

# BRASS MASTERCLASS

- Introduction

Part 1 - Basics and single tongue

Part 2 - KA tongue and double tongue

— — —breaktime— — —

Part 3 - Triple tongue and other thoughts

- Questions

by MARK GLOVER

January 30th 2016

Bukit Batok CC

Singapore

## INTRODUCTION

This tongue class has been an idea of mine for some time because I often get asked by secondary school students in Singapore about how to double and triple tongue. The class I am delivering will hopefully meet this demand and give students the inspiration to go ahead and practice some new techniques or develop their existing techniques confidently.

Before we do anything there are three things that are important to consider.

1) You have to believe that you have what it takes to be an amazing brass player. Everything achieved by anyone in the past is available to you should you be willing to work for it. If you never think positively about your brass playing then no amount of practice or teaching will help you. Start to believe that flawless technique is yours and it soon will be. Think "I CAN" all the time!

2) If you leave this class feeling confused or having not learnt anything then that is your own fault and not the fault of the teacher. If anything is unclear, raise your hand and ask for clarification. If you have a question which you desperately want answering, then ask the question. If you feel an important area has not been covered then ask about it. Do not care if your question seems silly or irrelevant and do not care what your friends think of you. If you disagree with something or feel there is a better way of explaining something then please speak up, everyone can learn from everyone.

3) A teachers teaching is based on their own experiences. Experiences they have had personally and experiences with their students. My ideas and theories are what work for me and my students. A teacher will always differentiate their teaching to suit a students needs but it's possible what works for one person might not work for you. Have an open mind, experiment, use teaching as a guide and always try and find ways to practise that work for you. If you are not making progress then you are not practising correctly. There are many other ways of explaining things and many many different exercises which could have been included in the document. I advise you all to just use this as a starting point and take it from there however you like.

We are going to work on tonguing from it's most basic stage. The basic foundations are the most important and although everyone would just like a short cut to super fast tonguing it is more important to get things right in the most basic of ways. Never neglect a good warm up. After you warm up you should not be tired! Making a great sound and being relaxed when you play is more important than tonguing fast.

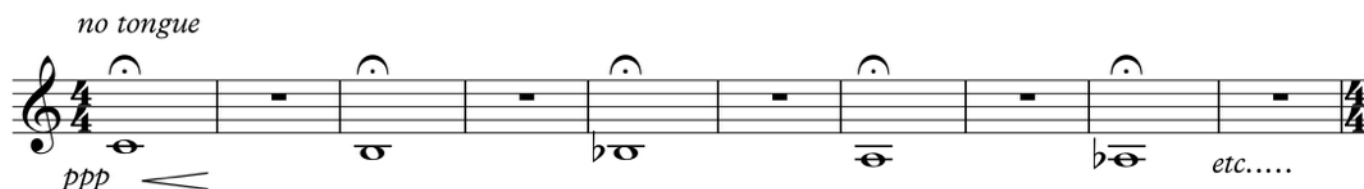
For the purpose of this class I am not going to discuss the tongues job from a slurring or range perspective because this class is focussing on articulation only. The sound is not made by the tongue. **The air is the sound.** The tongue releases the air and articulates air so we can have many different note lengths and rhythms.

I have included very simple exercises in this resource but you should go away and find study books and repertoire that will suitably challenge your new skills. Everything about music is based on performing live to people. Find opportunities to perform and show off your new skills, learn from your mistakes and enjoy every second of your practice. It should never be a chore!

## PART 1 - Basics and single tonguing.

The first exercise is also a good warm up. We are going to play a low concert Bb, starting the note as soft as possible, with no tongue at all, letting the note grow a little, always thinking about having a good uninterrupted airflow. Then we will hold the note as long as possible, aiming to keep a warm, open sound all the time. Keep the embouchure as open as it can be without going flat or spoiling the tone. Holding a long note is essential practice for our eventual extreme tongue speed. Often students think their tongue is the problem but it is nearly always the air. Holding one long note and playing many many articulated notes together is very similar. Make sure you remain relaxed at all times, letting all tension in your body, face and mind disappear. Take a large deep and open breath each time. Continue the exercise down as low as you can go. You can repeat the exercise starting a little higher if you wish. The start of the sound should be perfect and come from silence without any sudden sound or bumps. Work hard to not let the sound die, even at the end of the breath.

### Ex. 1 - Soft starts



Next we work on using the tongue to release the air. The louder we play the easier it is so it's worth aiming to play at a soft dynamic. We are aiming to create the same conditions which we face every time we take a breath and play a first note. It must be perfect all the time. Practising this consciously will lead to it happening unconsciously, which is what we want. Once we have grasped this basic step we can move onto repeatedly tonguing notes but it is important to spend a lot of time doing this and then eventually it becomes like riding a bike. You can start on any note.

### Ex. 2

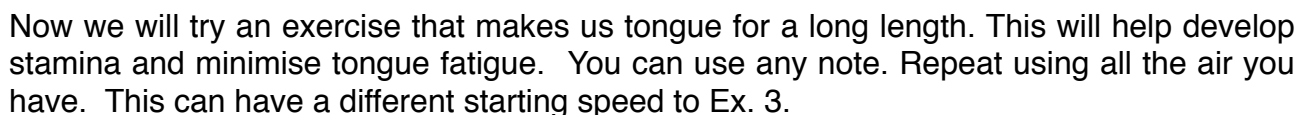


You have to remember that double or triple tonguing is still heavily based on being able to single tongue well. To start, we should work on single tonguing and pushing our technical abilities in this area. It is easier to single tongue very fast if we use just a small number of notes. But this doesn't help with strengthening the tongue for it to have enough stamina to maintain a long stretch of faster tongued notes so it is good to practice both ways. Using a metronome and making a note of speeds achieved on a daily basis is essential to your progress. Each new day you can start from where you left off tempo wise and if you always write down your tempos you will see your progress.

When it comes to tonguing we have to appreciate that there are various colours or effects which we can create. They are :-

I am not going to write any style marking on the notation in this document as it is expected that you can swap and change it yourself once you are feeling ready. Dynamics are an easy one you can do, just tell yourself as you go what dynamic you will play so you can be practising your dynamics along with any of these studies. I find the most useful to practice is the legato tongue. This ensures that our note lengths are always full, therefor our sound is always full. You can experiment with which type of tonguing you use and even mix them but as a rule it is best to always play as clear and punchy as you can but with maximum note length, never diminishing your sound and crescendoing when you ascend. Always play melodically and always work to remove any tensions.

### Ex. 3



Ex. 4



Now some uneven tonguing using dotted quaver/semi quaver patterns. Don't let it turn into a triplet! Later you can use this pattern but with some note changes and even intervals. This pattern is also excellent for using when you are learning repertoire. I find that doing lots of uneven rhythms really helps me play evenly.

Ex. 5



Now we can start changing note and developing our tongue and finger/slide coordination. Start with x4 notes on each one, then x3, x2 and then x1 so that we are tonguing and changing note on every note. This is a big milestone if you can do this with ease. Never be in a rush to go faster. You must play things PERFECTLY before increasing speed, do not cut corners. You can imagine the notes are crotchets, quavers or whatever. Set your speeds and each day start from where you left off the previous time. Obviously you will be able to go faster with scales your know better so use them so you can focus on increasing speed but try and use all scales as you improve, that includes minors!!

Ex. 6



Ex. 7



Ex. 8



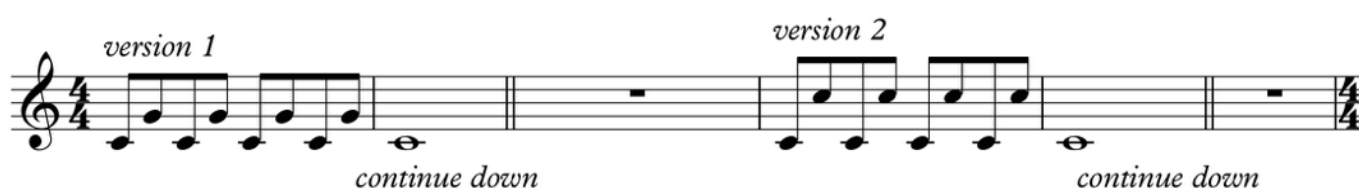
Ex. 9



You might find that if you are having problems, your fingers are to blame. Do some chromatic scales slurred or work through books like Herbert Clarke's Technical Studies.

Now let's try doing some intervals and single tonguing. This is more advanced and should be done slowly. Keep relaxed. Any tension will make you less flexible. Feel how the tongue level goes up and down. Many different versions of this so when you feel ready go ahead and experiment or invent more exercises. Look for Tongue Level Exercises by Claude Gordon. Of course, these are more commonly slur exercises but are great to practice tongued too!

Ex. 10



Lastly let's try mixing some slurs with the tongue. Ensure that the note lengths are the same. Sometimes brass players accidentally chop short the note they slur too. Don't do this unless the music requests it.

Ex. 11



## PART 2 - KA tongue and double tongue

In part two we realise that if we now attempt to double tongue we are missing a huge important step. The double tongue technique is made up of 50% single tongue (we can call it TA) and 50% of something else, which we will call KA. You may have never done any KA tonguing before so in theory, to be successful at double tonguing you should really be able to KA tongue equally as good as you can TA tongue. This can be likened to writing with your right and left hand. Most people are fine with one but almost useless with the other. It can be frustrating only doing KA tonguing because to start it may not sound or feel good. You must have patience and appreciate with careful practice it can only improve.

So we can now go back over ALL the past single tongue exercises but using the KA tongue for every note. You can still use a metronome but likely your tempos will need to be lower. Use your note pad to record your speeds and follow the same steps as you did before. Practice saying KA KA KA KA repeatedly, when you walk, when you shower, when you're on the bus, when you are bored in class. You have to get used to making the sound. When you do it, focus on making the air move forwards. Some people call this backwards tonguing but it's best not to think like this because you need to only think about air going forwards.

Try finding an opportunity to KA tongue. Such as in a wind band rehearsal when you may not have anything hugely important to play, just start KA tonguing every single note. It will soon become more natural.

You are now ready to work on double tonguing. To do this it is useful to start saying TA KA TA KA over and over. You can also say DA GA DA GA, THA GA THA GA, Di Gi Di Gi and a whole range of other sounds, but for the purpose of this class we will just use the TA KA sound. Your tongue position is different depending on how high or low you are playing. High notes will have an eeeeeeeeeeee tongue position and low notes an aaahhhhhh tongue position so this will affect things but again, often it's better not to over complicate things, and just remain focused on the air.

Some people think they are using the KA tongue correctly but actually are just TA tonguing. Saying it correctly is important but doing it on the instrument is a whole different thing. You have to become aware of what your tongue is doing otherwise you will just waste your practice time. If you think you are struggling and not doing it right then follow these steps below. You can use the same idea as before by doing small fast bursts with rests after and/or constant tonguing with no stops for as long as possible on each breath.

- 1) Say it - TA KA TA KA .....
- 2) Blow it with non stop AIR, forming slight embouchure shape
- 3) Do it on the mouthpiece at one pitch (making a good buzzy sound)
- 4) Do it on the instrument at one pitch, slowly.

*Note: When I mention the word 'buzz', I am referring only to the sound the mouthpiece makes. Do not buzz your lips into the instrument as this can create a thin, tight sound. Air is sound remember. With good air and support the lips will vibrate just right without any forced tight buzzing.*

So now you can go back over all the suitable exercises in Part 1 (Ex. 3-10) but using the double tongue. You can still use a metronome but likely your tempos will need to be lower. Use your note pad to record your speeds and follow the same steps as you did before. A great thing to do is to accent and massively over emphasise the KA note, this will help the weaker sound become stronger and eventually give you nice even notes. Ensure your rhythm is perfect and avoid any swinging.

Next let's try mixing some single and double tongue

Ex. 12/13



Now some tongue and slur as we did with the single tongue. Place the slur between different notes. Keep notes even.

Ex. 14



### **PART 3 - Triple Tongue, other thoughts and questions.**

Please don't attempt this unless you are confident with your single tongue and KA tongue. You could learn to triple tongue before double tongue, there are no rules and I believe it is best to try and learn all together, gradually improving each technique rather than perfecting one then struggling to get the other off the ground. Remember you get better at whatever you practice. Never practice bad habits by accident. Nothing stops you doing this and you will just get better at doing things wrong which is not at all what you want.

Generally the most common way to triple tongue is by using the TA TA KA, TA TA KA approach. However, the TA KA TA, TA KA TA approach is very useful at times. You can just decide on one and stick to it for all your triple tonguing or try and work on both. I would never recommend trying to use a TA KA TA, KA TA KA approach. I have written a comma to show the groups of 3 notes but this does not indicate a gap or pause like it does in language. It must always go forwards, focussing on the air going forwards.

So again we can practice the 4 steps:-

- 1) Say it - TA TA KA TA TA KA .....
- 2) Blow it with non stop AIR, forming slight embouchure shape
- 3) Do it on the mouthpiece at one pitch
- 4) Do it on the instrument at one pitch, slowly.

Then we go back over some exercises from Part 1 but using the triple tongue. It's quite easy to do this so to save space I have not included any written notation. Hopefully it is very clear and obvious but here is a brief explanation:-

Ex. 3, use 2 groups of triplets with a rest after.

Ex. 4, triple tongue as long as you can

Ex. 6, sextuplets

Ex. 7, as written

Ex. 9, just group the scale into triplets

Eventually you can try these more challenging patterns. You can also use these ideas for extra double or single tongue practice. Always accent the KA tongue as before and eventually as you speed up you will hear that the sounds are more clear, even and equal.

Ex. 15



Ex. 16



Ex. 17



You can invent all sorts of exercises or use study books like The Arban Cornet Method. Try not to get stuck with just using the same scale or the same exercise. The more you vary your practice, the faster you will learn. You could for example, work on one type of technical challenge first single, then KA, then double, then triple so you are rotating through each technique more, rather than just working on single for say 30 minutes, then KA for 30 minutes etc. Come up with your own tonguing routine and keep working on it. It will always get better with belief, discipline and relaxation.

### Flutter Tongue

The flutter tongue is a great effect. It can also be used to practice scales or slow pieces to help develop good tone and support. If you can roll your RRRR's then you shouldn't have any trouble doing this technique.

**Good luck!**

## QUESTIONS

These are questions that I imagine I would be asking if I was in your shoes.

Q) Does my choice of instrument or mouthpiece affect my ability to tongue?

A) No, it might affect your sound quality and range but providing your instrument is well maintained then it will be fine.

Q) I've tried, many many times, but I just can't do it. Why not, what should I do?

A) Seek the help of a good brass teacher. Watch good quality videos of leading professionals and get a better concept of what it is you want to achieve. Go slower and persevere. Focus on what you hear and not what you feel. Don't be ridiculously critical of yourself, set targets.

Q) I can't get any clarity in my tonguing. What to do?

A) Record yourself, it might be better than you think. Work on releasing the air perfectly. Practise playing louder. Find repertoire that requires super clear tonguing, such as fanfares or marches. Practice this style more.

Q) I can't tongue notes without having a gap in between, what to do?

A) Feel what your stomach muscles are doing. Are they pushing for every note. Ideally think of your stomach support as an ON/OFF switch. You should have the support activated evenly while you tongue (unless there are written accents) and it shouldn't keep going on and off and over. Feel where your tongue is touching when you tongue, and experiment until you can let it almost flick, articulating but not stopping the air.

Q) What if I am bored of doing basic exercises?

A) Find new repertoire or study books! Learn to be patient! Practice with a friend!

Q) How long should I practice?

A) You want to try and balance your practice to include a warm up, technical maintenance or improvement (slurs, tongue, dynamics, range etc etc), learning repertoire, practicing performing, sight reading and many other areas. Dedicate however long you want to each area but don't over do it. Rest often and set goals for each session.

### Other questions?

If you are reading this and didn't attend the class then some things might not make sense. Demonstration and explanation is important. Should you have any questions contact [markglover.euph@gmail.com](mailto:markglover.euph@gmail.com)

Please do visit [www.markglovermusic.co.uk](http://www.markglovermusic.co.uk)