

Routines of Roger Stevens

Teaching comments amended by Bonita Boyd

Roger Stevens was a student of Joseph Mariano in the era of Doriot Anthony Dwyer, etc. He was a brilliant teacher, Principal Flutist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for many years, and a "scientist in musician's clothes" in a way. I give him credit for any mastery I have of the instrument!

He fashioned the order of the chords in his Routines in the way he did, because he said they "bore some resemblance to the way they would progress and function harmonically in music, while still managing to get them all in"!

Here are tips for practicing them:

1. Play with full sound throughout range of flute. Air and support should be really consistent. Find the oral chamber shape that allows the range of the flute to speak. Avoid over-manipulating lips or jaw to make any individual note speak. Work to achieve a really consistently produced entire range on the flute. All notes should speak automatically when you have this consistency.
2. Be sure to slur the entire ascent and then descent. I suggest breathing at the top, and then descending on another breath. Do not tongue groups of notes!
3. Keep a steady tempo always- the tempo that makes it possible to do the whole ascent in one breath and then descent in another breath is a good tempo to achieve.

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Practice tips for the scales:

1. On the first set of scales, keep MODERATE tempo on first four configurations. Only the fifth time is to be quick. Roger Stevens said this was the least important one! The important aspect is absolute accuracy on the first four.
2. On the triplet scales, the method of triple tonguing, as Roger Stevens specifies, is to be TKT-KTK-etc. (As opposed to TKT-TKT). He felt this was extremely important because we are often called upon to play uneven groups of tongued notes (septuplets, quintuplets, etc.) and will be forever hampered if we are ONLY able to have "T" on the beat!
3. The triplet pattern tends to bring out previously unknown (!) unevennesses in the fingers, so make sure to avoid tension in the hands and have fingers fluid and even.

These scales and chords are to be played without writing them out.

This is very different from all other technical pattern studies which are written out (like Taffanel, Moyse, etc.).

I have found that they are not only great for our ear training and brain, but also for a fluidity and virtuosity only achieved when the VISUAL aspect is removed. (As playing for memory is also freeing in this manner.)