

Bowing and Pizzicato Terms

BOWING

abgestossen (G.) *Staccato* (in the generic musical sense), the normal term in German for musical *staccato*. *Gestossen* is also occasionally used in this sense. The non-musical meaning of the root of these terms in fencing is similar to that of the Italian term *stoccata*: *stossen*, to thrust, stab, or strike; *stoccata*, a rapier-thrust. Thus the implication, when these terms were first used as technical terms in music, may have been a vigorous type of separation. In time, the meaning came to mean *staccato* without specifying the means separation.

alzare l'arco (It.) To lift the bow.

archet (F.) Bow

au milieu de l'archet...in the middle of the bow.
avec toute la longueur de l'archet...with the whole bow
bout d'archet...bow-tip
coup d'archet...bow stroke.
glisser tout le long de l'archet...whole bow
l'archet bien a la corde...very legato
lever l'archet...lift the bow.
moitié de l'archet...half bow.
moite inferieure de l'archet...lower half
moite superieure de l'archet...upper half
tout l'archet sur chaque note...with whole bow on each note.

arco, archetto (It.) Bow or bowed.

A meta l'arco...with half-bow.
alzare l'arco...to lift the bow.
col arco naturale...bow in a normal manner
(following a passage played *sul tasto* , *sul ponticello*, or other bowing).
colpo d'arco...bow stroke.
con l'arco in tutta la sua lunghezza...with the whole bow.
con molto arco...with much bow.
gran arco...whole bow.
lasciate ondeggiare l'arco...let the bow undulate.
meta inferiore dell'arco...lower half
meta superiore dell'arco...upper half.
tutto l'arco...whole bow.
punta d'arco...at the point (tip) of the bow.

articulation (E.) In modern usage, a general musical term referring to the means of giving clear definition and shape to individual notes or phrases. In string playing the means of articulation include techniques of both the right and left hand. For the bow, the term refers to methods of phrasing, stopping, lifting, and attacking with the bow.

balzato (It.) Bouncing.

bariolage (F.) A passage which idiomatically exploits the distinct, individual *timbres* of the various strings. In this bowing style, no two consecutive notes of a passage of disjunct figuration are played on the same string. Instead, the bow oscillates between two, three, or four strings. Occasionally, a passage employing the *bariolage* principle will require the reiteration of notes. In the early nineteenth century it is fully defined with three meanings as a technical term in music:

1. a passage in which notes are played on different strings for reasons of contrasting colors of sound,
2. a passage in which stopped notes on one string alternate with an adjacent open string, and
3. a passage using open strings where normally stopped notes would be used.

behind the Bridge (E.) *Twentieth Century*: Producing high-pitched indefinite tones by bowing or plucking on the strings between the bridge and the tailpiece. Clear, high-pitched tones are obtained with a bow placement either close to the bridge or close to the tailpiece (on the string wrapping). Bow placement in the middle produces a scratchy, unpitched noise. The notation for *behind the bridge* is not standardized; each composer uses a different symbol for this effect.

behind left hand fingers (E.) *Twentieth Century*: An instruction for a string instrument to indicate that the bow is placed on the string near the nut at the beginning of the fingerboard (in first position) on the “wrong” side of the left hand. The tone color thus produced is quite haunting and soft, small and distant. The composer’s notation needs to show both where to finger as if the notes are to be sounded normally and the actual pitches produced with the bow in the back of the left hand. 1, 2, 3 sounds high-lower-lower and the lower fingers cannot be held down but must be lifted to produce the next pitch. Also, it is not practical to play *behind the left hand fingers* on the *middle two strings* as they are too close together. An unfortunate side effect is the rosin left on the string in first position-this must be cleaned off to avoid sticky fingers for the violin and viola. Two techniques make this effect easier to negotiate:

1. Take the left hand off the fingerboard and reverse it so that the thumb and first finger are now closer to the performer than the fourth finger. Fingering in this reversed position (fingers now on the G string side of the neck) allows normal fingering (low finger=low pitch) and anchoring the hand.
2. When sitting, hold the violin or viola vertically (like a viol or cello) on the lap. Although this makes bowing near the nut more comfortable, it does not allow for technique number 1, reversing the left hand.

Bogen (G.) Bow.

*Bogen mitte...*middle of the bow.

*ganzer Bogen...*whole bow.

*in der Mitte des Bogens...*in the middle of the bow.

*langer Bogen...*long bow stroke.

mit der ganzen Lange des Bogen ... whole bows.

*mit liegendem Bogen...*on the string, smoothly.

*springender Bogen...*bouncing bow strokes.

*viel Bogen...*full bows.

Bogenwechsel (G.) Bow change

*viel Bogenwechsel...*many bow changes (on a long sustained tone).

*kein Bogenwechsel...*no bow change.

bois (F.) Wood (bow stick)

*avec le bois...*with the wood.

*sur le bois...*on the wood.

bombi (It.) Seventeenth and eighteenth century term for *tremolo*.

brush stroke (E.) A type of *spiccato* bowing in which the horizontal motion is emphasized so that the bow drags or brushes the string and is lifted at the end of each stroke. This results in a more singing and less articulated bounce or lifted stroke than regular *spiccato*.

circular bowing (E.) A twentieth century term meaning a continuous sighing sound made by gradually gliding the bow away from the bridge on the down bow and over the fingerboard, then quickly returning the bow to the normal position on a light up-bow to repeat the circular pattern.

contact point (E.) This refers to the point of contact of the bow hair on the string, that is, to the distance of the bow from the bridge, a crucial factor in the control of tone production.

corde, a la corda, alla corda (It.) On the string (following a passage played with bouncing bow-strokes).

flatter la corda (F.) Caress the string.

tres a la corda (F.) Very legato or sustained.

craquer l’archet (F.) Two up-bows in succession, with a slight articulation between the notes and with the bow remaining on the string. This technique is used to make the bowing pattern conform to the “rule of the down-bow.”

depart (F.) This term refers to a kind of bowing attack in which bow speed and pressure are constant at the beginning of and throughout horizontal motion of the bow stroke. An incisive attack will occur without sharp accentuation.

detache (F.) Comprises a family of bow strokes, played on-the-string, which share in common a change of bow direction with the articulation of each note. *Detache* strokes may be sharply accentuated or

unaccentuated, *legato* (only in the sense that no rest occurs between strokes), or a very slightly *staccato*, with small rests separating strokes.

accentuated detache...a percussive attack, produced by great initial bow speed and pressure, characterizes this stroke. In contrast to the *martele*, the *accentuated detache* is basically a non-*staccato* articulation and can be performed at greater speeds than the *martele* (generally used at the point). It is usually indicated only by accent marks.

detache lance..."darting" *detache*. Characteristically, a short unaccented *detache* bow stroke with some *staccato* separation of strokes.

court detache...short, separated *detache*.

detache porte..."carried" *detache*. This *detache* stroke begins with a "slight swelling." Pressure is applied after horizontal motion begins and peak volume is reached shortly after soft initial attack. Release of pressure and, if desired, slight *staccato* separation from the next stroke follows. The bowing can provide expressive projection of musically important notes. It may be indicated by a horizontal dash, if any marking is used at all.

grand detache...whole bow *detache* stroke.

simple detache...most common of all bowings; unaccentuated, non-*staccato detache*.

drum stroke (E.) A thrown, rebounding bow stroke consisting of a series of consecutive pairs of ricochet articulations so that each bow stroke contains two rapid springing notes (alternating down and up bows). The stroke is done above the middle of the bow. This bowing is also known as *feather bowing* in the twentieth century.

flautando (It.) Literally "fluting or flute-like." An airy and breathy tone color obtained on a string instrument by drawing the bow lightly (light bow pressure ratio to bow speed) over the strings. Flautando does not mean "floating," and although usually played near or over the fingerboard, may also be played in other locations for various tonal effects. For example, *flautando quasi ponticello*; playing with a light bow stroke near the bridge produces a tonal variation of the *flautando* effect.

fouette (F.) Literally, "whipped." A sharply accentuated bowing performed, primarily, on an up-bow near the tip of the bow. The stroke can be performed following a down-bow *detache* stroke. After the down-bow, the bow is lifted, when time permits, and struck back at once in a stinging, biting attack. The bow does not bounce off, but remains on the string. The stroke can simulate a *martele* attack and can also assist the left hand in certain left-hand shifting situations.

frog (E.) A device made of ebony, ivory, tortoise-shell, etc. at the lower end of the bow to which hair is fastened. A screw mechanism functions to adjust the tension of the hair by sliding the frog back and forth along the stick in the mortise.

Frosch (G.) Frog

jete (F.) "Thrown." A series of consecutive up or down-bow *spiccato* strokes, each of which originates at the same point of the bow. Thus, in a series of up-bow bounces, the bow is lifted after each stroke and returned in the air to the point at which it began. The bow remains the same distance from the frog throughout the series of bounces. If the passage requires execution at a speed too fast to maintain the same bowing distance from the frog, the bow is permitted to creep in the bowing direction of the series. The difference between *jete* and *flying staccato*, which also consists of a series of bounces in the same direction, is that *jete* is a considerably slower bowing, and that each bounce of the *jete* is individually produced. The *flying staccato*, unlike the *jete*, always creeps in the bowing direction of the series, and is produced in the manner of a *firm staccato*. Like the *firm staccato* to which it is related, *flying staccato* may have a trace of "bite" or sharp accentuation.

legato (It.)

1. Bound together (literally, "tied"). Without interruption between the notes; smoothly connected, whether in one or several bows.
2. Sometimes explicitly means slurred, and is then indicated by a slur mark.
Expressive or inflected *legato*...slurred notes which are gently pulsed with bow pressure to bring them into expressive prominence. This bowing is often indicated by horizontal dashes under the slur, but this bowing can be used for expressive purposes when no

marking occurs. When there is a very perceptible degree of pulsation or a separation in the sound, the bowing becomes a *loure* bowing.

legno (It.) wood, *col legno* (It.) with the wood of the bow; to either draw the bow stick across the string or tap the string with the bow stick. In pure *col legno*, the bow hair is not used, but the edge of the hair can be allowed to contact the string along with the wood so that a more discernable pitch can be heard in the *col legno* tone color (notated as *half legno* or $\frac{1}{2}$ *legno*).

1. *col legno tratto, legno striscato* (It.) *gestrichen* (G.) Drawing the wood over the string in legato style.
2. *col legno battuto* (It.) Hitting or tapping the string with the wood of the bow stick- a percussive effect.
3. *half col legno- half arco* (E.) Drawing the bow so that both the wood and the hair are in contact with the string. This is accomplished by turning the bow on its side. With both the wood and hair in contact with the string, a clearer pitch results along with the scraping of the *col legno*.
4. *col legno battuto-sul tasto, sulla tasteria* (It.) Striking the strings directly over the fingerboard with the wood of the bow so that the sound of hitting the fingerboard- a violent, loud knocking is heard.
5. *col legno battuto- sul ponticello* (It.) Striking the strings directly upon the top of the bridge produces a loud knock.
6. *col legno frotte* (It., F.) The strings are gently rubbed with the wood of the bow.
7. *col legno- behind the bridge* (It., E.) String players may either tap the strings behind the bridge or draw the wood (stick) over the strings behind the bridge.
8. *col legno battuto-on the tailpiece or chinrest* (It., E.) String players may tap the tailpiece or the chinrest (on the violin or viola) with the wood of the bow.
9. *col legno gerissen* (It., G.) Pulled sharply (“torn”) with accent over the string with the wood of the bow to produce a strong and dramatic *col legno* attack.
10. *col legno weich gezogen* (It., G.) Drawn lightly with the bow stick.
11. *col legno jete* (It., F.) Bounced on the string with the bow stick.

loure (F.) This bowing consists of a short series of gently pulsed, slurred, *legato* notes. Varying degrees of articulation may be employed. The *legato* connection between notes may not be disrupted at all, but minimal separation may be employed. While the bow is in motion, pressure of the forefinger is applied to pulse a note, then release, and then reapplied for the following notes.

martele, marteler (F.) *martellando, martellato, martello*, (It.) *gehammert* (G.) Hammered; a sharply accentuated, *staccato* bowing. To produce the attack, pressure is applied an instant before bow motion begins. The string is then very taut before it is set into vibration. The bow is thrust into motion with great initial speed, and pressure is simultaneously reduced. Tension is suddenly discharged as the string snaps into maximum amplitude with an explosive accent, characteristic of the stroke. The bow is then quickly stopped or lifted (at the frog) in order that there will be a silence before the next stroke. *Martele* differs from the accentuated *detache* in that the latter has primarily no *staccato* separation between strokes and can be performed at faster speeds.

Ponticello, *sul ponticello* (It.); *Steg, am Steg* (G.); *puentecillo, sobre el puentecillo* (Sp.); *chevalet, sur le chevalet* (F.) Bridge; on or upon the bridge. A special tone color on a string instrument produced by bowing very close to the bridge, so that the pitch becomes weak or even unrecognizable and the raspy, nasal upper partials dominate. In pure *sul ponticello*, the bow hair is right at the bridge, and the pitches are not identifiable. Should pitch recognition be musically desirable, the bow hair is placed somewhat away from the bridge.

portato (It.) Notes played in one bow stroke which are articulated without lifting the bow from the string. They are neither slurred legato nor detached but almost connected.

punta (It.) Bow-tip.

a punta d'arco... at the bow-tip.

colla punta...at the bow-tip.

punta d'arco, quasi col legno...tap at the bow-tip simulating *col legno*.

colla punta d'arco...at the bow-tip.

punta dell'arco...at the bow-tip.

sulla punta...at the bow-tip.

punta d'arco... “Notes marked with these words demand a particular execution, which consists of striking gently on the string with the tip of the bow one produces thus a very lively *staccato*.”

al punto...at the bow-tip.
col punta del arco...at the bow-tip.
coll'punta...at the bow-tip.

rebound, recovery (E.) A term coined by Paul Rolland to describe the bowing motion of full recovery; "The bow is moved and returned in the air to the point of origin."

ricochet (F.) A series of two or more slurred and, characteristically, very fast bounces, usually performed in the upper-half of the bow. The bow is dropped or struck upon the string in such a way that the initial impetus and natural elasticity of the bow gives rise to a spontaneous series of successive bounces.

roule (F.) A practice routine to develop suppleness in the right hand fingers and to develop good tone production. The bow-stick is rolled by the fingers while drawing sustained bow-strokes so that the stick gradually and continuously changes the direction in which it faces, from fingerboard to bridge.

rule of the down-bow (E.) In early violin playing, the rule is that a down-bow should be used on the first beat of each measure unless the measure begins with a rest. The up-bow is to be used on unaccented notes. In the event that there are an uneven number of notes in the measure, as is likely to be the case in triple time, the bowing may be either with successive down-bows requiring a reprise *d'archet* between the measures, or with two consecutive up-bows and no reprise *d'archet*.

The rule seems to have been followed most closely and to have had the most musical value in the seventeenth century French dance style where it resulted in clearly articulated dance rhythms, closely associated with the actual step patterns.

saltato, saltando, saltante (It.) Bounced, bouncing. All the terms derived from *saltare* (to jump) have the general meaning of bouncing bows. They may have particular reference to a grouped bouncing stroke (such as *jete* or *ricochet*) but this usage is not consistent.

saltellando (It.) With skipping or jumping bow; a term used to describe the performance of a succession of bounced *staccati* in one bow.

sautille (F.) A characteristically rapid, and alternating down and up-bow bouncing stroke. When executed at the correct bouncing point, the resilience of the bow stick is brought into play and the bow springs off the string. The *sautille* is similar to the rapid *detache* stroke, but whereas the *sautille* jumps off the string, the *detache* remains firmly on the string. The *sautille* is often indicated by dots.

slur (E.) A curved line grouping notes together. In string music, those notes included by a slur are played in the same bowing direction, either all up-bow or all down-bow. These notes are played *legato* unless additional marks, such as dots or dashes under the slur indicate separation by stopping, lifting, or bouncing the bow.

smorzato (It.) "Bear a light Bow and play soft." "Means such a bow-stroke that the sound of the instrument becomes always weaker and weaker." "Intimates that the Bow or Fiddle-stick be drawn to its full length, and that not with the same strength of hand throughout, but bearing lighter and lighter on it by degrees, 'till scarce any sound be heard."

sounding point (E.) The term used for the best place on the string in relation to the bridge for bow contact to produce the desired focal tone.

sostenuto (It.) played in a sustained manner.

soutenir (F) *Eighteenth century*:

1. To hold the note for its full value without releasing before the end of the note.
2. To sustain a sound without nuance.

spiccato (It.)

1. Refers to a slow to moderate speed bouncing bow stroke. Every degree of crispness is possible in the *spiccato*, ranging from gently brushed to percussively dry. *Spiccato* can be played as fast as a slow *sautille*, but beyond a certain speed, becomes impractical.
2. Also used as a generic term meaning any speed of alternating down and up-bow bouncing strokes.

staccato (It.)

1. Used as a generic term, *staccato* means a non-legato *martele* type of short bow-stroke played with a stop. The effect is to shorten the written note value with an unwritten rest. Composers often use this term in its generic sense.

2. In modern violin playing *staccato* is specifically a series of slurred *martele* strokes characteristically performed in the upper half of the bow. Each stroke may be produced at a relatively slow speed in the manner of the *martele*, where an individual effort must be made to attack and release each note. A considerably faster *staccato* may be obtained by other means, but the rate of speed is not as easy to control. This is called *flying staccato*. To avoid confusion with the generic meaning of *staccato*, the terms *slurred staccato* or *group staccato* may be used. It has been suggested that the on-the-string *staccato* bowings be classified according to their speed as follows: *slurred staccato* (medium speed), *martele staccato* (slow), and *rapid staccato*.

3. *Staccato* may also refer to a style of bowing which may be likened to an unaccentuated *martele*. The bow is not pressed before motion begins. Thus no sharp report, as in *martele*, but a soft, "round" attack is produced. The bow is moved very rapidly and stopped abruptly to provide a rest before the next stroke begins.

4. *firm (or solid) staccato* (E.), *festes Staccato* (G.) As in *staccato* (No. 2), *firm staccato* also consists of slurred *martele* articulations, but can be performed at much faster, although mostly involuntary, rates of speed capable of little regulation. This is because the *staccato* stroke requires an individual application and release of pressure to produce each articulation, whereas the *firm staccato* requires reflexive, spasmodic muscular motions- the bow being firmly pressed into the string throughout the slurred series and the reflective motions itself provides the attacks and separations. The reflex motions employed by performers are of two basic kinds. One is related to the oscillating motion of the wrist as used to perform a rapid *tremolo*. The other is related to the spasmodic motion of the arm.

5. *flying staccato* (E.) A series of fast up-bow slurred, bouncing strokes, characteristically performed in the upper part of the bow. This bowing is very much akin to the *firm staccato*, in that it is produced by a series of rapid reflex motions. In contrast to the *firm staccato*, the strokes are lighter, far less sharply accentuated, and, for the most part, bounce off the string.

6. *standiges staccato* (G.) "Standing" *staccato*. A succession of thrown up-bows at the same point of the bow.

7. *staccato sautillant* (F.) Ricochet strokes of from two to four bounces, each consecutively following another to produce a continuous stream of fast bouncing articulations.

steg (G.) Bridge.

am steg...at the bridge.

auf dem steg...on the bridge.

hinter dem steg...A special bowing effect. Play in back of the bridge between the bridge and tailpiece.

nahe zum steg...near the bridge.

zum steg...to the bridge.

strappato (It.) Torn off, sharply accented.

Strich (G.) Bow-stroke.

geworfener Strich...Literally "thrown bow-stroke."

mit breitem Strich...With broad or full bow-strokes.

stricharten...styles of bowing.

Strich fur Strich...non-slurred, change bow direction with each note.

grosser Strich...Whole bows.

tallone (It.) Frog.

al tallone...at the frog.

col tallone...at the frog.

sul tallone...at the frog.

talon (F.) Frog

au talon...at the frog.

avec le talon...at the frog.

du talon...at the frog.

tasto (It.) Fingerboard

sul tasto, *sulla tastiera*...refers to bow placement over the fingerboard to obtain a soft, distant light tone quality on a string instrument. This should not be confused with *flautando*, although *flautando* is played near or over the fingerboard.

tip, head, point (E.) *pointe* (F.), *punta*, *punto* (It.), *Spitze* (G.) The pointed end of the bow. Also refers to playing at the extreme upper part of the bow near the tip.

tone color (E.) Refers to the tonal quality of musical pitches and the many available ways a composer may change the tonal characteristics for expressive purposes. Twentieth century composers often request gradual or sudden changes of tone color, much more often and with more variety than composers of the past. Bow placement affects string tone color the most. The three basic string tone colors are normal...bowing between the bridge and fingerboard, *sul tasto*...bowing over the fingerboard, and *sul ponticello*...bowing at or near the bridge.

tremolo (It.) The tremolo in modern usage usually characteristically consists of very small, unaccentuated *detache* bow strokes, usually performed near the bow tip, although it may be nearer the middle when loud. In extreme forte, it may even be played at the frog of the bow. When a pitch is reiterated as many times as possible during the extent of its duration, with no specific time value placed on each stroke, the *tremolo* is said to be unmeasured. A *tremolo* may also be measured:

Measured tremolo (E.) *non-tremolo*, *tremolo tres regulier* (F.) *tremolo misurato* (It.). Does not employ the style of unmeasured *tremolo* but reiterates the exact number of bow strokes notated. At times, confusion may result from the inexplicit nature of the notation of *tremolos*. Without specific indication, in some musical contexts, the notation of three slashes on the note could mean either to reiterate the notated pitch eight times in a rhythm of thirty-second notes or to reiterate the pitch as many times as possible within the duration of the quarter note.

vertical bowing (E.) A term which refers to a sighing, scraping sound made by sliding the bow along the length of the string instead of the usual perpendicular direction. The actual term, vertical, applies more to the cello and bass which are played vertically. Vertical bowing applied to the violin and viola is actually in a horizontal plane but toward the scroll and back along the fingerboard.

Viotti-bowing (E.) A bowing employed in some of the works of G. B. Viotti and made famous by him. The bowing consists of a series of two slurred *staccato* bow strokes. The first of the two slurred articulations occurs on a rhythmically weaker portion of the beat, the second on a stronger portion of the beat. The first of the two slurred notes receives very little bow and is unaccentuated, the second receives far more bow and is accentuated.

whole bow gliding (E.) A style of bowing occasionally requested by twentieth century composers in which the bow is drawn its full length frog to tip-on every note (or small groups of notes). *Whole bow gliding* can be performed either softly, with an airy tone, or quite loudly, with a rough, energetic, vigorous tone. There is no standard term for this bowing style. Composers will indicate the passage in question should be played with whole bows, or instructions will be given such as "Use a whole bow on every note" or "Glide with the entire length of the bow."