

Vibrato Exercises

Jim Walker

These beginning exercises are designed to develop the vibrato mechanism. BOTH the abdominal muscles (often referred to as the diaphragm) and the epiglottis (often called the throat) are used in creating vibrations in the airstream. There are two different sounds that come from the two areas.

(1) "who-who-who-who" comes from the abdominal area. To make the proper flute articulation and sound, practice saying "who" without the flute. Similar sounds which place your mouth in a more "flute-like" position are "ha-ha-ha-ha" and "hih-hih-hih-hih".

(2) "uh-uh-uh-uh" comes from the throat area. Take a full breath and stop the air with your throat, then let small amounts of air escape to make the "uh" sound. Similar "glottis" sounds are made by lightly coughing, crying, laughing or whistling.

NOTE: On both syllables ("who" and "uh") go back and forth between making the vocal sound and then a whispered sound. The whispered sound is the proper method when playing the flute. (Always listen carefully to your sound - taking special care not to make the vocal sound)

REMEMBER: These are PRELIMINARY exercises; they should not and will not sound like the beautiful vibrato we are striving for. That goal is achieved in subsequent steps. In that regard, it is very important to hear a beautiful vibrato as you are working to develop your own. Have your teacher play for you or at least have them suggest examples of various recorded artists to model your own vibrato after.

$\text{♩} = 72 - 92$

mf who who who who who who who who who who who who

5 uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh

9 who who who who who who who who who who who who uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh

13 who who who who who who who who who who who who uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh

17 whowhowhowhowhowhowhowhow whohowhowhowhowhowhowhow uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh uh

21 whowhowhowhowhowhowhowhow uh uh uh uh uh uh uh whowhowhowhowhowhowhow uh uh uh uh uh uh uh

The next exercises are faster and allow you to play pulsations at a speed that is closer to the actual vibrato speed. Go back and forth between the "who" and "uh" sounds striving for complete comfort in making that switch. As you gain more control, move the speed up closer to the 92 metronome marking.

REMEMBER: A medium vibrato speed is falls into the 76-84 (met) area. The higher speeds are required to express the fine control that a flexible vibrato requires.

25 $\text{♩} = 72 - 92$

p - f

29

33

The next exercises are critical for learning a proper, good sounding vibrato. The "choppy" (from "uh") and "huffy" (from "who") sounds are preliminary syllables that are learned prior to making the "true" vibrato sound. Now the big challenge is to "smooth" out the pulsations so that they take on a "spinning" rather than the percussive quality of the "who" and "uh" sounds. The best way to simulate the proper vibrato sound is to make a vocal sound where you sing a note and slightly wobble the pitch up and down about a half step. As before, go back and forth between the vocal wobble and a whispered approach to the same sound.

Play this exercise using a controlled (counted) set of vibrations which correspond to the rhythm of the low C's. The goal is to play with a smooth, round vibrato. Strive to feel the vibrato more in your chest, rather than only in the throat or only in the abdomen.

NOTE: There is one element of the vibrato we have not addressed directly: the depth or intensity of the vibration. This will be covered on page three. For now be sure to avoid the choppy vibrato (from the throat) and the slow wobbly vibrato (from the diaphragm or abdominal muscles).

37 $\text{♩} = 72 - 92$

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After working on the first two pages the flutist should be fully capable of playing a note with a steady, rhythmic vibrato. So far we have concentrated on the aspect of "speed". Equally important to the development of a beautiful vibrato is control of the "depth" or "density" of the vibration. This element is controlled by refining the movement of the epiglottis and of the abdominal muscles. Lets consider that there are three types of speed and intensity:

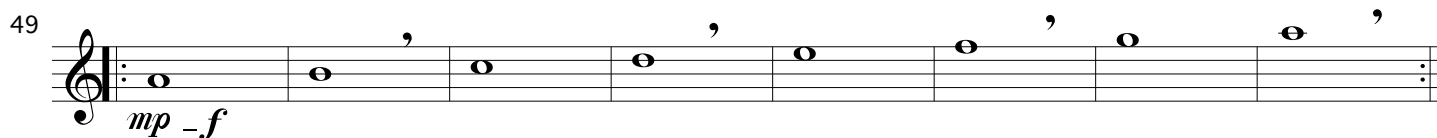
1. high - made by closing the throat and emphasizing the choppy sound of the glottis or by making hard abdominal pushes.
2. medium - made by opening the throat and moving the glottis in a way to only bend the airstream, rather than cut it off.
3. low.- made by barely moving the glottis, providing constant airstream support and taking care to avoid making jumpy surges from the abdomen or glottis.

The following exercises are designed to provide a means to develop complete control of the intensity. Please listen carefully to the actual sounds your are making. One of the biggest pitfalls for all players is the tendency to play on "automatic pilot", often failing to notice many aspects of your sound. In the early stages of developing your vibrato it is crucial that you develop your listening sensitivity. This quality will carry you very far in your musical journey.

On the first line, vibrate in 3's and 4's from 72-92. While it is imperative to play exactly in perfect rhythmic subdivisions, the emphasis on THIS exercise is to develop control of the intensity or depth. Play the line three times:

1. Use a very high intensity/depth - throaty but not completely cutting off the airstream.
2. Use a medium intensity/depth vibrato - open the throat and feel the pulsations in the chest.
3. Use a low intensity/depth vibrato - barely massage the airstream with gentle movements of the epiglottis.

NOTE: Low intensity is the most difficult method. Don't be discouraged by early failures.



The final exercises are devoted to incorporating the basic vibrato into musical lines. If there is a key to playing beautiful musical lines it is the use of vibrato while moving BETWEEN notes - through intervals. Most young flutists cultivate a vibrato that either quivers on every note or only wobbles on long notes. Both styles are not very good-sounding. Strive to have your vibrato take on a "spinning" or "shimmering" quality, rather than that "choppy" or "wobbly" character. NOTE: Approaching larger intervals poses problems for all flutists. As you play these melodies and intervals be sure to keep the vibrato going with a richly supported airstream. Use the wavy lines as guides for when to vibrate

57

mf

64

72

76

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