FRENCH HORN

The French horn is often played with the right hand inside the bell. It is the only brass instrument with a funnel shaped mouthpiece. The French horn consists of about 20 feet of narrow tubing wound into a circle. The player obtains different notes on the horn with a clear mellow sound by pressing the rotary valves. When the player pushes down on a rotary valve it pulls a string that opens or closes different valves. The French horn evolved from the hunting horn developed during the 17th century. The modern French horn developed throughout the 19th century as valves were added to allow players access to all the available notes.

French Horn Links

http://www.hornsociety.org/
http://www.hornplayer.net/
http://www.frhorn.com/index4.html

How the sound is made

Sound on a brass instrument comes from a vibrating column of air inside the instrument. The player makes this column of air vibrate by buzzing the lips while blowing air through a cup or funnel shaped mouthpiece. To produce higher or lower pitches, the player adjusts the opening between his/her lips. The mouthpiece connects to a length of brass tubing ending in a bell. The shorter the tubing length, the smaller the instrument, and the higher the sound; and the longer the tubing length, the larger the instrument, and the lower the sound.

How the pitch is changed

The pitch of a brass instrument depends on the volume of air that is vibrating, as well as the speed at which the player's lips vibrate. The volume of air depends on the length of the tube; a longer tube means a larger volume of air, hence lower pitch. By buzzing the lips faster or slower, the player can cause the air in the tube to resonate at different harmonics. In order to get all 12 notes of the chromatic scale, the player needs to change the length of the tube by moving a slide or by pressing valves.