

MUSIC FOR THE LOVE OF IT

April 1995

TIMBRE

by Ted Rust

Timbre is the character of a sound, apart from its pitch and volume. (For purposes of this discussion, let's also put aside articulation and vibrato, which concern changes of pitch and volume within the duration of a note.) Timbre alone contains information that makes any instrument or voice distinct from all others, yet allows it a wide range of nuance within its individual palette. Wind and string players work with timbre all the time, but do not find it easy to talk about.

What It Can Do

Timbre has enormous power to communicate feelings. Listen to Ernest Borgnine in *Bad Day at Black Rock*: "Mess with me and I'll *kick your lungs in*."* There is no crescendo, no accent on the words he chooses to stress. With a subtle shift of tone color, he attaches chilling conviction to the italicized words. Listen to a recording of Marcel Tabuteau, arguably this century's most influential oboist. His dynamic level is surprisingly level, and the tone is not lush or pretty, yet the music is full of life, the tone color constantly signaling the direction of his phrases. With no change in volume, a timbre change can make an instrument blend into or dominate an ensemble.

What Is It?

Timbre is often called tone color, and color can be a helpful source of analogies. Pigments are readily described in terms of hue (red to yellow to blue), value (light to dark, by adding black) and saturation (intense to pale, by adding white). Tone colors seem to vary in at least as many ways, although music theory does not offer such neat categories. We use terms like warm, cold, dark, light, covered, open, full, hollow, nasal, veiled, focussed, spread, opaque, transparent, hard, edgy, bright or even velvety, but more often we fall back on examples.

Timbre, like visual color, is most precisely defined by its spectrum. The spectrum of a sound is a recipe for the blend of frequencies it contains. Each distinct frequency is called a *partial*. For sounds having a discernible pitch, the sound spectrum will include a fundamental and a

Musical score for "The Fall of the House of Baring" (3-part vocal). The score is in 3/4 time and features three vocal parts (1, 2, and 3). The lyrics are: "Call low Led den mind — —, and Baring's Bank is left a wale and took to his heels, dugged out — of cyrenan wright the so he mid to wack derwyle, get his best to". The tempo is marked "Allegro".

Musical score for "Bad Day at Black Rock" (3-part vocal). The score is in 3/4 time and features three vocal parts (1, 2, and 3). The lyrics are: "kick your lungs in from his thick fingers - in - ten. He sight in Singapore — (naughty boy!), and no-one from local shores brought up the bar. He's got a whole lot of money in his pocket, who took a man - time!". The tempo is marked "Allegro".

harmonic series of higher partials, although it may contain prominent inharmonic frequencies as well. There is no simple recipe for the spectrum of a given instrument: unlike synthesizers, acoustical instruments produce very dissimilar sound spectra on different pitches, and performers have great latitude to vary them further.

How Do We Know?

One clue our brains use to recognize different instruments, voices and vowel colors is the sound of unusually loud partials called *formants*. Each voice and instrument has certain narrow ranges of frequency that resonate more loudly than others, because of the physical shape of the contained air volume and its means of connection with the outside. Any partials that fall in a formant frequency range become especially prominent in the combined tone, and lend it a distinct hue. In speech, characteristic mixes of the lowest two formant frequencies are recognized as vowel sounds; strong formants color the "mournful" lower notes of the English horn and viola.

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Friends of the late Mary C. Sanks, founder and director of the Annual Chamber Music Festival at Bozeman, MT, may wish to make donations in her memory to the ACMF Endowment Fund or the Mary C. Sanks Scholarship Fund, in care of Carole Oeschger, Department of Music, MSU, Bozeman, MT 59717.

In reply to a question from Susan Carroll, the National Flute Convention will be in Orlando, FL, August 17-20. Contact Phyllis Pemberton, 805/297-5287, fax 297-0753, or write National Flute Association, PO Box 800597, Santa Clarita, CA 91380-0597.

LETTERS

Editor:

While we were pleased to be mentioned in the recent news item about Sara Zallman's unique organizational abilities for chamber music players in our area (ACMP Newsletter Supplement, February 1995), there were factual errors that should have been checked. You failed to mention that the program is funded this year by a generous grant from the Amateur Chamber Music Players Foundation.

Originally founded and financially supported by a board member, the intent of the organization was to encourage retired musicians in the area to meet one another and to have a convenient location in which to play chamber music on a regular basis. It has grown considerably since its founding, starting with sixteen players and having now an active membership of over sixty players of varying ages and abilities. They include string and wind players as well as pianists. Players meet every other week, are grouped according to preference as well as ability by a faculty coordinator, and in most cases work on their own, although faculty coaches are available if requested. Players have use of the school's chamber music collection and the help of the coordinator in selecting appropriate repertoire.

Settlement Music School, one of the oldest community music schools in the country, whose Executive Director is Robert — and not Frank — Capanna, has a long history of developing special programs in response to community needs. The similarities in the two chamber music programs coexisting at the Jenkintown Branch of the school are primarily in their use of a facility that has minimal use during morning hours. I concur with Sara in encouraging other amateur chamber players to seek similar community resources.

Marsha Hogan, Director
Jenkintown Branch,
Settlement Music School
Jenkintown, PA

SUMMER WORKSHOP UPDATE

HIDDEN VALLEY MUSIC SEMINARS

Hidden Valley Music Seminars hosts many adult seminars and youth camps, including the John Mack Oboe Master Class, June 19-24, and the Northern California Flute Camp, July 16-22. Write Hidden Valley Music Seminars P.O. Box 116, Carmel Valley, CA 94525.

JAZZ CAMP WEST

Jazz Camp West, an intensive jazz music, dance and vocal program for adults and older teens, will be held June 24-July 1 in the redwoods of La Honda, CA, 50 miles south of San Francisco. It is open to all ability levels. For a brochure, write or call Jazz Camp West, 765 61st St., Oakland, CA 94609, 510/287-8880.

JAZZ IN JULY

The fourteenth annual Jazz in July Workshops in Improvisation will take place July 10-21 at the University of Massachusetts. Among the coaching staff will be the Billy Taylor Trio, Sheila Jordan, Dr. Yusef Lateef and Ted Dunbar. there will be a string program with the the Turtle Island String Quartet, July 17-21. Admission is by taped audition. Call 413/545-3530.

MUSIC DISCOVERY WORKSHOP

The Music Discovery Workshop in San Rafael, CA, is an innovative summer day camp for children and teachers, sponsored by the San Francisco Early Music Society. It teaches Renaissance history through music, dance and drama. It is designed for children 7-12, with a parallel program for adults. Contact Lee McRae, 510/848-5591.

PARK CITY INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Park City (UT) International Music Festival will include the Retreat Program, a professionally coached adult amateur chamber music workshop for all ability levels, July 17 through August 14. Contact Leslie or Russ Harlow, 801/649-5309, fax 801/645-8446.

WESTMINSTER CHOIR COLLEGE

From mid-June through August, Westminster Choir College of Rider University, Princeton, NJ, will sponsor more than fifty week-long workshops and seminars. General topic areas include choral conducting, church music, handbells, music education, voice, keyboard, and synthesizer, MIDI and computer use, as well as a recorder weekend and a Schubert festival. For more information call 609/924-7416, ext. 227.

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OVERSEAS WORKSHOPS

<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Association de Musiciens Amateurs; contact Mairie, BP 81, La Bourbaule France 63150	Orchestra, free-lance chamber music, seminars & concerts	July 3-14	La Bourbaule, France		
Chamber Music Holidays 57 Chatsworth Road Bournemouth BH8 8SL England	Chamber playing, concerts, master classes	June 12-26 and Sep 11-25 July 1-12 and Aug 29-Sep 9 Nov 4-11	Corfu, Greece Prague, Czechoslovakia Caribbean	£440 £720 \$2,199+	
Jane M. Carhart 25 Alden Terrace Millbrook NY 12545 USA	Chamber music in a farmhouse in Provence	April 13-18 only a few places left	Ardeche region, France	\$475+	914/ 677-5092
International Workshops 187 Aqua View Road Cedarburg WI 53012 USA	Strings, piano, orchestral & choral conducting	July 18-31	Glasgow, Scotland	\$1,595+	414/ 377-7062
Landesmusikrat Hessen E.V. attn: Juan von Haselburg Eschersheimer Landstr. 325 6000 Frankfurt am Main 1 Germany	Chamber music for strings, with Alfred Breith, Christian Sikorski, Rainer Kimstedt & Georg Oyen. Intensive courses.	June 14-18 October 13-17	Burg Fürsteneck Burg Fürsteneck	DM 375 DM 375	(49-69) 7447-1815
Musiche Ferien-Kurse für Amateure A. von Tószeghi Dufourstr. 7 CH-9008 St. Gallen Switzerland	Chamber music for strings, winds & piano; orchestra, flute ensemble, voice, instrumental, conducting & piano improv. also available	July 9-15 July 16-22 July 23-29 July 31-Aug 6 Oct 8-14	Abelboden Abelboden Braunwald Braunwald Abelboden	fr. 970 fr. 970 fr. 950 fr. 950	tel/fax o71/25.24.22
Orlando Festival Kiezergracht 261 1016 EC Amsterdam Netherlands	Chamber music for pre-formed ensembles, assigned repertoire Vermeer Quartet, Orlando Quartet, Altenburg Trio, others coach	July 18-25 July 26-Aug 1	Rolduc Abbey Netherlands	Dfl 1050	31.20. 6226979 fax 6229081
Zenith International Travel 16 East 34th St. New York NY 10006 USA	Chamber music coached by Sebu Sirinian, Lisa Tipton, David Bakamjian, Gwendolyn Mok	September 4-12	Roquebrune, France	\$2,049	800/ 221-2786 fax 212/ 594-4754

WEEKEND WORKSHOPS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>
May 13-14	New Haven CT	Music improvisation		Music for People	7 Middletown Rd. Roxbury NH 03431	603/352-4941
May 19-21	Delaware OH	Chamber music	\$75- \$85	Delaware Chamber Music Festival, Inc.	242 N. Sinsbury Dr. Worthington OH 43085	614/848-3312
June 11-12	Kentfield CA	Chamber music	\$110	Chamber Musicians of Northern California	3313 Grand Ave. Oakland CA 94610	510/452-1221
July 6-8	West Dover VT	Chamber music	\$150	Music in the Mountains	Shield Inn, P.O. Box 100 West Dover VT 05356	802/464-3984
Oct 14-15	Hayward CA	Chamber music	\$110	Chamber Musicians of Northern California	3313 Grand Ave. Oakland CA 94610	510/452-1221

BOOK REVIEWS

IMPROVISING ON ANYTHING

Improvising Violin by Julie Lyonn Lieberman. New York: Huiksi Press, P.O. Box 495S, New York, NY 10024. Paperback, \$23.50. Reviewed by Katrina Wreede

Julie Lyonn Lieberman's newly revised edition of her book, *Improvising Violin*, is a thoughtful, inspiring work. Its title notwithstanding, the book is useful not only to violinists, but to anyone interested in the history, people, styles and study of improvised music and especially improvised string music. I recommend it to any musician at any level interested in some gentle, intelligent direction towards self-expression through improvisation.

Lieberman starts by taking the reader through the history of the violin in American improvised music, from the early days of slave "fiddle" playing. Most of the music is forgotten, except in its influence on later styles, but some of it is documented in old newspaper ads and a few "race record" 78s. One poignant clipping from 1791 is an advertisement for a "RUNAWAY — a Negro man named Robert. 23 years old, about 5'10" high. Speaks good English, is a fiddler and took his fiddle with him." Ms. Lieberman goes on to cover the black string band tradition, the contributions of the early great players, and present-day violinists from disciplines as varied as Indian classical music (L. Shankar) and contemporary rock (Mark Wood).

Lieberman's approach is both systematic and entertaining. Some knowledge of music theory would help to understand the discussion of scales and chords, but a careful reading and slow, deliberate practice of the exercises she provides will bring results for anyone. I know because I used a similar approach when I learned to improvise jazz on the viola, and the skill has served me better than I could ever have dreamed, both professionally and personally. I recommend taking the chord charts, patterns and pentatonic scales very seriously. They are written in the treble clef but are well worth transposing if you need to.

The textural effects, or "breathing life into the music," are described with string technique in mind. You will hear all these sounds — note bends, slides, shakes, etc. — from any jazz instrumentalist (except a pianist, who would kill to do a note bend). Playing them on other instruments requires just a little experimenting. They are expressive techniques that apply in many styles.

For violinists and other treble clef people, the transcriptions of solos in different styles are a whole course of study by themselves. One of the most frustrating things about starting out is finding playable, stylistically accurate solos that are interesting and still easy enough to that one can concentrate on the new techniques. Lieberman offers several to get you going.

The information on amplification and effects is a good basic introduction to what is available. It will give you something to ask for at the guitar shop when you first look around, but if you are a string player who wants to play really loudly, nothing replaces experimenting with everyone else's equipment until you find your ideal sound. Improvisers will probably let you try things because they tend to be supportive of string players: we are still a novelty in many circles. After your basic work on listening and understanding chords and scales, the most useful part of the book for learning specific styles is the chapter, "Introduction to Stylistic Units." In it, Lieberman supplies a straightforward description of each style — blues, swing, jazz, rock, folk and New Age. Under New Age, she discusses Eastern influences on improvising violin. Each one also covers typical idiomatic techniques like vibrato, bow and finger tricks, harmonic language and note choices. She gives practice hints with "one key a day" and "alternate chord" exercises, among others. One of the most important parts of the book is the "Support Materials" section at the end of each chapter, with an appropriate short discography as well as readings, study aids and a reference list of people, companies and publishers. There is also a fairly complete discography at the end that samples recordings of the major violin improvisers.

I did regret that the author devoted so little space to the emotional and musical aspects of "free" playing. If you are seriously interested in improvising without any stylistic rules or for a more in-depth view of the spiritual and humanistic side of music-making, you might want to read Lieberman's book, *You Are Your Instrument* (reviewed in this newsletter, July 1991). Besides being a wonderfully useful book, it will help with the feelings of validation and trust necessary for playing "free." Also, David Darling's workshops are a good, supportive place to explore improvising outside a specific style.

There is a large and growing community of string players and other musicians exploring all sorts of



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improvisation. So far, everyone has had to dig their own path. With Julie Lieberman's book we now have some intelligent direction and support. She offers tools to start on the path, not to learn to play the same way, but to have a similar enough vocabulary that we can share ourselves and our music.

Katrina Wreede of Oakland, CA, former violist with the Turtle Island String Quartet, composes and performs in the "Improvisational Chamber Music" style. She will give the premiere performance of her Concerto for Improvising Viola and Orchestra in May 1995.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR LISTENING

*Lies My Music Teacher Told Me: Music Theory for Grownups by Gerald Eskelin, D.M.E. Woodland Hills, CA: Stage 3 Publishing, December 1994. Paperback, \$14.95
Reviewed by Ted Rust*

In *Lies My Music Teacher Told Me*, Gerald Eskelin corrects a number of widely accepted misconceptions about music theory, and offers in their place a clear, easy-to-follow way to perform and think about music that reconciles modern theory about the perception of pitch and rhythm with conventional music notation and the real-world techniques of the best musicians.

Eskelin's first main point is to stress the importance of using acoustically pure harmonic intervals, i.e. just intonation, rather than equal temperament, for learning, teaching and performing music. (Eskelin does not suggest doing away with equal temperament and fixed-pitch instruments, but simply asks us not to adopt their limitations as our own.) Acoustically pure intervals, he observes, are rooted in clear physical sensations that arise when pairs of sounds have frequencies in simple whole-number ratios one to the other, making them easy to remember and reproduce, without any need for absolute pitch recognition. When performed accurately these intervals produce beautiful sounds. Students, he believes, should be taught from the beginning to trust their ears in this matter, not the piano. Then they will not have to learn good intonation later as a departure from equal temperament, or worse, go through life playing and singing sour intervals.

Eskelin rings the changes on this point as it applies to the concept of scales (all half steps are not equal), ear training (don't use the piano as a model; learn harmonic relationships before scales), the concept of an interval (a perception of consonance), the practice of tuning (pitches must be adjusted to their harmonic context), the concept of a key (the harmonic relations of a central pitch), and the minor mode (not a mode in the medieval sense of a distinct scale, but a color modification of the diatonic major scale, with flatted third and sixth degrees, and only rare use of the flatted seventh degree suggested by its key signature).

Eskelin's other main point is that meter, like harmony, is based upon simple sensations arising in the way we hear music. We notice repeated patterns of two or three regularly spaced pulses as groups. We combine groups of pulses in twos or threes to form metric structures.

Eskelin shows how any rhythmic notation can be understood — and felt — in groups of twos and threes. Symmetrical groups have a regular pulse. Where groups of twos and threes are combined asymmetrically to form meters like 5/8, the pattern will contain an irregular pulse, and the performers need to concentrate on the next faster level of the meter to keep a steady tempo. Accents that make certain notes seem to be on "strong" beats may be provided by a melodic difference, a volume difference, or merely a mental expectation — the metric accent — that stresses the note once the pattern has been established. Stronger stresses occur when different types of accent coincide. When metric accents, which are silent, conflict with audible ones, the result is syncopation.

The author speaks with the authority conferred by a doctorate in music education and a successful conducting career. He helps the reader visualize his ideas with lots of clear diagrams. In trying to avoid a stuffy academic tone, he often adopts a brash, accusatory manner that may be amusing to some readers. But bad manners notwithstanding, this is a well-considered, insightful and very practical work for all teachers, performers and lovers of music.

Publisher/oboist Ted Rust teaches, performs and loves music.

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SELF-EXPRESSION

TIMBRE

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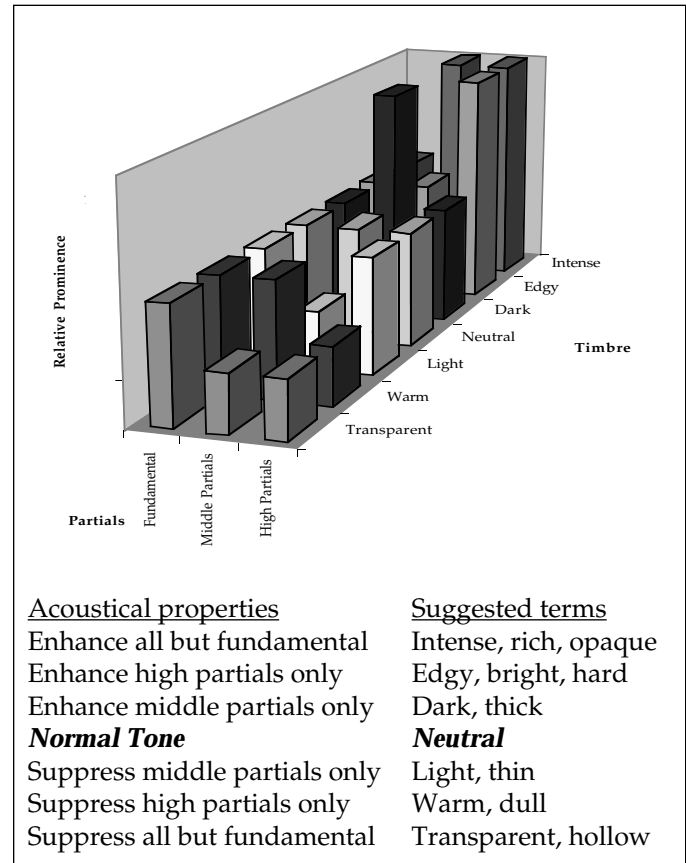
The formants used in ordinary speech are in the treble range, from a little above middle C to about three octaves above. The position of the jaw affects the pitch of the first speech formant, which rises as the jaw opens wider. The second speech formant is similarly modified by lowering or raising the body of the tongue, and the third by lowering or raising its tip. Trained singers and stage actors learn to modify the timbre of their voices for better “projection” in performance — the ability to make oneself heard without seeming to force the sound. The modifications are toward broader vowel sounds — “ee” shifts toward “ü” and “head” towards “heard” — and an open-throated, yawn-like manner of tone production. The resulting sound spectrum has slightly lower first and second formant frequencies, but also a much louder third formant — the partials pitched just above the top of the piano keyboard, not the ones used to produce vowel sounds — than ordinary speech or instrumental sound. Its quality is called “darkened” and “covered” by vocal instructors.

Inherent Timbres

Wind and string players can modify the relative prominence but not the pitch of their instrument’s formant sounds. Every instrument therefore has a “natural” or inherent timbre dictated largely by its formant frequencies. Each string or register of the instrument has its own inherent timbre as well, which can lead to abrupt changes in timbre when a melody moves from one string or register to another. Beginning and intermediate teaching, to the extent that it addresses timbre at all, often stresses the cultivation of a uniform or smoothly graduated timbre across these natural breaks. Unfortunately, this can result in a technique more focussed on the suppression of color than its cultivation. While a pleasant tone and the ability to avoid jarring changes in timbre are valuable assets for melodic playing, by themselves they are expressively neutral.

Timbre Variations

Thinking and talking about timbre variations is hard to do with precision because common terms are not used consistently. For example, the simple dark-bright distinction presented in most elementary books on instrumental technique is misleading, because darkness and brightness are not really opposite ends of a scale, but independent qualities: a musical tone can sound very dark (with loud partials immediately above the fundamental), very bright (with loud partials sounding in the upper registers), neither or both! A simple typology of timbre modifications available on most wind and string instruments is diagrammed in the accompanying chart and table.



One’s most neutral, ordinary tone can serve as a point of departure. The amplitudes of its fundamental frequency, its middle partials and its upper partials are each defined as “medium”. This timbre appears in the middle of the chart and table.

Moving away from this timbre towards the bottom of the table or the front of the chart involves suppressing partials other than the fundamental. It is analogous to using a paler color of paint. One may suppress either high or middle partials or both. By suppressing just the low partials, the tone is made lighter and thinner. An example of this timbre is the sound of muted strings. Suppressing only the high partials makes the tone duller, with a pleasant warmth but little projection, like the sound of a Baroque wooden flute. Suppressing all but the fundamental frequency makes the tone more transparent, in the literal sense that it is less effective at covering the sounds of other instruments, even when played quite loudly. Naturally transparent-sounding instruments are tuning forks, glass harmonicas and cheap electronic keyboards.

Moving away from neutral timbre in the other direction involves strengthening partials other than the fundamental, and is much like using more saturated pigments. Strengthening the middle partials alone, makes the sound darker but does not materially increase its projection in an ensemble, because so much competing sound occurs in the same frequencies.

Strengthening just the high partials gives an edgy, bright sound — an extreme example is the *sul ponticello* effect made by bowing right on the bridge, most familiar as the “ice” sound in Vivaldi’s Winter Concerto. When one strengthens all the partials relative to the fundamental, the resulting timbre is generally regarded as more intense and rich. It is relatively opaque timbre, easy to project and hard for others to blot out, and so tends to be favored by orchestral and operatic soloists. Despite its association with heroic soloistic exertions, an intense timbre actually permits greater economy of effort than a neutral one.

Controlling Timbre

The technical means for producing timbre modifications in string and wind instruments are straightforward, though by no means easy to master. It is quite possible to selectively enhance or suppress the high or middle partials of one’s basic tone so as to vary the timbre in any of the six directions suggested above.

There are three main ways to change the relative strength of a selected group of partials. One can (1) change the amount of energy being applied to the part of the instrument that is vibrating at that frequency, (2) change the loss of energy (due to friction or air leakage) from the same area, or (3) change the coupling of that area with the outside air.

For string players, bowing or plucking near the fingerboard puts the most energy into the fundamental. As the sounding point is shifted towards the bridge, a greater share of energy goes into higher and higher

partials. (Compensating increases of bow pressure and reductions of bow speed are required to avoid squeals and keep the fundamental sounding at all.) Loss of energy in the high partials comes from internal friction, as when one uses a thicker, lower string in a higher position, and (on fretless instruments) from the dampening effect of the soft fingertips, which also increases in high positions.

For both both strings and winds, the use of a mute muffles the fundamental, allowing the other partials to predominate. Harmonic fingerings go the next step and completely cancel the fundamental. Because harmonics need little bow or breath pressure to sound, they generally yield a lighter, more transparent timbre than the standard fingerings.

For wind instruments, the greatest share of sound energy goes into the fundamental when a large volume of air is used at very low pressure — the way I play a flute. Increasing air pressure, while decreasing its quantity by means of a smaller, better-aimed lip opening makes the upper partials relatively more prominent in the tone; this quiet, well-supported timbre, called *dolce*, has always been prized by wind players. Like singers, wind players are also able to reinforce certain harmonics of their instruments by tuning the natural resonance of their mouth and throat cavities, reducing the damping of those frequencies by their bodies. Reed players who use a flexible style of embouchure can subtly adjust the point of contact between lip and reed within the area of strong resonance to control the relative strength of high and

low partials with the same effect as moving the sounding point on a string, while larger movements towards the tip have the effect of dampening high partials. Woodwinds have an additional timbre resource in the use of alternative fingerings, a technique whose numerous possibilities were documented by the Italian composer Bruno Bartolozzi in *New Sounds for Woodwinds*, with fingering charts for flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon and an accompanying record. The alternative fingerings apply to notes that can be fingered with two or more open tone holes. Standard woodwind fingerings cover tone holes progressively from the top of the instrument, leaving a row of more or less equally spaced open holes below a closed pipe. This system allows the most opportunities for a full harmonic series of partials to sound, and minimizes color differences between adjacent notes. (The bell simulates an extended row of

TECHNICAL RESOURCES FOR TIMBRE CONTROL

	<u>Strings</u>	<u>Winds</u>
Enhance upper partials	Sounding point nearer bridge (1) More bow pressure (1) Standard fingerings	More air pressure (2) Mouth resonance Standard fingerings
Suppress upper partials	Use lower string /higher position	Less air pressure Long fingerings Reeds— muffle tip
Enhance lower partials	More bow speed Sounding point nearer fingerboard	More air volume Larger opening Throat resonance
Suppress lower partials	Use mute Harmonic fingerings	Use mute Harmonic fingerings

(1) In string playing, the sounding point must always be balanced with the speed and pressure of the bow and the position at which the string is fingered. Playing nearer the bridge will generally require more pressure and less bow speed.

(2) In wind playing, the amount of air pressure used is similarly balanced with embouchure tension, shape and position.

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FROM THE HEART *by Helen Spielman*

MEETING JIMMY

For years my flute teacher talked about Jimmy. Brooks would say, "Jimmy does it this way," or "Listen to Jimmy's recording of that." After a while, I, too, thought of him as Jimmy .

When James Galway gave two concerts at Duke University in nearby Durham, Brooks and his wife had a reception at home for Galway, their longtime friend and Brooks' former teacher. So that Brooks and Mary Lou could prepare for the party, they asked my husband and me to drive Jimmy to their home. "I hope this won't put you to too much trouble," said Brooks. Trouble? Having the world's greatest flutist in my car, all to myself for 20 minutes, trouble? Was he kidding?

I was excited and thrilled. My students and friends asked what I would say to him. I didn't plan a speech or memorize a list of questions. After all, James Galway was a regular person, just like anyone else, and I wasn't expecting to feel intimidated or tongue-tied. Now if I had to play flute in front of him, that'd be another story. But I'm an extrovert and was looking forward to whatever would spring up spontaneously.

The concert included the fabulous Prokofiev Sonata, the showpiece *The Carnival of Venice*, and as encores, *The Swan* by Saint-Saens and *Danny Boy*. Galway's technique was stunning; his tone spectacular. He made engaging and humorous comments between pieces.

Many of my students were there. Rachael and Kamna, both 11, sat with their mothers in the third row. Rachael came back to the eleventh row to inform me that she was sitting so close to James Galway that she could see his wrinkles. Great. I've been teaching her for four years to listen observantly to performers, to watch fingers and embouchure, to notice breathing and posture and tone and phrasing, and she sees wrinkles. At intermission, I barely stood up to stretch when Kamna was at my side, her eyes round and sparkling, saying, "Wow, did you see his fingers? I never saw fingers move so fast. They're all exercised."

After the concert, I made my way backstage, accompanied by my husband, my adult students, Rachael, Kamna, two other of my young students, Rachel and Ramona, and at least a hundred other autograph seekers. When Galway opened the door, he was in his raincoat, suitcase in hand, ready to go. He took one look at the crowd and exclaimed, "Wow, look at this! OK, let's do it." And went back inside the room, sat down at a desk, and waited for the first person to approach him. Kamna and Rachael didn't know what to do, so I encouraged them to say hello. "No, I want to wait for my mom," said one and "You go first," said the

other. So I approached him with my hand outstretched and said, "Mr. Galway, I'm Helen Spielman, Brooks' student, and I'll be taking you to the party." He warmly shook my hand and said, "For God's sake, call me Jimmy. I want to get out of here; let's go as soon as I get this over with." Then as I watched, I saw a truly gracious person patiently sign his name on programs and CD covers and greet each person in a friendly manner, even though I could sense his impatience to leave. When my 9-year-old student Rachel approached him, she had a strip of paper that had one blank music staff on it. James Galway seemed amused and asked if she was a flutist. After she answered yes he took extra time to write out the opening two measures of the Bach *B Minor Suite* in addition to his name. Rachel came and showed me her treasure. I told her, "Save this forever. It's special." She giggled and went to find her parents. Ramona handed him a program and he asked her, too, if she was a flutist. When she nodded, he said, "Well, are you going to go home and practice?" and when Ramona simply smiled, I said "Yes, she definitely is!" Jimmy chuckled.

I'm forever telling my husband not to drive so slowly, but for once I was glad about the lightness of his foot on the pedal. In the car, the three of us talked about Jimmy's four platinum and seventeen gold flutes (all with diamonds), about publishing the music he records, about anesthesiology (my husband's profession), and about the new Liebermann Concerto. Jimmy mentioned someone named "Lenny" and I realized he meant Leonard Slatkin, the conductor.

My teacher and his wife have a warm and beautiful home and there was good food and wine at the reception with flute music in the background. Most of the guests were Brooks' college students, and one or two private students like myself. Jimmy answered questions, made jokes, and signed more autographs. I was amazed at his energy, his willingness to be "on," knowing he had to get up early and play a concert in Pennsylvania the next day. I perceived him as a man with enormous fame but the graciousness to respond respectfully to comments he's heard a million times.

The next morning I lay in bed reminiscing. Brooks had thanked me for being Jimmy's chauffeur, but I wanted to thank Brooks for giving me the privilege. Then I got up, put on my jeans, and went to meet with my accompanist, to rehearse a piece for church the next day. We were working on a movement from the "Fantasia for a Gentleman" by Rodrigo, transcribed for flute by my new pal. After the first run-through, my accompanist turned to me in surprise and said, "You sound fantastic today! Your tone and phrasing are incredible!" For God's sake, call me Helen.

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BRINGING AMATEUR MUSICIANS INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by Betty Lefferts

To expand the musical knowledge of chamber musicians who have already tackled late Beethoven, Merrimack Valley Music and Arts Center (MVMAC) introduced its Workshop in Twentieth Century Music. The innovative workshop has been a success, attracting players from Maine to Florida to California. Participants tell us it has been a mind-expanding experience.

Players submit audition tapes to show that they are advanced enough for this workshop. Some of the players attend as pre-formed quartets, prepared with literature of their own selection. Others sign up individually, are placed in groups and are assigned music to learn.

The members of the renowned Da Vinci Quartet, which placed fourth in the International Chamber Music Contest in Moscow in 1992, coach the groups daily. After six days of coaching and rehearsals, the groups perform one or two movements of the works they have studied. In the workshop's first three years, participants have studied and performed works of Bartok, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Janacek and Hindemith.

This year's workshop takes place July 9-16 at Merrimack College, North Andover, MA. Information may be obtained by calling Fred Ottenheimer, 212/689-6610, or writing MVMAC for a brochure at Box 20388, Greeley Square Station, New York, NY 10001. Deadline for enrollment is June 1.



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open holes to make the last notes similar to the others in timbre.) Closing any hole below the first open one suppresses specific partials that would have sounded through that hole. The resulting timbres are distinctly colored, but lighter and more transparent than a fully developed standard tone.

Technical means exist for timbre control for winds and strings. Players can vary timbre towards greater intensity or transparency, warmth or edginess, lightness or darkness, guided by their ensemble role, expressive purpose and personal taste. With a more consistent use of vocabulary, we may also get better at thinking and talking about what we want to hear.

* *A Bad Day at Black Rock*, M-G-M Studios, 1955

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Further Reading About Timbre

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CAMP BUGLER

by Fran Thomas

As soon as possible after arriving at camp, I sought out the director, with my trumpet in hand. I had never been to a summer camp before. I found the camp director standing outside the office building with a whistle around his neck and a clipboard in his hand.

"I know the bugle calls," I told him. "Can I be the bugler?"

"You think you want to be the camp bugler?" said the director, looking at this eager little girl (I was going to be in the 5th grade). "Yes," I said. "I know all the calls."

"One of our regular staff members has always done the bugling," he said, not unkindly, but with the clear message that this was the end of it.

"Well, maybe I could help him," I persisted.

"He doesn't really need any help," replied the director. "One bugler is enough. Oh, here he comes now. Hey, Jim! Can you step over here a minute? This young lady would like to 'help' play the bugle calls." He winked at Jim. "I told her we already had a bugler."

"You play the bugle?" asked Jim.

"Well, I don't have a bugle, but I can play the calls on my trumpet," I said gamely. I had seen the camp director wink at Jim. Even as a going-to-be 5th grader, I realized I might have to hang tough in this man's world.

"I see you have your trumpet," said Jim. "Let's hear you play a few bars of 'Retreat.'" Now it was his turn to wink at the camp director. They were not mean-spirited men. It was just that little 5th grade girls were not to be taken seriously as buglers for a co-ed camp that included teenagers and was run by a totally competent all-male staff.

I blew spit and fingered my valves, although playing bugle calls doesn't actually require any valves. I had done some soft, low warm-up exercises before seeking out the camp director, so I felt ready.

I looked up at my audience of two grown men, silently waiting for me to mess up so they could get on with the business of running the camp. They had wordlessly agreed to humor me and wait for me to hang myself.

But I had practiced those bugle calls, and I was confident—and also gifted and well-taught—none of which they had bargained for. So I lifted my trumpet and played crisply with a beautiful tone and no misses. The camp director and the camp bugler, Jim, stood wide-eyed and open-mouthed. I decided I would just keep on playing until they stopped me.

I finished a flawless performance, and looked at my audience. Jim was the first to speak. "Well," he said. "Well." No more sly winks.

"Do you know 'To the Colors'?" he asked. I started in on it, but he stopped me before I had gone far. "O.K., O.K.," he said. "Hmmm."

Then he turned to the camp director. "How would it be if I play 'Reveille' and she plays the rest of them?" And to me, "You can blow my bugle if you want to—or you can just use your trumpet. I'd be glad to share the duties with you. You're quite a bugler—for a girl."

I had heard variations of that remark plenty of times and it no longer bothered me. Maybe most girls didn't play the trumpet, but I did, and I also liked to bugle.

So I was a happy camper—a 5th grade girl, sharing bugling duties with Jim, an adult male. I wasn't concerned about age and gender battles. I just wanted to bugle.