

Dr. John's Warm-up Routine



There are two parts to this Warm-up Routine: long tones and finger and tongue exercises. The long-tone exercise combines aspects of Eleanor Lawrence's long-tone exercise with Robert Dick's ideas on throat tuning. I assume that you know about breathing from your diaphragm. If you have not worked on this with a teacher, you can get an idea of how it works by lying on your back on the floor and breathing quietly and slowly. You will most likely notice your stomach rising and falling as you take slow, quite breaths. That's all there is to it – your stomach goes out as you take breath in and pushes the air out (goes in) as you exhale. The finger exercise section uses the Taffanel & Gaubert *Exercices Journalieres* (T&G) though you could use any book that includes scale and three and four note arpeggio patterns.

The first step of the long-tone exercise consists of two whole notes, slurred together. The speed of the underlying quarter note is determined by how long you can play the 8 beats without running out of breath. The second step uses the same diaphragmatic inhalation & exhalation but includes tongued quarter notes and $1/8^{\text{th}}$ notes.

I. Tone

A. Step One:

Between each two-note combination of this long-tone exercise, take a slow, deep breath from your diaphragm. It is not important to keep a steady beat between the steps of the exercise; it is more important to take each breath with your diaphragm. Tongue the beginning of each two-note step where your upper front teeth meet your hard palate.

Eleanor Lawrence taught us to use the G scale for this long-tone exercise. I like to alternate between G on day 1 and Ab on day 2. For purposes of the description, we will assume you will be playing a G scale; on the days you do Ab, the pitches will be different, but the breathing and singing and articulating aspects are the same.

☞ First, exhale across the pads of the foot joint as if you were trying to fog a mirror. This will humidify the pads and help them seal better.

Take a deep, diaphragmatic breath, hum the low B (or C if you don't have a B foot - you can play the note first if you need to get the pitch in your head), Keeping your throat tuned to that pitch, play a whole note B, slurred to a whole note C (imagining as you change pitches that you move your vocal chords as if you were singing the C). It is important to keep the breath constant as you change pitches so there is no change in the speed of the air as you move from one note to the next.

Take another slow, diaphragmatic breath, hum or sing the D and play a whole note D, slurred to a whole note E.

Continue in this manner until you reach the highest note you can play. As you reach the upper notes, you might find that you need to take a breath after each whole note. If so,

remember to hum each pitch before playing the note (and that you keep articulating at the point where your upper front teeth meet your hard palate).

B. Part Two:

Instead of playing two whole notes, articulate four quarter notes on each pitch, doing your best to keep the air flowing as smoothly as it was during the whole notes *especially* when moving from one pitch to the next. When you reach the top, re-articulate the top note as two 1/8th notes and make your way back down to the lowest note, stopping to breathe where necessary.

II. Fingers:

A. After you've warmed up on long tones in this way, practice the T&G exercises as follows:

one exercise of the scale pattern exercises (## 1-4)

one exercises of the pattern exercises (## 5 - 8)

one exercise of the three-note arpeggios (Ex. 8-11, 15)

one exercise of thee four note arpeggios (Ex. 12-14, 16).

Exercise 17 is a great study for finger position if you play the trills with the "real" fingerings, concentrating on keeping your fingers close to the keys.

To keep track of what articulations and keys I have done in the T&G, I like to check off the various articulations and keys (if you're not keeping a practice diary) as I do them, and then erase the check mark on the second time through the options. If you are keeping a practice diary, you can track the articulation and key options there, as well as the metronome speed you use for each exercise. I find it best to use Samuel Baron's "magic number" approach to picking the metronome speed. Your magic number (which you can find for pieces you are working on as well) is the speed at which you can play the material without tension, anxiety or stumbling. As you become comfortable with that speed, notch your metronome up a number or two to make a gradual and anxiety-free increase in the speed you're able to play the material.

A. Quickie fingers & tongue

If you have minimal time to warm up, you can use T&G Numbers 1 or 2 for a quickie warm-up. Do this by playing the first 8 notes slurred, the second 8 notes single tongued, the third 8 double-tongued with the D and G on each pitch and then the last 32nd notes as follows – the first eight notes like the opening series, and the last eight 32nd notes as written.

Watch for an upcoming article "Taking T&G into the 21st Century" for tips on extending T&G to cover the whole range of the contemporary flute.