

Bass Line Technique Outline

By: Shilo Stroman

The basis of this technique is very relaxed and not forced at all. There should be no tension from the shoulder to the fingers. NO TENSION equals a consistent, full sound!

GRIP

The bass mallet is held comfortably between the thumb, middle finger, and ring finger around the smallest part of the handle. The first finger is resting on the stick with minimal pressure. The soft/fleshy part of the thumb should make contact with the mallet and should “point” to the head of the mallet (very similar to holding a golf club). There should be no visible daylight between the thumb and first finger.

Begin with both arms hanging down at your side with the thumbs on the top of the mallets and your hands by your legs. The mallets should point forward and down at a 45-degree angle. Next, bring your arms up (bending at the elbows) until the forearms are parallel to the ground. The position of the hand, wrist, and mallet should NOT CHANGE. This playing position should feel very relaxed and natural. From this position, I will adjust the drum to you. Once the drum is in position, bring your forearms in so they touch the rim, Memorize what part of your arm touches the rim so you will be able to always find the center of the head.

In playing position, the mallets should be parallel to the drumhead. Your arms should hang naturally on both sides of your body. The amount of space between your elbows and ribs depends on the size of your body frame. The upper body is relaxed and free from tension at all times!

ROTATION

The stroke consists of a Legato forearm rotation. All strokes are initiated from a simple rotation of the forearm. The back of the wrist should be in line with the forearm; there should be no break in the wrist when you play (i.e. no windshield wiper motion). Let the weight of the mallet help with the rotation. Remember, you are playing against gravity.

At slow tempos, the fulcrum is the bottom bone in the forearm (the one on the pinky finger side). As the tempo increases, the rotation point shifts gradually to a point in between the two bones in the forearm.



STICK HEIGHTS

When in playing position, with the mallets parallel to the head, the mallets are actually set at a 1" stick height. Rotate the forearms out 90 degrees so the mallets are perpendicular to the head to establish the 12" stick height (the palm of the hand should be facing the ceiling). The 6" stick height is half way in between 1" and 12" and the mallet should be at a 45 degree angle to the playing surface. To achieve the 3" stick height, rotate one quarter from the playing surface. To achieve the 9" stick height, rotate three quarters from the playing surface. In performance, look forward toward the section leader for stick heights and the section leader is looking at the snares.

GENERAL CONCEPTS

1. THE INTENSITY OF THE STROKE NEVER CHANGES REGARDLESS OF VOLUME OR TEMPO!!!

2. Volume increase is executed through change in height only.
3. Breathe with the phrases of the music.
4. Quality of sound is number one!!!