

# **Training the Woodwind Section (Flute)**

**Randall Spicer**

**Vol 6, #2, p.36 (Nov-Dec. 1990)**

**[Complete article from BANDWORLD Magazine]**

The proper use of rehearsal techniques will result in an improvement of tone, intonation, balance and blend in all sections of the band. There are many fundamentals that must be used consistently in each rehearsal.

## **1. Establish the sound you want.**

Each director becomes known for the type of sound he has in his band. This sound depends on many things. First, it depends on the ability of students to play notes in tune and in rhythm. Second, it depends on the ability of students to play with ensemble feeling and with a flow to the phrase line. Thirdly, it depends on the ability of exposed passages (solos, trios, quartets, etc.) to come through in a mature and confident manner.

The woodwind sound of the band depends on the type of "CORE" of the tone that the director demands. This "CORE" should be in evidence in all woodwind sections. It is the purpose of this paper to give hints that the director can use in full rehearsal to establish unity in woodwind sounds.

## **FLUTE**

1. Establish a core of the tone by use of harmonics. Play the following notes with one fingering.
2. Use regular fingerings for the following notes. Hold the sound to that of the first note. Example: Use fingerings of E in 2nd note but proper embouchure and breath support will produce harmonic B.
  - a. References: The Flute Book - Leblanc Publications
  - b. The Flutist Guide - Frederick Wilkins
  - c. Harmonic Fingerings for the Flute - Arthur Brooke
3. Do the following exercises: Play as loudly as possible with feeling that tone wants to jump an octave. Listen for an octave. Listen for an "edge" in the tone. Add the "hollow sound" by blowing more into embouchure opening. Close lips to keep tone from going flat. Play as broadly as possible with feeling that tone wants to drop an octave. You will hear the bottom harmonic in tone.
4. Checkpoints for flutes:
  - a. Lower lip must be parallel to tone hole. It covers 1/3 of the opening.
  - b. A tight lower lip forms a curve in relation to the tone hole. This tone will be "tight and windy."
  - c. The lower lip should be spread the full width of embouchure plate.
  - d. If you can see the inside edge of tone hole the tone will be "windy."
  - e. Feel that corners of lips are relaxed and pulling downward.

- f. Upper lip may be tight for a brilliant tone or more relaxed for a full mellow tone.
  - g. Lift head at end of phrase to avoid "flatting."
  - h. Tip end of flute "up" for lightness in diminuendo.
- 5. You may find the following fingerings to be useful:
- 6. Flip finger 3 down at the instant of attack to get quicker response on low notes.
- 7. Finger patterns for flute:
  - a. Adjust bottom flute joint so that finger 7 will fall on low C with no wrist movement.
  - b. Do not let little finger (left hand) drop below G# key.
  - c. Do not lift fingers more than 1/2 inch.
  - d. Do not let fingers 4, 5, and 6 ride rods of keys.
  - e. Let flute rest on tip of right thumb. Fingers of right hand feel that they are leaning toward upper end of flute.
  - f. Feel a lift in the right wrist. Finger action of right hand is similar to finger action on the piano (with less arch in fingers.)
- 8. TROUBLE CHART (The Flute Book - Leblanc publications)

Plays Sharp - Wrong lip position - Turn flute in on lip, play with flute lower on chin

Head joint - Adjust to pitch with octaves remaining in tune

Plays Flat - Wrong lip position: Flute is turned in too far on lip Lip covers too much of tone hole

Generally Poor Intonation - Combination of above: Student practicing for technique only, work for blend and do tuning exercises

Weak Low Tones - Tense lips, poor embouchure, flute leaks! Practice softly to relax lips.

Breathy Low Tones - Lip opening too large: Play high notes to establish small lip opening - play low notes with same opening but changed air direction

Harsh Upper Tones - Lips too tense: Blow full tones with sagging corners of embouchure - blow more into flute for hollow sound - play softly with air stream forcing lips to open

Sluggish Fingers - Poor hand and arm position, fingers are holding flute in tight manner : Play open tones to find easy balance of flute, play over break to relax little finger in right hand, do not let fingers ride key rods, practice scales and trills.

Slow Tongue Action - Tense muscles, tongue stroke is too long, tonguing is too far back in mouth, too much flesh is used for attacks: Get the feeling that tongue releases air from the front of mouth. Many students play with feeling that air is pushed from back of mouth.

Source: 5•2•39