

## Aspects of Beautiful Tone Production

What is tone?

Tone really comes down to how good you sound. It is the most basic skill we as musicians must develop. Articulations, flexibility, and style mean little if we can't execute them with a fundamentally "good" sound. Luckily when it comes down to it, developing great characteristic tone is a fairly simple endeavor; it just takes a matter of focus and patience.

### 1. Fast & Immediate Air

- a. Thick column of air
  - i. Execute a quality breath by making sure the oral cavity and throat stay open and that there is no tension or pressure created during the breath.
  - ii. A breath is one cycle of inhalation AND exhalation. The cycle cannot be interrupted by a closing of the throat or oral cavity. Focus on turning the air direction around immediately and easily.
  - iii. As we exhale/produce sound, make sure that the oral cavity and throat stay open and that, for brass, the tongue is at the very bottom of the mouth as to not cause turbulence in the column.
- b. Support from the lower torso
  - i. Don't use your upper torso/shoulders as methods of production. Direct the energy from inhalation down towards your diaphragm as to not create tension by your throat, inhibiting the breath cycle.
  - ii. DO NOT USE COMPRESSION IN YOUR ABDOMEN. It is vital that production is not done from a proposition of force. Feel your abdomen just below your ribcage as you start notes and ensure that the muscles stay supple and relaxed.

### 2. Hear/Buzz in tune

- a. Hear before you play
  - i. Have a sense of pitch in your head as you play. For younger musicians this is hard but one of the easiest ways to improve your ear training. Internally "sing" the material you are about to play in your head to ensure pitch is accurate.
- b. Sing, Buzz, Play
  - i. If tone or response is inconsistent one of the fastest ways to improve execution is to resort to the "sing, buzz, play" method. By singing we ensure that we are accurately internalizing the pitch, phrasing, and style of the material. Buzz on the mouthpiece to make sure we are feeding our instrument accurate instructions. Inappropriate phrasing, articulation, and pitch become immediately transparent.
    1. For woodwinds alter this to either "sing, play" or "sing, hum, play".

### 3. Fast & Accurate Tongue

- a. Good articulation never stops the air column
  - i. Blow on the back of your hand and articulate a pattern and make sure that while you can feel the articulation, the air column is maintained.
  - ii. The articulation has to be LIGHT and FAST with a Toe/Ta or Doe/Da syllable using the tip of the tongue. Do not "paint the back of the teeth" with the broader part of the tongue.