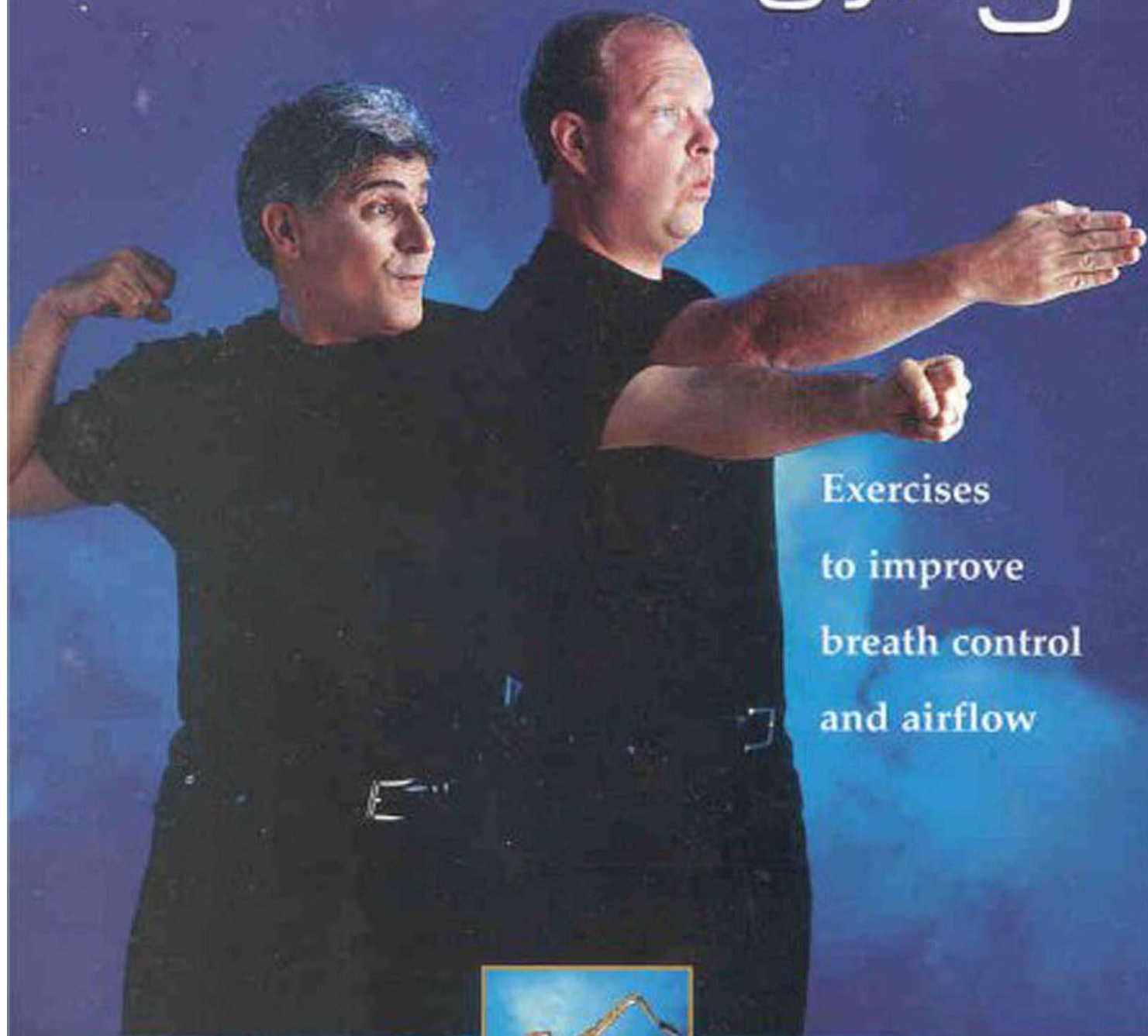


For Band, Chorus, and Orchestral Winds

The Breathing gym

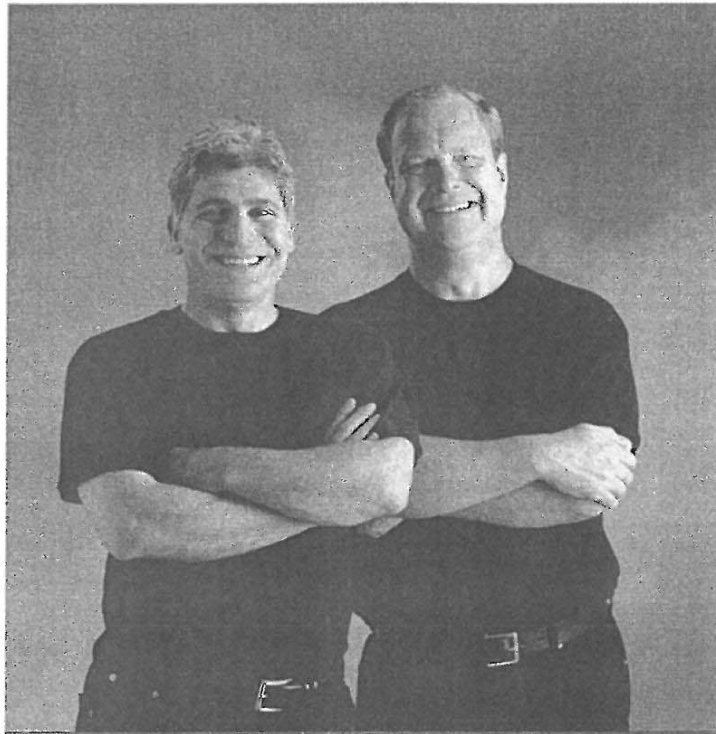
by Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan



Exercises
to improve
breath control
and airflow



Focus On
EXCELLENCE



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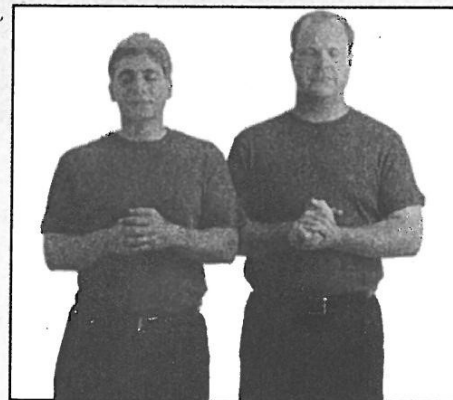
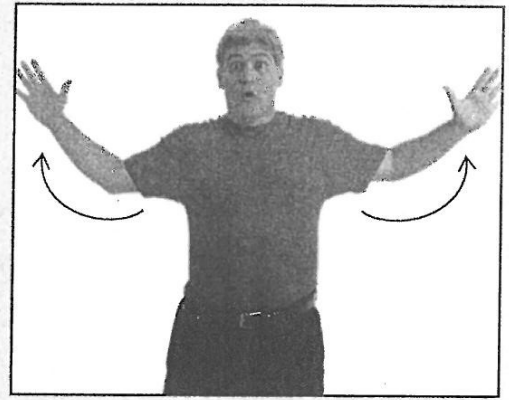
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Introduction



Warm-ups for wind instrument players usually consist of exercises to prepare the fingers and lips. Warm-ups for singers often develop range and diction. However the source of the sound when playing a wind instrument or singing is often overlooked: breathing.

Put simply:

AIR → VIBRATION → SOUND

Breathing correctly when singing or playing a wind instrument uses a great deal more of our lung capacity than we normally use in everyday life. This extreme use of our airflow is a skill that must be practiced.

MORE AIR → MORE VIBRATION → MORE SOUND
LESS AIR → LESS VIBRATION → LESS SOUND

A good sound requires good breathing, and the exercises in The Breathing Gym are designed to give musicians control and efficiency of breath.

These exercises improve musicians' tone, stamina, and all-around performance.

When these exercises are used during an ensemble rehearsal, they also:

- Promote a calmer, quieter, more focused rehearsal.
- Create better group timing at entrances and releases.
- Help internalize and improve group rhythm.
- Allow students to prepare for performances and work through stage fright because of the calm and focus created by group breathing.

We are confident that you and your ensemble will notice improvements in many facets of your music-making as a result of your attention to breathing, the source of sound for wind instruments and singing.

How to use these exercises



The exercises in The Breathing Gym can be used as part of a warm-up routine, as a mid-rehearsal change of pace, or to address specific issues such as dynamics, articulation and phrasing in a certain piece of music. The exercises can also help produce a calm, focused atmosphere before a performance or competition.

There are five types of exercises:

- 1) Stretches** — These exercises loosen the muscles in the areas around our lungs and mid-section, allowing for better flexibility of the breathing muscles. Musicians also feel the breathing muscles at work during these exercises.
- 2) Flow Studies** — These exercises simulate breathing patterns used in singing and playing wind instruments. The goal is to move air without resistance or tension, sometimes quickly and sometimes over longer periods of time.
- 3) Therapies** — Therapies are used to inspire better air flow. This is accomplished by deliberately creating problems to overcome, such as resistance or suspension. Therapies can also be used to assist ensemble members experiencing tension in the flow studies.
- 4) Strength and Flexibility** — These exercises expand and contract the lungs and breathing muscles from full capacity all the way to empty. With practice, musicians will incorporate this increased range of motion into their singing or playing with greater ease.
- 5) Breathing for the Brain** — The most important music-making “muscle” is the brain. These exercises bring focus and concentration.



What is the best combination of exercises?

The best combination is whatever you choose to meet the needs of your ensemble. There is an index chart (page 30-31) that lists appropriate exercises for common rehearsal and pre-performance situations.

Should percussionists do these exercises, too?

Absolutely! The exercises help percussionists (and all non-wind players) develop concentration and a sense of ensemble timing.



Overtraining and the Law of Accommodation

As with most any exercise program, participants' stamina and ability will increase with practice over time. The Law of Accommodation states:

What is difficult today will become easier if practiced.

The Breathing Gym contains exercises with varying levels of difficulty. Participants should work to a level just past the point of ease, slightly into discomfort without overexerting. As your ensemble members practice an exercise and it becomes easier, you should extend the duration of the exercise, add a variation, or move to a more challenging exercise.

Celebrate the accomplishments and progress of your ensemble!



W A R N I N G



The breathing exercises contained in this book are more demanding than our everyday breathing. These exercises are a workout to promote better singing and wind instrument performance.

Persons with respiratory or lung conditions, heart conditions, or other medical issues related to breathing or the upper body should consult a physician before participating in these exercises.

Anyone who feels lightheaded should sit down and breathe normally through the nose for quick relief of the dizziness. This person should be able to join the rest of the group after a moment of rest and normal breathing.