

PRACTICAL BAGPIPE TUNING (part 4)

USING “PRESSURE VARIANCE” TECHNIQUE TO TUNE THE CHANTER

Pressure Variance

After establishing a true octave A-high A (chanter and drones), with the help of a tuner such as the CA-30,

The other notes of the chanter scale can now be tuned to the **established drone tuning position.**

When tuning the chanter note to the drones **with out a tuner**, it is an advantage to be able to

“slightly increase or decrease your **BLOWING** pressure”
to determine if the chanter note is “sharp” or “flat” to the drones.

For example if you have to increase your blowing pressure on a note to harmonize with your drones, this would indicate that the note is flat.

Conversely if you have to decrease your blowing pressure on a note to harmonize with your drones this would indicate the note is sharp

THIS IS KNOWN AS *“PRESSURE VARIATION”*****

VARYING YOUR PRESSURE,

is a useful skill to acquire either as an

“Individual when tuning chanter notes to the drone setting”

or when tuning your chanter for

“Integration with another piper.”



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TUNING CHANTER NOTES TO THE DRONE SETTING

This should be done by using the “Arpeggio notes
(*Arpeggio : a chord performed with the notes separated*)

OCTAVE

A

Using the CA-30 tuner and
applying “Pressure Variation” technique

G

Check the octave

F

(mouth blow chanter with the aid of a tuner)

E

D

Then blow with drones and

C

check the drone tuning on low A and high A

B

Again using the CA-30 tuner

A

G

Now with drones set

Play the A arpeggio notes (blow notes A-C-E-A’)

and using the “pressure variation” technique

Check the notes E and C

A arpeggio

A

If either of the E or C notes are sharp the simple remedy
is to use tape to seal the top of the hole (by adjusting the
tape bring the note to harmonize with drone tuning).

G

F

If you find either of the notes flat you can try to
adjust the reed to sharpen .

E

This of course would mean using tape on the other test
notes that you have tested. (These notes will have sharp-
ened)

D

C

B

If this does not work consider if you have “unfriendly”
Chanter or Reed and consider replacing the reed.

A

G

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With your drones tuned
 Blow the “**D**” arpeggio notes (low A, D, F, high A)
 and Check notes **F** and **D**

Then blow the “**G**” arpeggio notes (low G, B, D, high G)
 and check the note **high G**

D arpeggio

A

G

F

E

D

C

B

A

G

F...listen to its relation to E

D listen to its relationship to A,B,C

G listen to its relationship to E,F

B and low G are pitched one whole tone away from pitch of drones “dissonant” and are therefore more forgiven and usually reliable.

NOTE as before it is a simple task to use tape (on sharp notes)

if you have flat notes the only course of action you have is again to adjust the reed position (step 5) or sharpen (step 7) and then use tape on all the sharp notes (this is when you should consider using another reed and consider if you have an “unfriendly” reed and/or chanter.

G arpeggio

A

G

F

E

D

C

B

A

G

This method makes use of using a C-30 tuner AND the drone tuning, and involves a fair amount of experience (e.g. piper must be able to blow steady) Remember for the less experienced piper the individual tuning of the chanter note can be tuned using the much more expensive tuner AT-2B

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TONAL INTEGRATION WITH ANOTHER PIPER.



Establish a master or lead piper

(usually the piper with the best pipes, steady blower or with the most experience)

It is also an advantage if he or she is able to apply
“pressure variance”

**Each individual piper from other member pipers of the ensemble,
WITH drones stopped,
TUNE chanter with the master Chanter (both playing the scale)**

**The second piper should be encouraged to apply “pressure variation”
To determine if any troublesome notes are sharp or flat with the master chanter**

Make necessary adjustments if required AS previously described

Re- test with master chanter until completely satisfied

Finally re-tune drones to low A-high A



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