and thumb.

The rebound notes should sound the same as the primary stroke. To achieve this, the stick must be allowed to rock over the hand fulcrum evenly, by opening the fingers slightly on the primary stroke and then following through with the fingers on the rebounds.

The first finger and thumb in matched grip, and the fulcrum between the first finger and thumb in traditional grip, are areas of inactivity, meaning they are not involved in the opening (release) and closing (squeeze) process of rebounds. Wilson described these parts of the grip as being "firm, comfortable, and constant."

If rebounds are executed correctly, the stick will move parallel to the drum (see illustration below). If you hold your fingers too rigidly and prevent them from elongating as you bend your wrist forward, the stick will remain at a downward angle.



Double-Stroke Roll (Rebound Doubles)

As Spivack said, "There's nothing more important than the single- and double-stroke rolls."

Wilson described the double-stroke roll as the drummer's long tone. He believed drummers should devote as much attention to the double-stroke roll as violinists and horn players do to long tones on their respective instruments.

The double-stroke roll involves rebound doubles, which are played by turning the wrist once and allowing the stick to rebound once, providing two notes for every wrist turn.

Tap both feet with the metronome when practicing the following exercise.

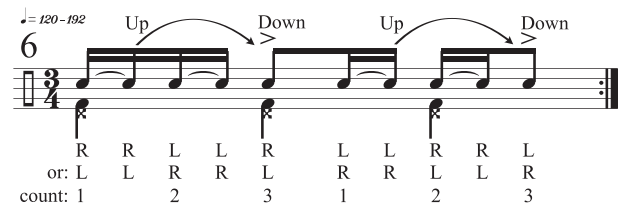


Roll Strokes

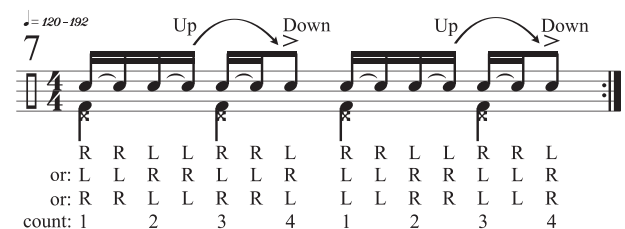
The following exercises are four roll rudiments that are played using rebound doubles and the single stroke. The rolls are played with rebound doubles, with one or two accents at the end.

Wilson categorized roll strokes, when played repetitively, as either hand-to-hand or single-handed. In hand-to-hand rolls, the stroke begins in one hand, and the next iteration begins with the opposite hand. When played repetitively, single-handed rolls naturally begin with the same hand. Single-handed roll strokes can be played starting with either the right or left hand. To make single-handed rolls alternate, start the next iteration with the hand that makes the final accent.

The five-stroke roll contains two rebound doubles and a single stroke.



The seven-stroke roll contains three rebound doubles and a single stroke.



The six-stroke roll contains two rebound doubles and two accented single strokes.

♩ = 120-192

R R L L R L R R L L R L
 or: L L R R L R L L R R L R
 count: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

The eight-stroke roll contains three rebound doubles and two accented single strokes.

♩ = 120-192

R R L L R R L R L L R R L L R L
 R R L L R R L R L L R R L L R L
 count: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

The following musical passage contains all of the previously discussed strokes.

♩ = 48-92

Rebounds Single Stroke
 Feint & Flam 6-Stroke Single Hand Alt. Flams Feint & Flam 5-Stroke Rolls
 7-Stroke Roll Single Handed 7-Stroke Roll Single Handed Single Flam 8-Stroke Roll
 Alternating 6-Stroke Rolls Alternating 7-Stroke Rolls

In part three, we'll discuss how ruffs, paradiddles, and ratamacues can be played utilizing the seven basic strokes.

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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