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RECIPE

Rich Tone Production with Centered Pitch à la Whistle Tones

Leslie Marrs

Whistle tones (also known as whisper tones, flageolets) have been used by flutists for years to enhance embouchure placement and development as well as breath control. Side benefits include increased pitch awareness, greater comfort playing in the fourth octave of the flute, amazing your friends, and confounding your enemies, cats, and birds.

INGREDIENTS:
One or more flutists, with flutes in hand, and a sense of adventure

SERVES:
Flutists, composers, and their audiences.

Wind players in general have special issues in tone production because most aspects of the embouchure are hidden from view. The shape of the oral cavity, and tongue and teeth positions are invisible to the observer and are further obscured by the presence of a mouthpiece directly in front of the lips. Flutists in particular have special issues due to the fact that 1) unlike other wind performers, the mouthpiece comes in contact with only the lower lip during regular tone production and 2) unlike other woodwind players, there is no reed to guide tonguing. Almost all tone deficiencies in flute playing are the result of the position of the embouchure (lips, tongue, and oral cavity) and/or airflow. William Kincaid (1895–1967), renowned pedagogue and principal flutist with the Philadelphia Orchestra (1921–1960), advocated producing these delicate sounds as a method of eliminating deficiencies and improving sound.

A teacher or conductor may observe that a flute student has an acceptable but not wonderful sound. There may be some sonic fuzz present, and perhaps flexibility is limited due to some aspect of the tone. This could be the result of a flattened tongue position, teeth close together, and/or the lips may be pulled back too tightly or too relaxed. Having the flutist whistle can pave the road to solving this dilemma. In order to whistle, the teeth need to be open about a finger's width, the tongue needs to be arched in back, and the lips need to be forward.

Ask the player to whistle and take note of one or all of these aspects, then apply them to flute playing. *Note that the flute embouchure is not quite as far forward as the average whistling lip position.

If the player is unable to whistle, have him or her say "eee" on the inside of the mouth while bringing the lips around to say "ooo." The resulting vowel should sound like the French "u" sound in the words "tu" and "flûte" (a layering of "i/u"). This usually results in the same position as whistling.

Have the flutist play a note in a comfortable range, then whistle or sing the pitch on "û" (an octave away is okay). Keep this position for the next step.

Return the flute to this improved embouchure. Blow slow, warm air across the embouchure plate. Strive for a light, whispery sound that resembles a teakettle whistle. *If a regular flute tone or only air sounds, practice this slower air stream by blowing onto the index finger close to the lips. This warm/hot air stream should leave moisture on the finger. Return to producing a whistle tone; repeat playing and singing a pitch as needed.

If there is difficulty reproducing the exact pitch fingered, hold any whistle tone steady and strive for at least 8 seconds. As the comfort level with this technique increases, hone the whistle tone production so that it is possible to echo the original flute tone with a whistle tone of the same pitch.

Even if the student is incapable of producing a whistle tone, the awareness of the above three aspects of embouchure—oral cavity, tongue, and lip positions—will open the door to improved tone production. A sense of adventure and experimentation with the above steps will lead the student to the ability to produce whistle tones.

The end result in flute sound is a more focused sound, with a rich and open quality that lends itself to ease of flexibility in range, dynamics, and tone color. Playing a steady whistle tone for at least 8 seconds demands an absolutely steady air stream. Whistle tones may be quiet, but they have amazing projection. This brings new perspective to regular flute playing: it is not necessary to blow forcefully to produce a clear, projecting tone. In addition, a steady air stream is the foundation for refining breath control. Since flute tone production is defined by a split air column—some air goes into the flute and some does not—breathing management is the only way to fly on the flute. This is training every flutist should add to their regimen.

As the flutist develops the ability to produce precise pitches, pitch awareness is internalized and enhanced. Whistle tones are wonderful for learning high notes on the flute. High A (A6; third octave A on the flute) is a favorite place of mine to introduce students to whistle tones. As they learn notes in to the fourth octave, playing them as whistle tones instead of regular tones will allow the flutist to get the pitches "in their ears" while learning the fingerings—without taxing the embouchure muscles. Familiarity with the fingerings allows them to play scales and musical passages that contain high pitches and concentrate on tone rather than finger dexterity. The range of playable whistle tones on the flute is from about low A (A4) up through pitches in the fourth octave. Care must be taken with lower (first octave) whistle tones, so that the tongue does not cause constriction of the airflow. There *can* be too much of a good thing, and each person should decide where the comfort zone boundary lies.

Playing whistle tones as echoes of pitches yields incredible **fppp** effects. While composers may wish to include this technique in a composition for musical purposes, flutists may find this type of echoing a good personal model for **fppp** in regular flute production. It is also possible to play the overtone series on whistle tones. This advanced step in whistle tone technique further enhances pitch awareness and embouchure development.

The unassuming whistle tone allows for great benefits in many aspects of flute playing, as a certain flick of the wrist would improve sautéing, kneading dough, or whisking batter or sauce in cooking. As this technique is perfected, there's the added angle of amazing your friends and confounding the uninitiated!

RECIPE

Tasteful Oboe Playing—Developing the Fundamentals of Tone

Valarie Anderson

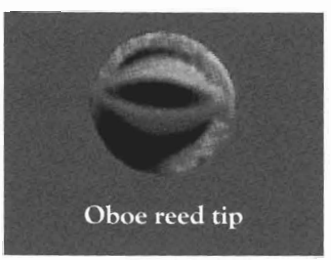
INGREDIENTS:
Intelligence, good ears, and curiosity

SERVES:
All oboists and people who listen to them.

The oboe is often referred to as "the ill wind that no one plays well." It is sometimes likened to the sound of a duck and, unfortunately, that is what many young oboists sound like, through no fault of their own. Most public school band directors have had very little preparation for teaching oboe—often as little as a few weeks of instruction in their undergraduate woodwind techniques classes. No one can expect the average music teacher to deal with the intricacies of adjusting oboe reeds, one of the major obstacles for the oboist. However, teachers should know about the characteristics of a good reed and embouchure formation in order to guide their young students.

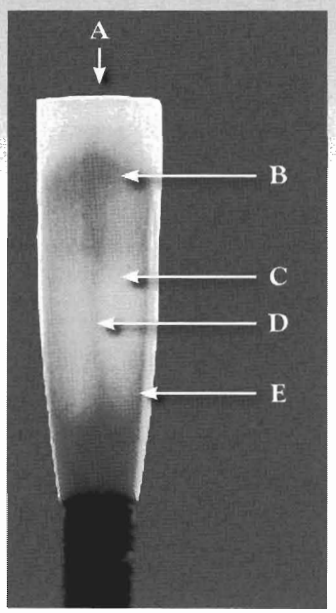
Reed Selection (The Most Important Ingredient of Our Recipe)
A poorly constructed reed will handicap a young student. A good reed will eliminate barriers and allow one to perform all the requirements of the music. It must have pitch stability, dynamic flexibility, and response. The following is not meant as a reed adjustment guide, but simply as a list of characteristics of a good reed. Until students can make their own reeds, they will need to purchase finished reeds. Ideally, only reeds with all of these qualities should be used, or the student may develop poor habits by making incorrect physical adjustments in the embouchure.

Important physical attributes of good reeds include:


Oboe reed tip

A good reed will have the same appearance when it is dry as when it is wet. Even when dry, the sides should be together. While looking at the tip opening, you want to see an even arch. Players should not need to frequently squeeze the reed sides to try to keep it open. The proper reed tip shape is shown to the left.

The lay of the reed is all of the territory that is scraped.



The tip (letter A) begins where the main strength of the reed ends. The tip sets the reed in vibration and the length of the tip determines the length of the entire reed. If the tip is too long in comparison to the rest of the reed, the reed will be unstable; if it is too short, the reed is inflexible.

The plateau (letter B) holds the reed opening, keeps the high notes up in pitch, and gives stability to the reed.

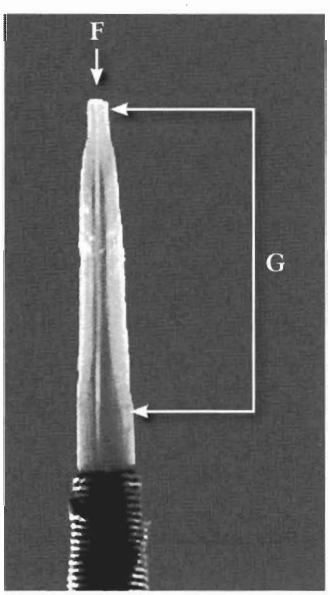
The "ribs" or "windows" (letter C) produce lower partials and deepen tone quality.

The "spine" (letter D) and "rails" or "sides" (letter E) give the reed structure and strength. They must support the reed but must have flexibility. If either is scraped too much, the reed will lose the basic vibration. If too much cane is removed from the spine, the reed will sound hollow.

The shape of the reed should not flare at the tip. Any widening at this point sacrifices the high register. If the reed flares, it is impossible to achieve the correct pitches of the crow.

A very important aspect of the reed is that the sides seal tightly all the way to the tip. Any leaking along the sides will reduce the stability and response of the reed. When the sides are properly sealed, there is no need for fish skin or wire. The use of either inhibits the vibration of the reed. To test the seal of the reed, place a finger over the end of the tube and blow the reed with the embouchure near the tip. There should be no air escaping through the sides.

The "crow" of the reed is an indication of how the reed is vibrating and is an important technique that each oboist needs to learn. By placing the reed in your mouth with the lips touching the thread, slowly start blowing the air without any articulation. The first sound should be a high C and as you add more air pressure the lower octave Cs will become present in the crow. If the crow is below pitch, the reed will play flat. If the lower Cs of the crow are not present, the reed will have a tendency to go sharp. A properly constructed reed that has pitch stability should crow the same at the end of a practice session as at the beginning, provided the embouchure is correct.



The profile of the reed should show a gradual slope into the tip (letter F). There must be elements of both connection and separation. If there is too much blend, the reed loses flexibility and pitch. If there is too much separation, the reed produces mostly tip vibrations (reedy, buzzy sound).

When looking at the profile, you should see a straight line from the bark through the plateau area (area G). If a dip is seen, too much cane has been removed and the reed loses vibrations.

Third-line B is the true indicator of the pitch of the reed. This can be tested by playing a low B with a fairly loose embouchure and slurring to the B one octave higher while maintaining the same embouchure. (N.B. Be certain that you are not changing embouchure and have proper diaphragm support.) In this test you are comparing the entire length of the tube to the shortest length. If the octave is not in tune and the upper B is flat, the reed lacks pitch stability and the player will end up using the embouchure to manipulate the reed in an attempt to correct the pitch.

To test the response of the reed, blow the lowest G with a fairly loose embouchure and no tongue. The tone should start easily with very little lip pressure. A minimum of air noise should precede the tone, like when saying or singing "who."

When the oboe reed has proper pitch stability, one should be able to play any note throughout the range of the instrument without manipulating the embouchure, provided the instrument itself is correctly tuned.

Let us now talk about the proper oboe embouchure and diaphragm support (the next ingredients of our recipe).

The oboe embouchure is similar to whistling, with the corners of the lips pushing forwards to anchor the embouchure. The mouth should be open with approximately one-half inch between the teeth. Have the student form their embouchure first by saying "OH" pushing forward on the corners of the mouth. While maintaining that position, say "EE" which points the position of the chin downward. Place the reed on the lower lip and let the upper lip come down into place. The upper lip should be slightly in front of the lower lip, giving more control over tone. If the lips are directly opposite each other, the sound will be deadened. The lips should not be rolled in, as this will cause too much flesh to touch the reed, thus muffling the sound. Frequently young students will do this to compensate for a poor reed. If the reed is too noisy and bright, a discriminating student will try to control the sound by putting more flesh on the reed or playing on the very tip. They can sometimes produce a more covered tone, but they will have limited dynamic range and articulation.

The flesh holding the reed must not be soft or loose. The muscles along the corners of the mouth must be flexed. The oboist should be able to hold the reed alone in their mouth (without the help of the fingers) and do repeated staccato quarter notes with no movement of the reed. This tests the amount of flex and control of the corner muscles. Players at all ages should do this in front of a mirror. The pitch produced is approximately C. Too little reed in the mouth will result in a lower pitch and too much teeth pressure will produce a higher pitch.

In all of this, proper diaphragm support is assumed. However, too many young students compensate for improper support by pinching the reed. Once again, have the student play with the reed alone in the mouth (no oboe) and play staccato quarters. But also have them press against their stomach, striving for a constant diaphragm pressure.

The strength of the embouchure must be built up and developed over time. The student should not play beyond the point that they can play with comfort.

Selecting the Proper Oboe (The Frosting for Our Recipe)

A good, properly maintained instrument is the final ingredient for our recipe. The oboe should have the full conservatory plateau system, with the left hand F key, the forked F resonance key, and the low B-flat key, allowing the student to develop the proper technique

from the beginning. A frequent problem with lower-level oboes is that the student must learn alternate fingerings to correct for pitch and tone. The most common of these is the addition of the E-flat key for "forked" F. Later when they do get a better instrument with an automatic resonant F, they must break their established habit of adding the extra key.

The better quality oboes will have "fraised" or "under-cut" tone holes, which contribute to a more even scale on the instrument. All of the pads, with the possible exception of low B and B-flat, should be made from cork, in order to obtain the best seal possible. Additionally, when different types of pads are mixed, it can lead to unevenness in the tone and scale.

Unfortunately, oboes do go out of adjustment fairly easily. There are close to twenty small adjustment screws on the oboe, which control the balance of the keys. These adjustments need to be checked regularly to ensure that all the pads are sealing correctly. The slightest leak will lead to problems in response.

In conclusion, with the combination of a stable reed, proper embouchure, and a good instrument, this recipe, when followed for several years, will produce a delicious oboe tone, suitable for solo or ensemble playing.

Bon appétit!

RECIPE

Developing Facility on the Bass Clarinet

J. Lawrie Bloom

INGREDIENTS:
You need a bass clarinet that is in playable condition (too often a "school" instrument is not in playing condition and a young player gets blamed when no one could be expected to play it), a player with the intellectual curiosity to want to add the bass clarinet to his/her musical bag of tricks, and a little assistance to get started.

SERVES:
Bass clarinetists, and their conductors and colleagues.

Preparation:
Putting together a bass clarinet is different than putting together a B-flat clarinet. There are more long rods that can get bent, and more bridge keys that need to be positioned correctly before putting the joints together so that they are not knocked out of adjustment or have the corks torn off. Start by putting the bell on the bottom joint, taking care to set the bridge key on a low C bass so that it does not get bent. On a Buffet instrument that means closing the key on the bell (thereby raising the bridge key). On other makers' instruments this may be slightly different, so look at the way the bridge goes together before you try to assemble each joint. (Sufficient cork grease should always be applied, so that you don't have to force the pieces together.) I hold the bell with my right hand, and hold the bottom joint with my left. This allows me to reach around the keys of the lower joint, applying no pressure to the long keys and rods, which can most easily bend.

Next add the top joint. Holding the joint with the left hand, depress the throat A key, and the D/A key. This raises the back bridge key and lowers the front bridge key, making it possible to slide the two joints together without hurting any of the four parts of the bridges.

Now, add the mouthpiece to the neck, which gives you a nice "handle" while you put on the reed and ligature. Finally, put the neck on the top joint, starting with the upper-register key out to the side, then swing it gently in. If the bass is set up correctly, the top register key should have space between it and the arm that sticks up to activate it. Not much, but it needs a little or you'll never know when you might end up in the upper register by accident. Now put the endpin in and adjust to your height. The correct height should allow you to bring the instrument in to your embouchure without you adjusting your head, neck, or spine.

Stirring:
Now let's get to making sounds on the instrument.

I am fortunate to present numerous master classes each year, mostly on college campuses, on clarinet and bass clarinet. Inevitably the question is asked, "What do you have to do differently on bass clarinet than on clarinet?"

I think this is actually the wrong question for most players. Especially for college level or advanced high school players, the question should be, "What do we do the same as playing a clarinet to play bass clarinet?"

In this way you are approaching a new member of the clarinet family from strength and experience, rather than from fear and confusion.

When beginning any member of the clarinet family with which you are unaccustomed, I suggest you start with scales. Whether bass, E-flat, basset horn, or whatever, most players squeak in the beginning not because they are doing something wrong with their embouchures, but because they hit the wrong key at the wrong time. Just grazing a key not needed for the note you are playing can give you some fabulous loud, high squeaks and squawks. I use the Klosé scales that many of us learned as children. In the beginning you don't need extended range scales, so they work just fine.

In my experience, when most clarinet players are presented with a bass clarinet, they look at this large instrument and immediately overblow. While the bass clarinet bore is bigger than the clarinet bore, the aperture—the opening between the reed and the mouthpiece—is only slightly larger. Blowing too much air only causes the reed to vibrate out of control and the sound becomes unfocused—somewhat like a foghorn.

On virtually every horn I have played, the low F is a pretty good note. Begin with a slow, relaxed flow of air and play a low F, listening for a good sound. It should be rich, round, and free. It should take very little effort to produce this note. When you have a good sound from the low F, begin to slowly play an upward scale. Make sure you to go very slowly so that you can compare each note, keeping that rich, resonant sound as you change notes. Any advanced soprano clarinet player knows that there are minute resistance changes from note to note on the clarinet. The same is true on the bass, but these resistance changes may occur in different places than they do on the B-flat clarinet. All fine players make minute changes in the embouchure and airflow to adjust these notes on the soprano clarinet and make them match in timbre, dynamic, and color. This is also true on bass clarinet, so we just need to find where the resistance changes are on the instrument you are playing. Now, you may be waiting for me to tell you where they are. Each major company's instruments are different, and even individual instruments within the same company will vary slightly, so I can't do that. By slow playing, really listening as you go note to note, you will be able to identify them yourself. One reminder: don't overadjust. These changes have to be small enough that you can actually execute them when performing. If you find that you have to make huge changes in embouchure pressure or airflow to change the sound or pitch, then the instrument may need repair or replacement.

Baking:

After you are comfortable playing scales and beginning to find the resistance differences on the bass clarinet, almost any material will get you going. I like to start students off on Strauss tone poems, because they quickly help you to know what the instrument is capable of, and how it should sound. Each of the parts is so beautifully written for the bass clarinet that you will quickly gain great facility by working through them.

Many advanced clarinet players are not comfortable reading in bass clef, and Strauss' *Death and Transfiguration* presents us with a part mostly in bass clef. Try reading Bach *Cello Suites* to develop your bass clef reading. These are much less chromatic than the Strauss, so you will know if you are right or not. It really is necessary to read bass clef to perform on the bass clarinet, so hard work to hone this skill is time well spent.

Proceed without fear:

Another question I am all too frequently asked is "Will playing the bass clarinet ruin my clarinet playing?"

I have found in my own playing, when I first began to play bass, and in the playing of countless students with whom I have worked, that performing on bass clarinet only helps your clarinet playing. Why? It is impossible to play the bass with tension. The reed simply refuses to vibrate freely if there is tension present in the embouchure, the air stream, or the body. Learning to play without tension makes playing the bass possible, and this can only help your clarinet playing as well.

So go ahead and experiment. Try something you have always played on clarinet on the bass clarinet. I sometimes find I like certain clarinet pieces better on bass clarinet than clarinet, just because it allows a sound difference I find more satisfying for that particular piece.

Heard an interesting piece played by a bassoonist? Try it out. Feeling really brave? Check out some of the many, many pieces written for Josef Horak, Harry Spaarnay, or Michael Lowenstern. Nowadays there's a lot of music for the bass clarinet for solo, chamber, or large ensemble situations. You don't want to stop playing the incredible repertoire for the clarinet; you just want to add to it the amazing music and sounds of the bass clarinet.

RECIPE

Playing the Contrabassoon

Lewis Lipnick

INGREDIENTS:
A good bassoonist with the willingness to broaden horizons

SERVES:
Orchestras, bassoonists, and the listening public.

Like most contrabassoonists, I started out by playing the "regular" bassoon. It wasn't until I entered eleventh grade of high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy in the fall of 1962 that I became interested in "this instrument that almost always sounded like more of a gastric disturbance than a *musical* instrument." Although I really studied only the bassoon for the two years that I spent at IAA, and the four years I studied for my bachelor of music degree at the Peabody Conservatory, I continued my fascination with the "contra."

It wasn't until I won the position of second bassoon in the National Symphony Orchestra in 1969, and then moved over (via mutual consent within our section) to the "official" contrabassoonist, did I begin to realize that the contrabassoon was a far more difficult instrument to play *well* than the bassoon. Like the tenor or baritone sax, it is very easy to make a "noise" on the contra, but to play it well takes a great deal of air control, physical stamina, good ear training, and, even more than the bassoon, great reeds.

Why is this the case? While I do not consider myself to be an expert in the acoustical dynamics of the contrabassoon, I believe that since the contra has an inherent lower threshold of resistance than the bassoon, clarity of pitch and obtaining a focused sound is more of a challenge. I often joke to my NSO bassoon section colleagues that whenever we are playing a work requiring bassoon and contra doubling, the bassoon seems like a child's toy in difficulty in comparison to the "out of control beastly contra."

So now that I have stated the obvious, how does one go about making a successful transition from bassoon to contrabassoon playing? I believe the "secret" lies in two areas. First, one has to learn to hear pitches *and* the resulting harmonics of those pitches that do not exist on the bassoon. Most German system contras have a very strong "12th" (octave and a fifth above the fundamental). As an example, when I play a contra C (opening solo note of Richard Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra*), I know that I am really "nailing" the pitch center when I can detect a very strong G (octave and a fifth above the contra C). Perhaps that is why Strauss scored the opening of this work for such an odd combination of organ pedal without any octave couplings above sub-contra C (which is a pitch no human can detect), string bass section playing a tremolo contra C (which is not also clearly heard as a distinct low pitch), and contrabassoon playing a sustained contra C. Without the contra, there is virtually no pitch

definition to those opening four bars of the piece. But as soon as the contra is added, the audience can immediately identify what they *think* is a contra C. But in fact, it is the G, an octave and a fifth above that C, that tricks their "ears" into "believing" that they are hearing a note that really is not there.

The second most important aspect of contrabassoon playing that I believe makes the difference between a full, resonant sound with clear pitch, and one that sounds like the proverbial case of lower intestinal indigestion, is the psychology of how the air source is directed into the instrument. Please note that I mention *directed into the instrument* and not *through the instrument*. What are we really doing when we play *any* wind instrument? Are we simply trying to displace a huge amount of air into and through the instrument, or are we attempting to acoustically *excite* the air column *within* the instrument? I vote for the latter approach, although an ingoing air source of more volume and speed can indeed make for a louder and more resonant sound.

So now that we have that concept down, let's look at the *main differences* between the proper direction of the air source of the bassoon and the contrabassoon. Since the bassoon inherently has more resistance, we can blow more or less directly into the instrument (assuming that the reed is properly adjusted and is not too hard or soft, etc.). But this just does not work on the contra. I tell my students to think of "spinning" the air column going into the contra, rather than blowing "straight" into the instrument. At first, they don't understand this, and start out sounding worse than they did before. But as soon as I use mind images, such as "think of the contra as a huge hollow log, which you need to get to resonate." Now the student begins to get the idea that if they simply try to blow a lot of air into this "huge log," they will quickly run out of breath and the sound will sound more like they are blowing down a giant sewer pipe than into a woodwind instrument. But when I finally get them to use mind visualization of "spinning a very large air column *into* the instrument, as if the sound were going in a spiral," then the sound comes alive, the pitch becomes more focused, and the student discovers that they have actually expended *less air and energy* than before. Of course, this is an oversimplification of this process, but it works every time.

Thus ends my short dissertation on what I believe to be two of the most important aspects required to obtain a good, focused sound with clear pitch on the contrabassoon. I could easily write another five or six pages on more advanced aspects of contrabassoon performance, and even get into the difference between the dynamics and various designs of contrabassoon reeds vs. those for the bassoon. But I believe that the two points that I have discussed above should help any teacher and student better understand the two main differences between playing the bassoon and playing the contrabassoon.

RECIPE

Why Etudes? A Guide for Woodwind Players and Doublers

Albert Regni

INGREDIENTS:
Etudes

SERVES:
Woodwind players and doublers.

As a student, I remember asking, why I was knocking myself out practicing a Rosé etude on the clarinet or a Ferling oboe transcription (of all things!) on the saxophone or a Karg-Elert etude on the flute? What good was this doing and wouldn't it be more beneficial to be learning an orchestral etude or digging into the Mozart clarinet concerto or memorizing the Ibert *Concertino Da Camera* or "perfecting" the Poulenc flute sonata, or working on a saxophone/clarinet/flute orchestral etude or even running through "rhythm" changes? (Talk about being scatterbrained.) We all know that there is so much that we *have* to know, what will an etude do for us? We only have so much time, so why not put it to use working on something that is a more obvious requirement for a "real" performance? (You know the old saying, "So much music; so little time.")

A short while into my professional career I began to realize the importance of a constant regimen of disciplined preparation and performance of unfamiliar etudes. The preparation of a new etude for each of my weekly lesson sessions provided that outlet. (Yes, I did continue to take weekly lessons well into my professional career.) The benefits of constantly planning and "working out" of (new) materials have a far-reaching carryover effect that not only contributes to one's technical mastery of an instrument, but also to the musicality of the individual involved. It is also quite important to realize that "doubling" requires a great deal of organization and continuous prudent preparation. Proficiency on any instrument requires the performer to have the technical and physical competency necessary to play through a piece in its entirety without interruption.

From the most elementary to the most advanced, new etudes require a discipline that is unique and very important to a musician's development, instrumentally and otherwise. Having to work out new musical problems on a consistent basis within the form of an etude, or even a short musical vignette, is an important part of regular practice. Let's look at some of the considerations and the benefits to be derived from following through on them.

Before we attempt to play a note, a primary requisite in the planning of an etude is to consider the tonalities and mood of the work and to what significance are these in relation to

the overall piece. A couple of questions we can ask ourselves at the outset are: "Is this a major key with a spirited mood or a serene etude, in a minor key, with a lyrical approach needed?" I often ask students to aurally "visualize" how they would sing the work in preparation, before they attempt at playing it. Thinking about how the music should come together and having a concept of the piece in your "mind's ear" aids in the focus necessary for a good finished product. At times our tendency as instrumentalists is to give more attention to the instrument than to the music we are playing.

Editing an etude is tantamount to good performance. Knowing and marking the breaths not only gives the music and performer the necessary pacing, but also helps to define the intent of the music. The effects of pauses and silences between phrases create a dramatic sense of tension and release for the listener. As in poetry or speechmaking, a sense of timing is very important to delivering an effective message. We have heard many times that music is a universal language, but as in communicating in any tongue, music must be defined not only by its content but by its delivery as well. Knowing in advance *where to breathe* should be considered a primary step in our preparation process.

Playing a phrase requires a feeling and understanding of a musical line. This is where the "artistic" qualities began to emerge. Dynamics are certainly in consideration here but relating the markings to an actual sound requires sensitivity to good basic musical principles. We need to play softly but not too softly. How much crescendo is needed? These are only a couple of the questions we need to consider in our quest for the definitive performance of our chosen work. How an individual phrase should be presented in terms of dynamic nuance needs to be considered so as not to be overplayed or visa versa. Good lyrical connection of succeeding notes is an ever-present matter to be dealt with, remembering that our ultimate goal is to present music that will be satisfying and interesting to our listener(s).

Technical etudes **require slow, methodical preparation** so that the benefit of even and flawless lines and articulations are attained. Lyrical melodic pieces require breath control, vibrato consistency, and attention to intervallic balance. Many considerations must go into our personal masterpiece. As we begin to consider these parts, the realization of what one must work for in attaining a quality performance takes shape and spurs us on. When the pieces are put together in a prudent manner, the player's readiness to perform is suddenly enhanced and the desire to perform is not so boggled by "performance anxiety." In fact, when preparation is beyond adequate, we yearn to perform and are "chomping at the bit" for the listener's ear.

After preparing an etude sufficiently, we many times realize that much of what we considered to be music fit only for the practice room works very well before an audience. Solo performance of etudes not only gives the listener the benefit of the presenter's technical and artistic abilities, but a glance at the personal musical characteristics of the performer as well.

Everyone has his or her own thumbprint when it comes to performance, as in any art form, and etude presentations are wonderful methods of showing off individuality, virtuosity, and musicality.

Since etudes are not always heard outside of the practice room, or mostly for your teacher's ears only, we must not lose sight of Ralph Waldo Emerson's wonderful words of wisdom: "The reward from doing something well is to have done it." I would carry this a step further and add that the reward of consistent etude preparation enhances one's instrumental performance security.