

Developing Breath Control

The following exercises will help you develop the ability to take a deep breath quickly by progressively limiting the time available for breathing in. When playing them you should only breathe during the rests. Never let your breathing alter the length of the notes. Breathe in silently through the sides of your mouth, with the minimum of adjustment to the embouchure.

These exercises should be played several times. When you have mastered them at the slowest tempo, then vary the tempo within the limits set by the metronome marks. **Also play them at different dynamic levels and throughout the entire range of the instrument.**

(♩=40–120)

1

2

3

4

Breath control is essential to a good performance and cannot be achieved without careful planning. When preparing music for performance, mark in, on your copy, the places where you are going to breathe, bearing in mind that your breathing should not contradict the phrase-structure of the music. Breathe in the same places every time; in this way you will learn to judge and control the necessary amount of breath for each phrase.

When playing in the extreme register, it can be difficult to pitch a note accurately after taking a breath because of the adjustment made to the embouchure as you breathe in. Therefore, try to avoid taking a breath just before a leap up to the high register. When necessary, breathe out any 'spare' air before breathing in again; this may stop pressure and tension building up.

Section Two

The Chalumeau register

The characteristic tone of the chalumeau register is dark, rich and sonorous. You will need to play out (project) more in this register because of the slightly hollow quality which makes it somewhat lacking in carrying power. A slightly relaxed embouchure and an increase in air pressure will improve the quality of the lower notes.

Play the following exercise, listening carefully and trying to join each note smoothly to the next.

You will also find that alternative fingerings can bring about improvements in the quality of your sound. These fingerings cause a lengthening of the vibrating air column and thus increase resonance. But bear in mind that they may also affect intonation (see Part Two); you should therefore experiment, both with the fingerings indicated and with ones you devise yourself, to find those most suitable for your own particular instrument.

The first staff shows a G note with three fingerings: 1 (open), 2 (open), and 3 (open).
 The second staff shows an Ab note with three fingerings: 1 (open), 2 (open), and 3 (open).
 The third staff shows an A note with three fingerings: 1 (open), 2 (open), and 3 (open).
 The fourth staff shows a Th (throat) note with three fingerings: 1 (open), 2 (open), and 3 (open). The second and third fingerings also have a '5' above them, indicating a fifth finger fingering.

Aim for a full, well-rounded tone when playing the next set of exercises. Take great care to maintain the tone quality throughout.

1

Now vary ex. 1 using the following pattern:

1a

2

3

3

4

Examples:

Rêveusement lent

Debussy, Première Rapsodie

p

Andante moderato

John Ireland, Fantasy Sonata

mp

Refer again to the instructions on page 9 before playing the next study.

Study

Adagio

mf

cresc.

dim.