

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD .....	6
ABOUT GAELAN MCCORMICK.....	7
INTRODUCTION.....	8
CHAPTER 1: SIMPLE SPICCATO (ETUDES NOS. 1-8) .....	17
CHAPTER 2: RESTARTING SPICCATO (ETUDES NOS. 9-18) .....	30
CHAPTER 3: SPICCATO COMBINED WITH SLURS (ETUDES NOS. 19-25) .....	43
CHAPTER 4: TRIPLETS (ETUDES NOS. 26-33).....	55
CHAPTER 5: BRUSH STROKE (ETUDES NOS. 34-38) .....	67



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Simon Fischer, *Basics*. (Edition Peters, 1997), p. 70.

The spiccato stroke can be approached as follow: starting from high above the violin, make large semicircles with the bow, just catching the string at the very bottom of the curve. Make progressively smaller and smaller semicircles, moving along the string a little longer each time, until the semicircles are very small and produce a clean spiccato.

The bow wants to bounce. The idea that playing on the string is easy, and lifted bowings are more difficult, is not correct—rather is it the other way round. To sustain the sound requires *doing*, i.e. pushing against the springiness of the wood of the bow, bow hair and string. Lifted bowings require *letting*, i.e. not resisting the natural bounce of the bow out of the string.” [Fischer’s emphasis]

All the different types of spiccato strokes are achieved by using different proportions of the vertical and the horizontal movements of the bow. The higher the bounce and the less movement along the string, the shorter and crisper the spiccato becomes. The lower the bounce and the more movement along the string, the longer and more rounded the spiccato.

### When Do We Use Spiccato?

Spiccato happens at the tempo when we can no longer keep going as martelé, and generally speaks well in the range of  $\text{♩} = 88\text{--}120$ , where the stroke is happening on sixteenth notes. At the low end of this tempo range, there is the possibility of playing either on or off, and that choice is a musical and contextual one. Musically, the player will choose spiccato for more articulation at the start of the note and to create clarity around faster moving lines.

### Some Examples of Spiccato from the Standard Orchestral Repertoire

$\text{♩} = 72\text{--}80$



### Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, K. 525 (opening of first movement)

In the Mozart example, the repeated G will provide more rhythmic impetus and make a cleaner underpinning if they are played spiccato instead of remaining on the string.

$\text{♩} = 108$



### Johann Sebastian Bach, *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2*, BWV 1047 (first movement)

Even though the bass line has more melodic shape than the Mozart example, this would still benefit from spiccato stroke to help keep the lightness of the sound and the clarity in the lowest register of our instrument.