

Points of note from Keith Underwood's seminar and master class at Penn State University On October 24, 2016.
Topics: Breathing, Articulation, Tone, and Posture.

BREATHING:

- Finger Breath. Take the knuckle of your first finger of either hand and place it in the middle of your lips. Form suction around the lips and inhale. There should be a rushing sound that is created by your suction around your finger. It will open up your sound!
- Breathing Bag: Things to remember when using the breathing bag: make sure your lips surround the tube's opening, which results in a more open throat. Before doing any exercise on the bag do one set of the inhale/exhale on the bag before doing your exercise. The breathing bag is a great way for the body to relax while practicing breathing.
- There is an up and down component to breathing. If you restrict this motion you will not get as much air as you think.
- When you are nervous you tend to take many short breaths. This makes your body shut down.
- More Co2 is better than O2 if you need to calm down before a performance. This is one reason why the breathing bag has such great results in your playing.
- Don't shy away from the benefits of a good nose breath. Feel the openness from a nose breath.
- Your breath should cue the beginning of your piece, not a large movement from your flute.
- Rhythmic Breathing. Make sure your breath reflects the pulse and style of the piece in which you are playing.
- Breath control is like a controlled sigh.
- Ending a note with a "stomach breath" makes the release of the note too abruptly. Instead think about lifting off the flute like a violin bow when breathing.
- Breath Builder: Another breathing tool invented by a bassoon player.
- Cat breath: Taking a spin on the yoga pose. Breathing into the back and letting it expand more in the back than in the front.

ARTICULATION:

- The "F" in flute creates a sound when you say the word. This sound is called a fricative. Use this sound when tonguing, more of a "Tf", especially in the high register.
- Tonguing should have an up and down feel. The second syllable in your double tonguing should have an up feeling. To demonstrate this, move one of your fingers up and down. Now do this while you are articulating a note. Does it change the way you think about articulating?
- Articulations are in front of mouth and registers and dynamics are in the back.
- Tongue on top of the tongue, not at the tip. You should feel your canines when you tongue softly.
- "Duh" is a great word to use for a more relaxed and responsive articulation.

TONE:

- Whispered “Ahs”. Think of a stage whisper. Then say it with the word “Ah”, continuously blowing through it. Ideally this throat position is what you will play with. If not, work on getting the air to the back of your head.
- Move your chin muscles up towards the top lip for more focus and control in the sound.
- When you add vibrato you do not have to blow harder.
- Sound is made in the back of the head, behind the nose. Send air to the back of the mouth and aim it up and down.
- Low Note: Behind neck. High Note: Behind nose.
- Pharynx: This is where the sound is created. There are three regions.
- Shape the air with your lips. Don't control the air with your lips.
- Vowel placements are in the back of your mouth. Consonants in front of your mouth.
- Forming the sound “Pha” is a great way to find proper lower lip placement.
- Embouchure is inside the mouth.

POSTURE:

Here are the references to Alexander Technique that he made throughout the classes:

- The head leads and the body follows
- Look down your nose at the music
- Keep your eyes active and do not move the head to look down at the music
- Find your length
- Bring the instrument to you and adjust the placement with your upper arms
- Get taller as you descend in range
- Put the weight on the middle of your feet
- Whispered “Ah”
- Lift the flute from the inner part of your arms.

EXTRA RESOURCES:

Professor Underwood gave us many wonderful YouTube links that were great references that reinforced his ideas. Here are a few favorites.

- Julius Baker performing Shostakovich 5 with Bernstein. See how he looks as if he is rising out of his chair in the solo when he is descending, about 5 minutes in.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FF4HyB77hQ>
- Glen Gould finger tapping: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkI-aKqQ1kI>
- Denis Bouriakov Note Bending:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5u3VYim6OcY>
- Angela Caine: Voice Gym: <http://www.voicegym.co.uk>