



**Bill McBirnie**  
**Clinic Outline—Jazz Flute Technique**  
**(NFA Convention—NYC—August 2009)**

This clinic will be of interest to flutists who wish to explore and develop some of the alternative techniques required to play in jazz and other non-classical idioms. We will focus on how to modify your physical approach with a view to achieving more convincing—as well as more musical—results in non-classical settings. We will also explore some constructive methods in developing the ability to improvise fluently.

With two demonstration tracks (of 4-5 minutes each) and some illustrative licks, Bill will explain how alternative techniques (such as the following) will enable you (i) to obtain more convincing “non-classical” results—with greater ease—and (ii) to expedite the development of your improvisatory skills—in terms of both your ears and your fingers.

**Jazz (Non-Classical) vs. Classical**

**What Is the Same?**

- (1) Lots of Air—You have to get as much air into the instrument as possible in order to produce a big, clear and open sound.
- (2) Relaxed Embouchure—Tension in your embouchure is not required because your lips are simply a cushion for the air.

**What Is Different?**

- (3) Less Vibrato—...a LOT less!...Although vibrato is very much a matter of taste, learn to hear—and to accept—an uninflected tone as a VALID SOUND. Also, start to utilize—not vibrato but rather—compresses and swells in order to highlight and shade your phrases.
- (4) Alternative Use of the Air Column—To obtain a more authentic feel, particularly for swing-oriented idioms, make the air column bounce—within the quarter note—which can be accomplished with a slight huffing on the upbeats.
- (5) Alternative Methods of Articulation—You must deviate from the traditional tonguing etiquette and utilize unorthodox syllables; e.g., “doo-dle”. Also, do NOT articulate excessively! Learn to stipple the line instead—especially as the tempo increases. This will enable you to obtain far more nuanced results.

*[NOTE: Bill is a Canadian jazz and Latin flute specialist. He has studied with renowned flutists, Robert Aitken and Richard Egues. His awards include Flutist of the Year—Jazz Report Awards and a winner in the USA National Flute Association's Jazz Flute Masterclass Competition. He is also a teacher, clinician and woodwind columnist with Canadian Musician magazine. He now serves as the resident Jazz Flute Specialist at Sir James Galway's web site. You can find additional information about Bill—as well as samples and CDs/MP3s of his work—at MySpace, SonicBids, CDBaby, iTunes and IndiePool. You can also contact Bill directly at [billmcb@direct.com](mailto:billmcb@direct.com) ]*