

Two things are important to mention here. First, it is essential to maintain a strong steady flow of air to compensate for the closing and opening of the throat while singing. Also, watch out for a slight buzzing which may occur in your embouchure; this buzz may deteriorate your natural flute sound. I've found that it is not possible to eliminate this problem entirely, but practice will eventually eliminate most of it. You may even find that your extra concentration on air flow and embouchure will help to improve your natural flute sound.

3. *What effect does voice over flute have on vibrato?*

I've found that vibrato is, for the most part, ineffective, due to the double job your throat must perform to both produce sound and direct the air flow for the flute.

4. *What equipment do you use?*

I use a solid sterling silver open hole flute. For special effects I add a tape echo delay and a touch of reverb.

In closing I would like to say that using the voice over flute effect is a great stimulant for your imagination and your creative sense. It allows you a freedom and new avenue of expression. Along with it goes a responsibility to maintain and constantly improve your basic instrumental ability. Pride in your ability is important because it gives you the confidence necessary to be a good soloist. ■

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Bobby is the featured flute soloist with the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra. A veteran of many national and international tours with the group, he also is a featured soloist on Maynard's "Primal Scream" album and later releases on the Columbia label.

A native of Buffalo, New York, Bobby commenced his musical career while in the fourth grade.

Bobby performs on a Gemeinhardt "K.G." model flute.



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The technique of performing with voice over flute — singing and playing at the same time — is often used as a gimmick to add excitement to a solo or to achieve special sounds in conjunction with electronic effects. Although I do enjoy these effects, I feel that the technique of using voice over flute has not been explored for its full melodic potential. There are many interesting ways to combine unison and octave doubling of the melody line along with parallel and contrapuntal harmonies. Once you have learned the technique, you can explore many of the creative possibilities for using voice over flute.

Unison and Parallel Harmonies

Your success with voice over flute depends greatly on how well you can vocalize. To produce the voice tone while playing, simply concentrate on the same things you would if you were singing. To experience the correct feeling of playing and singing, pretend to hold your flute as you practice vocalizing. Think of an *oo* syllable to help keep your throat open. Then form your embouchure as if you were about to play. Maintaining your embouchure at all times, begin singing a major

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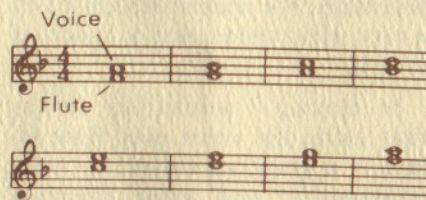
scale upward and downward using the syllable *do* for each note.

When you are ready to begin playing while singing, first find out what your voice range is. (I use more than a 2-1/2-octave vocal range which allows me the freedom to scat just about any line I play.) Once you have determined your range, divide it in half to find the midpoint; then, starting at the midpoint, begin to *play and sing* long tones, working upward chromatically and then downward chromatically until you have completely covered your range.

The next step is to practice singing and playing unison lines. (You'll need to have at least a one-octave range.) Let's say you have a vocal range of F to F. Starting on your low F, sing and play a diatonic F scale ascending and descending. Continue to play as many different scales as your range will allow, working at a *moderato* tempo.

Now using the same method transpose the vocal line an octave away from the flute's pitch; shift it an octave up or an octave down, depending on your vocal range. When this exercise becomes relatively easy for you, continue to develop your ability by using minor, augmented, and diminished scales. In much the same way you can then sing parallel harmonies, always keeping in mind the key signature and chord structure to maintain proper tonality (see Ex. 1).

Ex. 1



Note: Exercise should be done ascending and descending.

After you can handle 3rds, continue on playing and singing intervals of 4ths, 5ths, 6ths, etc. You will probably find that the hardest intervals to maintain are major 2nds and 7ths.

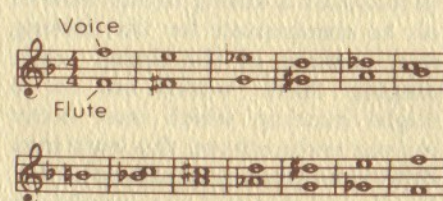
There are several fringe benefits to learning this technique. It is an excellent method of ear training since it teaches you the different intervals and how they relate to each other. Also, your ability to maintain a constant pitch, in tune, while creating motion around it will probably be an asset to your ensemble playing in the future.

Contrapuntal Lines

If you have grasped the basic principles involved in playing and singing harmonies, you should understand the independence of the voice and flute. Keeping in mind this feeling of independence you will find that contrapuntal lines are easily within your reach.

Begin by singing an octave above the note you're playing (see Ex. 2). Slowly begin playing a chromatic scale upwards while you sing a chromatic scale downwards. Now do it in reverse, singing a chromatic scale downwards.

Ex. 2



Then move on to other notes, depending on your vocal range. You can also begin experimenting on your own to achieve new and different effects. I have recently been working with basic piano and flute duets, singing one part and playing the other. It's quite a challenging endeavor.

Questions Answered

At this point you should have a fundamental understanding of the technique of voice over flute, so it might be helpful now to give you answers to the four questions I am most often asked by students.

1. Is amplification necessary?

You can achieve all the effects mentioned in this article without amplification, but in performance it is important that you be able to hear clearly both voice and flute above the rest of the band. You may be able to hear the flute without amplification, but the voice is lost after a very short distance. So for performance purposes I would say yes, amplification is necessary for total effectiveness.

2. How does the use of voice over flute affect your embouchure and breathing?