# Martelé

Martelé (from the French word meaning 'hammered') is a very powerful, accented bow stroke. It can be played in all parts of the bow, and ranges from very little bow to almost whole bows.

The different components of the stroke are clear when compared with détaché. 'Simple détaché' is entirely even, so the bow speed and pressure remain constant from the beginning of the stroke to the end. Each stroke is connected seamlessly to the next without a break in the sound.

Simple détaché develops into 'accented détaché' when the bow speed is fast-slow and the pressure is heavy-light.

Accented détaché in turn progresses into martelé when the stroke is not only fast–slow and heavy–light, but also begins with a sharp attack (the bow 'biting' the string), and there is a definite space between the strokes.

#### Bow hold

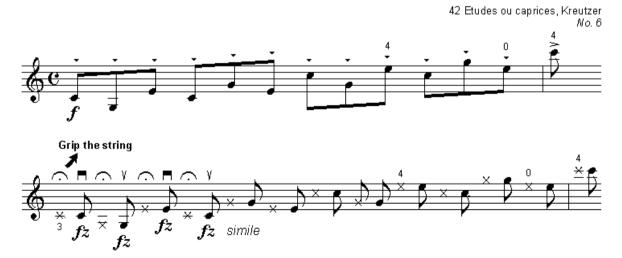
Because martelé is such a powerful stroke, to play without undue effort you have to put together all the factors in the bow hand that give power:

- 1 Move the first finger slightly further away from the thumb (i.e. in the direction of the point). This uses the principles of leverage to better effect.
- 2 Bring the knuckles down slightly flatter.
- 3 Turn the hand slightly more on to the first finger ('pronate').
- 4 Raise the elbow slightly more to lever the weight of the arm into the hand and bow.
- 5 Slightly straighten the fingers more on the down-bow, curve more on the up-bow. (This makes a difference even if the amount the fingers move is almost invisible.)

It is an interesting experiment to try to play martelé while doing the opposite of these five points. Play a few strokes on one note with the first finger close to the thumb, high knuckles, the hand turned slightly towards the little finger, and so on.

## Catching the string

• The 'bite' at the beginning of a martelé is an important feature of the stroke. During the silence between the strokes grip the string heavily, ready for the next stroke. To do this (at any part of the bow) push the wood at the middle of the bow down towards the hair.



1 Before playing each martelé, stop the bow on the string. Press the bow down heavily to grip the string firmly with the hair (shown as an x-note).

Feel the springiness of the wood of the bow, the hair, and the string. The wood, hair and string all want to return to their state of greatest possible relaxation, but hold them still in a state of increased tension.

1

Example

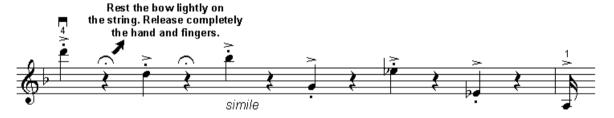
- Without releasing the pressure, very slowly pull and push the string from side to side. Do this entirely silently do not lose hold of the string, letting it snap back.
- 3 Having moved the string from side to side a few times stop the bow on the string, still without releasing the pressure.
- 4 Then play the martelé with a fast–slow bow speed. Release some of the pressure the instant the bow begins to move: the stroke should begin with a 'click' not a scratch.
- 5 Stop the bow on the string at the end of the stroke and repeat the process for the next note.

### Releasing between strokes

Martelé requires a firm bow hold at the beginning of the stroke, but during the martelé the hand can release. Tension and awkwardness may result if the hand remains 'fixed' and 'gripping' the bow during and between the strokes.



 Practise the moments of release into the martelé by pausing between strokes. Completely release the bow, hand and fingers during the pause.



#### Vibrato accents

In slow to medium martelé and at other times when the bow makes an accent, it is usual to mirror this in the left hand with a vibrato that is fast–slow and wide–narrow.

**Bow** Fast–slow, heavy–light **Vibrato** Fast–slow, wide–narrow

Apart from the musical result, this produces a feeling of the hands working together, rather than the unnatural feeling of combining an even-speed vibrato with fast–slow bow speed.

 Practising by exaggeration, make the vibrato accent greater than the bow accent by playing each note with a very fast-slow and wide-narrow vibrato.



• On each note marked 'vib', make a fast-slow and wide-narrow vibrato. Keep the bow speed and pressure almost even, creating most of the accent with the vibrato not the bow:



2

Example

3

Example