

# Essential Elements for Four-Mallet Playing

## by Julia Gaines

The building blocks of the pyramid directed to improve Accuracy & Efficiency all apply to four-mallet playing. The following are additional comments as related to four-mallet technique.

### STANCE/BODY POSITION

- Body parallel to instrument (larger range needs to be balanced)
- Solid torso – do not turn to the left or right
- Align elbows with shoulders and hips

### GRIP

- Independent/Stevens (popular in the US)
- Traditional/Cross (popular in Europe/Japan)
- Burton (popular in jazz styles)

Stroke types:

1. Double Vertical
2. Single Independent
3. Single Alternating
4. Double Lateral

Top 3 errors made with Stevens grip:

1. Curled index finger
2. Thumb not centered on mallet prior to interval shift
3. Middle finger not supporting end of shaft of mallet

### STROKE

- Avoid any lift prior to stroke and any bouncing after stroke
- Start stroke at the correct height for the current dynamic level and stop stroke at the correct height of the next dynamic level
- Fifteen minutes of proper stroke technique twice a day will be more helpful to a beginner than one solid hour of practice until strength develops in the small muscles of the hands

Resource

Anyone wanting further information on the Stevens four-mallet grip should read “Method of Movement for Marimba” by Leigh Howard Stevens which is published by KP3. The first part of this book has a wonderful narrative about each stroke type and proper position of every finger in this grip.

# LITERATURE SUGGESTIONS TO BUILD A&E FOR THE FOUR-MALLET PLAYER

## Methods

- A. *Method of Movement* by Leigh Howard Stevens
- B. *Fundamental Method for Mallets* by Mitchell Peters

## Beginning Solo Literature (in sequence)

### Marimba

- Prayer* by Richard Gipson
- Sea Refractions* by Mitchell Peters
- Hymn for an Angelic Child* by Gus Burghdorf
- Yellow After the Rain* by Mitchell Peters
- Rain Dance* by Alice Gomez
- Memories of the Seashore* by Keiko Abe
- Michi* by Keiko Abe

### Vibraphone

- Solo Jazz Vibraphone Etudes* by Arthur Lipner
- Summer Song* by Alice Henry
- Tranquility* by Murray Houllif
- Trilogy* by Tim Huesgen
- Music of the Day* by Bill Molenhof

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