

# UNI All-State Workshop

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## FUNDAMENTALS

Fundamentals are the most important thing we can practice as bassoonists – everyone wants to hear someone play controlled, beautifully, and in tune.

**Control:** Daily fundamentals exercises will help you develop awareness of how and why you play the way you do and will ultimately give you control of your sound. Play the bassoon, don't let the bassoon play you!

**Tone:** We are always striving to make a full, rich sound. Let your mental model bassoon guide you when you are playing, no matter if it is practice or performance.

**Intonation:** All long tones, articulation exercises, and scales should be played with a drone. This will help train your ear (by listening to a steady pitch) instead of your eyes (by looking at a tuner). There are many more ways of adjusting intonation than just with your embouchure and we will try several of these today.

## THE MAGIC TRIANGLE

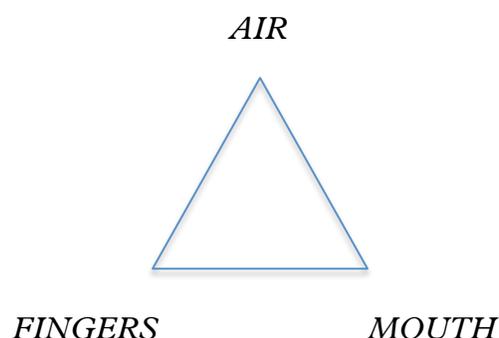
When a note or a passage does not sound the way we would like, there are three approaches to make a change, which are the three points of the “magic triangle.”

**Air:** Our bassoon relies on quality air to produce quality sound. Make sure you are taking a full breath from the bottom of your lungs and supporting outward with the lower muscles of your abdomen. Faster airstreams can raise the pitch of flat notes, prevent slurs from cracking, and open up the sound in upper registers.

**Fingers:** Sometimes alternate or resonance fingerings are necessary to fix issues with intonation or tone quality, especially in the upper register. Today we will cover special fingering considerations of half-holing and flicking, as well.

**Mouth:** The embouchure is the way your lips and face muscles work with the reed, but the shape inside of our mouths also affects our sound in many ways. Softening the embouchure or thinking about having more space inside the mouth (say the syllable “oh”) can lower pitch and open up tone, while firming up the embouchure and raising the tongue (say the syllable “ay”) can raise pitch and support thin notes.

All three of these balance with each other to help us play beautifully.



## **PRACTICE PLANNING AND TECHNIQUES**

Finding the time and energy to practice effectively can be difficult. Try the following tips to make your practice sessions more efficient:

- Write out your schedule and decide ahead of time what days and times you will practice.
- Balance your time roughly 25% fundamentals, 25% scales, and 50% other repertoire. (Remember, fundamentals help with everything!)
- Set process goals as opposed to time goals. (Ex: D-flat Major scale at 60 BPM, not practicing for 30 minutes)

- Focus on the most difficult sections at the beginning of each practice session so you are fresh and have the most energy to devote to them.

In addition to planning, certain practice techniques can increase the amount of improvement you see in a short period of time. We will play through examples of each of these today:

- **Massages** – Listen closely and identify what exactly is causing you problems in a given passage and isolate only that. This will likely only be one or two consecutive intervals.
- **Bridges** – After you have massaged a small problem area, place it back into context one note at a time. Play the problem area plus one note before and one note after, building a bridge to your more solid technique.
- **Variations** – Stay engaged in your practice and increase speed by varying rhythms, articulations, dynamics, and styles. See the Practice Variations handout for some ideas.
- **Chunking** – To help increase speed in scales or repertoire passages, practice speeding up very small groupings (2-4 notes) at a time, as if they were grace notes.

## HALF-HOLING AND FLICKING

Some pitches on the bassoon require the left hand index finger to only cover one half of the tone hole, a process known as half-holing, and some pitches require the left thumb to briefly open higher keys to allow air to vent, a process known as flicking.

**Half-holing:** The half-hole notes on the bassoon are F-sharp, G, and G-sharp on top of the bass clef staff. To cleanly and easily execute the half-hole, think about your left index finger knuckle dropping down toward your middle finger. This opens about half of the tone hole by the fingertip rolling downward.

**Flicking:** The flicked notes on the bassoon are A, B-flat, B, and C on top of the bass clef staff. Flicking should be used to help these notes to speak whenever they are articulated or slurred to by an interval larger than a step. To develop accurate and tension-free flicking technique, practice the following four steps slowly:

1. Play the lower note with the whisper key down.

2. Sustain the lower note while lifting the thumb and gliding toward the upper thumb keys.
3. Increase airspeed and press down the proper flick key. The upper note will sound easily.
4. Maintain a fast airflow and release the flick key so your thumb is ready for the next note.

## **REEDS**

The quality of your reed can greatly affect everything about your playing. We will go through a complete reed checklist today to make sure you are using a fully functional reed.

Handmade reeds are always your best bet. Feel free to contact me if you do not study with a private teacher who can sell you personalized reeds, and I will be glad to make and sell you reeds that will work well for you.

## **SIGHT-READING**

Accurate sight-reading is a direct reflection of your ability to recognize and recreate musical patterns on the spot. Try using this checklist to help identify and produce patterns:

**Signatures** – What are the key and time signatures, and do they stay constant throughout the piece?

**Tempo** – What are the marked and most reasonable tempi for you to perform right now?

**Rhythms** – Are there any surprising or nonstandard rhythms?

**Accidentals** – Are there any accidentals? How do they function?

**Patterns** – Are there any scalar or arpeggiated patterns? Do any measures or phrases repeat throughout the piece?