BASICS OF ARTICULATION

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Articulation Stroke

1. Movement of the tongue to close the reed
2. Build-up of the air pressure back of the reed
3. Release of the tongue, the reed, and the built-up air pressure

What Can Vary

1. Speed of tongue motion
2. Amount of tongue pressure used to close the reed
3. Amount of air pressure allowed to build up back of reed
4. Amount of time tongue stays with reed

Primary Types of Articulation (Pointed and Placement)

1. Pointed—more point to the beginning of the sound
   - Beginning of the sound defined by a point with full resonance
   - End of the sound defined by a point with full resonance
   - End of the sound simultaneously the beginning of the next articulation
   - Minimum or no taper to individual notes

2. Placement—less point to beginning of the sound
   - Slower tongue motion
   - Tongue motion must start sooner
   - Tongue stays with reed longer
   - Less tongue pressure against reed
   - End of the sound less defined with more taper to individual notes

Key Concepts

Tip of tongue should press down the tip of the reed.
An articulated note should begin and end on a point with full resonance
Articulation ranges in a continuum from the most pointed to the least pointed
taper also ranges as a continuum: pointed has little or no taper.
Taper also ranges in a continuum from none to the maximum possible

Additional Types of Articulation

1. Bounce Stroke—like the pizzicato stroke on the violin
   End of sound tapered with air to create a bouncing effect
   I.e. last movement of Mozart Clarinet Concerto—beginning motive

2. Double Stroke
   Begins like pointed articulation
   Then tongue bounces quickly on the built up air pressure
   Tongue pressure and air pressure must be balanced

   Exercises:

Key Concepts:

Sound can begin with either the tongue or the air
Sound can end with either the tongue or the air
Most of the time sound is begun with the tongue
The sound is ended with either the tongue or the air

Staccato Length

1. Staccato length determined by the length of space in between articulated notes
2. Tongue Pressure used to close the reed can be varied from just enough to press the reed closed to maximum tongue pressure used for articulation.
3. Air pressure allowed to build up back of the tongue can be varied from just enough to produce a barely audible point to the articulation to enough to produce an extremely pointed articulation.

Key Concepts (Advanced)

In most cases in articulation, tongue pressure and air pressure build-up back of the tongue are coordinated: the least amount of tongue pressure and air pressure build-up produce the least amount of articulation space between notes.

Tongue pressure and air pressure can function independently: a placement stroke with a large amount of space and a very pointed stroke with very little space between the notes can also be produced.

Finger-Tongue Coordination

Finger-tongue coordination is extremely important to insure clarity of articulation and it is more important as the speed of the articulation increases.

Key Concept

For maximum coordination of the fingers with the tongue move the finger or fingers to the next note in the articulation space: immediately after the tongue has pressed the reed closed and interrupted the air flow.

Common Problems

1. The air column tends t coordinate with the movement of the tongue producing a tapering effect. This is especially bad if the phrase does not call for this tapering of the articulated notes.
2. The tongue movement to close the reed tends to be late. Always remember that the articulation is a release of the built-up air pressure, the tongue, and the reed. This implies that the tongue has already pressed the reed closed, and the pressure has built up back of the reed. More frequently, the student is coordinating the "striking" of the reed with the tongue when he/she should be "releasing" the tongue.
3. Generally students play the articulated note/notes too short and the articulation space too long.
4. When articulation space is written as rests, generally students taper the articulated notes too much and let down the air support producing a "choppy" effect. Articulation should never change the natural shape of the phrase. It is a good idea to practice the phrase without articulation to determine the correct phrase shape and then to compare the shape of the articulated phrase to the non-articulated one.
5. Young performers tend to use only one articulation stroke which varies very little.
6. Most young players lose resonance and focus of the sound when they articulate. The tone produced during the articulat4ed passage should be as focused and resonant as the same passage played without articulation.

Articulation Guides

1. Verbally say the articulation: this models how the passage should sound.
2. Say the passage with air only: this models how the articulation should feel.

Using both guides should encourage the correct balance between tongue effort and air pressure. Tongue pressure tends to be too much and air pressure tends to be too little.