

How Sound Sheets Got Started...

During the first year of my graduate studies, week after week, my flute teacher asked me to change my tone. I neither heard what she heard nor understood how to do what she was asking me to do. Frustrated and tired of feeling like I was making no progress, I decided that somehow I had to make this change.

Step 1:

I realized that not only did I not understand the sound she wanted; *I didn't even know the sound that I wanted!* Determined to figure this out, I began with a blank sheet of paper. I asked myself what I truly wanted my flute tone to sound like. At the top of the page I wrote, "A Sweet, Singing Sound."

Step 2:

Still having no idea how to break free of habits and transform my tone into this ideal, I remembered that I am a strongly visual learner. Maybe, I thought, if I had a beautiful image attached to the idea of my new sound, it would be easier to find it. I searched online for something inspiring and found a picture of a painting of a gorgeous woman draped in a pink cotton candy cloud perched in a blue sky. I transferred my title to a fresh document on my computer, then copied and pasted the picture right underneath the title of my Sound Sheet.

Step 3:

The beautiful colors and elegance of the painting lit up my imagination and I became excited about this project! Next step? I began to write down all the things I knew already helped me to have my best tone. I wrote things like, "Pulled back ears," "Sponge breathing" and "A filling breath that supports itself." These things wouldn't necessarily make sense to anyone else, but were meaningful to me.

Now what?

I put my brand new Sound Sheet in a plastic sleeve and kept it on my stand every time I went to the practice room. Whenever I had an "ah ha" or "light bulb" sound discovery, I added it to my Sound Sheet. I even kept it

on my stand during orchestra rehearsals! During one rehearsal, the oboe player next to me leaned over and asked, "Terri, why do you have a naked lady on your stand?" I explained that I was on a mission to find my new sound and she inspired me 😊.

Did it work?

Though I looked at my Sound Sheet daily and was constantly adding new things to it, I didn't realize how well my Sound Sheet was working until about a year and a half later. In the past, I had gotten positive feedback about my performances, but rarely would anyone say that they loved my tone. I hadn't really noticed this missing detail until I started a doctoral program at a new school and had the opportunity to play principal flute in an orchestra rehearsal for the Dvorak Cello Concerto (which has many beautiful flute solos). After the rehearsal, *nine different musicians* came up to meet me and specifically told me how much they enjoyed my tone! I was on cloud nine and realized that my Sound Sheet was truly working!

A Lifelong Project

As I have incorporated new ideas from different teachers, lessons learned from listening to other musicians, and discoveries from my own practice and creative process, my sound concept has evolved. Making new Sound Sheets has been a joy and an inspiration (see the back of this page for examples).

Sharing the Sound Sheet Project

Prompting my students to make their own Sound Sheets has helped me to become a better teacher and helped my students to take ownership in the search for their own beautiful flute tone. By capturing ideas in their own language instead of mine, they are more motivated to practice the concepts consistently, transforming their musical experience in a real and meaningful way.

Please feel free to "steal" this idea for you, your students or any other creative purpose. I love the idea that my frustration and feeling of being stuck so many years ago has transformed into something positive not just for me, but for other musicians as well!

Terri's Sound Sheet Evolution...



Sound Sheet Examples

