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BREATHING
(Prelude)

A study of circular breathing cannot be undertaken if normal breathing habits necessary for wind performance have not been established. For this reason, a discussion of proper breathing habits is appropriate.

It should be remembered that no matter how much importance one places on the embouchure, technique, the mouthpiece or the instrument, no sound is created without air. The breathing process and its ultimate control is the single most important item in wind performance and one that has a decided effect on all of its other phases.

It seems rather obvious to state that most people take breathing for granted. It is a natural body function, necessary to sustain life. But the type of breathing necessary for wind performance is not a natural function. It requires a reversal of common breathing practice and therefore must be learned. Examine first the normal breath: about 60% of a single breath cycle is consumed in inhalation, about 20% in exhalation and the final 20% in a rest period. Stated another way, if a normal breath cycle were five seconds in length three seconds would be spent inhaling, one second exhaling, and one second for rest.

Breathing for performance requires a drastic reversal of this "natural" process. The inhaling of air is done instantaneously, while exhaling is sustained over a long and always differing period of time. The rest portion of the cycle may not exist. The exhalation of air in itself has some additional marked differences. In the normal breath it is released with great intensity at first, followed by a sudden relaxation. The same release of air during performance requires the air to be expelled over a long time, with a consistent intensity. The actual consistency varies with the phrase and the dynamics, range, articulations and a multitude of other considerations.

The question then is how might we best approach this highly controlled release? The breaths are described first as the "high" breath and the "total" breath. (Breathing is often discussed in terms of "high" and "total" and although a complete study of Yorke's work delves only into the physical ramifications of



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PART I - BEGINNING TECHNIQUES
(Without An Instrument)

In order to develop the technique of circular breathing, the following steps are recommended. Care should be taken to master each step before proceeding to the next. The results will tend to be very frustrating if you should choose to do otherwise. Please note that Steps 1 and 2 are done without the instrument.

1. The initial problem in circular breathing is one of developing the cheek and throat muscles; learning to use them to push air out of the mouth in a continuous and controlled manner. This is initially complicated by the fact that air is not a tangible substance. It can be swallowed and inhaled as well as being pushed out of the mouth. For this reason, we will start out by using water.

Imagine that your mouth cavity is a balloon, and the only opening is your mouth. You must consciously make an effort to close off (figuratively) the opening in the back of the mouth cavity (the throat) leading to the stomach and lungs.

- a. First, take as much water in your mouth as possible. Allow your cheeks to puff, much like the beginning player who has not yet been instructed otherwise. Standing in front of a sink, create a small hole in your lips, and using your cheek and throat muscles attempt to push the water out in a steady stream.

After doing this a number of times, place two or three fingers in the center of each cheek and push in, forcing the water out in a steady stream.

You will notice that the water comes out in a direct manner with the aid of the cheeks. This exercise without the aid of the fingers. This exercise has no control and flow of water through the fingers. This exercise has no control and flow of water through the fingers. This exercise has no control and flow of water through the fingers. This exercise has no control and flow of water through the fingers.

- b. The next exercise is to...



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