

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You should begin by going to www.schott-music.com/ed12450 and downloading the audio tracks, which are an integral part of this method, and will give you the feeling of playing with a band from the very beginning.

There is a demonstration track and a playalong track for each piece. You are not expected to be able to play every piece immediately with the track. It may take several weeks of practice to work some of the music up to speed. If the music is too fast, do not try to match the recorded accompaniment—such practice is fruitless and counterproductive. Instead, practise **slowly**, with a metronome—at half-speed, even slower, and gradually build up to the challenge of playing with the mp3.

Mastery of the foundation techniques presented in Part 1 is essential to playing the flute well, so please ensure you are comfortable with the exercises and the notation of the book before attempting the pieces in Part 2.

Many of the chapters finish with suggestions for further learning, reading or practice. You are advised to adopt as many of these suggestions as possible in order to gain maximum benefit from the method.

It is particularly important to develop your ear as well as your technique and ability to read. With this in mind, try to play as much as possible, for example by memorising the tunes after you have learnt them, or by transposing them into other keys or different registers of the instrument.

The book is not a rigid syllabus to be followed. Once you are confident to play what is written you should feel free to improvise. Many of the tunes will benefit from being treated in this way.

Have fun! ENJOY YOUR FLUTE!

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT PRACTICE

Choose the environment you practise in as pleasant as possible. The room should be warm and well ventilated. It should also preferably not be too cluttered—if there is a bare wall space the room will lack resonance and your sound will be deadened. Soft furnishings like rugs, carpets and curtains have a particularly muffling effect. On the other hand this might be an advantage if your neighbours complain about the noise!

It is very important to practise regularly—every day if possible. 20 minutes a day is much more valuable than one or two much longer sessions a week.

If you practise more intensively remember that it is more effective to play for short periods of 20 minutes to half an hour with breaks in between than to play for hours at a stretch.

Do not expect to progress at a uniform rate, however hard you practise. The foundation techniques in particular can take a long time to master. Very often you will encounter the ‘plateau effect’, where you feel for a long time that you are not progressing at all. Do not be discouraged! Such periods are nearly always followed by a dramatic leap forward.

Avoid practising when you are tired. It may be more effective to practise at the beginning or middle of the day than at the end if your lifestyle permits.

Do not practise in a half hearted way—you will be wasting your time.

Warm up properly—long notes or simple tonguing exercises are ideal.

You can do a lot of valuable practice without the instrument in your hands—singing, clapping or listening to music for example.

Avoid becoming obsessed by any one aspect of your playing—there are many different skills to acquire.

Fear of failure is the biggest enemy, and usually what gets in the way of people achieving their musical potential. You must learn to trust that all problems can be overcome by practising with the right attitude. Believe in yourself.

ABOUT THE FLUTE

The word 'flute' is a very general word which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is used to refer to 'any instrument having a cylindrical hollow body and activated by a stream of air from the player's lips striking against the sharp edge of an opening'. Different kinds of flute were played in many ancient civilizations and continue to be played in different cultures throughout the modern world.

There is evidence to suggest that the earliest transverse-blown, flute was the Chinese *ch'ih*, which can be traced to the 13th century BC. The flute first appeared in Western Europe in Germanic lands and was regarded as a solo voice during the Baroque period, most notably through the works of J. S. Bach, Handel, Telemann and Vivaldi. The instrument, which throughout this time was wooden, with only one key, but underwent various technical modifications. In the middle of the nineteenth century, it was completely redesigned by Theobald Boehm, and transformed into an instrument which closely resembles the modern orchestral flute. Very little was composed for the instrument by nineteenth-century composers, but in the twentieth century there has been a great deal of interest, and the list of those who have written for it, includes such eminent figures as Debussy, Hindemith, Milhaud, Prokofiev, Ravel, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams, Nielsen, Berio, Boulez and Rodrigo.

Except for the saxophonist Woody Warmer, who played flute as his second instrument, making recordings with the bands of Benny Carter and Chick Webb in the 1930s, and before might be regarded as the first jazz flutist, very little jazz was played on the flute before the 1950s. Its low volume and lack of penetration by comparison with instruments such as the trumpet and saxophone made it difficult for it to find a place in the exuberant idioms of New Orleans, Swing and Bebop. However, with the rise in the 1950s of the generally softer sound of the West Coast or 'Cool' style, the flute began to interest composers, arrangers and players. At the same time jazz began to be strongly influenced by Latin American music, in which the flute had always played a significant part. This decade also saw the emergence of Herbie Mann, the first jazz player to make a successful career for himself with flute as his primary instrument.

In subsequent years an increasing number of musicians have specialized on the flute, and while the instrument has never been as prominent as the saxophone or trumpet as a solo voice, it has gained in popularity to the extent that most saxophonists make the flute their second instrument in preference to the clarinet. With the increasing influence of World Music it would seem likely that the flute, which has strong associations with different kinds of ethnic music, is to remain an important tone colour in jazz.

FURTHER STUDY

Reading:

JOACHIM E. BERENIST, *The Jazz Book*

BARRY KERNFELD, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*

STANLEY SADIE, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*

Part One: The Foundation Techniques

BREATHING EXERCISES

Good breathing technique is essential for good playing. The following exercises will help to develop this.

Stand in front of a mirror, preferably one in which you can see yourself from the waist up. Breathe in through the mouth. You should have raised the shoulders and lifted the chest to accomplish this. For the flute and woodwind playing this is both unnecessary and incorrect. Notice how you breathe when you allow your conscious processes to take over.

Exercise 1

Take hold of an average hardback book, lie on the floor on your back, place the book on your abdomen and relax (Fig. 1). Do not try to breathe in any special way, only observe the natural breathing process. You will notice that the book rises on inspiration and falls as you breathe out. In other words **expansion on inspiration** and **contraction on expiration**.



Fig. 1

Now all you have to do is achieve this in a vertical rather than a horizontal position and as a slightly more controlled, conscious process.



Fig. 2

Exercise 2

- Place the hands on the abdomen (Fig. 2).
- Breathe in through the mouth—a small sip of air rather than a massive gulp. The hands should be pushed out slightly. Exhale.
- Now place the hands on the back (Fig. 3). Breathe in again. You should notice that the hands are pushed backwards; it is as if you were breathing in through two holes in the back underneath the hands. The point is that you are not simply pushing the air out but achieving all-round expansion in the area of the upper and lower ribs.



Fig. 3

This kind of breathing is called diaphragmatic breathing. The diaphragm is the powerful muscular floor to the chest cavity. In correct breathing the diaphragm moves down to make room as the lungs inflate. It is this bringing down of the diaphragm that achieves the expansion described.

You must now turn your attention to the exhalation. The diaphragm is like a piece of elastic. Left to its own devices it will spring back into position and the exhalation will be very short lived. You might liken this effect to blowing up a balloon and then letting go of it. The balloon flies away, the room and within seconds has emptied itself of air. If you wish to control the exhalation, your note on the flute will be as crisp and short as the burst of air from the balloon. You must exert a braking influence on the upward movement of the diaphragm, and do this by contracting the muscles which surround it.

The last exercise is for increasing control of these muscles:

Exercise 3

- Breathe in as described in Exercise 2 above).

● Now exhale out making a loud whispered 'ah' sound. Keep the throat open and steady. The 'ah' should be as long and steady as possible—ten or fifteen seconds would be reasonable for a beginner.

What you should notice is that the muscles around the diaphragm squeeze more and more firmly until the breath runs out. This effect can be likened to squeezing on a sponge. If you wish to achieve a steady flow of water you must squeeze first gently and then ever more tightly.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

In flute playing the sound is created by the air-jet being split into two equal parts by the far edge of the embouchure hole (see Fig. 4). The sound thus produced is called an **edge-tone**. Exactly the same principle is at work when sound is produced by blowing across the top of a bottle. You should always bear in mind that you are trying to create an edge-tone.



Fig. 5

It is not only the **direction** of the air-jet but also its **velocity** which is critical. An edge-tone will only be produced if the air is moving quickly enough. The following exercises, which you can perform whenever you have a spare moment, will demonstrate how you can influence both the velocity and the direction of the air-jet which you blow.

Hold your right hand behind your head (see Fig. 5). Compress the lips as if you were about to say the letter 'p' and blow the air onto the back of the hand through a small hole at the centre of your lips. The air should feel cool – a sign that the air is moving with sufficient velocity. If it feels warm you are blowing either too gently or through too large a hole. When playing the flute you should **always think of blowing cold air**.

Now blow a cold jet of air backwards and forwards across your hand. To achieve this you will need to alter the position of the lower lip in relation to the upper one. When the lip is further back the air-jet will be directed more downwards; as the lip moves forward the air is directed further away from you. When playing the flute you will be making subtle changes to the angle of the air-jet.

BLOWING ON THE HEAD JOINT

As a beginner flute player you will probably be keen to put the instrument together and start trying to play some tunes. However, since the most difficult challenge is to produce a good sound, it would be far better for you to spend at least one week blowing on **just the head joint**, without having to worry about other factors like posture or fingering.

- Take hold of the head joint of the flute and position yourself in front of a mirror so that you get a good **close-up** view of your mouth. If you can arrange it so that you can also get a side-view by using a second mirror that would be even better.
- Press the lip plate **firmly** but comfortably into the indentation between the lower lip and the chin and rotate the head joint until the edge of the lip, where the red part meets the white, is just inside the inner edge of the embouchure hole (see Fig. 4).