

Notes from Susan Maclagan:
MINI FLUTE SPA WITH PATRICIA GEORGE
Maintenance Practice for Those with NO Time

I always make a point of attending Patricia George's Flute Spas when they are offered at flute conventions because I always know that I will pick up a lot of very useful tips. This class was great as usual.

From the convention program: No time to practice? This participatory masterclass will explore several exercises to keep you playing well. Suitable for all ages and playing abilities.

Note: My comments are in square brackets.

You can be depressed about not having time to practise or you can figure out how to deal with it.

Even if you only have a brief amount of time to practise, you will have a better session if you relax for a few minutes beforehand. Some things that might help you to relax are:
-sitting in a dark room. This may also help you to feel less tired.
-breathing through one nostril. This may also help you to get focused. When doing this, don't always think: Breathe in; breathe out. Also think Breathe out; breathe in as flute breathing is about breathing out.
-To help you focus, find a straight line on a wall and try to trace it with your eyes.

PART 1:

HEADJOINT EXERCISES

If you only have a few minutes, the best thing to do is headjoint work. Brass players often do a lot of mouthpiece work. Some even practise on their mouthpieces on the way to symphony rehearsals and are warmed up by the time that they get to the concert hall.

With your head joint in the normal position AND in the reverse position, do the following exercises:

Note: Patricia feels that playing the head joint in the reverse direction homogenizes the headjoint and that the idea of homogenizing the head joint in this way is from Harold Bennett.

1. THROAT STACCATO: Throat staccato is starting the tone with the breath as in "HAH." No tonguing is involved. The notes should be staccato and on the quiet side. The "HAH" is produced with the vocal folds.

Play the following rhythms on one pitch. Use the syllable hah for each note and repeat each rhythm several times. Place an accent on the first eighth note of each rhythm (this is the strength of the beat concept---where the first beat is stronger than the second, etc.).

(a) 1/8th note-1/8th note, 1/8 note, followed by an 1/8 rest. HAH HAH HAH rest.

- (b) Triplet of 1/8, 1/8 1/8 followed by an 1/8 and an 1/8 rest.
- (c). Four sixteenths on the first beat, followed by an 1/8 and an 1/8th rest.

2. Slur the throat staccatos in #1 (HAH, HAH, HAH, rest). Keep the action in the vocal folds. This will produce a quite natural vibrato.

3. HEADJOINT OCTAVES

- (a) slur 2 vibrato (HAH, HAH) low NOTES, and then 2 vibrato high NOTES four times. Repeat this three or four times.
- (b) slur 3 vibrato low notes and then 3 vibrato high notes four times. Repeat this three or four times.
- (c) slur 4 vibrato low notes and then 4 vibrato high notes four times. Repeat this three or four times.
- (d) Stop the end of the headjoint and do slurred vibrato (throat staccato-HAH, HAH) on the three pitches that you can get.

4. ARTICULATION

- (a) Start by tonguing with the tongue outside your mouth aperture to learn that tonguing is a horizontal process rather than a vertical one. Note: Think of tonguing off the top lip. Visualize your tongue [doing an ice-pick motion].
 - (b) Repeat the rhythms from exercise #1 ---with Thi, thi, thi, rest etc.
 - (c) Then with the back syllable: Key, key, key rest.
 - (d) Then with the double tonguing: thi-key
- Note: Patricia was taught du du tonguing, but she did not find this a quick form of tonguing as the tongue is too high in mouth.
- Dicke is used in the Soussmann method. If you work at your tonguing, using the dicke or thi-key syllables, you should eventually be able to tongue without touching anything -- you will just interrupt the air stream. Dont use the heavy de ke de ke.

FULLY-ASSEMBLED FLUTE EXERCISES

Play a G Major scale in the following ways:

1. RUN the G. Place your right hand on the barrel. Play G Major with the left hand only to get the fingers independent of the air. Do several more times. Placing the right hand on the barrel gets the flute into the correct position on the chin and the lower lip fat spread across the embouchure hole. Producing the higher notes of the G Major scale with left hand fingering teaches you how to lift from the first octave fingerings into the harmonics, thus strengthening the embouchure. (i.e., finger G2, A2, B2, C3, and then overblow a G1 to produce the D3, A1 to produce E3, B1 to produce F#3 and C2 to produce G3 or just think: G2 A B C and overblow to sound the third partial G, A, B, C.
2. Place the right hand on the barrel. Using the left hand only, play the rhythms from above on each note of the G Major scale.
3. Do #1, but turn in a circle as you play. This movement will help you get the air out

and keep the air stream going. The steady air flow will help you learn to separate the fingering motion from the air stream. Too many students change the air speed when the fingering changes.

4. When practicing an etude, play 8 or 16 measures -- and then RUN the G -- this will insure that you are keeping the flute in the right place for the best sound and help keep you from evolving into a less satisfactory position.

5. FINGER EXERCISES The following trill exercises will warm up your hands and relax your fingers.

(a) Practise a right-hand trill followed by a left-hand trill. For example:

-trill FGF, then GAG or

-trill EFE, then ABA or

-D to E, then B to C, using the following rhythm for each: 1/8-1/8 1/4.

When the trill is in your right hand, place your weight on your back foot; when its in your left hand, place your weight on your front foot. Moving from foot to foot teaches movement in playing, helps to develop body awareness and really moves the air out of your body because it reinforces playing on the exhale. According to Patricia, this is why all good flutists do this. When watching Galway perform in a concert or on Youtube, notice how he shifts his weight from the back foot to the front foot.

6. (a) Alternate trilling from FGF to GAG while shifting your weight from the back foot to the front foot. Repeat this exercise about 8 times. Repeat with the other pairs of notes: EFE and ABA; and DED and BCB. Place an accent on the first note of each group.

(b) Repeat (a), but with FGFGF, GAGAG, etc.

(c) Repeat (a), but with FGFGFGF, GAGAG, etc.

(d) Repeat (a), but with FGFGFGFGF, GAGAGAG, etc.

Notice your breathing. You are quietly panting = open throat.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

-The Talent Code by Daniel Coyle <http://thetalentcode.com/>

It has information re chunking.

-Flute methods by Altes, Taffanel and Soussmann.

The NFA Convention Handout, having to do with this part of the class is posted at the bottom of the following page:

<http://fabulousflute.com/id77.html>

PART 2:

ARTICULATION

-Playing the flute is always about getting the air to move. Mariano said: play on the air--- tongue on the air---finger on the air.

BREATHING

- Think of hugging yourself or a tree. Breathe. Notice how much expansion is in your back. Breathe this way when you play.
- The lungs start above your collarbone and stop just above your floating ribs. The lungs are much higher up than most of us think.
- Once you realize that the trachea is at the front of the body/spine and therefore, we breathe at the front of the body or in front of the spine, your breathing will become easier.

EMBOUCHURE

-Cup your hand such that your middle finger is braced on your nose. Blow. Where does the air hit? It should hit the heel of the hand in order to get the focus in the tone that is, the breath goes out and down. Think of this when you play. Pianists use the cup position to get the right curve of the hands. (In the piano world, this position is called the position of function)

-People who play with the embouchure hole tilted back (rather than parallel with the floor or ceiling) will have a smaller octave pitchwise and poor projection. If the octave is too small, then when you divide it into 12 parts (for the chromatic scale), the parts won't be the correct size. It's best to keep the embouchure hole parallel, but this will mean that you have to develop your embouchure which is more work than tilting back the embouchure hole and you must practice regularly to maintain this skill. However, the pitch will be better.

PLAYING POSITION

- Keep your music in the center of the music stand. This helps to prevent stress in your body as you won't be turning your eyes to see the music.
- Hold the embouchure hole 90 degrees to the face.
- Most head joints are made to be played in such a way that the end is a little forward of a line parallel to your face so bring the end of your flute forward. This will get you blowing in the right place and help avoid back pain.
- Notice that the foot end of the flute is in front of your nose. [The space between the right arm and the flute will] look like a piece of pie.
- Line up your nose with the center of the embouchure hole and the crease in your elbow.
- Have your keys face the ceiling and your embouchure hole face straight up. If you don't do this, then you will be out of tune.
- Vocal folds need to be open for inhalation and exhalation
- Patricia calls the lips, the lipstick lips and the immediate area surrounding these, the clown lips (or duck lips). Don't use only the lipstick lips. We also want to use the clown lips.
- Hang your arms. Shoulders down. Hang your jaw.
- Put your head joint in your chin. Put the back edge [of the embouchure hole] on a point where the chin skin meets up with the lip skin. This is the usual placement, but the position may need to be adjusted, depending on the body.
- Open throat. We should really say open vocal chords.
Ex. Pant. When running uphill, its the vocal cords that are hurting.
- Buy a skeleton as looking at it will remind you to stand properly etc.

-Stand 30 inches from your music stand. [To help you figure out how long this is without a ruler], take your flute, which is around 28 inches, and hold it between your face and the music stand.

-Learning to balance the hand is important for technique. Keep your fingers down. Have the knuckles the same height as the keys. Gravity will help you with putting the fingers down.

-An easy way of teaching the playing position:

Stand parallel to the music stand with your legs apart, your left foot facing 12:00 o'clock and your right foot facing 3:00 o'clock. Your torso should now be [facing around 1:30.] Adjust to make yourself comfortable.

1. touch the G# key cup (not the G# lever) on your nose.
2. pull flute away 6 inches,
3. turn head to left
4. rotate flute into your chin thinking that the flute is on a spindle under the G# key.

Patricia saw Emmanuel Pahud teach this set up at the Chicago Flute Fair in November 2007 and wishes that it were her idea as she thinks it's a winner.

TEACHING

-If you teach a lot, keep moving as this will help keep you relaxed. Even rocking on your feet is helpful.

These notes have been enhanced and approved by Patricia George.