

MASTERING YOUR INSTRUMENT

Playing a musical instrument gives one a great sense of satisfaction. The better one is able to play it, the more satisfying it becomes. When YOU become the master of your instrument, you'll find it one of the most rewarding experiences of your life.

Becoming the master of your instrument isn't as difficult as you might think. You can make rapid progress toward your goal by following some basic suggestions. By acquiring the correct habits from the start, you'll find that learning to master your instrument will be an enjoyable experience.

POSTURE

Breathing, tone quality, intonation, technique and endurance are all affected by your posture. Sit forward on your chair with your back arched in and your head held high. If, standing, stand with a straight back and your feet slightly apart.

LONGTONES

One of the best ways to improve your tone quality on a wind instrument is to practice LONG TONES. Start softly and make a gradual crescendo to the largest volume possible, then make the diminuendo back to nothing. Start each practice with a few notes played in this manner. Great for warming up your lips before you begin to play.

INTONATION

The ability to play your instrument in tune is a very important aspect of mastering your instrument. Listen carefully as you play and try to make certain that the notes are in the correct pitch. When playing with other instruments, learn to favour your notes so they will agree with those of the other players. Make the necessary adjustments on your instrument to correct your pitch.

DYNAMICS

Dynamics are the various degrees of loudness and softness applied to music. Practicing long tones will help expand your dynamic range. Try to achieve the greatest dynamic expression possible. Applying dynamics allows you to sound musical and expressive.

PHRASING

Rather than just playing the notes, a fine musician will make the notes convey a musical message. To make the notes say something you must first divide the music into musical sentences called “phrases”. Then decide where the climax of each phrase will be and how the phrase will be played to give it the greatest musical interest.

SOLO AND ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE

You should try to be involved with at least one ensemble of any size and try to be working on at least one solo piece. Performing in front of an audience of any size helps develop your performance skills. Try to “perform” at any occasion that allows you.

PLAYING EQUIPMENT

Many talented students are hampered by equipment that would be impossible for even a professional to play well. Seek advice from your teacher or a professional musician before buying an instrument. Take good care of your instrument to maintain a high level of performance.