



## Musical Musings: Tonguing Techniques

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My work last week with a student on mastery of double tonguing and other tonguing patterns has reminded me of a practice method that I employed for many years that might be helpful to you as well. Most bassoonists are well aware of the rapidly tongued passages in the 4th movement of Beethoven's 4th Symphony. Indeed, the solo passage from the movement is standard fare for almost every symphony audition for bassoonists:



Each day I practiced this passage and the other 16th note passages in the movement with 4 types of tonguing: 1) staccato tonguing, 2) legato tonguing, 3) combination tonguing, and 4) double tonguing. I would start the practice session around quarter-note = 80 and then gradually increase the speed. Once I reached failure with one tonguing method I would reduce the speed and end my practice session with that tonguing method in a successful repetition or two. The lines above the notes indicate places I hold down the C flick key in order to insure clean attacks.

Let me now detail the 4 types of tonguing. Staccato tonguing should be performed with as relaxed a tongue as possible, NOT striking the reed hard with the tongue. The duration of the note is made simply by the length of time the tongue is off the reed. For staccato tonguing the tongue is off the reed a short time. Aim to move the tongue as short a distance as possible. Legato tonguing is the converse of staccato tonguing, that is, the tongue touches the reed for as short a time as possible. Working on these two types of tonguing is important for increased tongue speed. I find that as the metronomic speed increases these two types of tonguing begin to converge. Once I cannot make a difference between the two I have about two or three faster metronomic settings before I reach my maximum single tonguing speed.

Combination tonguing is the term I have given to a tonguing method developed by Bernard Garfield and printed in a woodwind magazine several years ago. Combination tonguing uses a combination of double and single tonguing units (TKTT TKTT or TTTK TTTK). Double tonguing alternates the tonguing of the reed with the tip of the tongue and the tonguing of the roof of the mouth with the top of the tongue (TKTK TKTK). One key to developing a fluid and pleasing double and combination tonguing technique is to keep the "K" as far forward in the mouth as possible. Two other keys are to employ these tonguing techniques with minimal tongue motion and keep the tonguing as legato as possible. Try to match the quality of the legato single tonguing.

I use the TKTT pattern for the sixteenth-note passages in the Beethoven 4th movement and when needed in most other fast passages. Generally I reserve the double tongue for faster passages such as Smetana's Overture to the Bartered Bride. I employ the TTTK pattern in Mozart's Haffner Symphony (#35) in the 4th movement where octave leaps interfere with the a clean "K" syllable in my typical pattern (TKTT):



Apart from the octave leaps I use the standard pattern (TKTT) in this movement. Consistent practicing of these tonguing types at all metronomic speeds will greatly add to the flexibility of your tonguing technique.