



The Recorder Maven

Recorder Advice From Elijah Ducon

Dear Elijah:

In the consorts I play with, I hear people talk occasionally about double-tonguing. What, exactly, is it, and is it something I need to learn? If so, what is the best way to go about it ?

Curious on the Upper West Side

Dear Curious,

A variety of articulations is necessary to give meaning, emphasis and shape to any piece of music. They help by making phrases and sentences of the notes. Without articulations music would be bland and monotonous.

Articulations on the recorder are achieved by using the tongue to accent or interrupt the flow of sound. There are several ways of accomplishing this.

First, there is single tonguing, which is attained by striking the same area with the tongue behind the teeth consistently, again and again. There are three basic forms of single tonguing. They are: *legato* - which is used to smoothly join the notes, *detachée* - which is used to gently separate the notes, and *staccato* - which dispatches the notes in a very short, clipped manner. One can apply these three forms of articulation in multiple combinations and achieve a myriad of sophisticated shapes and phrases.

Double and triple tonguing began to emerge during the Baroque era. The double-tongue would help dispatch notes in a duple format much more quickly than single

tonguing would permit. Triple tonguing does the same thing, but in a triplet format, in groups of three. Because of the syllabic emphases which are inherent in this new approach to tonguing, the term *inégal* is often applied to the result one hears.

Let's discuss how to double-tongue. If you were to place your tongue behind the teeth and say "dad, dad, dad, dad," you would get a single emphasis on a one-syllable word. Try it. However, if you place your tongue behind the teeth and say "daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy," you would get a two-syllable effect with the accent on the first syllable. Try it. You'll notice the tongue operates in two different areas behind the teeth. One, when you say the single 'd' that begins the word, and another when you say the double 'dd' in the middle of the word. This dual emphasis is in fact creating a form of *inégal*.

Take your recorder. Choose an easy note in the first register. Take a breath, and as you blow into the instrument say "daddy" several times on one current of air. You should hear the two-syllable emphasis right away. Keep the gesture small. Don't overemphasize. Just simply say "daddy."

Guess what?... You are double-tonguing! Once you get the hang of it, try moving through notes saying "daddy" on every two notes as you go along. Start by moving step-wise. It may not move too quickly at first, but with time and practice you should become more comfortable with it.

For the record, I should mention that "daddy" is not the only word that can be used. To dispatch notes even more quickly, some players say "deedle, leedle, leedle, leedle," and some alternate between tongue and throat by saying "dugga, dugga, dugga, dugga." However, for your initial attempt, I would suggest you begin with "daddy."

Should you employ double-tonguing when playing with your consort? In a word, NO! I'll deal with the reasons for this in future column, where I will also address triple-tonguing.

In the meantime, enjoy your adventures into the world of articulations.

Good luck!

Elijah Ducon

Please send your questions for **The Recorder Maven** to: elijahducon1@gmail.com