

Seven **B**'s for Three *ppp*'s

By Mark Eubanks with help from Clifford Reynolds

Can you sing softly? Playing a controlled pianissimo with good pitch and resonance in the tone is one of the greatest challenges in bassoon playing.

Breath - Support to the max! *Firm* muscles at double or triple what's used for normal playing. Support low notes from the bottom of the abdomen (ho), middle notes below breastbone (who), upper notes from the chest (eek). Maximum full breath!

Bunching – Squeeze the embouchure in *firmly* from the sides, round, like a purse string.

Bite – Move lips slightly out towards reed tip, but bring the oral focus *forward* inside the mouth.

Billowing – Puff air under upper lip as a *cushion* to allow the reed's vibration come through to maintain resonance. Tricky to master but worth it.

Back pressure – Feel the “Good Resistance” of a well balanced reed and properly voiced and leak free bassoon. This is a must to avoid *bad* resistance.

Bag of tricks 1. **Insert a Mute** with location either in the of bell or end of long joint using a special leather bassoon mute, a painter's sponge, ball of pillow stuffing or pantyhose. 3. **Change** to alternate, mute, or “*piano*” *fingerings* as needed for proper resistance to control pitch. 3. **Scrape** for the *trouble notes* using specific tests to balance the reed just for soft playing.

Build and switch as needed to a “**Cut Reed**” style used for soft studio, continuo playing or special soft solos.