

VIBRATO

As on most wind instruments, the finishing touch to producing a beautiful tone is a tasteful vibrato. Vibrato is often used on longer notes and at the peaks of phrases to heighten expression. It should be avoided in fast passages because the speed of the oscillation in pitch and/or volume may be similar to the speed of the notes, and will cause the passage to sound out of tune or unsupported. Vibrato speed should be slower in the low range and increase as the range gets higher.

The most effective and reliable vibrato for bassoon is produced by pulsating the air. This is often called a diaphragmatic vibrato since it originates in the abdomen, even though the diaphragm is not the muscle that creates the oscillation. Although some bassoonists produce vibrato by rapidly moving the jaw up and down, this technique often produces a tone that is too bright, and a vibrato that is too sharp and fast for the range and timbre of the bassoon.

In order for a diaphragmatic vibrato to function, efficient inhalation must be established. Before inhaling, make sure your abdominal muscles are released and relaxed. As you inhale, let your torso expand from bottom to top as if filling a glass of water. Feel your rib cage expand in your back and sides

VIBRATO WARM UP #1: Put your hands around your waist, just below your rib cage. Observe what happens when you shout, “Ho! Ho! Ho!” The side muscles, located just inward and up from your hipbone, push outwards and the front muscles at your navel push inwards. Do not *try* to activate these muscles. Just observe what happens naturally after taking a relaxed breath and shouting, “Ho!”. The side muscles setting outward provides the foundation for general breath support. The front muscles allow the pulsations in the air.

VIBRATO WARM UP #2: Take a deep, relaxed breath, and let out a sigh. Pause and do this again, but this time, as you sigh, round the lips as if you were going to whistle, and then pulse your sigh at about four pulses per second, as if you were panting. Maintain this feeling of ease in the airflow and pulsating as you practice the vibrato exercise below.

VIBRATO EXERCISE: Set the metronome at 60. Play one long tone and create a surge of sound on each beat. Once your pitch is steady and the tone quality remains the same, with the pulsation creating only a change in volume, then proceed to two pulsations per beat, then three, etc. Beginners might want to practice just the first two measures for several weeks until they are well controlled, then add the third measure, etc. Play this exercise on three notes a day, starting in the middle range and working upwards and downwards as you become more proficient.

Vibrato Exercise

♩=60

Musical staff 1: Bass clef, quarter notes with slurs. Dynamics: *sf sf sf sf*, *sim.*. Triplets: 3, 3, 3, 3.

Musical staff 2: Bass clef, eighth notes with slurs. Quintuplets: 5, 5, 5, 5. *vib.*