

Why not extend your palette with special effects? Part 2 By Dean Stallard

Here are a couple more special effects that have no other benefit than giving you a larger tool box to choose from. But isn't that reason enough to learn them? These are not difficult effects to learn, giving you easily won variety for improvising, especially with Halloween coming soon.

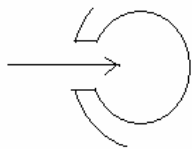
Last time we looked at whisper or whistle tones and as promised this time we are going to look at another type of whistle;

Jet whistle

Jet whistles are extremely easy to execute as, in those famous words from the film, "you just put your lips together and blow"! You cover the embouchure hole with your lips and blow, it's that simple, but there are a number of factors that will allow you to change the sound you are making.

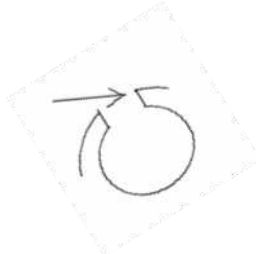
The angle of the embouchure hole in relation to the stream of air flowing into the flute will have a drastic effect not only on the pitch of the jet whistle but also how long you can sustain it and your endurance.

If you direct the air straight into the flute there will be little or no resistance. This will produce a jet whistle with very few higher partials (harmonics) but you will also get very dizzy after just a few jet whistles. This can be a useful exercise for teachers to put themselves in the new-beginner's shoes and experience the same giddy spells they do 😊



With the flute angled in there is little or no resistance as the air stream passes straight into the flute

If on the other hand you rotate the flute outwards (keeping the embouchure completely covered by your lips) the air stream will hit the edge of the embouchure before deflecting into the flute. This will create resistance that you should feel as back pressure in your mouth. It will also create a totally different sounding jet whistle, rich in upper partials, at the same time as allowing you to sustain the effect for longer.



By keeping a more normal blowing angle the air hits the edge of the embouchure creating turbulence and resistance.

Experiment with different blowing angles to find the effect you want.

Another factor that will affect the jet whistle is how hard you blow. Try blowing lightly and rapidly increase the air flow, tailing off at the end as you run out of breath. You should have made a sound something like an elephant that just got a mouse in its enclosure!!

Try now doing the same again but move rapidly up and down a scale figure (it's best to start on a low note like C1 or D1) as you crescendo and diminuendo. This should sound something like the wind whistling through a haunted house.

More spooky effects can be created simply by experimenting with variation in how hard you blow. Blowing lightly can create a longer background effect while blowing very hard can create a sudden shock that will have the audience jump out of their seats.

The opposite to jet whistles must be.....

Residual Tones

A residue is something that is left when the main component has evaporated and this effect is created by doing the exact opposite to what you did for a jet whistle. What you are after is a totally unfocused sound, containing mostly air but with a hint of the sound that would normally be there.

Instead of covering the embouchure with the lips you keep the flute in something like a normal playing position and open the lips to allow the air to spread in all directions. You can also keep your lips in a normal playing position and blow so lightly that you don't get any proper sound (but of course not so lightly that you end up with a whisper tone instead).

Nearly all student players can play residual tones already, as they do it by force of habit when they get new music, embarrassedly breathing over the flute while fingering the new notes to get the sequence, while wishing they had practiced their scales which are one of the best aids in sightreading!

Well now it's time to take residual tones into proper use. Try the scale figure you used on the jet whistle (with or without crescendo and diminuendo) for another spooky Halloween effect.

Experiment with varying degrees of focus in the lips and different strengths of breath. You can get a very good effect if you set your tongue as though you are going to say "shhhh" and bare your teeth. This really spreads the air at the same time as keeping a good speed on the air that is lucky enough to actually hit the flute.

If you add to this a "k" articulation from the throat you will get a nice percussive effect that sounds like Thomas the Tank Engine letting off steam. Add a simple sniff of the nose (shouldn't be hard at this time of year) and you can be Thomas pulling away from the station in the following sequence;

at rest.....starting up.....picking up speed.....chuffing along.....Whistle!!

The musical notation is on a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). It consists of the following elements:

- A whole note labeled 'JW' with a dynamic marking of *p*.
- A half note labeled 'R' with a dynamic marking of *mf*.
- A quarter note labeled 'R'.
- A quarter note labeled 'R'.
- A quarter note labeled 'S'.
- A half note labeled 'simile'.
- A series of eighth notes, starting with a repeat sign, labeled 'accel. poco a poco'.
- A quarter note labeled 'JW' with a dynamic marking of *sfz*.
- A quarter note labeled 'JW' with a dynamic marking of *sfz*.

JW= jet whistle R = residual tone S = sniff

Next time we'll make some thumps and bangs.