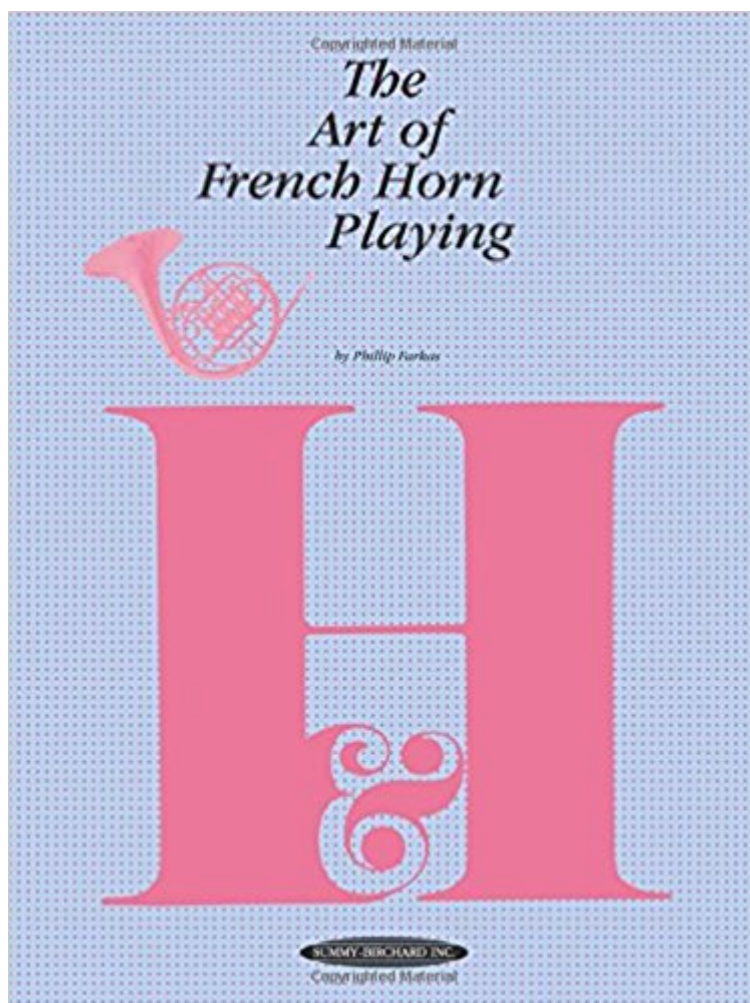


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# The Art Of French Horn Playing (The Art Of Series)



## Synopsis

First to be published in the series was *The Art of French Horn Playing* by Philip Farkas, now Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Music at Indiana University. In 1956, when Summy-Birchard published Farkas's book, he was a solo horn player for the Chicago Symphony and had held similar positions with other orchestras, including the Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, and Kansas City Conservatory, DePaul University, Northwestern University, and Roosevelt University in Chicago. *The Art of French Horn Playing* set the pattern, and other books in the series soon followed, offering help to students in learning to master their instruments and achieve their goals.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Philip Farkas's book is still the best. May it long be published! (Perhaps I speak prematurely. I have not yet seen Verne Reynolds's new book on horn playing, published by the Amadeus Press.) There are a few areas where I would like to see it brought more up to date, though. In the chapter devoted to maintenance, Farkas advocates using valve oil for lubricating the valves. That is out of date advice that I religiously followed and quickly wore out my valves' bearings, which made them clack within a couple of months of purchase of the horn. Nowadays, the better advice is to lubricate the upper and lower bearings with key oil, which has much more lubricity than valve oil, and to use valve oil strictly between the rotor and the casing as a space filler, administering the oil through the valve slides. Ever since I started searching for it in 1959, I never did find Linen Cuttyhunk string, but

I think technology has moved ahead and what's now available will outlast that string manyfold. Slide greases have also improved greatly, and I don't think anyone seeks out gun grease for slides anymore. (I still use Marvin Howe's old favorite: wheel bearing grease.) In his chapter on embouchure, Farkas included nearly everything. But he omitted mention of the levator and depressor muscles, the ones that bare the teeth, without whose participation it is impossible to form an aperture, so essential to tone and response. He was obviously using them-- I am sure I see that in the photograph of him playing-- but he might have been unaware of it. The mouthpiece also forms part of the horn player's embouchure. The angle between the mouthpiece and the face isn't quite perpendicular with the horn (or with any brass instrument) because there would otherwise be no way for the upper arch of the lip aperture to form, since the levator muscles are at the side of the nose and do not act on the center of the upper lip. Nobody seems to take his advice about fingerings. Practically everyone is sure Farkas has ordered everyone to switch from the F horn to the Bb horn at G#/Ab. He did no such thing. He designated the region between G#/Ab to C as an optional area. Many need to reread that section. There is one place, though, where he was a little too arbitrary, and I wish he hadn't influenced people. He advises against ever using the third finger alone to play A on the grounds that trilling to the Bb above it would cause a cross fingering. That's true, but a third finger A is the only one that would make a trill from G# to A possible. He could have gone more into how fingerings need to be selected by what will facilitate playing, beyond what he discussed about the section about the switch from the F horn to the Bb horn and vice versa. Maybe Farkas didn't want to complicate things too much. His chapter on tonguing emphasizes the need for accuracy. But as for gaining speed, alas! it hasn't helped me much. What he is describing sounds perhaps like a controlled flutter tongue. My tongue just won't cooperate with his instructions, or anyone else's, so I use double and triple tonguing (neither one mentioned in this book but mentioned in his *Art of Brass Playing*) for successions of sixteenth notes after around 104 beats per minute. I've inquired around, and I've found I'm not alone in this. His recommendations about breath control appear to collide with those of the school of Arnold Jacobs, the esteemed tuba player also of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and whose teachings about breath control are now sacred among most brass players. In no way would Mr. Jacobs agree to Farkas's proposition that the throat hold back air during soft playing or any other. I'm still trying to sort that one out. A veteran trombone player from that orchestra told me once that Farkas could not have been following his own advice in the matter. Another area where others might disagree with Farkas is about how to phrase sixteenth notes. I saw a school of thought about that in Keith Stein's book, *The Art of Clarinet Playing*, in which that author advocated making a slight crescendo through the weak sixteenth notes, so as to

make the note that falls on the beat a goal note. The rest of the book is indeed strong. The use of double exposure to show hand position in the bell was a stroke of brilliance. His warmup routine is a real lip and accuracy builder. The recommended etudes are outstanding, as well. It's too bad, though, that Erwin Miersch's book of etudes wasn't out back in 1956. Farkas must have surely liked it when it appeared. His advice about intelligent practice is unique; I don't know why other method books, even ones for other instruments, don't lay it out so simply. His advice about stage fright is also wonderful, though I think a musician should also consult Barry Green and Timothy Gallwey's book *The Inner Game of Music*, which adds to what Farkas discusses.

This book made me! Farkas' book is the most complete guide to playing horn I have ever read. It offers everything from lip position to advice for stage fright, and the BEST warmups you can ever use. Play his warmups for about half an hour every day, and in a month I guarantee you'll see results. This book made me the performer I am, and I can't emphasize enough how valuable it is to a horn player on any level. Buy it; it's well worth it!

I refer to this book CONSTANTLY as a guide for practicing, and playing. I've also recommended this book to all of my horn pals. It covers (and explains) everything: tuning, warm-up, embouchure, transposing, hand placement, etc. with helpful pictures. If you're serious about horn playing, this is a MUST in your library of books -- leave it in your music folder!!

This is still the best of all horn instruction books. I have used it for nearly 40 years and find new things in it every time I refer to it. As the other reviewers say, every horn player must have it, along with the Dennis Brain CD's.

"Art of French Horn Playing" by Farkas is a must and bible for horn players. Never seen a book so complete with problems and SOLUTIONS discussed

My college horn teacher subscribed very much to the Farkas methods provided here, so I had a good foundation as a horn player. But I wish he had made this required reading so I would have had this years ago. It is a goldmine, and Farkas is very reasonable and logical in his approach. Some of what you will read by horn enthusiasts will lead you on a journey of trying new mouthpieces and experimenting with new horns and in several configurations, if you are a serious player. Farkas has it right, though. None one instrument or one mouthpiece will do it all perfectly. It, therefore, only

makes sense to choose a good compromise (whether in regards to a horn, mouthpiece, or tuning position) and make the player do the rest with his/her ear and embouchure. If you are looking for common sense, and clear explanations, this book is a must (acknowledging that it could use an update...as for example, neoprene horn stops have made cork from a bottle of champagne an unnecessary recommendation) have.

Doesn't matter if you're a beginner, intermediate horn player, or an expert everyone can benefit from reading this book. Is it outdated? Sure, maybe a little, but this is still the 'bible' of horn playing and a must read. This book has helpful information regarding pretty much all aspects of horn playing: types of horns, practicing information, types of mouthpieces, mechanics of the horn, practicing techniques, hand positions and placements, tuning, warm-ups, diagrams, embouchure, performance etiquette and tips, breathing, just general pointers and other miscellaneous, virtually everything! This is a great book for any horn player to reference or refer to. I constantly find myself going back and re-reading sections whenever I have a question or a problem arises. This book really teaches you and helps you become a better horn player. The pictures and diagrams in the book are super helpful so you can get a visual of what your supposed to be doing and correct any bad habits or mistakes you may be making. In addition to all the information this book has I love that it also includes a section of warmups to practice. I would definitely recommend practicing these warmups everyday for at least 10 minutes, although I would do them for about 30 minutes, and you'll see almost instantly an improvement in your range, and your tone, your ability in moving your fingers, your overall quality of playing, and even your sight reading! If there's one book you buy for your instrument I suggest and encourage it be this one. Life changing for a French horn player.

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