

CONCEPTS OF **TECHNIQUE**

INTRODUCTION

This book is built on the acceptance of two basic principles, muscle memory and the concept of delineation. This book will not deal with the mechanics and descriptions of how to make a “good” sound, it is merely designed to help the player work on the other components of technique. These etudes are not designed to be an “be all, end all” for practice. They are to be used as a part of a complete practice regime which should include a daily routine, style etudes, and performance materials. These etudes would most likely fall into someone’s daily routine. These etudes and the accompanying philosophy surrounding them have been the basis for the development of technique in my studio, and I hope you can use them as well.

MUSCLE MEMORY

Everything we do as players depends upon the idea of muscle memory. Without it, we cannot begin to free our mind in order to “make” music; we simply cannot worry about all the different facets of technique and still develop our art to a high level. Muscle memory includes everything from how to breathe properly to what valves to push down, to tongue motion and rhythm. This book will not attempt to be a primer for all of these things, as there are very good books and videos on breathing, reading rhythms and so on. This book will primarily deal with the idea of playing with a very smooth, steady, non-pulsed air stream. Wind instruments cannot “sound” good without the performer utilizing a consistent air stream. We, as players, cannot slur, nor articulate correctly without having a truly great, smooth air stream. This point cannot be emphasized enough. The development of this concept in a practical way is dealt with through the concept of delineation.

DELINEATION

The term delineation is used here to describe separating the various components of technique and working on them individually. Technique can be broken down to four primary components: Articulation, Speed, Dynamic, and Range. If a player can work on each of these areas separately, then typically technical progress can be made at a quicker pace.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Each chapter in this book is based on Range—the chapters are titled Middle Register, Upper Register, and Lower Register. Each chapter contains twelve etudes, the first six of which utilize the concepts of delineation, with etudes 7-12 putting them all together. The Practice Guide, found below, provides a matrix for etudes 1-6 which can allow the performer to focus on one component of technique at a time. The Practice Guide is divided into cells of three letters each, with a total of twelve different combinations of technical components. (with the component of range being determined by which chapter one is studying) The letters used in the cells Practice Guide are arranged in such a way that technique can be developed from the easiest combinations to the most difficult.

1. The top letter in each cell refers to articulation: “S” is for slurred, “T” is for tongued.
2. The middle letter refers to speed: “S” is for slow, “F” is for fast.
3. The bottom letter refers to dynamic: “M” is for medium loud, “L” is for loud, and “Q” is for quiet.

The descriptors are purposefully ambiguous, so that technique can be continually refined by players at all levels. I encourage the player to slur as smoothly as possible, with no pulsation of air, and to tongue as cleanly as is possible, with a quick tongue motion; slow should be at most 60-70 beats per minute, while fast should be as fast as that individual can go (at least double their slow tempo); medium loud is “normal” volume—just easy playing, loud is really, really loud, and quiet is a whisper.

The ordering of the cells is vital, as one cannot really learn to articulate properly without having a great air stream set in motion. One really must develop the first six cells on each etude before going to the second six (tongued) etudes.

S	S	S	S	S	S	T	T	T	T	T	T
S	S	S	F	F	F	S	S	S	F	F	F
M	L	Q	M	L	Q	M	L	Q	M	L	Q

The layout of the chapters is quite purposeful as well—medium range to start with, then upper range work once the player is a bit more warmed up and the air stream is working well, then lower register to allow the player to relax the face before going on to other practice.

It is my hope that you will find these concepts and etudes helpful in developing your technique and muscle memory so that you can further enjoy the art of making music.

Dennis AsKew

MIDDLE REGISTER STUDIES

1.

S	S	S	S	S	S	T	T	T	T	T	T
S	S	S	F	F	F	S	S	S	F	F	F
M	L	Q	M	L	Q	M	L	Q	M	L	Q

2.

S	S	S	S	S	S	T	T	T	T	T	T
S	S	S	F	F	F	S	S	S	F	F	F
M	L	Q	M	L	Q	M	L	Q	M	L	Q

3.

S	S	S	S	S	S	T	T	T	T	T	T
S	S	S	F	F	F	S	S	S	F	F	F
M	L	Q	M	L	Q	M	L	Q	M	L	Q

Moderato

7.

p *mf*
p *f*
mp *pp*

Allegro

8.

f *ff*
mf *f*
mf *f*

Andantino

legato tongue

rit.

9.

p *mf* *mf*
p *mf*
f *mp*
p *mf* *f* *pp*