

Piers Adams Workshop - Edmonton Recorder Society March 3, 2017

Details! - this is the 10% that takes you from amateur to pro.

Breathing:

- It is all from the diaphragm
- Relaxation is a baseline state - use sparks of tension for effects, then return to relaxation
- One hand on chest and one on belly - you should feel action in the belly when breathing, not in the chest (can also lie down with book on belly)

Blowing:

1. deep sigh with loose lips - place recorder on lips - explore and experiment with single note: no articulation, start strong and allow decay to go flat
2. repeat "sigh" note with crescendo & diminuendo - go for shape and let the pitch change
3. repeat - stop blowing when you hear the more start to go flat
4. repeat - open your mouth at the end of the note to release air before going flat

Now go to the music - just air, no articulation:

1. play first note as a "sigh" note, with cresc & dim, hold for length of phrase
2. then move your fingers to hear the whole melody
3. add a slight push of air on the downbeat of each bar (go back to single note)
4. add fingers back in - feel slight stress on downbeat from extra push of air
5. for complete control of phrase shape, refer to handout of methodical possibilities over 8 beats

Contrast a straight air stream with shaping air & punchy bits

Make the air shape the phrase the way you want it - then use alternate fingerings to correct any pitch problems. Do not compromise your phrasing or play tentatively because you are afraid of going out of tune.

Now add articulation:

1. go back to the first note - just play the rhythm of the phrase with articulation using only the first pitch
2. "breath is the engine of the articulation" - a slight push of air through the tongue action will be reflected in a slight puff of the cheeks
3. softest articulation is "n" (try no-no or do-no, pinching your nose so you sound like you have a cold :-)
4. then add the fingers for the various pitches once you have your articulation going on one note
5. then consider where you want TuDu (or DuNo¹ for the softest possible articulation)
 - in TD, TDD, TDDD, the Tu "spawns" any number of Dus.
 - For pick-ups, put Tu on the anacrusis and Du on the downbeat. ²
 - "Tu" is a very strong articulation, favoured by some performers. Others prefer using mostly "Du" or "No", and using push of air from diaphragm to give added strength when desired. These are schools of thought / personal preference.
 - for staccato, "nut" with a quick open mouth on the "t"
 - accents are created with air, not tongue
 - slap tongue on bass: "t" beatbox style + "hoo" of air = practice separately then connect
6. Double tonguing: KuGu is a softer version of TuDu. On upbeats: KD ,TGD, KDGD, TGDGD
7. consider how air flows through the articulation
 - is there a separation?
 - does following note start instantly after tail of previous note?
 - allowing previous note to droop in pitch slightly before next note starts is OK, also accents that create a moment of sharpness - average pitch is good, these are shape moments, not poor intonation moments

¹ Piers Adams got the "n" articulation idea from Von Hauwe, *The Modern Recorder Player*

² For a very systematic review of all possible articulations and situations in which to use them: *The Compleat Articulator* by Kees Boeke

- playing in jazz styles - pitch bends and fall-offs are part of the style - relax and be jazzy (Slow Fox piece is excellent for working on this)
 - does previous not give a little push back up before the articulation? (not desired)
8. in Renaissance music, the phrase structure is often Q / A followed by a short “tail”, which can be played staccato.

Vibrato

- Is an ornament or an aid to phrase shaping, not a mask for poor intonation.
- most vibratos are too much above the pitch and not enough below
- practice going below the pitch so far the sound cuts out completely

Fingers

- baseline relaxed position - recorder supported (thumbrest recommended³), fingers pressing holes, then relaxed until they are just able to seal the air
- action is a quick flick up, as precise as flicking a wad of paper across the room, then instantly return to relaxed position
- other fingers remain relaxed - no tensing in response to surrounding action
- no snatching at notes - that makes tension - go slowly with very quick actions between notes - wait, and then very precise
- fingers hanging over edge are more relaxed than fingers curved to use tip on hole - middle fingers can be more forward to do this
- exercise - pick 2 notes at random, alternate working on precise finger action with no tension in fingers that aren't moving - add a third note, then a fourth, etc. Random patterns good prep for contemporary music :-)
- when drilling technical spots, make sure you are also doing the nuance as well as the action

Thinking

- mental focus = precision
- there is a tempo when you can do it with no errors

Slurs

- in new music for recorder, feel free to break up long slurs with legato articulations - composers do not often fully understand the instrument
- slur up = mouth shape oh-ee (feel like you are whistling the high note)

³ Sugiu: a putty that sets and adheres - good for making thumb rests - come in different colours :-)