

AN INQUIRY INTO SLAP TONGUING

After pondering over the technique of slap-tonguing... I would explain it as the application of the broad top of the tongue onto a fairly large section of the reed, making sure that the tongue is pressed flat and tight against the bamboo. This is immediately followed by an aggressive release which should create a 'pop'.

Realizing that this explanation is minimal and likely unhelpful, I've decided that the following three analogies may be useful in understanding the technique:

Suggestions for slap-tonguing:

- ***"Sucking your teeth."*** Upon considering the position of my tongue for slap-tonguing, I realize that it parallels the idea of sucking one's teeth. Your mouth is closed – sealed – and the environment inside your mouth is a closed system. By pressing the front-most top-part of your tongue against the back of your upper teeth, and sucking, there is a suction created; a sense of pressure becomes evident. While you won't be 'pulling' in such a way upon your reed, the tongue position seems to me to be similar, and may serve as a useful comparison when considering how to learn the technique.
- ***The Phoneme, "TH"***. Give attention to the placement of your tongue in producing the 'TH' sound. To produce 'TH', the end of our tongue must make contact with the top set of our teeth, in order to be articulated. In musing over my own method of slap-tonguing, I don't believe that the tip of the tongue will suffice for the effect. However, keep in mind the technique that your tongue uses in forming this sound and then apply it to the reed – only, rather than using the tip of your tongue, place a large, broad section of the top of your tongue up against the plane of your reed. Proceed to then aggressively pronounce the 'TH' phoneme, distinctly releasing your tongue from reed-contact.
- ***Clicking***. Recall the tongue-produced clicks used in some African languages. Similar to sucking your teeth, your tongue is now pushed against the roof of your mouth; suction is created and then released to create a largely percussive sound. Apply this idea to the reed.

-LMO (Nov.20/09)