

# **A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TEACHING YOUNG TRUMPET STUDENTS**



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## **Musical Image**

“Without a musical image in your mind, the difficulties of performing on an instrument are magnified greatly. Many of us assume that students have a good musical image, but I am amazed how often this basic element is either absent or fades into the background.”

-Vincent Cichowicz, former member of the Chicago Symphony, Professor Emeritus, Northwestern University (1927-2006)

“The best players have a very specific idea about what they want to sound like and a very general idea of how they do it. Most players have a general idea of how they want to sound and a very specific idea about how they think they do it.”

-John Rommel, Professor of Trumpet, Indiana University

Listening to a great recording or live performance can be a transformative event. This experience has changed since the dawn of the MP3 and the decline of CD's and LP's. Maintaining a focus while listening has become more difficult because of the amount of choices in listening, distractions via phones and other devices, lack of financial investment and lack of physical object. Yet, focused listening is vital and must be insisted upon. Repetition of specific listening is very important. This repetition is how we learn the dialect of sound and musical style.

Learning where the tone resonates is the result of listening.

Please see the suggested listening list that is included in the back of this packet for listening suggestions.

## **Breathing**

Breathing should be simple and natural. Because it is a natural process the breath must be linked with a musical message (hence the above comments on musical imagery), this idea must be introduced as soon as one starts to play an instrument. No beginner needs to have thoughts about anatomy when learning to play. The diaphragm is an involuntary muscle. There is no nerve ending from the seventh cranial nerve that allows us to “control” it the same way we can when we order our fingers or toes to move. It simply goes down and up in accordance with our breath. I am not in favor of using a lot of breathing exercises with young students. They want to do things correctly and tend to overdo these exercises or become rigid and therefore unnatural in their execution. Many issues with breathing have more to do with preset tension that is incurred when positioning the instrument to the lips. This preset tension manifests itself in a tight breath that then becomes muscular and forced. There are times to address the breath but it is best done away from the instrument or with non-anatomic imagery. For example I often have students imagine a bow gliding across the string of a violin. The up bow is the inhalation in the down bow is exhalation. It is one continuous process. I actually have them hold the trumpet in the left hand and have them use the right hand holding their imaginary bow. This thought of a violin bow gliding across a vibrating string is a musical image. Any discussion of breath with a young student must be paired with a musical idea otherwise it is just a thought about an invisible gas.

## **Articulation**

Articulation is pronunciation of sound. Saying tu, tah, du or dah are all excellent ways of understanding proper tongue placement. Students must not try to be so exact in this placement as it will vary slightly from person to person and from situation to situation. For example when I tongue in the upper register the placement will be slightly different than it is in the low register. Therefore a general awareness of this position is fine but trying to be physically exacting can be detrimental. The student must have a clear idea of what excellent articulation sounds like. Often in attempts to gain clarity the articulation can interfere with a free and natural breath. Using a simple “wind pattern” away from the instrument can help get things back on track. Also buzzing on the mouthpiece and listening for a clear and open sound at the back end of the note can really help clear up the issue.

## **“Staccato is an illusion”**

Staccato marks in music will often get students tied into knots faster than any other musical notation. It is important to understand that notes generally sound quite a bit shorter in front of the bell than they do behind the bell. When students see staccato markings they often tongue harder and diminish a healthy air flow. Students need some sense of musical context in order to understand note lengths. Staccato articulations need clarity and resonance.

## **Embouchure**

Embouchures come in all shapes and sizes. The embouchure develops as a result of sound concept and the practice of specific musical materials. Too often embouchure is discussed in some abstract and segmented way. The most common embouchure issue is playing in the “red” or “tubercle” portion of the lip. This problem causes issues with sound, flexibility and range. This issue often occurs as a result of students breathing before the mouthpiece is on the lips. With a classroom full of students it is often difficult to spot, but in my experience with is the most common embouchure issue. The other issue occurs when students preset their lips to what they think is a position that is necessary to execute an upcoming passage. Students can imagine the sails on an old clipper ship. The sails are loose when there is no wind, however, they are in a position to catch the wind. When the wind comes they take the wind and stay activated until the wind subsides and they resume their loose position. It is the wind that activates the sail, not a preset tension. The embouchure acts in exactly the same way. It is in a position to take the air and only then is it activated.

## **Learning all of notes right away**

Arnold Jacobs, the great tuba player of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and titan of brass pedagogy, often stated “make statements don’t ask questions”. When a student does not know the fingering for their instrument they are asking a question. The mind goes off of the sound and the natural process of breathing compromised. All instincts of healthy playing go away and the stress of not knowing a note or fingering stiffens the playing apparatus. While learning fingerings takes repetitive practice to become permanent muscle memory it is a type of practice that can be repeated over and over again without fatigue, unlike playing the trumpet. It is my opinion that students should learn a Bb concert chromatic scale as soon as possible. This will allow the student to feel the easy transfer of notes by the by half step which will create a more efficient way of traveling up and down the instrument, while at the same time teaching students all notes names and fingerings as well as giving them a clear understanding of enharmonic spellings. While young students may not use all 12 notes right away in their music, this process takes away any phobia they may otherwise attain by not being familiar with certain parts of the instrument.

## Learning Scales-A Different Approach

Often young students learn C, F and G major scales (Bb, Eb and F concert scales) first in a beginning band class. This makes sense because those keys are common keys in all music but especially in a class of young students. However, F and G are often difficult for students due to issues with range. I suggest if possible, students should start to learn scales in the following order (from this point on I will be writing scale names for the Bb trumpet) C, Bb, B and Db. Along with a chromatic scale that covers the range of each aforementioned scales. There are two reasons to start with these scales. The first being that there is a break of partial or “harmonic bridge” between B and C# and C and D (over the fourth and fifth partials) as stated by Herbert L. Clarke in the fourth study of his *Technical Studies for Cornet*. This is why most young students can easily play a simple trill between Bb and C, but struggle between B and C# and C and D. By learning C, Bb, B and Db first this break is not crossed. Yes, the C# (Db) is played but not via whole step. The second reason is that while working on scales which are physically in a comfortable register students are improving their technique. A by-product of this method is that because the C# and B scales use the longer positions on the trumpet (more valve combinations using 23 and 123) it encourages a healthy air flow. After these scales are mastered in a smooth fashion, the student will have more confidence in their technique and a healthy air flow because they are not physically manipulating to get over this “harmonic bridge” area. After these scales, students should learn scales that expand up and down from the original scales mentioned. After learning scales in a range where they have been successful without physically manipulating the air flow, the expectation of evenness is well established and issues regarding technique will be minimized.



## Harmonic Bridge F Major



## Learning scales without a scale sheet

Using a scale sheet is the biggest impediment to young players learning scales for the first time. If students have learned chromatic scales first then they have all the tools necessary to achieve the task at hand. All major scales have the same architecture. Key signatures simply move notes up and down to maintain this architecture. Instead of using a scale sheet I suggest students memorize the order of sharps and flats and the number of sharps and flats for each key. The act of actually copying the chart below several times (often the same way multiplication tables are learned in a math class as well as verbally speaking/singing note names and fingering the scales on the trumpet several times before actually playing them will ensure correct technique right from the start and speed up the learning process. At this point students can just see each scale fits neatly into a simple formula. For example the D scale would work like this:

1. The D scale has 2 sharps
2. The first two sharps in the order of sharps are F# and C#
3. Play from D to D with F# and C# as the only altered notes.
4. Result: D, E, F#, G, A, B, C#, D

Order of Flats BEADGCF

Order of Sharps FCGDAEB

C=0

Flats		Sharps
F=1		G=1
Bb=2		D=2
Eb=3		A=3
Ab=4		E=4
Db=5		B=5
Cb=6		F#=6
Cb=7		C#=7

While this chart teaches the same information as the “circle of Fourths” and “Circle of Fifths” it has been my experience that students engrain scales much quicker this way. I also suggest learning traditional technical studies such as Clarke and Vizzutti in tandem with scale practice.

## Flexibility

Flexibility or “lip slurs” as this skill is often called is very important for all brass players. Too often players become tense and overly physical a skill that relies more on finesse than strength. Often young players ascending lip slurs are full of tension because of a preconceived idea that it takes “more air” or some other physical action to get to the next partial. This also makes for a tone that can be described as pinched or forced. Intonation suffers and fatigue sets in. Conversely, in descending slurs, students often let the air stream sag, the sound spreads and the sound loses focus. By approaching flexibility using other notes not found in the harmonic series (especially the minor third preceding the change in partial) to aid the travel in between partials, the player will start to hear and feel the proper placement of the sound and experience more ease. Below are examples of how I teach flexibility to young students.

The image displays ten musical staves, each containing a single melodic line. The exercises are designed to teach flexibility through various slurs and partial changes. The first staff shows a simple ascending slur from a middle partial to a higher partial. The second staff shows a descending slur from a higher partial to a lower partial. The third staff illustrates a slur that crosses a partial boundary, using a note from the lower partial to lead into the higher partial. The fourth staff shows a more complex ascending slur with multiple partial changes. The fifth staff shows a descending slur with multiple partial changes. The sixth staff shows a slur that crosses a partial boundary with a specific intervallic relationship. The seventh staff shows a slur that crosses a partial boundary with a specific intervallic relationship. The eighth staff shows a slur that crosses a partial boundary with a specific intervallic relationship. The ninth staff shows a slur that crosses a partial boundary with a specific intervallic relationship. The tenth staff shows a slur that crosses a partial boundary with a specific intervallic relationship.

### **Getting Into The “Taper Zone”**

When a player can end a note with smooth diminuendo they are playing in the most resonate spot in the note. Sound, flexibility and intonation all improve. If a player is pushing on the note a smooth taper is impossible.

### **Tuning**

The tuning slide should for young students can be kept about a half inch to three-quarters of an inch out. At a young age tuning students individually by moving tuning slides constantly is not beneficial. A concert “Bb” is the most common tuning note. This “C” on a Bb trumpet tends to be sharp. The D above it is low as is the Eb and E. When the slide is out too far and the already flat D, Eb and E are even flatter. To get to the upper register the student will really have to push the pitch up. Singing in full voice with a focused sound while matching pitch is a much better and more efficient use of time spent on tuning than the use of a tuner and constantly moving the main tuning slide.

### **Posture, Horn Angle and Hand Position**

#### **Sitting up Straight**

While this may seem like a simple thing to do, I often see young players contort themselves into pretty unnatural positions when they are given this simple request. I have found that if the student will focus on the small of the back being straight and the chest slightly up that everything else will fall right into place.



## **Horn Angle**

The trumpet mouthpiece sits across the flat surface that is created by the teeth behind the lips. Most players have an overbite. Therefore a proper horn angle needs to be slightly down for most players. Players should not push the bottom jaw out to meet the trumpet. When this happens there is a great deal of tension introduced to the temporomandibular joints (TMJ). Additionally this can have a negative effect on the inhalation process in breathing because it can manipulate the natural seal around the mouthpiece.



## **Hand Position**

In my opinion there is no problem with students letting the right pinky rest inside the pinky ring. As long as the student is not obviously pulling the horn into the face this will not cause any issues. The fulcrum point of the instrument changes depending on the horn angle. If it is at a comfortable angle (slightly lowered) the pinky should be just fine. If the horn angle is parallel to the ground the odds are that there will be pressure from the pinky ring because of the shift in weight. One issue I do see as problematic is when the right thumb sits behind the first valve casing. This will add excess tension and pressure. The right thumb should sit either in between the valve casings of the first and second valve or sit on the first valve casing itself.



## **Tendencies**

Young students often share similar pitfalls. Here is a short list to look out for:

- Not playing with intention, noodling etc etc
- Breathing as they are bringing the horn to the face.
- Playing flat on G# in the staff
- Fingering Cb 23 instead of 2
- Not using the third valve slide
- Using third valve slide for 23 combinations

## **Semantics**

Often phrases with the best of intentions can have unintended consequences. In this section I want to address some of these common phrases and help find better ways of addressing the issues they are meant to help.

### **“Use More Air”**

The phrase “use more air” is a common phrase which often results in either the student blowing harder and causing the vasalva maneuver to initiate, or the student will take what they perceive as a larger breath but is really just raising the shoulders.

### **“Pull back your lips to play higher”**

This phrase automatically reduces the vibrating surface of the embouchure. It cuts off the high register. It does nothing positive.

### **“Open your teeth” “Lower your jaw” “Think oh”**

On any brass instrument there is a certain amount of compression needed. In the middle and low range it is not as noticeable but it is there. This stops that compression and causes the pitch to go flat.

### **“Support with the diaphragm”**

This causes tension and the diaphragm is an involuntary muscle, therefore this is an impossible task. Even the term “support” can get students to become rigid. It implies muscular tension and takes away elasticity.

### **“Play with a dark tone”**

This results in an unfocused tone because the term “dark tone” can have many different meanings. When students hear this they usually try to open up the oral cavity and lose focus in the sound. Try using words like resonant and warm instead. Also the use of colors and descriptive adjectives can be an effective tool.

### **“Fill up from the bottom” and “Breath from your toes”**

Impossible. The air goes in the body and goes exactly where it should naturally go. Phrases like this cause students to over do it. It takes flow to play the trumpet, not hurricane force winds. The breath should be natural and conversational.

### ***Suggested Listening Ideas***

#### **Classical Soloist**

Hakan Hardenberger  
Maurice Andre  
Timofei Dokshizer  
Reinhold Friedrich  
Ole Edvard Antonsen  
Alison Balsom  
Jouko Harjanne  
Tine Thing Helseth  
Selina Ott

#### **Orchestral Principal Trumpet Players**

Michael Sachs, Cleveland Orchestra  
Esteban Batallan Cons, Chicago Symphony  
Chris Martin, New York Philharmonic  
Tom Rolfs, Boston Symphony  
David Bilger, Philadelphia Orchestra  
Tom Hooten, Los Angeles Philharmonic  
Mark Hughes, Houston Symphony  
Stuart Stephenson, Atlanta Symphony  
Paul Merkerlo, Montreal Symphony  
David Krauss, Metropolitan Opera  
Billy Hunter, Metropolitan Opera  
Mark Inoye, San Francisco Symphony  
Michah Wilkinson, Pittsburgh Symphony  
Manny Laureano, Minnesota Orchestra  
Phil Cobb, London Symphony  
Gabor Tarkovi, Berlin Philharmonic  
Tamas Velenczei, Berlin Philharmonic  
Guillaume Jehl, Berlin Philharmonic

#### **Famous Former Principal Trumpets**

Adolph "Bud" Herseth, Chicago Symphony  
Philip Smith, New York Philharmonic  
William Vacchiano, New York Philharmonic  
Roger Voisin, Boston Symphony  
Armando Ghitalla, Boston Symphony  
Thomas Stevens, Los Angeles Philharmonic  
James Thompson, Atlanta Symphony, Montreal Symphony  
George Vosburgh, Pittsburgh Symphony  
Bernard Adelstein, Cleveland Orchestra  
Louis Davidson, Cleveland Orchestra  
Susan Slaughter, St. Louis Symphony  
Gil Johnson, Philadelphia Orchestra

Frank Kaderabek, Philadelphia Orchestra  
Harry Glantz, New York Philharmonic  
Maurice Murphy, London Symphony

#### **Jazz Soloists**

Louis Armstrong  
Clifford Brown  
Dizzy Gillespie  
Miles Davis  
Freddie Hubbard  
Lee Morgan  
Chet Baker  
Clarke Terry  
Blue Mitchell  
Wynton Marsalis  
Marcus Printup  
Kenny Rampton  
Woody Shaw  
Ingrid Jensen  
Terrance Blanchard  
Roy Hargrove  
Graham Breedlove  
Randy Brecker  
Sean Jones  
Jim Rotundi  
Chris Botti  
Dave Douglas

#### **Brass Quintets**

American Brass Quintet  
Boston Brass  
Empire Brass  
Canadian Brass

#### **Lead Trumpet/Commercial Trumpet**

Doc Severinsen  
Maynard Ferguson  
Wayne Bergeron  
Jerry Hey  
Gary Grant  
Cat Anderson  
Roger Ingram  
Bill Chase  
Charlie David  
Jon Lewis  
Malcom McNab

**Mark Dulin** leads an active career as a performer and educator in Atlanta, Georgia. As an orchestral musician he is a former member of the Charlotte, Jacksonville Symphonies and has performed with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, Charleston, Winston Salem, Greensboro and Tenerife Symphony Orchestras. He is a member of the Atlanta Chamber Brass and has performed with the Emerson String Quartet, giving the North American Premiere of Dimitri Shostakovich's op.41A. He is a founding member of the Atlanta Chamber Brass.

Dulin has served on the faculties of the University of Akron, Winthrop University, Appalachian State University and the University of North Florida. He has presented masterclasses and lectures at the Juilliard School, the Eastman School of Music, the Cleveland Institute of Music, Illinois State University, Western Illinois University, the University of Iowa and the Trumpet Festival of The Southeast. Additionally, Dulin has hosted regional trumpet festivals in Ohio and South Carolina. He currently teaches privately throughout the Atlanta area.

He has written articles for the ITG Journal including interviews with Hakan Hardenberger, Gabor Tarkovi, Raymond Mase and Kevin Cobb. He is the co-editor of Vincent Cichowicz *Long Tone Studies, Flow Studies Volume I and II*. These volumes are published by Studio 259 Productions and Balquhiddy Music.

Dr. Dulin holds degrees from Indiana University, the University of Cincinnati and SUNY Stony Brook and is a Vincent Bach Performing Artist. He is a student of John Rommel, Marie Speziale, Kevin Cobb, Joe Phelps, Michael Sachs, James Pandolfi and John Entzi.