

Solo Class Lecture #28

“Set-Up Drills”

Dr. Mark Ponzo

Basic Concept;

Set and maintain the embouchure for the highest pitch of the phrase structure.

Common Issues;

Most musical phrases start on the lowest pitch of the phrase, ascend to the highest and return to the starting point. Young players set for the first note that they have to play and then try to adjust as the musical line rises. As a young player tries to reach the higher pitches by firming the embouchure they are often adding undue pressure at the same time. The mouthpiece pressure does not allow the muscles of the embouchure to form (and develop) correctly and the embouchure becomes pinched, the air flow diminishes and the structure collapses. In addition, the quality of the sound through the playable range of the instrument is uneven.

The least amount of movement will provide the greatest efficiency and most even quality of the sound. In order to achieve efficiency, the embouchure must remain stable. The air is adjusted in order to change pitch. Air speed is adjusted by abdominal support and tongue position.

Set Up Drills;

In each exercise, set the embouchure for the first note (this is also the same as the final note of the pattern) and hold that setting through the pattern. The embouchure should be very firm, in a “gripping (flexing) set”. Once the embouchure is in stabilized, modify the tongue position and air flow (support) to change the pitch. The embouchure should feel as if the entire pattern is one long-tone.

Each pattern should be played in one breath so that the embouchure is not disturbed.

The method is divided into four sections; Set-Up Patterns, Embouchure Set Patterns, Scale Patterns and Lip Trills. It is imperative to establish a solid physical memory during the Set-Up Patterns before proceeding to the more advanced exercises.

Getting Started;

Keep the embouchure as firm as possible and use the air speed and tongue position to move from pitch to pitch.

Play a second line “G” for four measures. Make the embouchure as firm as possible, concentrate on making the aperture as small as you can. This is how the embouchure should feel during the Set-Up Drills.

Always start with patterns #1 - #6 before playing any of the advanced drills in order to re-establish the correct setting for the embouchure.

There will be some shifting of the embouchure as you move from the first pitch, this is normal, but do not loosen (or tighten) the embouchure in order to descend (or ascend).