

## Forte Brass Technique Program

I know that there may be some of you who want to get straight to the exercises but I must insist that you read this packet from beginning to end otherwise the “fun” stuff will be meaningless. If every horn line member agrees to follow the technique program outlined in this packet we will be successful. Period. We, the brass staff of Forte, realize that there are a great number of successful technique programs in this activity and that ours is one of those. In order for any technique program to be successful however it must be used by every member of the group without exception. That is why it is paramount as stated above that every horn line member agrees to follow the technique program as outlined in this packet.

We are well aware that each of you comes from a different background and that some of this packet may seem new or strange to you. That being said you must trust your staff just as you trust your fellow members of the horn line. This technique has been utilized by countless corps including the Bluecoats, Cavaliers, Phantom Regiment, Madison Scouts and countless others throughout the years.

If you are ready to learn the secrets behind a dynamic, powerful, balanced and dark horn line sound then read on. Best of luck as you begin to learn the technique used here at Forte and as always feel free to contact your brass staff for assistance. Let's begin.....

### BREATHING

If you asked brass caption heads in DCI what the secret to their horn lines success on the field was most of them would say their breathing technique. The success or failure of a horn line is determined before they play their first note. Breathing effects every aspect of a brass players performance from the quality of their sound, phrasing, attack, sustain, release, and so much more.

Relaxation while breathing, as with all aspects of brass playing, is a vital component to successful breathing. It is important to note that the body must be relaxed in order for the breath one takes to be relaxed. With this in mind we will stretch, as you should when you practice on your own, before begin our breathing exercises. The primary areas of concern will be your chest, neck and shoulders in regards to stretching.

There are many components involved with taking a proper breath, and many books and articles have been written on this particular subject. To achieve clarity through simplicity, we prefer to keep the following concepts in mind while playing:

- Breathe from the bottom up, meaning that you should begin the breathing process from the base of your lungs. Envision literally breathing from the bottom of your lungs as if you had gills on the outside of your lowest ribs. Once you have filled up the lowest portion of your lungs you can proceed to fill up the rest. During this process you should feel your lower abdominal muscles expand first and then progress to your chest. This form of breathing will allow you to take in the maximum amount of air possible in the shortest amount of time possible with no resistance in your breathing process.
- To maintain a state of relaxation, the shoulders and the upper back must not be tense so that the breathing passage is never constricted while inhaling or exhaling. Keep the throat open so there is no resistance or audible friction.
- *Air **NEVER** stops while playing. Air is either going in or out. Be careful not to “cap” the breath during inhalation. Capping occurs when the air is stopped during inhalation. Breathing is like a swinging door. Either air is coming in or going out it is never under any circumstances stopped.*
- During exhalation there should be a feeling of total release in the upper body. The air should have a warm, engulfing sound and texture. An exhalation should never be forced. As the air is released through the horn, it

should reflect the timbre of that particular instrument. It is important at this time to mention that any tension in your body will be heard in your sound without exception. You must constantly concern yourself with the quality of your breathing and where you are sending your air.

The timing of the breath is of the utmost importance. THE TIMING STARTS WITH THE BREATH! In other words, horn lines that breathe together play together. A bad attack can be attributed to a bad breath nine times out of ten. Late attacks typically result from "capped breaths" (stopped air between in and out) or poor timing. The performer must ALWAYS breathe and play with his or her feet to stay in time with the ensemble.

## RELEASES

***Play until you breathe.*** It really is that simple. Releases should be approached through the initiation of a short inhalation. Using the tongue or a contraction of the throat and jaw should never be used to release a note. Simply breathing inward on a predetermined count will create a defined release. A uniform timing of the breath will ensure uniform timing of the release throughout the entire ensemble.

### DO NOT:

- Close the jaw upon the release
- Choke the air with your glottis (closing your throat)
- Use your tongue to stop a note (this can be detected 100 yards away!)

### DO:

- Release with a small, relaxed breath
- Subdivide into a release
- Energize every release

A clean release will ring for a moment even after the air has been released. Strive to make the note ring!

## BREATHING EXERCISES

As with the human brain most people do not use the majority of their lungs either. Your goal should be to increase the capacity of your lungs that you do use. This is easiest to see in the stomach area, but the expansion should also be felt in the sides as well as the back. Once the lung capacity is full, the focus should switch toward releasing all of the air out. It is important to completely empty the lungs because the lungs will start to store carbon dioxide. If the air is not released to its natural point, this carbon dioxide will build up and begin to decrease the player's lung capacity, causing unnecessary stress, tension, dizziness, and exhaustion.

When you begin these exercises, take in as much air as possible, and then release ALL of the air. You should concentrate on taking ALL of the counts to perform each portion of the exercise. If four counts are given to take in air, the player should take all four counts to do so, then turn the air around, moving it out. This will take away any dead time that is similar to holding your breath. **There should be no hitch in the breathing process.** This will give the player the greatest efficiency with regards to the use of air when playing. These exercises should be done with and without the instrument. In both cases, relaxation is a key factor towards producing the proper air-stream; the avoidance of tension will allow for a more effective use of the airstream. It is important with all of these exercises that you try to imitate the way you play in a performance situation as closely as possible.

As important as it is to stretch before you begin your breathing exercises it is equally important to release the tension created through the exercises. After we have completed a breathing exercise we will take a deep breath in and release with a sigh releasing all the tension created in the breathing mechanism.

Every exercise used is intended to increase your ability to breathe is just that, an exercise. This means two things to you as a member of the horn line. First, to increase your capacity to breathe, and more importantly breathe properly on your part, you will have to work on a daily basis to condition your body. These exercises for breathing are just like physical training for any other part of your body you have to be committed to improving both endurance and lung capacity. The exercises we use, which are heavily based on the Breathing Gym philosophy, are designed to push your body to its limits so physical fitness will be a factor.

The second thing to remember is that any knowledge or ability you may gain during the use of breathing exercises is meaningless if you do not apply it to your performance. It is VITAL that you treat every exercise playing or breathing as a performance opportunity and apply the knowledge gained to your show otherwise we are wasting our time.

## **2 Count Breath?**

I realize that too many of you this concept will seem new or different but trust me it's not and it works. Here at Forte we believe strongly that you should take as much time as available to breathe which for most of our exercises means the use of a two count breath. A two count breath will improve your ability to fill up with air, sustain, and have your embouchure prepared to play the selected passage. Now we will of course be teaching you how to take multiple different styles of breaths including one, two, four, etc.....since there will be times that you are called upon to take a different breath based on tempo or style of the music. Here are some things to remember about this concept:

### **DO NOT:**

- CAP YOUR BREATH!!! (Make sure you use all of the 2 counts don't stop your air!!)
- Make the breath audible there should be no tension
- Zone out during the breathing process. STAY ENGAGED OR THE ATTACK WILL SUFFER!

### **DO:**

- SUBDIVIDE YOUR BREATH!!!!
- Fill with air! (From the bottom up as mentioned above.)
- TAKE ALL OF THE COUNTS TO BREATHE!!!!
- Breathe Together! ALWAYS BREATHE TOGETHER!!!!!! (Whatever the designated count(s) may be.)

## **POSTURE**

To be the most efficient when playing and marching, the body should be in the most natural and upright position. Improper posture can cause injury and negatively affect your brass playing. While playing your brass instrument, your weight should be evenly distributed on both feet; your upper body weight should be lifted up from your waist (NOT leaning on the lower part of your back); your shoulders should be relaxed; and your instrument bell angle is 10 degrees above parallel. The basic rules that apply to all hand positions is that the hands are relaxed, finger tips are on the valves, valve casings are perpendicular to the ground (except for the tubas), and your wrists are straight. The right hand should cradle the instrument not strangle it. Place your thumb between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> valve casings.

## **MOVING & PLAYING TOGETHER**

Marking time and step outs will be used in all music rehearsals where we do not march drill. In the future, the marching technicians will go into further detail regarding the proper way to mark time. Some basic rules for marking-time are as follows:

- The initiation of the mark-time will be “one” count or the “and” count (this depends on the tempo of the exercise).
- The heels of your foot will hit the ground on all “down” beats.
- Your heel will come up to your anklebone.
- Your upper body must not bounce or sway while you mark time; it should look as if you are standing still.

The success of the brass ensemble will be determined by how well you play and move at the same time. The sooner you start adding movement to your playing, the better you and the section will become.

## **EMBOUCHURE DEVELOPMENT**

Most professional brass musicians practice with the mouthpiece as well as without the mouthpiece on a regular basis. The benefits of mouthpiece/free buzzing include: being able to isolate embouchure and tone production problems; improved aural skills; and less lip fatigue (the exercises are easier to produce without the brass instrument’s resistance). One should play on the mouthpiece every day.

Therefore, developing a warm, dark and resonant sound on the mouthpiece should be a priority for all brass players. There are numerous articles written about embouchure development for each of the instruments. We strongly recommend that you find and research these articles so that you may apply the information to your specific instrument. You should also continue to reinforce the embouchure work that you may have done with your private lesson instructor. There are some basic embouchure rules that can be applied to all brass players:

- The corners of the mouth need to be firm and strong with a comfortable set.
- Both lips should have enough flesh in the mouthpiece to allow for a full, robust buzz.
- Always bring the mouthpiece to the same place on your lips.
- The jaw should always be open and relaxed - especially in the lower register.
- The teeth are always apart.

## **MOUTHPIECE BUZZING**

Buzzing will be used on a daily basis and is fundamental component of successful brass playing. The mouthpiece should be held with your non-dominant hand, palm facing out, with the shank of the mouthpiece in between your middle and ring finger. This method of holding your mouthpiece will force you to use very little pressure against your embouchure. If the lips are buzzing freely, a full mouthpiece sound will result. Again, be certain that the corners are locked and there is always excellent breath connection. When buzzing, there should always be a dark, open “Oh” sound. If the sound is bright and tinny, open your jaw more, lower your tongue, and firm up the corners. Be sure to check that the mouthpiece is not forced against your lips. In addition to warm-up exercises, mouthpiece playing will help improve accuracy discrepancies in the show music. Every player in the ensemble should be able to play any part of the show music on his or her mouthpiece. Buzz the way you play. You have to buzz without tension and with your tongue as low as possible as if playing.

## **FREE BUZZING**

This again is a fundamental to brass playing that may be new to some of you. Free buzzing is buzzing without a mouthpiece. This fundamental will help with creating endurance; embouchure awareness; and aural awareness. As with mouthpiece buzzing it is imperative that you not change anything when you free buzz. You should be able to free

buzz basically any exercise in this packet by the end of the season. I know that this is a new concept for some of you but trust me it will pay great dividends for you as a brass player and for the horn line this season.

## **SINGING**

Singing is a wonderful tool for developing great ensemble tone quality and intonation. The brass section will sing frequently, and we will have a very serious approach to the technique of singing. The resonance and breath connection necessary for singing are near identical to proper brass playing. All too often you will hear shouting on pitch called singing in the activity. This will not be the case with Forte Drum and Bugle Corps. When singing, everything should be just as relaxed as when playing. Imagine a boy's choir singing. Your sound should be free, light, yet resonant and easily heard. Do not be tempted to force your sound to produce more volume. This is the same as over-blowing on your horn, and it produces a nasty sound. If your volume is very small at first, that is perfectly fine. The following are guidelines for all singing exercises:

- The throat should be open
- The same approach to breathing, and air connection
- Everyone should always be listening to match the pitch
- We will use different vowel sounds, including different types of humming
- We will always be checking the pitch before and after we have sung
- We will work on and be able to sing everything in the technique book, chorales, and show music

## **STYLE & ARTICULATION**

Articulation should be executed with no explosion in the attack. Every note should be started with the sound "dAAH" in mind (notice the lowercase *d* and uppercase *AH*). Each player should strive for less tongue in the sound and focus on providing more tone. Close to 90% of an attack is the air and only 10% is the tongue. THE AIR STREAM SETS THE BUZZ INTO ACTION, NOT THE TONGUE!

### **LEGATO TONGUING**

When tonguing in a legato style, the air is virtually unbroken as the tongue plays each note like a soft paintbrush. Be mindful to keep the tongue moving fast; do not "chew" the notes. Imagine your air stream as a garden hose in the on position, and your tongue as a finger poised above the end of the hose. Your finger can flick the stream of water lightly to break it into chunks. In the same way, your tongue lightly taps the air stream to give a smoother articulation while never actually stopping your air. The air stream never truly comes to a stop.

### **STACCATO TONGUING**

Remember, staccato does not necessarily mean short! It means "separated" or "detached." To produce a good staccato, keep the air stream supported and create perfect blocks of sound: each block identically matching the one that preceded it. Keep in mind that "Dit" is not an acceptable articulation and will never be used while at Forte. Remember to keep every articulation an open-ended, even staccato.

### **MARCATO TONGUING**

This style lies between the staccato and legato articulations. It can best be explained as a sustained staccato with only a small bit of separation between notes.

## **ARTICULATION EXERCISES**

Articulation exercises are an integral part of developing the relationship between the tongue and the air stream. It is important to understand that the tongue cannot articulate properly if there is not enough air support. These exercises are intended to develop a consistent and clear approach to the motion and speed of the tongue and air. It is also important to know that the clarity of the articulation should not be affected by tempo, technique, note length, volume, or range. The only time an articulation will change is when the style being played changes.

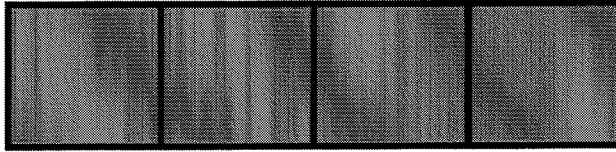
# Style/Note Length Glossary

Style/Length

Symbol

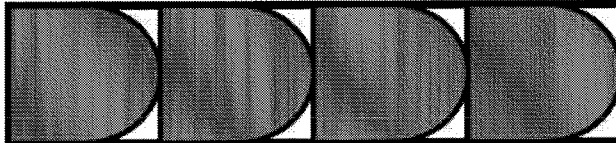
Visualization

*Connected*



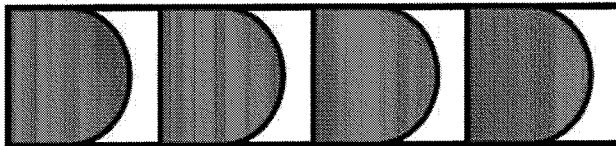
*def.* – There is no decay and the notes touch.

*Long Lifted*



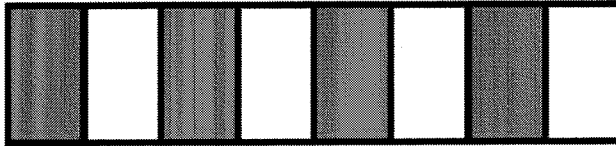
*def.* – There is a slight decay and the notes touch.

*Lifted*



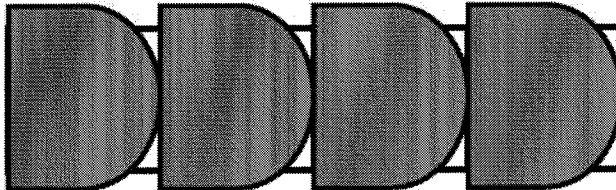
*def.* – There is a slight decay and a small space.

*Detached*



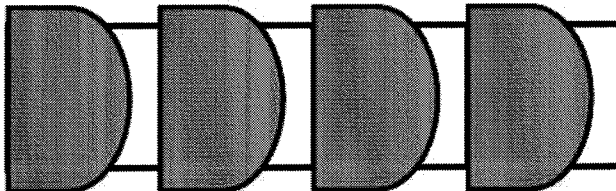
*def.* – There is no decay and the length is half of the note it is attached to.

*Accented*



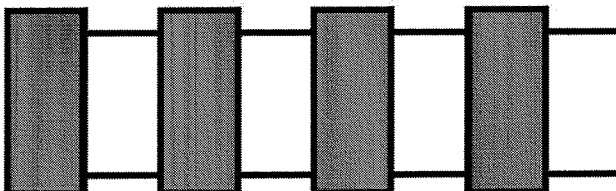
*def.* – The beginning of the note is slightly louder, there is a slight decay and the notes touch.

*Lifted Accent*



*def.* – The beginning of the note is slightly louder, there is a slight decay and a small space.

*Roof-Top Accent*



*def.* – The beginning of the note is slightly louder, there is no decay and the length is half of the note it is attached to.

## VOLUME

Power and quantity of sound are trademarks of great brass ensembles. This type of playing requires a constant monitoring of the player's quality and intonation. **The key to playing loud is relaxation.** An ugly, "spread" tone is often the result of tension and forced breathing. You must stay "open" to maximize the amount of air involved during the inhalation to produce a large and flowing *fff* exhale. The corners of the mouth must be kept firm to support the large volume of air pouring through the aperture (the opening of the lips inside the mouthpiece). However, the aperture itself must remain as relaxed as possible. Visualize the lips being wrapped around the air stream when playing at fuller dynamic levels. Great care should be taken through the building of volume over a given period of time. Playing loud with a round, beautiful sound is a goal that will require great concentration and a good deal of time. By finals night, if you stick to this technique packet and what the staff teaches you, standing ovation inducing volumes will be no problem whatsoever.

## PITCH & INTONATION

All brass instruments have various inherent intonation deficiencies. As a brass ensemble, we need to be aware of what deficiencies exist, and how we can correct them with our playing. We build our system of tuning through the matching of overtones, which are by definition, never out of tune. Overtones will ring when the pitches coming out of the horns are in tune. For example, when the baritone section "locks in" on and open "Bb", usually the "F" above can be heard quite clearly even though there are no performers playing it.

Tuning itself is a matter of many different aspects of your playing. Some instruments are more in-tune than others. However, be aware that the "tuning slide" on your horn is only responsible for a player's bad intonation about 10% of the time. The vast majority of the time, tuning can be corrected without making any adjustments to the horn itself. When you do not maintain relaxation, correct breathing technique, good articulation, and the other aspects of good brass technique, you will not only produce a sound that is less-than-desirable, but you will affect your intonation in a negative way. Though we will continually use tuners throughout the summer, you should become less reliant on the tuner as you progress in your ability.

### Interval Adjustment in Cents (100 cents = ½ step)

Unison	No Adjustment
Minor 2nd (e.g. B-flat to B-natural)	Raise 11.73
Major 2nd (e.g. B-flat to C)	Raise 3.91
Minor 3rd (e.g. B-flat to D-flat)	Raise 15.64
Major 3rd (e.g. B-flat to D)	Lower 13.68
Perfect 4th (e.g. B-flat to E-flat)	Lower 1.95
Tritone (e.g. B-flat to E)	Raise 3
Perfect 5th (e.g. B-flat to F)	Raise 1.95
Minor 6th (e.g. B-flat to G-flat)	Raise 13.68
Major 6th (e.g. B-flat to G)	Lower 15.64
Minor 7th (e.g. B-flat to A-flat)	Lower 3.91
Dominant 7th (e.g. B-flat to A-flat in a Bb-D-F-Ab chord)	Lower 31.17
Major 7th (e.g. B-flat to A)	Lower 11.73
Perfect Octave	No Adjustment

## CHORD PROGRESSIONS

Chord progressions are an integral part of every brass player's daily routine. As we play through these progressions, be aware of all of the notes changing around you. For example: If you play the same note in two different chords, you almost always have to do something different to the note to keep it in tune:

- Recognize what part of the chord you are playing. Is it the root? Or the third?
- Listen with “big ears.” Know all of the parts and how your part fits into the ensemble.
- Crescendo the moving lines (especially the descending passages).

## BALANCE & BLEND

The first criterion toward achieving great balance and blend is perfect intonation. If one note in a chord is played out of tune, then balance cannot be achieved properly. The second criterion is knowing who has the moving line, and who has the melody. This is achieved by keeping your ears aware of the parts being played around you. When trying to achieve good balance and blend:

- Ask yourself, “am I in tune with the ensemble?” First listen to intonation in your section, then branch out to other sections, always keeping in mind that you should listen down to the bass voice.
- If you are supporting a moving line, ask yourself, “am I playing louder than that line?”
- Finally, ask yourself, “am I playing within the other sounds, balancing my sound against it with a rich, supported, full bodied tone?”

Balance and Blend requires the performer to listen very closely. There are 3 levels of listening required if you are to become a greatly balanced brass section:

- **Level One Listening** focuses on the sounds, volume, style, etc. of him- or herself. Self-awareness is an important key toward higher-level playing.
- **Level Two Listening** focuses on the sounds, volume, style, etc. of the other members in each respective section of the horn line.
- **Level Three Listening** focuses on the sounds, volume, style, etc. of all instruments in the ensemble.

## BOPPING

Bopping is a technique that is used to improve timing and perfect uniform articulation and tone production. Bopping is executed by reducing every note down to a staccato (detached) eighth note. Additional rules to bopping are as follows:

- Everything is performed at the dynamic of *p* (piano).
- Make sure the throat is open and relaxed. No “Dit” articulation should be heard. Only “dAAH.”
- Keep all notes open-ended (detached articulation).

## PEDAL TONES

Pedal tones are an important part of our brass program and should be a part of every brass player’s daily ritual. When playing pedal tones listen carefully to the pitch. These notes do not actually exist and you need to “push” them down as you play them. Make sure that your corners stay somewhat firm in the pedal register. **If you do not keep your embouchure the same as when playing in your instrument’s normal register, working pedal tones will bring no results!** The effective use of pedals in your warm-down and practice routine will:

- Soothe your embouchure
- Provide greater command of your instrument
- Aid your attack confidence
- Develop better lip vibration
- Create a bigger sound in all registers
- Develop endurance

## FINGER TECHNIQUE

When playing fast passages, we recommend pressing the valves down with authority, while keeping a relaxed feel in the wrists and fingers. Do not lose control of the valve on the way back up. The fingers should be rounded and the tips should press the valve straight up and down. If a player pushes the valves on an angle, the valves will stick and make technical passages unplayable.



To work on your dexterity (the speed and flexibility with which you can change valve combinations—essential for runs and other fast sections), practice scales and Clark studies in multiple keys. These not only familiarize you with playing in different keys (which you will need during your show), but allow you to master nearly any run you come across with ease very quickly (as you will have undoubtedly practiced it in some form through these exercises).

# Forte Drum and Bugle Corps

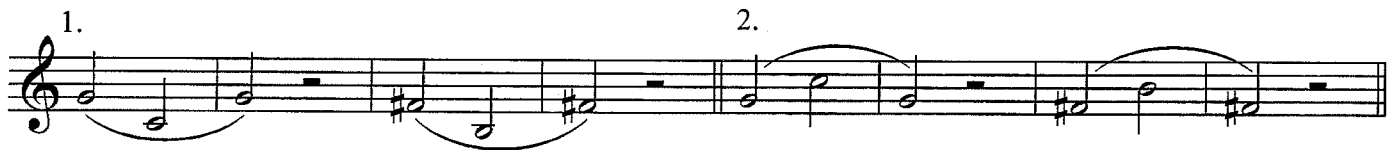
## Brass Handbook 2010

LONG TONES (will be performed as both 3 and 4 releases)

By: Andrew Lee  
Contributions by Chris Green



### LIP SLURS



11. 12. 13.



ARTICULATION AND FLEXIBILITY

1.



2.



3.



4.



5. Will be performed with various subdivisions and releases



DEXTERITY AND ARTICULATION

"Fun Times"

Key of F

Key of E-Flat

5

CLARKE STUDIES

F Major

9

E-Flat Major

14

B-Flat Major

19

C Major

24

CHORD PROGRESSIONS

F-Major Progression

29

B-Flat Minor Progression

Fort Forte

40

4

F Progression

B-Flat Minor Progression

29

1. 2. Space 4. 5. 1. 2. 3. 4.

Fort Forte

40

# O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Bach Chorale

J.S. Bach / arr. Martin

Score

$\text{♩} = 72$

Musical score for Soprano, Mellophone, Baritone/Euphonium, and Tuba. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 72. It features a first and second ending for each part. The Soprano part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The Mellophone part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The Baritone/Euphonium part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The Tuba part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The score includes first and second endings for each part, with first endings marked '1.' and second endings marked '2.'.

Musical score for Soprano, Mellophone, Baritone/Euphonium, and Tuba. The score is in 4/4 time. It features a first and second ending for each part. The Soprano part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The Mellophone part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The Baritone/Euphonium part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The Tuba part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The score includes first and second endings for each part, with first endings marked '1.' and second endings marked '2.'.