



Southern Miss
Flute Studio

Mississippi Flute Day 2008

Presentation given by
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Tone development exercises

These warm up exercises provide practical tools to develop a focused sound, balanced intonation, and consistent volume through out all the registers of the flute.

Air Support and Vibrato (15 minutes)

Five intensive short exercises that use muscle groups engaged in air support and vibrato. Flutter tongue is utilized in this section.

Throat Awareness (15 minutes)

Sing + Play! Learn to relax throat muscles by singing and playing long tones.

Harmonic Exercises (15 minutes)

This section contains sets of long tones that vary from harmonics to third and fourth octave notes. Lip flexibility and air support are key factors in this section.



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Air Support and Vibrato (15 minutes)

The goal in this section is make students aware of several muscle groups that are already being used to push air out of their body. Control of these muscle groups leads to a steady air stream (air column) and a flexible vibrato. The five short exercises described here can be done in less than 15 minutes and they should provide a physical “workout” feeling to those practicing it.

In the first exercise, students play isolated notes and scale patterns using a “breath attack” for each note. Although the sounding result might not please their ears, they will feel their abdominal and intercostal muscles working. The goal is to create an awareness of the muscle groups participating in the inhaling and exhaling process. During this exercise students are encouraged to relax other muscle groups, such as arms and shoulders. (Taffanel and Gaubert’s EJ 1 and EJ 2 provide excellent patterns for this exercise)

In the second exercise, students play the same patterns as before, but they will not take breaths in between each note. Students should also play the same patterns with flutter tongue. This extended technique demonstrates the necessity of a continuous and supported air stream to maintain the flutter tongue. The goal here is to willfully control the muscle groups participating in the exhaling process.

In the third exercise, students play longer scale patterns (similar to the ones in the previous exercises) associating the abdominal attack with a light tongue articulation. Distinction is made between staccato and legato articulations. Depending on the ability of the students, scales are performed at an increased speed. The goal is to demonstrate that one is able to tongue fast and cleanly when the abdominal muscles support the air and the tongue muscles are relaxed.

The forth exercise focuses on metric control of the abdominal and intercostal muscles. Students perform rhythmic patters over a single sustained note. Patterns will increase in speed and complexity according to students’ ability. The goal is to provide students with a practical way to improve their abilities in using these muscles, from slow to fast vibrato. They are encouraged to practice this long tone exercise at home, with a metronome and a tuner.

The final exercise associates volume control to the previous exercise. Students experiment with dynamic variations on single sustained note. The abdominal attack is set at a comfortable speed while the students focus their attention on a particular dynamic level. After a few exercises, the speed of the abdominal attack can also change. The goal here is to demonstrate the wide range of sound possibilities by changing vibrato speed and intensity.



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Throat Awareness (15 minutes)

In this section, students will focus on singing the pitch that is being produced in the flute (sing + play). The goal is to create an awareness of the throat position and its relationship to the air stream.

This section is organized into a step-by-step process:

- 1- Play the opening set of “De la Sonoritè” (B5-Bb5)
- 2- Sing the same set an octave lower
- 3- Sing the same notes
- 4- Sing the same notes and add blowing
- 4- Whistle and sing the same notes
- 5- Bring the flute back and play step 1
- 6- Play the same set an octave lower
- 7- Start singing and blowing and slowly put head joint into playing position
- 8- With the flute in playing position, start singing and blowing and try to get the same sound on the flute
- 9- Start playing the flute and add the singing (reverse of step 8)
- 10- Repeat steps 2 to 9
- 11- Do step 8, but this time, play an octave higher than your voice
- 12- Do step 9, but this time, play an octave higher than your voice
- 13- Do step 8, but this time, play two octaves higher than your voice
- 14- Do step 9, but this time, play two octaves higher than your voice

Note: Not all students will be able to achieve steps 11 to 14. The teacher encourages flutist to incorporate this exercise in their daily practice. The singing and playing exercise demonstrates that sound quality and intonation can be markedly improved when a flute player’s throat is open and relaxed.



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Harmonic Exercises (15 minutes)

The goal of the exercises in this section is to increase lip flexibility and intonation awareness. Students play sets of six notes in a descending chromatic scale, changing the harmonic partials in each set.

In the first set, students play slow chromatic scale, starting from B5 and going down to F#5. Students are encouraged to use all the air in their lungs and to sustain a beautiful tone on every note.

The second set uses the same fingerings as the first set, but the students will over-blow the notes in order to reach a chromatic scales that goes from F#6 down to C#6. Students are encouraged to tune the harmonic notes by maintaining good posture and adjusting the angle of air blown into the flute.

In the third set, students perform the same notes as the second set, but this time they use real fingerings. The instructor brings out important points regarding the ease of intonation when using the appropriate fingering, as well as the importance of air support for these notes in the high register.

The harmonic exercises restart with a new set of six notes (F#5 – C#5). In the second set students look for the second partial, reaching F#6 down to C#6. They are reminded that they are reaching the same notes as the second set in the first exercise, but with different fingerings. Once again, they are encouraged to maintain the tuning of the harmonics.

The third set on this second exercise uses the same notes as the third set in the first exercise. (F#6 to C#6 using real fingerings)

The final exercise in this section uses a six-note set from C#5 to G#4. The second set, reaches harmonics from G#5 to D#5. The third set uses these same notes with real fingerings.

If time permits, a final challenge is given to the students: Reach the same pitches using fingerings from E3 to B2.

At the end of this section students are reminded that if they are able to reach the harmonic partials with a flexible lip position and good air support, they will also be able to play third and fourth octave notes in tune and with greater dynamic range.