Proper Embouchure Positioning

Flute

Both lips should be stretched or spread slightly toward the corners of the mouth. The small opening between the lips should be centered right above the blowhole in the headjoint. In order to establish the proper placement, initial practice should be done on the headjoint alone. After tones are produced which are clear and devoid of air, then assemble the flute and blow into it, using no fingers and producing a C#.

The amount of air used should be controlled so that there is no overflowing. To ensure that the lip aperture is centered over the blowhole, try watching in a mirror. Once the centering is perfect and the proper amount of air goes into and over the hole, the tone should be crystal clear. The head should be erect and the cheeks should be flat.

Clarinet

The lower lip should be stretched over the lower teeth. Most of the inner lip should be out of sight. Too much lower lip tucked in will throttle the reed vibration. The upper teeth should rest on the mouthpiece about one-half inch from the tip. The lower teeth should press a little further down the mouthpiece. The jaw is not lowered, and the bite should be firm, with the cheeks flat. The throat must be relaxed.

Good reeds that are neither too strong nor too weak should be used. I suggest using a *Vandoren* 2 or 2 ½. A good mouthpiece and ligature are also necessary. Sound is also improved when the player holds the clarinet at less than a 45-degree angle to the body. Screws on the ligature should not be too tight. The head should be erect, and you should have the sensation of "blowing across" the reed.

Saxophone

The saxophone embouchure is almost the same as the clarinet embouchure, in that the lower lip is turned in, leaving about half of the inner lip showing. The lower lip should press on the mouthpiece about a ½ inch from the tip. The mouthpiece should be held firmly, but with less pressure than is used on the clarinet. Cheeks should be flat, with the throat open and relaxed. The head should be erect.

As with the clarinet, reed selection is also valuable to tone quality. A *Vandoren* 2 or 2 ½ is recommended along with a good mouthpiece and ligature.

Trumpet

For the average embouchure, the mouthpiece is placed about one-half on the upper lip and one-half on the lower lip. Several variable aspects however may cause a deviation from the average, and these include the physical properties – teeth and lips.

In all brasses, the mouthpiece is normally placed exactly in the center of the lips, from left to right. But again, there are exceptions. If one of the teeth protrudes, the mouthpiece placement may center directly on the prominent tooth. This results in a firmer embouchure and is preferable over setting the mouthpiece in the middle, or on the recessive side of the mouth.

Pressure should be minimal, although some is needed for tone quality and high range playing. The head should be erect and cheeks should be flat.

French horn

The muscles should contract toward the center of the lips. As much of the inner part of the lips as possible should be inside and on the mouthpiece. As with all other brasses, the mouthpiece should be in the center, except in cases as already noted in the trumpet.

About two-thirds of the mouthpiece should be on the upper lip and one-third on the lower lip. Contrary to the case with other brasses, the lower lip remains stationary while the upper lip moves. Again, too much pressure should be avoided.

Different lip formations on this instrument can produce a bright or dark sound. The embouchure recommended above will produce the dark sound that is preferred by successful players.

Cupping the hand alters quality, too, with deeper cupping resulting in darker quality. Once the performer determines just how deep the hand should be inserted into the bell, this should remain constant. Consistency of hand placement is quite important, since this affects both tone and intonation.

Trombone & Euphonium

Although the trombone embouchure is generally the same as is found in other brasses, such as the mouthpiece being centered from left to right, two thirds of the upper lip should be used and one-third lower lip. The lips should be slightly puckered rather than stretched. If the lips are stretched, the tone will be thin and rather brassy – too bright.

The mouth should be somewhat more open than with high brasses, and the teeth should be further apart in order to open the sound. In other words, the lower jaw should be dropped to prevent a thin or nasal sound. Excessive pressure should be avoided, the cheeks should be flat, and the head erect.

Tuba

The embouchure should be flat, with no puffing whatsoever around the mouthpiece. A firm set is required in order to produce a centered and controlled sound. A pointed chin will help to ensure this concept of tone control the chin is not rounded.

Sufficient amounts of air are absolutely necessary in order to maintain quality and pitch control.

Generally, the mouthpiece is centered from left to right, but since the mouthpiece is large, it is difficult to suggest exact placement of the lips. Some experimentation is necessary in order to find a comfortable position that will produce a solid, consistent sound.

Excessive pressure should be avoided, the cheeks are flat, and the head is erect.