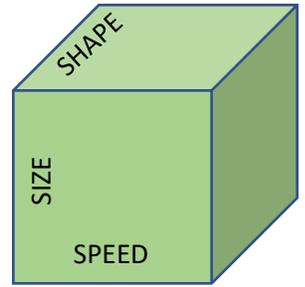


Vibrato: an ocean of possibility

Dr. Matthew Allison

As one of the flute's most versatile elements of expression, vibrato should be practiced for control over its multiple qualities. I think of vibrato of having three dimensions (like a box) that we as flutists control: speed, size, and shape. All of these qualities are independent from the other expressive elements that include dynamics, articulation, etc., and should be practiced as its own skill to master. I describe vibrato similarly to the way scientists talk about ocean waves.



SPEED

The speed of vibrato is akin to the frequency of waves. We measure it by the number times per second that the vibrato peaks. Speed is one of the easiest elements to control and create variation, as it's the easiest to measure. Use a metronome to become more expressive?!?!? Yes. Use a metronome.

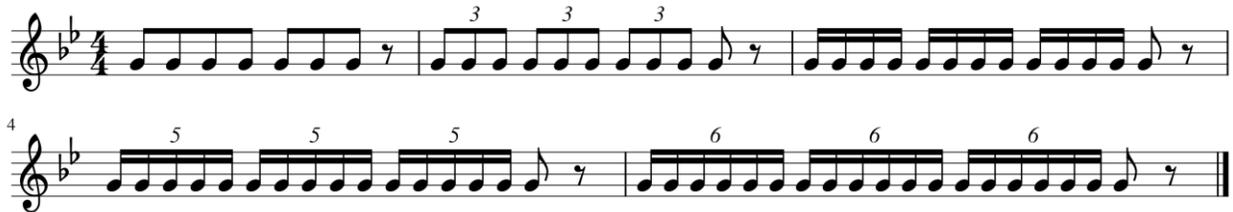
1. Speed test



Track your metronome practice, perhaps in a chart like this one.

Date	Start Tempo	End Tempo

2. Quaver counting



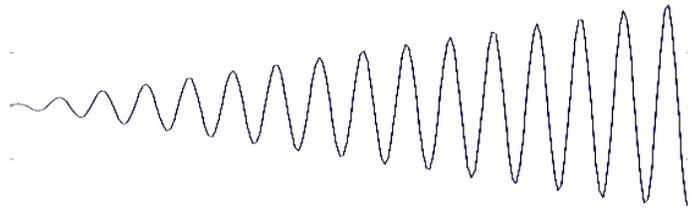
3. Quaver variation



- When do we use slower vibrato?
- When do we use faster vibrato?
- When do we accelerate vibrato?
- When do we decelerate vibrato?

SIZE

The size of the vibrato is like the distance between the crest and the trough in waves. Size of the vibrato is often times reflective of the dynamic at which we are playing - but it does not have to be dependent of it!



- I like to imagine big vibrato as giant waves, churning from the abdomen.
- I like to imagine small vibrato as a shimmering ripple, spinning within my mouth.
- Size can also include “sans” or without vibrato, like a still, reflective pool.

Waves / Forte	Waves / Mezzo	Waves / Piano
Ripples / Forte	Ripples / Mezzo	Ripples / Piano

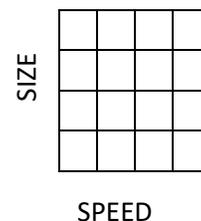
Practice size independent of dynamic; use this chart for reference.

Also practice vibrato within the dynamic, increasing the size of the vibrato as you crescendo and decreasing the size of the vibrato as you decrescendo.

2-D Vibrato

Practice the first two dimensions of vibrato with control.

Use the imagery of the front of the box to plot your vibrato.

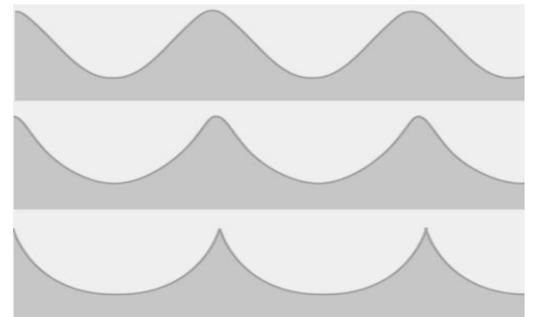


SHAPE

The shape of vibrato has to do with its roundness or sharpness, primarily of the crests. This quality is determined largely by how quickly and forcefully the musician contracts to increase air pressure, and releases to decrease. Part of that speed and intensity is determined by the parts of the body that are initiating and forming the contractions.

Generally, we play with a rolling wave vibrato. Too round can give a sluggish quality. Too sharp can give a piercing quality.

Shape of vibrato is directly related to tone colors.



DIRECTION, FORM, & MOVEMENT

Put the elements of expressive vibrato together to create an experience. Use the three dimensions of the vibrato box to create unique vibrato that suits the expression of the music. **Your options are as expansive as the ocean!**