

BEFORE THE FIRST NOTE: THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Patricia George

I. The trunk and legs

A. Stance

1. Music stand – point of reference
2. Marching band or Artistry. Asymmetrical: yes. Symmetrical: no.
3. Feet – 12:00/3:00 (comfortable) or positioned as if serving a tennis/volley ball
4. Trunk – 45 degrees to the right
5. Head – turned to the left
6. Flute – either parallel to music stand or the footjoint slightly forward depending on the “sweet spot” or cut of headjoint embouchure hole. Use straw to find the best blowing angle. Flute Triangle or pizza slice.
7. Goal: Nose, aperture, embouchure hole, left elbow crease, center of music stand. Keep moving the music so what you are playing is always in the center.
8. Emmanuel Pahud and Flute Drop cloth
9. Head at the bottom of a small (bored) nod.
10. Intelligent movement (forward flow and down/up) – fluid, no locking knees

B. Sitting

1. Music stand – point of reference
2. Rotate chair 45 degrees to the right (asymmetrical)
 - a. Problem of positioning chair perpendicular to music stand (symmetrical)
 - b. Problem of placing chairs too close together. Claim your space.
 - c. Neck – Flutist’s Tilt
3. Use foam wedge or sit on the front half of the chair
4. Position feet 12:00/3:00 (comfortable). If you can stand up without adjusting your feet, you are using the floor well. The floor is the bottom of your sound and the ceiling the top. Trunk – 45 degrees to the right
5. Head – turned to the left
6. Flute – either parallel to music stand or slightly forward depending on the “sweet spot” or cut of headjoint embouchure hole. Flute Triangle or pizza slice
7. Goal: Nose, aperture, embouchure hole, left elbow crease, center of music stand
8. Intelligent movement. Think hips not waist.

II. The Arms and Hands

A. Arms are hung

B. Four joints: sternoclavicular joint (sternum), shoulder, elbow, wrist

C. The left collarbone and shoulder blade should move forward to reach the keys well.

Have you hugged your cello today? (David Darling)

No military or marching band with shoulders back and chest up. Aim for artistry.

D. Elbow bends and rotates. Explore palm up/palm down.

E. Right hand: Set the middle or 2nd finger first. Thumb – coke can test. Long fingers?

Move the flute forward until the keys meet the finger tips.

F. Left hand: Wrist position. What is “straight?” Goal: neutral wrist. Position of function. Shoe Size.

- G. Position of left hand thumb. Do not play on the tip of the thumb. Generally bottom of key touches at 1st crease. Thumb is straight and pointed to the ceiling.
- H. Movement of the fingers is from the third knuckle back from nail except left index finger
- I. Move from the back of the hand, not the palm side (knuckles rather than creases)
- J. The brain's organization of the hand. Tricks to achieve independent fingers: oversized ring, latex gloves, corks (plastic) different heights and position, Toilet paper between fingers, key extensions.

III. Head

- A. Nod to find the optimum placement or neutral. Loose neck.
- B. Bring the flute to you. No "turtle" heads.
- C. Play with your natural face. Some flutists have "natural" smiley lips so corners down is not be the best idea for all.
- D. Embouchure means "mouth of a river" (harmonic work and "P" or "B" attacks)
- E. Teardrop: place the embouchure hole to the player's left
- F. Hang the jaw. Place fingers in your ears to experience the hanging/tense feeling. Separate your wisdom teeth.
- G. Tongue: free your neck, free your tongue. Tonguing is horizontal rather than vertical. Tongue through the teeth on the top lip. Back of tongue is down (ho, ho, ho). Changing the position of tongue (long and short vowels) will alter tone color. Keep tongue down until you are finished with a note.
- H. Vibrato: In the larynx: Hah, hah, hah, rest staccato and then hah, hah, hah, rest slurred. Generic speed: 6 pulsations = MM 60. Practice 4 pulsations MM= 60 to 80. Practice patterns: 02320, 0234320, 023454320, 02345654320. Change from one note to the next in the same position of the vibrato cycle.

IV. Breathing

William Kincaid: Yes, I do it. (What marvelous advice!)

Rather than saying: open your throat, say: separate your vocal folds

Play on the exhale. Always move the air out, aiming for a target on the back wall.

In playing, keep the vocal folds separated on the inhale and exhale as if panting.

Practicing in chunks with a rest in between each chunk will be similar to panting.

V. Awareness

- A. Reread these handouts. Make them yours.
- B. Cell phone camera
- C. Video camera

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georgeflute@hotmail.com

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