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Tips for Brass Players

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Artistry

by Chase Sanborn

Many musical instrument companies maintain a roster of "artists" to promote their products. An effective artist is someone who has established a reputation as a performer and/or a teacher, who chooses to play the company's instruments and who can effectively communicate why she likes those instruments. There are many misconceptions about being a company-sponsored artist. Hopefully, this article will shed a little light on the situation.

The relationship between the company and the artist is a business relationship – each side offers something of value and expects something in return. The company offers promotional and financial support for the artist's professional activities, while the artist offers credibility and exposure for the company's products. An artist benefits from the prestige of being associated with the company; an endorsement implies that she has achieved a certain stature within the industry. The company benefits from association with musicians who have achieved that stature. The company's primary goal is to sell instruments; the artist's primary responsibility is to build a successful career while playing those instruments.

Contrary to popular assumption, artists do not get free instruments, nor are they paid to endorse them. The company looks for artists who choose to play the instruments with or without an endorsement; without a sincere belief in the product the endorsement doesn't mean much. As an artist you are expected to purchase your instruments, however you might have access to discount pricing.

A common misconception among artists is that affiliation with a company will result in a slew of gigs and clinics. While the company strives to help promote the careers of its artists, it is not a booking or management agency. It remains the artist's responsibility to create a demand for his/her services. There may be times that the company will hire an artist, e.g. as a clinician for a music festival, however most gigs originate with the artist or with an organization that seeks to engage the artist. The possibility of funding may put an engagement within the financial grasp of a host organization, and in that way generate additional opportunities for both the artist and for host organizations.

A common misconception among host organizations is that the company will pay all fees and expenses for an artist to appear at an event. Most of the time the company acts as a co-sponsor, sharing costs with a local dealer and the host organization. If an organization seeks to engage an artist, a clear and concise proposal should be drafted, outlining the nature of the event and the budget, including a specific request for funding. State exactly what you are seeking and what the company stands to gain by co-sponsoring this event, e.g. publicity, advertising, display space, etc. You'll have to sell the idea – companies are inundated with requests for money – but they are always interested in a good opportunity to promote their artists and their products.

So what makes you desirable as an artist? It all comes down to exposure and credibility: Do your concerts attract a substantial audience? Do your recordings sell in large numbers? Are you winning awards? Are you a well-respected teacher, adjudicator or clinician? Are your writings published? In all of these roles you establish credibility as an artist, and by extension, for the company that makes your instruments. Note that artists must be effective and engaging teachers – many sponsored engagements include an educational component. Promoting music education is a major part of being an artist.

As an artist, remember that this is a business relationship. Dealing with business is natural for a company, but not always so for musicians. Try to see things from the company's viewpoint: everything they do is with an eye towards improving the bottom line or increasing their market. That is not to say that the company is devoid of altruistic intentions, but they want to grow their business, and artists are a part of that master plan. Therefore, it behooves an artist to consider how to be a more effective spokesman for the company. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, *"Ask not what your company can do for you, but what you can do for your company."*. Here are some specific suggestions:

• Be organized, responsive and clear about what you offer and what you expect.
• Put together a high-quality promotional package; give the company something to work with when promoting you. Maintain an informative Web site and be able to send pictures and bios electronically.
• Build a mailing list and become an important local source of information about upcoming events and promotions.
• Compile a price list for your services, taking into account all the different situations you might encounter as an artist (clinics, concerts, adjudication, etc.)
• Keep the company apprised of any upcoming projects or high-profile gigs. Try to involve them whenever possible.
• Incorporate the company logo on your handouts and promotional materials.
• Learn about the relationship between the company and its dealers. As an artist you may find yourself working with competing dealers. Knowledge and diplomacy are invaluable.
• During a clinic or performance:
– Acknowledge your sponsors. Explain briefly how corporate sponsorship helps to allow events like this one to take place. Emphasize the company's role in promoting and advancing music education.
– Tell the audience about the instrument(s) you are playing, including the model, features, etc. Explain how you evaluate an instrument and offer some tips for choosing their own instrument. Emphasize the importance of playing a quality instrument to maximize the effectiveness of all the hours spent practicing and studying. Encourage them to try out instruments at the local dealer, or at the venue, if instruments are available.
• Above all, build your career and inspire people to enjoy and explore music. The more successful you are as a performer or teacher, the more valuable you are as an artist.

Chase Sanborn is a jazz trumpet player based in Toronto, Canada. Chase is a veteran studio musician and a member of the jazz faculty at the University of Toronto. His teaching methods, Brass Tactics *and* Jazz Tactics, *have earned worldwide praise for their insightful yet lighthearted and humorous look at the world of brass playing and jazz improvisation. For more information on Chase's books, DVDs, CDs and other products, visit www.chasesanborn.com.*

Reflections

By Chase Sanborn

Ahhh … as I look back on a life well-lived…

Just kidding. This article doesn't deal with those kinds of reflections, though I have a few. I'm referring here to glass reflections, namely mirrors. In a recent article I touched on the use of a mirror when practicing; I'd like to expand on that concept. Vanities aside, there are valuable reasons for a brass player to watch in a mirror while practicing (and even vanity serves a purpose, as you'll see). The teacher observes the student as she plays; why not turn that same critical gaze upon yourself? There are two kinds of mirrors you might utilize: full-length, to watch your posture, and close-up, to watch your embouchure. Both serve a primary function, which is to allow you to observe and, thereby, control the actions of your body.

Playing a brass instrument is an athletic event, and requires the coordinated use of many different muscles. The mirror helps you learn to use your muscles in the most efficient way. It also keeps your mind focused on the task at hand – the harder you concentrate, the more you accomplish. When the horn is in your hands, your mind should be on music.

Obviously, you can only watch in a mirror if you have memorized what you are playing. That's good – you should memorize everything you practice, even if only in short segments. As long as you stare at the printed page, you devote valuable brainpower to processing what you see, rather than what you hear. Take away visual input and your brain receives increased input from the other senses; simply closing your eyes immediately changes the way you hear. The mirror helps you connect what you do with your body to the sound that results.

A full-length mirror is useful for improving your playing posture and revealing bad habits. Observe these posture guidelines:

• Plant your feet firmly on the floor; feel that you are pushing against the floor to expel the air. If sitting, feel that you could stand up while you are playing – support the sound from the feet, not the seat.

• Keep your elbows comfortably away from the body, your shoulders down and relaxed, and your chest up.

• Watch your entire torso expand as you take a breath. Whenever possible, inhalations should be slow and relaxed. At soft to medium volumes, the exhalation should also be relaxed, like a sigh.

• Most of the time, the exhalation should follow the inhalation with no delay. "Bottling up" the air creates tension that must be released at the moment of attack. To become aware of this tension, inhale deeply and hold your breath; your body immediately tenses to resist the natural inclination to release the air. If you breathe in and out naturally, you stay relaxed.

• Keep your chin up to open the throat and eliminate a common source of tension. The first point of resistance to the air should occur at the lips, not the throat. Watch for a common error – the horn angle drops as you descend. This closes the throat and misdirects the sound. The low register demands a wide-open air passage – hold your horn up!

• Here's another common error: the eyes look towards the ceiling as you ascend. Your eyes should always look where you want the sound to go. Picture the sound as a visible beam of light emanating from the horn – the higher you play, the farther the beam projects. High notes are not further up; they are further out. Keep an eye on your sound.

Using a close-up mirror to observe your embouchure is somewhat controversial. In general, it is better to focus on the bigger picture, i.e., the sound and the music, rather than obsess about the embouchure. Still, the lips are the source of vibration and small adjustments can make a big difference in the sound. I mount an extendable shaving mirror to the wall so the bell remains unobstructed yet I can get a close up view of my face. Watch the muscles of your embouchure outside of the mouthpiece and strive to reduce facial movements; the less the external muscles move, the finer the control within the mouthpiece, where it really counts. Watching in the mirror while using a rim visualizer can be enlightening – it is amazing to see that such a small part of your body is ultimately responsible for the sound that comes out of your horn. No wonder a trumpet teacher must also be an amateur psychiatrist!

There is no ideal way an embouchure should look, so don't try to copy someone else's embouchure or operate on a pre-conceived notion of what is correct. Whatever produces the best sound is correct for you. Listen as you watch, and make small adjustments with the lips and with the position of the mouthpiece on the lips, always searching for the embouchure setting that produces the most resonant sound with the least effort. Find the easiest way to play the horn!

Finally, a mirror can be used for its primary purpose – to see what you look like. Many players overlook the fact that a musician on stage presents a visual as well as an aural performance. The full-length mirror gives you a chance to check out your wardrobe and see what looks best on you on stage. Perhaps that suit that hangs well when walking down the street bunches up awkwardly when you play your instrument. Maybe your girlfriend is right … that shirt really doesn't go with those pants. Don't discount the importance of your appearance; it affects the way people relate to you, both as a musician and as a human being.

The mirror reflects many aspects of the person and the musician. It can teach you to use your body in the most efficient way and to keep your mind focused. Plus, it can improve your sartorial standards. So now … go take a hard look in the mirror!

Chase Sanborn is a jazz trumpet player and a member of the jazz faculty at the University of Toronto. He is the author of Jazz Tactics & Brass Tactics, *and has just published* Tuning Tactics, *a book/CD method for improving intonation for all instrumentalists and vocalists. Chase can be heard in good company on his new CD entitled* Perking Up. *Chase Sanborn is a Yamaha Artist, and appears throughout North America as a clinician and guest artist. For more information e-mail: chase@chasesanborn.com*

New Rule: Blow Your Own Horn

by Chase Sanborn

The following is a condensed interview conducted by Burt Brown.

Chase, when did you start playing, and how did you get started in your music career?

I started playing in grade four in the New Jersey public school system. Trombone was my first choice, but I couldn't reach seventh position (I still can't). During high school, I commuted to Philadelphia to study with Dr. Donald Reinhardt, a brass specialist. In the early 1970s, I attended Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA, one of the few universities offering a major in jazz at that time. In 1979 I moved to San Francisco, CA to cut my teeth as a freelancer for the next four years. During that period, I spent a year touring North America and Europe with the Ray Charles Orchestra. In 1981 I moved to Toronto, ON inspired by what I heard on Rob McConnell's Boss Brass recordings, and the quality of life offered by the city. I am very happy to be a Canadian (dual citizen, actually) and to be the father of a couple of them!

What kind of playing do you do in Toronto?

As a commercial session player, I've made my living primarily in the recording studios and theatre pits, with the occasional jazz gig to make sure I have enough tax deductions. These days, I'm spending as much time on the road as in town, appearing as a guest artist.

Do you have a regular group of your own?

I have a group whenever I have a gig! Toronto has a large talent pool, and there is never a problem forming a band. I do have my favourites, including Mark Eisenman on piano, Steve Wallace on bass, and Reg Schwager on guitar. That trio appears on my new CD, *Perking Up*.

How do you approach making a recording?

I try to make the session as much like a live gig as possible: play a few tunes, take a break, play a few more tunes, etc. I avoid listening to playbacks in the studio and I never strive for perfection, because a) I'll never achieve it and b) that is not the goal. A jazz recording attempts to capture a moment of spontaneity; you want to hear a jazz musician taking risks. As Guido Basso says: "Don't forget to flaw." Basically, if you assemble a group of great musicians that enjoy playing together, and give them tunes they enjoy playing, they'll make your record for you!

Can you talk about your teaching?

As a younger player, I always resisted teaching, fearing that it would distract me from my playing career. As it turns out, teaching has made me a much better player, and actually provides quite a few playing opportunities as a guest artist. Teaching has become a major focus of my life, and if I have a calling, that is it. I enjoy travelling and working with students more than anything else I've done in my career.

My private students range from about 13 to 80, from beginner to pro. I teach a lot of adults and comeback players, people who stopped playing to raise a family or build a career, and now want to return to it. It's a satisfying group to teach because they are doing it totally for personal pleasure, without any pressure, beyond what they put on themselves. Often they get bugged that their real job interferes with their practice time.

In the jazz program at the University of Toronto (U of T), we have a small student body of about 70 undergrad and graduate students. With a faculty of more than 20 of Canada's finest jazz musicians, the students receive a lot of individual attention – there is nowhere to hide in our program! The level of the students is high, and they inspire and challenge each other. Many of the country's rising-star jazz musicians are graduates of the U of T program. Increasingly, I find myself on the bandstand with ex-students, for example in vocalist Heather Bambrick's band, where I am the token "old guy." I'm following the example set by Phil Nimmons who has obviously discovered the fountain of youth, which is: hang around with young people!

Do you have any advice for students?

Make every note sound as beautiful as you possibly can. Practice slowly, with full concentration, and listen critically. Try to communicate with your listeners on an emotional, not intellectual level.

How do you choose what style of music to play?

It chooses you. As a musician, it's important to stay true to your own taste. If you play music that speaks to you, it will speak to others too. Whether it speaks to a million people or 100 people, you don't have a whole lot of control over that. If you are true to yourself, you are a success.

Can you talk about your books and DVDs?

I have self-published three books: *Brass Tactics*, *Jazz Tactics*, and my latest, *Tuning Tactics*, which deals with intonation. The books and accompanying DVDs are extensions of my teaching. I attempt to distill 30 years of professional playing experience into a few hundred pages, presented in an enlightening and entertaining format. My writing style is casual, with a bit of humour. Readers will discover that the life of the professional musician, whatever else it may bring, guarantees a lot of laughter.

Self-publishing is very time-consuming, but I enjoy every stage of the process from writing to marketing. I love that my writing has connected me to people all over the world. People seem to feel that after reading my books, they know me a little, as they are written very much from my personal perspective.

You are a Yamaha Artist. How does that work?

Yamaha co-sponsors some of my educational activities and I play and endorse their instruments. I'm very proud to be affiliated with Yamaha, because of the quality of their instruments and because of their commitment to music education.

What equipment do you play?

My primary trumpet is the Yamaha 8310Z, which is the most versatile trumpet I've ever owned. My flugelhorn is the 6310Z. Both horns were designed for Bobby Shew. My mouthpieces are designed and manufactured by GR Mouthpiece Technologies. They are on the market as CS Signature Models, and have turned out to be very popular.

Chase Sanborn is a jazz trumpet player based in Toronto, ON and a veteran columnist for CM. *For more information, visit* www.chasesanborn.com.

Doubling For Brass Players

by Alastair Kay

I'm counting 26 bars rest. Across the pit the woodwinds are putting down their saxes, and are quickly picking up flutes and clarinets. The trumpet players in front of me are emptying spit-valves and blowing warm air through their flugels getting ready for a delicate soft entry. I've worked with the bass trombonist beside me for a dozen years now and I know he's going to wait until the last second before picking up his tuba. The soft brass chorale goes beautifully, the flugels and tuba are set down, not needed again until the next act.

The life of a doubling brass player can be rewarding, but also stressful, having to keep chops in good condition on two or more horns. What are the strategies for successful doubling? What are the typical problems encountered? Throughout my 33 years as a pro, I've worked with the good, the bad, and the brilliant, so hopefully I can give you some insight into this subject.

Common instrument doubles: Even though this list of possible doubles seems daunting (and expensive!), many players (in dixieland, concert/brass/silver/marching bands, etc.) don't double and have a great career playing only one horn.

Jazz (Latin, musicals, R&B, etc.) trumpeters: B♭ trumpet, B♭ flugelhorn, and occasionally B♭ piccolo trumpet. Classical trumpeters: trumpets in C, B♭, E♭, B♭/A piccolo, and occasionally in D, F, or G, B♭ flugelhorn, cornets in B♭, C, or E♭. Add to this list baroque style trumpets, post horns, bugles, herald trumpets, rotary-valved trumpets, and for early music types, cornetti.

Jazz tenor trombonists: bass bone, euphonium. Within the tenor trombone family alone there's three distinct bore (tubing diameter) sizes. I use a Yamaha 697Z small bore (.483/.490), a medium bore YSL684G (.525), and a large bore YSL882G0 (.540). Jazz bass trombonists: tuba (pitched in B♭, C, E♭, or F), tenor trombone. Classical tenor trombonists: alto trombone in E♭, and sometimes bass bone, euphonium, bass trumpet. Classical bass trombonists: tuba, tenor bone. Euphonium players: tenor trombone. French horn players: natural horn in a few different keys (no valves), descant (high F), tenor Wagner tubas, and E♭ tenorhorn.

Problems: In addition to learning different clefs, transposition skills and different slide positions or valve fingerings, there are altered physical demands made on the doubler. The amount of air support needed from you and the resistance from the instrument changes due to different bore types (conical, cylindrical) and size, so your body needs to slightly alter the ratio of air and embouchure to consistently play that same note. Similarly, your body feels the change going from a larger bore B♭ trumpet to a smaller E♭ trumpet, or from a tenor to bass trombone.

Mouthpiece design (size of rim, cup, and throat) is important. Jazz trumpeters tend to use smaller mouthpieces (Jet Tone 3B or Giardinelli 6C), the same rim but deeper cup on flugel (Jet Tone B rim or Giardinelli 6C), and similar rim but shallower cup on piccolo (Giardinelli 6C). Classical players use slightly larger rims and cups (1C or 1 ½C Bach) for their B♭, C, E♭ trumpets, and smaller rims and cups on piccolo (Bach 7D, Stork 2P).

Tenor trombonists of any style rarely stay with the same rim between horns. Small bore jazz players use (11C or 12C Bach, 8H Marcinkiewicz, Al Kay signature), medium bore (Yamaha 48, Bach 6 ½ or 7) and large bore (Yamaha 51B, Bach 5GS). Alto trombone (Bach 12C, Christian Lindberg alto). Bass trombonists (Marcinkiewicz Reichenbach, Bach 1 ½ G). Tuba (Warburton Arnold Jacobs, Parke Ofenloch, Conn Helleberg).

Sound quality can suffer if you play your flugel as a trumpet – relax, drop your jaw a bit and let the air help open up the sound. Listen to the best, like Guido Basso. You will also find that dedicated tuba players play larger instruments and mouthpieces than bass bone/tuba doublers, but sometimes you have to compromise sound quality for ease of playing.

Solutions: To be a successful brass doubler you have to be in shape and be ready to play at a very high level on any of your instruments. If I were to practice euphonium exclusively for the next two weeks, then be called up to play a jazz gig on trombone, it wouldn't feel good at all. This also happens to trumpet players playing too much flugel. It's rare to have months, weeks, or even days notice about an important gig coming up. Your embouchure, air support, even tonguing all adapt to what horn and mouthpiece you are playing most frequently. To feel comfortable on all of your horns, you have to alternate between horns during each practice session. Warm up well on your main instrument, play one study on that, then switch to your first double, back to your main, then your second double, etc. If possible keep all of your instruments out on stands so you can pick them up at any time. When you pick up each instrument, treat it as a new instrument with its own unique sound and problems to master. I would also suggest that you join a band or orchestra playing one of your doubles to gain experience and build confidence.

Remember, every time you play, your reputation is on the line, so have equally high standards on all of your horns. Doubling isn't easy, but it can open up new opportunities in your career that can fulfill you musically and monetarily.

Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

Articulation

by Al Kay

Articulation is one of the hardest concepts to teach to students, but I believe it to be one of the most important. I will concentrate on just the beginning of each note (knowing what to do with the middle and the end of the note is important too!), which must be shaped by the player to define the style of music played (classical, jazz, etc.), and the emotion or mood the composer or arranger is implying. In addition, performing in different venues (small jazz club, large concert hall), your role in the band (section, lead, or soloist), and giving the music your own unique sound all add to the complexities of producing a perfect note.

The Basic Tonguing Concept

A jazz player playing a middle B♭/C quarter note (played *f*) needs to come up with an air speed of 10 km/h (it doesn't, it's just for this example) to vibrate her lips and produce that note. If she didn't tongue the note ("Hoo") it would take quite a few milliseconds to go from zero to 10, giving a softer, unfocused start to the note. For this jazz attack (hard, accented) the player needs to have an *instant* 10 km/h to give the note the energy, life, and punch that the music demands. To understand the correct concept we need to isolate the start of the note. Away from the horn, take a big breath and place your tongue on your top teeth. Try to exhale (use firm abdominals, but relax your upper body and neck). For a second or two your tongue should be stopping the air from escaping, building up lots of air pressure. When you quickly pull back your tongue there should be an explosion of built-up air pressure (remember spitting sunflower seeds, or peashooters?). Don't push any air after the release – concentrate on the initial release. Repeat this quite a few times until you get consistent results.

On The Horn

Get ready to play a middle B♭/C. Big inhalation, but delay the release of the air with your tongue for a second (which in real playing situations you would never do), and let it go. You should end up with a loud, accented, instant note that has an extremely sharp-edged attack.

This is the shape of that jazz note:
An instant, accented start to it, a quick decay.

This inferior note has a fuzzy start:
A sluggish tongue release.

Repeat a few times. Try playing a descending B♭/C scale (short quarter notes) one note at a time, making sure you set up each note correctly, and listening for the "snap" at the beginning of each note. Repeat each note until it's perfect then go to the next one. Once you get the concept try to reduce the pressure build-up time until just before the note. Metronome at 60, 4/4 time, count three beats rest, inhale on beat four, start to blow, your tongue building up lots of air pressure behind it just a fraction of a second before the big release on beat one. If you've been achieving consistent results, try constant quarter notes. If they sound good, bring out a swing/latin chart and try to play some parts of it using your new intense articulation. The music should have more energy and excitement now. If it's not consistent, go back to the start of the process, visualize the note shape, and isolate the beginning of the note using the correct concept. Keep the note shape the same for all dynamics (soft playing uses smaller intensity), and from your lowest to highest notes. (In the future I hope to have an article on improving your high range, part of it talking about this same concept to easily nail notes in the high B♭/C to F/G range!)

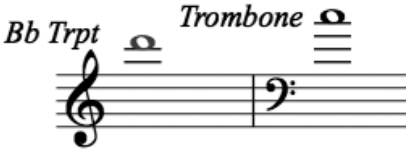
For many jazz or Latin tunes, using this note shape gives clarity, energy, brilliance, projection, and a very confident rhythmic feel to your playing, which is ideal for a soloist in front of a large, loud band! This intense articulation will definitely make your sound cut through to the back row of the hall.

Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College, is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, a member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

High Air Speed = High Notes

by Al Kay

Last time, I mentioned the use of your tongue to build up pressure and release an explosion of air, which improves the stability, consistency, and energy of a note.



Instant air speed using this technique also helps a brass player's high range. If that high D (or C on bone) needs a fast air speed to vibrate the lips at 1046.6 cycles per second (523.3 for trombones) you can try and get it by: A) Decreasing the aperture size of your embouchure; B) Blowing faster air from your lungs; C) Using a higher tongue level; D) Releasing built-up air pressure creating a very fast air speed. Just about every brass player uses some or all of these techniques to get their high notes, but many have ignored method D.

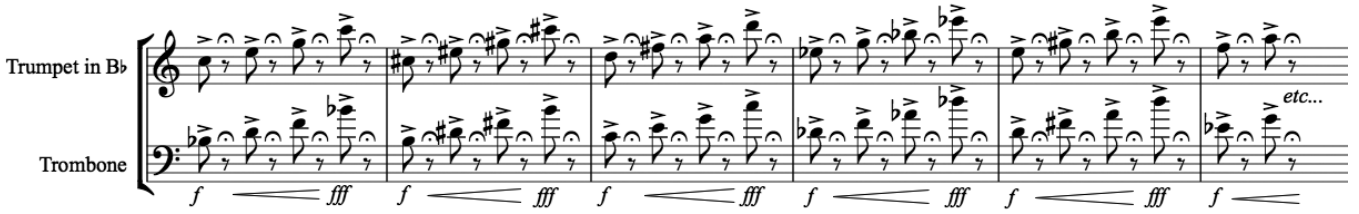
Here are my thoughts on the previous points:

A) Creating a smaller embouchure aperture speeds up the air and gets you the higher notes. Practice slurring (no tongue) up the harmonic series from middle F softly, squeezing the notes up as high as possible. Avoid tonguing, closing the throat, air bumps, crescendos, and excessive mouthpiece pressure.

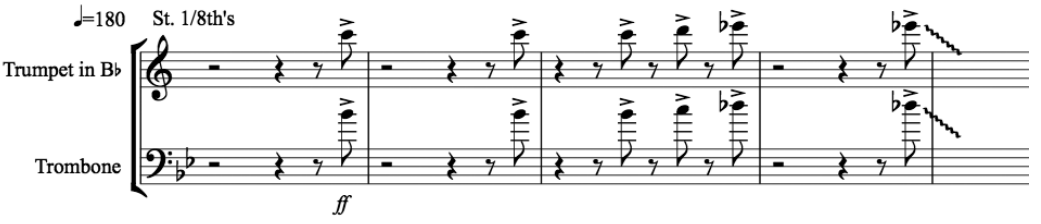
B) Blowing faster air sounds simple, but it works! Think of all the great lead trumpet players who get a huge sound up high. Practice going up major chords (C-E-G-C) or scales with a big crescendo (mf to fff) heading up to the top note. Firm abdominal muscles help with the air supply. Don't think of any high note limits, lots of air will make the lips vibrate, and keep the same method intact as high as possible. Avoid closing your throat, letting your lips blow out (keep a firm embouchure), and too much mouthpiece pressure.

C) Raising the back of your tongue does make the air go faster helping higher notes, but save it for the extremely high range since it compromises sound quality. The main reason so many brass players have a small, tight, and weak sound in the mid to high range is that they rely too much on a high tongue level. They should be working on embouchure strength and a good air supply to minimize the need for a high tongue level. Practice raising and lowering the back of your tongue while playing a higher note (lower tongue is better!). Compensate for the tongue level when lowering it, by increasing the air speed (blow!). Avoid the same problems as mentioned in A and B.

D) Hitting the high notes (like a loud, single high D 8th note in a chart) can be scary IF you approach it incorrectly.



Set up each note by placing the tip of your tongue on the top teeth, build up lots of air pressure behind the tongue, then quickly release that air (similar to spitting, as mentioned in the previous article). The explosion of air instantly gets the lips vibrating. Take time between each note to set it up correctly. It might take one or a half second delay on the release of the air initially, but as the weeks go on and your ability to hit consistent notes improves, use less and less delay. Just a short delay before each note is enough to build up a huge amount of air, ready to kill that top note!



When playing this Latin salsa figure, I would inhale on beats two and three but have the tongue up on the top teeth by beat four building up air pressure ready to release. The note is actually on the "and" of four, but the momentary delay will ensure proper air speed. When you do release it, the note will have energy, sizzle, burn, excitement – exactly what this music needs! In bar three, I can set up the first note the same way, but use tongue-stopped articulation (tat, tat, tat), which is used throughout jazz, R&B, Latin, and most other contemporary music styles.

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Know Your Role

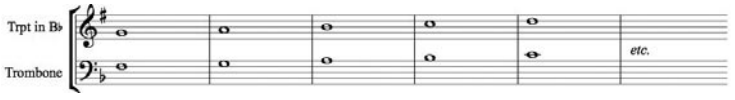
by Al Kay

Accomplished brass players need to sound strong and confident, but also be sensitive to what's happening musically around them. If they play loud because the music says *"forte"* without realizing that they may be covering up the melody in the woodwinds, then they are not listening. This bull in a china shop syndrome is evident everywhere in bands, and this one-dimensional style of playing will severely limit the type of gigs that person can be hired for.

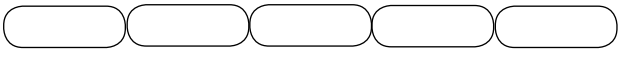
There are many instances in a piece of music that require you to quickly change your role from lead to a secondary or tertiary part. It's not just a matter of playing a bit softer under the new lead part, but it can also mean changing your phrasing, articulation, rhythm feel, sound quality, and intonation (which I will talk about in a future article). In a typical big band chart, playing lead in the trombone section means matching the lead trumpet player for 16 bars, then playing a duet with the lead alto for another 16 who might be slightly higher in pitch and have a more laid back swing feel, playing two choruses of background figures behind a vocalist, then taking a jazz solo. Each of these areas requires you to change your sound a bit, possibly compromising on intonation and swing feel, then playing a confident solo. It's not easy to do, but the more you listen, and practice the following techniques, the better you'll be at it.

I learned a lot about playing with a soloistic sound when I was around 17, working with much more experienced trumpet players who played in the '40s, '50s, and '60s such as Don Johnson, Bob Van Evera, and Paul Grosney. Back then, brass players were featured on melodies all of the time, filling large concert and dance halls with their huge sound – they didn't need mics to help them. It wasn't just about playing louder to get that sound, they also shaped the note differently, and had a "core" or "focused" sound that projected to the back of the hall. I call it getting "presence," and here's an exercise to help you add it to your sound:

Fig1



The note shape:



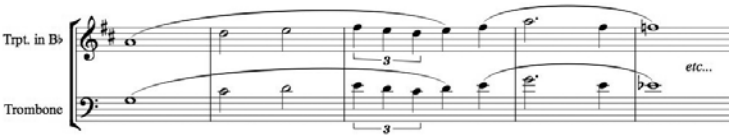
Start with a legato (lighter) tongue, then focus on the middle of the note, bringing up the sound (to mf or f) through a quick crescendo, but maintaining that sound throughout the note. Compared to a regular jazz note it has less "attack" but more body in the middle:

Now that the note shape is different, you also have to add core or focus to your sound. Play the scale above with

crescendos on each note, but as you get louder add more lip compression (work on a smaller aperture without forcing the note up to the next higher pitch). This technique should give you a more brilliant sound that has projection and "burn." For ballads, don't overdo it, but for leading a strong brass section in a loud, exciting passage, go for it! You have to practice this method since it takes a bit more strength but it will eventually reward you with much greater endurance.

To apply the techniques above to real music, practice a favourite tune (or my tune below) slowly at first to get the consistency, then at a performance speed. Play the tune softly (imagining you are playing a gig stuck in a corner of Starbucks with an acoustic guitar) with a little bit of core sound, play it again a little louder (small jazz combo setting) with more core in your sound, then again quite loud with lots of "burn" (as if a big band is playing behind you). You could also change your sound again by imagining you are playing a duet with a flutist or vocalist.

Fig2



Practice: 1. softly (but with good focus). 2. mf (jazz combo – good presence with a nice core). 3. fff (big band – a brilliant, focused sound with "burn"). 4. pp (dead sound – no emotion, very little focus). 5. duet (with a "breathy" singer – softer, velvety sound). 6. duet (with bagpipes – you've got to be heard!). 7. a capella (played alone at a wedding or funeral). 8. mf with a straight, cup, or bucket mute (which means you need lots of air and focus to project your sound). 9. happy!, sad, etc. You get the idea…

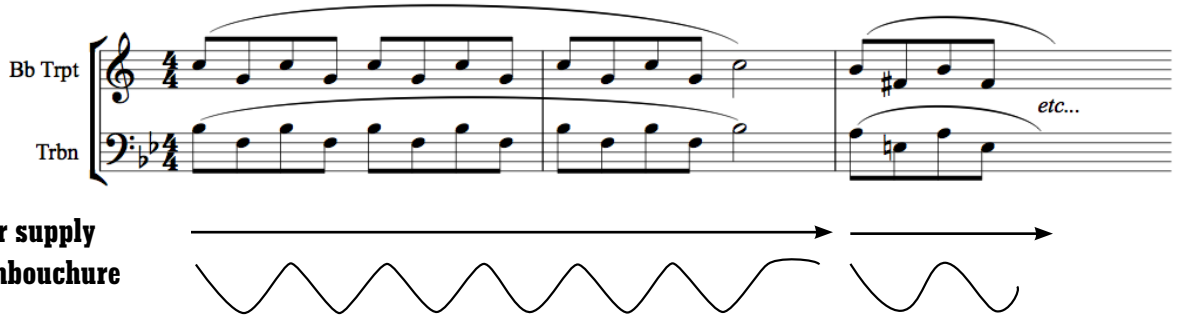
Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College, is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, a member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

Stay Flexible

by Al Kay

There are five main areas of study that brass musicians around the world strive to improve: 1. Air supply. 2. Sound quality. 3. Flexibility. 4. Tonguing. 5. Range (high and low). You should be playing exercises in all of these areas. Flexibility is one area that I find is weak in many pro and amateur players. This is not always the fault of the player who might put in 20-40 minutes a day of dedicated flexibility exercises. The problem is understanding the basic concept of getting your lips to squeeze up and down between notes. Once you figure this out, 25 minutes of focused practicing will be the same as an hour or two of your old way of playing.

Old habits die hard as they say, and for brass players this means bad flexibility techniques such as your throat constricting, too much tongue level, air stopping between notes, air bumps, tonguing the notes, slotting (thinking of separate notes), large embouchure changes, etc. If you have practiced using these inferior methods for years, then they feel normal to you, and you are not aware of them. Here's a typical two-note flexibility exercise and how to practice it properly:

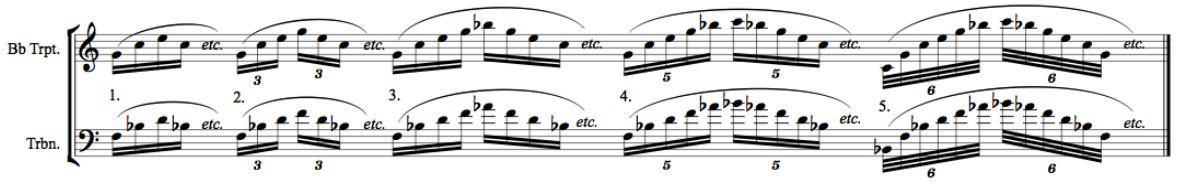


1) Play the first two bars very slowly on your mouthpiece only. Don't think of two separate notes. Slowly let the pitch fall then squeeze up, down, up, down, thinking of a fire engine siren or ocean waves. Your air supply should be constant, using firm abdominals to help regulate the air. Your sound should be consistent with no breaks. Check to see if your throat is open – as you play these waves, aim up towards the ceiling. If it sounds more open then your throat may be constricted in your normal playing position. If so, try to match the open-throat feeling when playing up to the ceiling to your straight-ahead position. Don't rely on too much tongue level (ee-ah-ee-ah) to change the pitch, use small changes in your embouchure aperture to go between the notes (I like to think of a slight mm-aa-mm-aa-mm-aa with my lips). If you have corrected problems with your throat, air supply, sound consistency, and tongue level then there's a good chance you are playing correctly!

2) Put your mouthpiece in your horn, play the exercise starting slowly again and try all of the suggestions in #1. Speed up a bit as you go, keeping the correct concept intact. It may be a little hard to squeeze between the notes initially (thinking of waves), but as you gain lip strength and reduce your bad techniques, progress will come quickly. By the way, this slow squeezing between notes is for the purpose of gaining lip strength, uncovering bad habits, correcting them, and ensuring a great air supply.

3) For trombonists (it may or may not work as well on trumpet, but try it), try reaching down to your spit-valve, and play the first two bars over and over, alternating between open spit-valve and closed, open, closed, etc. They should feel similar (always thinking waves). Trumpeters could try playing with the mouthpiece half-out of the horn, then in, then out, etc. The idea for you all is to teach your body how easy and relaxed it can be, re-creating that feeling playing on your horn.

If you master this concept of slurring between two notes, then over the weeks and months you can gain speed, always thinking of an uninterrupted air-stream and waves. Instead of seeing 13 or more notes in a row, you can now think of one event, a concept that will really help when playing hard 16th note passages in your music. Flexibility is not just about slurring between two notes in the harmonic series, so start to practice three, four, five notes, or two or three octaves! Practice the following, going down in half steps:



Remember: think waves; one event (no matter how many notes); eliminate bad techniques; practice correctly and stay flexible! If you have any questions, please e-mail me at al@alkay.ca.

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The Lost Art Of Playing In Tune – Or, Is Technology Ruining Our Music?

by Al Kay

I remember doing a recording session a few years back, and being told by the engineer that he usually sends the recorded horn tracks at a later time through pitch correctors (used mainly to help untalented pop singers sound better). Our horn section sounded really rich, full, and in-tune, so I later wondered what types of bands this engineer records – perhaps he doesn't know what really good intonation sounds like. Excellent horn players (brass and/or reeds) know how to listen to each other, and know what note in the chord they are playing (major thirds are brought down a bit). If this engineer is mostly recording lots of keyboards and virtual MIDI instruments, then his ears are used to instruments that are tuned with **Equal Temperament**.

For about 3,000 years, mathematicians and musicians have been debating on how to tune instruments and scales. In ancient Greece, Pythagoras found mathematical formulas that made scales and simple harmonies sound very much in tune. Over the centuries, other great minds began to temper or transform these scales, initiating heated debates about who's tuning system was best. The Pythagorean scale was fine for simple melodies and harmonies that were tuned to one key (key of C for example), but what if the melody modulated to the key of F? The mathematical intervallic relationship would be a bit off and make that new key sound out of tune. So, if they compromised some of the key of C notes to make the key of F notes better, why not? You can tune a piano to play a concerto in C and make the chords ring true, but play that same piano in the key of D♭ or E♭ and it's almost dissonant. By manipulating all of the notes on the piano they finally found a way to make the instrument play equally out of tune in all keys! This is what we call Equal Temperament, and modern pianos, synths, and most instrument tuners you buy in the store use this system.

Tuners that are out of tune? Why yes, read the paragraph above again! A student that practices his or her brass instrument using an electronic tuner exclusively will be slightly (and equally) out of tune in all keys. He or she may also be lipping the pitch up or down to match the tuner, causing the sound to be inferior.

Jazz and classical songs that might start in the key of B♭ usually move through quite a few other key centres, so if bars 8, 9, and 10 are in the key of C, you have to make sure that each interval is in tune in that key. Sometimes you are in a new key for one bar only, but make it in tune – why compromise the tuning like a keyboard instrument! I like to play music using this movable **Just Intonation**. It lets me play solos and horn sectional parts that sound just right. I still have to listen around me as I'm playing and maybe compromise a few notes here and there to make the band sound in tune overall. Interestingly, very few of the hundreds of jazz bands I've played with (including Rob McConnell's Boss Brass) tune up before a gig or recording – you just play in tune! At the first chance you get, you can move your tuning slide if you need to, to make it a little more comfortable.

I have a tuner, but I don't use it for tuning scales. Here's what you should use your tuner for:

1. As a temporary reference for a note such as B♭ or A. (These notes might change intonation slightly depending on what key centre you are playing in).
2. As a ROUGH guide for tuning scales or intervals on your instrument, or perhaps checking out the intonation of horns at a music store. (Remember that the tuner might make you play the thirds high, the fourths slightly high, and the fifths slightly low).
3. Playing with a really out of tune band or orchestra so your tuning confidence is gone! (To play confidently in this situation you have to be an intonation leader, not a follower).
4. It's hard to play softly with a beautifully centred sound (usually brass players go sharp and above centre). Find that centred sound by playing a loud note (a brilliant, core, focused sound the horn wants to be played at), seeing where the tuning needle or LED ends up (it doesn't matter if it's flat or sharp just now) and then play the same note very softly and match the same meter position – you are still playing in centre.
5. It's not bad for finding octaves, but read about Pythagoras's octave dilemma from 3,000 years ago in Stuart Isacoff"s excellent book *Temperament*.

If you go online and google "temperament" you'll find popular books, including *How Equal Temperament Ruined Harmony* by Ross Duffin. For many years on my Mac I've used a nice tuning program that has many different temperaments to experiment with at ww.katsurashareware.com. They have some good pages that show the mathematics behind these different scale systems.

In my next column, I'll show you some good intonation exercises that will help wean you off your tuner. Don't compromise – play in tune!

Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College, is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, a member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

The Care And Feeding Of Brass Instruments

by Michael Durocher

Did you know that the brass families of instruments have to be fed differently? That what they feed on is just as important to how they work and feel – just like you and me? Let me help shed some light on information that is not readily known to players of all calibres.

Trumpets

Valve oils and slide greases. Sounds simple doesn't it? Two simple products that will make your instrument perform like the star you are, well … there is more to this than it sounds. Let me inform you of some of the choices you will need to make.

Valve Oils

Oils have two major functions. The first function is to lubricate the valves to assist in creating a seal between the valves and the valve casing. This also creates a barrier from the body acids introduced by the player. The second function is to use a viscosity that allows the valve to move at the speed and smoothness required by the player. Look for an oil that will last, keep the valve wet, and responds fast enough not to impede playing abilities. When you are successful, there should be no staining on the valves and action should last between three to seven days.

The Choices:

Synthetics or Petroleum-Based – Whatever you choose, you need to ensure it meets the two criteria required by valve oils. Most synthetics are designed to be thin and are meant for tight-fitting valves, while petroleum-based oils are designed for older or student-level instruments.

Whichever oil you choose, you will need to experiment, as the formulas will affect people with different body chemistry differently. The condition of your instrument should also be considered.

Tuning Slide Grease – Trumpets & Trombones

Greases used for tuning slides work on all brass instruments. The purpose

of slide grease is twofold: to allow the slide to move smoothly and at the speed that is required; and to create a barrier between the metal and the moisture to prevent oxidization and corrosion caused by the player's saliva. With these two points in mind, we then must deal with viscosities and make an informed decision with our purchase. Look for a product that creates a proper barrier and allows the slide to work as fast as needed.

As we wade into this subject we must ask ourselves a few questions:

- What do I want the grease to do? Slide fast, protect, or last?
- How much maintenance am I prepared to do? Frequency, ease, or difficulty?
- How tight or loose are the slides? New or old?
- Do I want to use more than one kind? Viscosity, brand, or type? Some brands can be mixed down to create the perfect action needed with the valve oil you are using. The Selmer brand mixes well, for example.

The Choices:

Natural, Synthetic, Thin, or Thick – slide oil, Lanolin, Roche' Thomas, FatCat Crème, Hetman Light or Heavy Slide, Selmer Tuning Slide, Cork Grease, and more are some of your choices.

Knowing the answers to the questions we asked ourselves earlier, we can readily find the solution with a quick search on the Internet for the product we are looking for. Simply type in the product name and search, and you will find all the information and comments you need to make an informed decision.

Trombones

There are many choices of slide oils and slide grease formulas. Firstly, I must say that slide oils are not conducive to the prevention of slide damage and care of the hand-slide. While this product is better than no prevention at all, it is accepted as a necessary evil. Those looking for a better solution for preventing slide damage must consider slide cream and formulas as the answer.

Application process of slide cream to the hand slides is as follows:

1. Pull the inner slide tubes out of the outer slide tubes. Try to pull as straight as possible!
2. Wipe clean the inner slide tubes with a clean, soft cloth.
3. Apply cream to the stocking of the slide tubes (slightly larger part of the tube).
4. Work each slide into the outer slide to spread the cream around and then pull out.
5. Wipe off excess cream and spray slide down with water (mist) bottle.
6. Put slide back together again and test. Noisy – add more cream; slow – wipe off and mist.

Michael Durocher is the program designer and Program Head of Musical Instrument Repair studies at Keyano College. Located in Fort McMurray, AB, Keyano College offers Canada's only Musical Instrument Repair program and is considered one of the leaders in the industry. Michael has been repairing for over 22 years and has been involved in music for over 32 years. Michael can be contacted at michael.durocher@keyano.ca or by visiting www.keyano.ca. Michael belongs to the National Association of Professional Band Instrument Repair Technicians and is currently serving as the Canadian (Region 8) Director. Visit NAPBIRT at www.napbirt.net.

Intonation Exercises

by Al Kay

In my previous article, I discussed the compromises you make in intonation if you rely solely on a tuner. If you remember, Equal temperament is a way to make pianos sound reasonably in tune in all key signatures, adjusting each note slightly flat or sharp. It is important to know in what direction each of these notes are altered, compensate for that, and end up with better sounding melodies, chords, and scales.

Knowing what interval or note you are playing in a chord is the key to getting each chord to "ring." You may be playing the fifth (C) of a chord (F major) in the first bar, then move to an A (which is the third) in the second bar. Bringing down the pitch (if you were looking at a tuner) of the third is crucial in producing a great major chord. Eventually you will need the tuner less and less, and instead of looking to determine where the intonation should be you will hear it! These ideas will head you in the right direction, but keep in mind that good musicians will continuously assess the intonation needs of each chord, adjusting and occasionally compromising their notes for the good of the band!

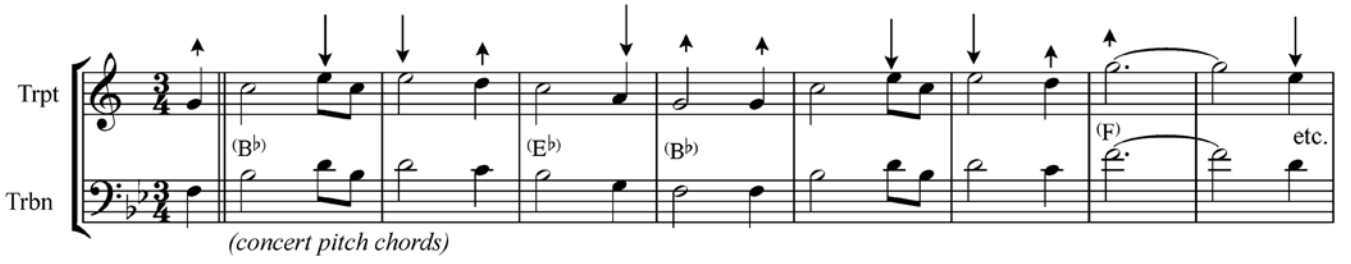
Exercise #1. Using your typical electronic tuner, see if it has any markings for "cents." Mine has -15, 0, +15, but if your tuner doesn't, don't worry, just make the note a tiny bit sharper (if it's +2 it's barely perceptible) or moderately flatter (if it's -13). Pick a major scale such as C, play the low C and make it "0" with the tuner. Look at each of the degrees of the scale below and head up or down in the direction needed to change the pitch (experiment, don't be afraid to take it lower or higher to help find it). Trombonists can easily move their slides (don't lip it up or down), and trumpeters can use their first or third valve slides to help, but may have to lip it anyway.

Degree:	I(C)	II(D)	III(E)	IV(F)	V(G)	VI(A)	VII(B)
Adjustment:	0	+3	-13	-2	+2	-13	-8

Exercise #4. When you've had good luck with the scales, try playing a melody such as "Amazing Grace." Adjust the pitch slightly in the direction of the arrows (long stem means move farther from tuner's "0" than short stem which is barely perceptible at +2).

You'll notice that the thirds on the B♭ chords are down (-13 cents), but also on the E♭ chord as well (the G concert is the third (-13) of E♭ but also the sixth degree in the key of B♭ which according to my intonation chart just happens to be -13). Coincidence? I think not. If we were to play a melody over the chords of the diatonic key of B♭ (B♭, Cm, Dm, E♭, F, Gm, Adim) our perfected scale would sound just right.

Exercise #5. At sectionals or rehearsals, have your trumpet or bone section play random whole notes for a few minutes,



(concert pitch chords)

Exercise #2. Have two of your musician friends play and sustain the root (0) and fifth (+2) then you find the third (-13). That third is a lot lower than what the tuner says, but listen, no "beats" between the notes! Next, have your friends sustain the notes again and using the guide above, practice moving the pitch in the proper direction on the other notes of the scale. Switch around to give the others a chance.

Exercise #3. If #2 is getting more consistent, have just one of your friends sustain the first note while you slowly move each note of the scale in the proper direction. Practice in other keys.

listening and adjusting no matter how pure or dissonant the chord is. It will open all of your ears, and give you enough confidence to try and make the overall intonation better during rehearsals and performances.

In conclusion, this is a difficult but very important topic. Throughout my own research and experimentation I still ended up with more questions than answers. Keep refining your ears and technique so there's only one way to play a note: with a beautiful sound and **in tune!**

I will be putting some open fifths and major chord drones (using theYamaha HD-100) for you to practice with on my new site: www.torontobones.ca. All brass players are welcome!

Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College, is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, a member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

The Invisible Horn

by Al Kay

Think of the basic idea behind brass playing: blowing air past your lips and making them vibrate into your instrument. This should be a simple thing to do, but what we tend to do is worry too much about our results. The fear of missing notes, etc. tends to sap your confidence in getting the notes out of your horn. Players also fight their bodies and horns by using improper breath support, not realizing their throat is choking the sound, and being so stiff in their upper bodies that their sound doesn't resonate (think of a xylophone or marimba without their resonating tubes – the sound is weak and thin). With so many things to worry about, most players have developed bad habits that seem normal to them, since they have been consistently playing this way for the last 10 to 50 years. When I work with a player and start to strip away all of these negative performance techniques, they are amazed at how easy it is to play with a full sound, and PO'd that they've wasted so many years struggling with their horns!

Here are some thoughts and exercises to head you in the proper direction:

1. Look at the first exercise. You will be changing your inhalation timing before each note. Count yourself in at around 80 bpm, but if you have always taken a breath on beat 3, change it to 2 or 1, or even 4. Just change it! This will head you away from your "usual" set-up, which can mask throat and air support problems.

2. Play your notes with a "HOO" attack (no tongue). This helps get the air going and takes away improper timing issues when using tongue articulation.

3. Start playing with a middle G (F on trombone) in mind, but no worries about missing it – if you hit a higher or lower note it's okay. Take a relaxed big breath (you've changed your inhalation, right?), and start a LOUD note with a HOO attack. Don't worry about sound quality right now – raw, unfocused, hockey-horn sounds are okay! Remember, you are trying to get back to the basics of brass playing, not perform a concerto. Repeat many times.
(See Example 1)

4. While you are playing, say to yourself, "relax." Make each attempt better by loosening up your upper torso and making your body a better resonating chamber. Firm abdominals are okay, though.

5. As an experiment, change your posture – aim your horn up towards the ceiling, or with feet firmly planted in a forward stance, aim your horn to the extreme left, right, down, or up each side. Try moving your head quite a bit forward. Does it sound or feel better? Most people notice a difference. It doesn't mean you should play with that weird direction or jutting head position from now on, but you should try and match that open feeling and sound using a more typical posture (not your old, stiff, non-resonating posture!).

6. By now, with no performance pressure issues to deal with, and using a much more relaxed inhalation and posture, your notes should sound and feel easier (an Invisible Horn feeling). Scales are next. Remember, no punishment for missed notes! Play with abandon, no expectations. If you use some wrong

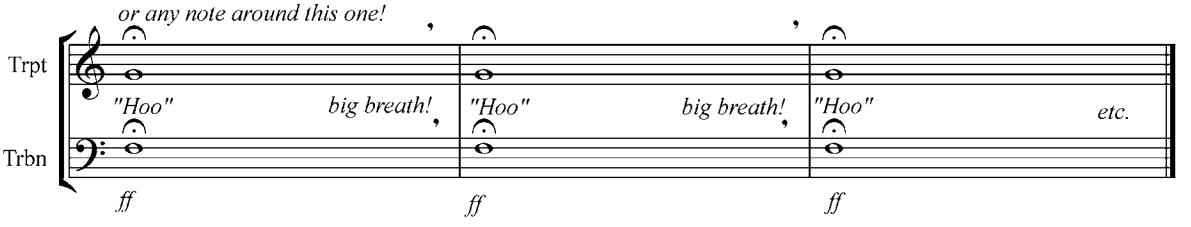
fingerings or can't get some of the higher notes, don't worry. Make a bigger crescendo next time and the notes will come out.
(See Example 2)

7. Try some other scales as well. When your playing starts to feel and sound effortless, try playing the scales a little softer, keeping the same feeling.

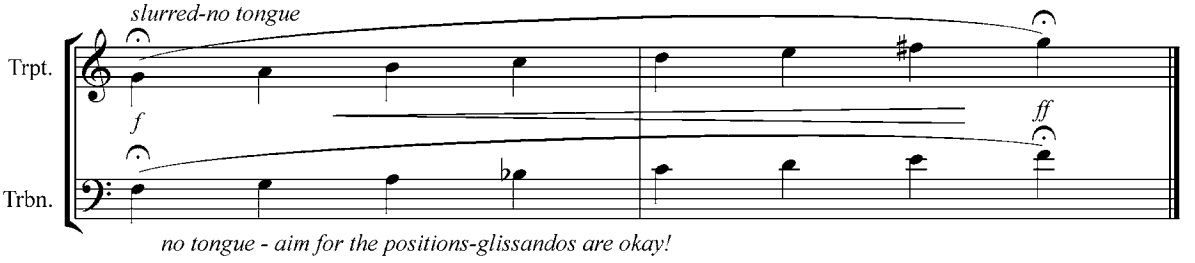
8. Play a slow study, melody, or tune you know without thinking about musicality, time, articulation, or technique. As you play, work on changing your inhalation, relaxing your body, aiming your horn in different directions, blowing with great air support (it doesn't have to be really loud), focusing not on the performance but the correct "feel." If you are not happy with the results go back and do some more scales. If you are feeling really good, start working on a more focused sound, and add tonguing, dynamics, and other musical techniques, but don't lose the "feel"!

Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College, is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, a member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

Example 1



Example 2



Momentum (Or How To Fake It)

by Al Kay

Last term at Humber College, I asked my improv students to learn the head of Charlie Parker's "Anthropology" at a blazingly fast ♩= 150! The sax players started drooling right away, but most of the other instrumentalists shook their heads in defeat. Music students and many pros, have been taught to learn tunes slowly, increasing the tempo gradually over weeks and months. This is the way I was taught at the Conservatory playing classical studies, and it is still an important method for perfecting every note, but what this approach also does is slows down your momentum, especially when sight-reading, as you MUST try to play all of the written notes. Time, rhythm, and style take a back seat as you assess each note's valve or slide position, pitch, and volume. This article will make you re-think your priorities: putting time, rhythm, and style AHEAD of getting all the notes.

As the trombonist on jazz gigs, I end up playing some fast tunes standing beside great sax and trumpet players whose finger dexterity is awesome. The last thing I want to do is step in the holes attempting to play every note perfectly as they fly easily through the tune, so over the years I have learned how to fake my way through the fast lines, hitting most of the notes I can, and throwing away or faking the ones I can't. This means I can keep up with them at any tempo, while preserving the time, rhythm, and style. Of course, when you have a chance to practice these fast tunes, you must work on bringing the quality back to those faked notes (keeping great time, rhythm, and style).

Here are three examples to practice this new concept. Put the metronome on at ♩= 140 or higher. This is probably too fast initially, but try and play Example A. Example B has us playing the "key" notes that will hold the time together. Play and accent them. Example C has the "key" notes and the faked notes in-between. Play the "key" notes strongly staying with the metronome, and try to play as many of the faked in-between notes as you can. Increase the quality of the faked notes by blowing more air throughout the scale, and trying faster articulation methods like double or doodle tonguing. You can start increasing the tempo, but always keep good time.

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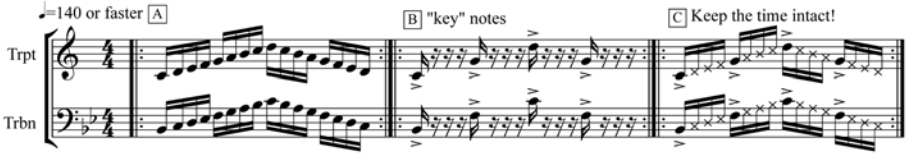
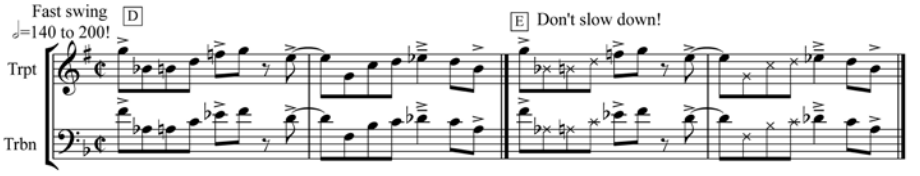
Example A B C



Using this concept, I can play some of my hardest solo pieces like "Csardas" or the last movement of "Bluebells of Scotland" at any speed the conductor wants to take it!

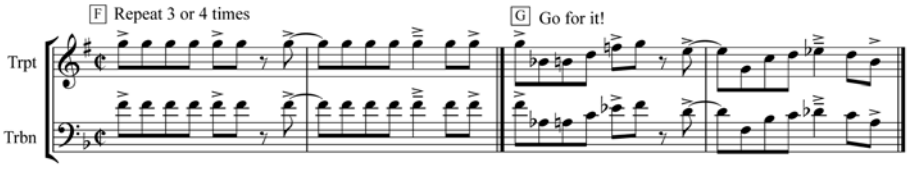
Here's a fast jazz lick (Example D) that would bog down most players initially, but if you look at E, you can see how you can maintain a great time feel. Try to play SOMETHING on the faked notes, even if it's a crummy-sounding note, but always try to improve them as you play.

Example D E



Your confidence, sluggish slide or valve technique, and lack of embouchure flexibility is probably slowing you down as well, so practice playing the rhythm of the lick on one note to maintain a great time feel (Example F). Repeat three or four times playing one note, then play the lick as written – it always sounds and feels better!

Example F G



I had my improv. class practice these concepts for a few weeks and they all performed "Anthropology" brilliantly! Some students had a little more note consistency and quality, a handful of them were superb, but all managed to pull it off without losing time.

In the future, don't be afraid of fast tunes. Always think of keeping the MOMENTUM: putting time, rhythm, and style ahead of the notes!

Passion For Performing (Love It or Lose It!)

by Al Kay

The start of the fall season at Humber College is always frenetic, with the new first-year crop of students practicing hard, eagerly awaiting for their ensemble placements and for who their private lesson teachers will be. For most, it's the first time they've dedicated themselves to serious thought about what it takes to be a great player. This fresh, new personal motivation for learning applies to all levels of musicians, whether it's their first year playing or professionals who have been out of school for awhile.

I've been part of many conversations with parents and younger students about what it takes to get into the local arts school, to a college such as Humber, and what it takes to excel as a "pro." I've put together some thoughts and ideas that will hopefully guide you in the right direction. Just remember, learning is never completed on your instrument, so don't fall into the trap of complacency and laziness – keep pushing yourself to greatness!

Grades 6 to 8 If you're in your first two years of playing, get some private lessons to help develop your sound and technique. Those who don't have access to a good brass teacher nearby might have to take a trip into a larger town once a month, but DO IT! Start building a library of great players on your instrument by buying CDs and downloading (legally) great jazz and classical recordings. Emulate the sound, phrasing, and articulation of those players when practicing. Don't just practice to the level of the music you are playing in band – practice higher, faster, slower, louder, softer, etc. If you are progressing well, ask your band teacher if you could be featured as a soloist in an upcoming concert. Go and listen to live music that features your instrument to witness how great players can make it sound so easy!

Grades 9 to 12 If you think you love playing more than any other subject at school, then maybe you have the "passion" to pursue music. I know I did even in grade seven – taking lessons, buying every trombone LP (vinyl) that I could, and attending every concert that featured a trombonist. You should be doing the same: finding a good brass teacher, falling in love with a great player's sound, technique, or improvisational ability, and wanting to play just like him or her. Start soloing more in jazz band, trying some of the licks you've learned from your favourite players. If you love jazz but don't have a school jazz band or combo, make your own group from friends at school or in the area. I had to do that in my high school, playing with a superb 18-piece all-star big band made up of players from about six local schools. Don't forget that almost every community has a good concert band or orchestra that you and your friends can join. They're great for reading, learning other styles, and consistency.

In grade 11 or 12, access the websites of potential music departments and find out about audition expectations, so there will be no last-minute surprises when you get the official invite to audition. In addition to preparing classical etudes and studies, you should buy quite a few jazz play-along CDs to practice with (the Jamey Aebersold series is very good). It is a great way to learn tunes, work on time feel and endurance, and practice your improvisation. Since most jazz school auditions ask for two or three jazz tunes, you can show up well-prepared and less nervous!

College and University This is when you have to get serious about practicing. There are no "magic bullets" that will take the place of hours and hours on the horn. When I see students hanging around the student lounge all day when they could be practicing, it makes my blood boil (especially when they still can't play their ensemble music)! You should frequently get together with like-minded students, book a room, and jam. Over the next few years you will make (musical) friendships that will last you a lifetime. Attend live concerts, clinics, and support your fellow students when they have a gig! Take a few lessons outside of college with some local or visiting brass artists. Many times they won't even charge you, so if you have a limited budget, at least ask! Most importantly, go to concerts, clinics, and gigs – and be seen, so your face and name stay fresh in the more established musicians' minds.

Finally, set some goals over the three or four years you are studying there – if you are not being worked hard enough by your teachers, push yourself!

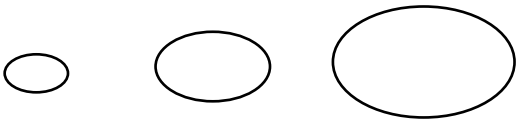
Pros Many musicians who have been out of school for awhile lose the "passion" for their art. Maybe they're too tired to practice after working their day job, or a little down as to why no one is phoning them for gigs. When they do get called for a nice gig they usually sound mediocre due to a lack of chops! Start practicing hard and re-discover the feeling of being in great shape. If nobody is calling you, make your own gigs. Go to jams, concerts, and clinics – get your face around. Take some lessons. Ask a local band or orchestra about performing the Haydn or David concerti with them next season. Have weekly rehearsals with friends, write new charts, and record a demo that may get you a gig somewhere. Above all, remember why you are doing this in the first place – **because you love it!**

Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College, is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, a member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

Three Apertures

by Al Kay

When you play a brass instrument, your embouchure is constantly changing the aperture size and shape to accommodate different note ranges, dynamics, articulation, and styles of music. Attempting to play the same melody in a small chamber group, jazz octet, or a Latin big band requires you to manipulate the shape or the notes, change tonguing styles, and increase (or decrease) your air pressure to get the "right" sound that will fit the ensemble. There are many classical and jazz musicians out there who haven't figured this out yet, and play with a "one-dimensional" sound on all styles – not ideal for making music. Changing your practice routines, adding the ideas below, will eventually make your performances much better, adding new life to your phrases, sound quality, and generally make playing much easier!



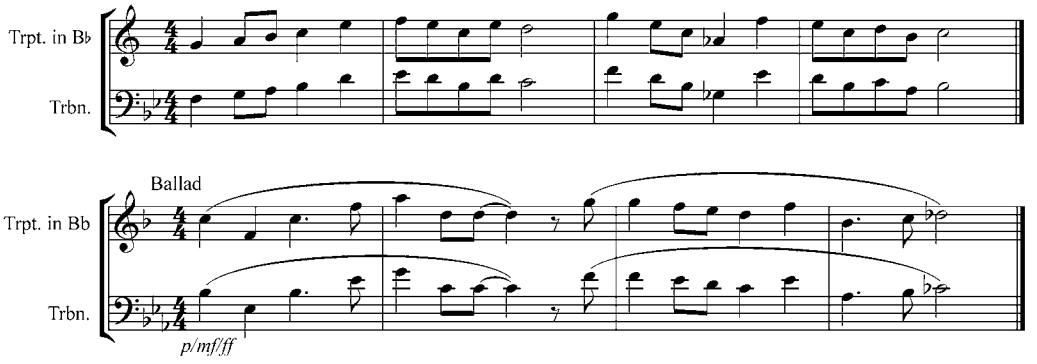
These three shapes represent small, medium, and large aperture sizes in your embouchure. Obviously, the trumpet or horn players' sizes will be smaller, and the tuba players' even bigger. Play the excerpt below three times, thinking small, medium, and large. As your aperture gets bigger, you will of course have to greatly increase the air speed from your lungs (don't use throat constrictions or high tongue level to do this), to keep the lips vibrating at the proper pitch. If the pitch goes down, faster air! Take a risk and get a really wide aperture – it's not impossible to get the notes with lips almost to the edge of the mouthpiece!

If you've tried the three ways, you'll notice that the sound is clearer at the middle aperture, the phrasing is better because of the more constant air stream, and the higher notes don't sound so strained. The smaller aperture might have made you shape the notes more (like a mwahh mwahh sound), and the large aperture is maybe not the best sound, but you've proved to yourself that if you had to play this tune really loud in front of a big band, you might just be able to pull it off! Think of the times when your chops have been very tired and you couldn't make a smaller aperture for the higher notes – wider chops plus fast air will get you those notes.

Many players practice at home with a softer "practice" sound, which might be comfortable for them, but is useless at concerts when they have to produce a much bigger sound to fill the hall. Change your practice sessions to include the three aperture concept while playing your warm-ups, lyrical and technical studies, orchestral excerpts, and jazz tunes.

A smaller aperture doesn't always mean small sound, and wide doesn't mean really loud, so try to vary your dynamics. When I play a soft, sweet, high ballad most of the time it's with a smaller aperture, but I can play the same tune no louder with a medium aperture. The sound may be little less focused, but it might be exactly the sound I need to match another instrumentalist who's playing in unison or octaves with me.

The next example is a ballad, so a nice, long, uninterrupted air stream is essential for beautiful phrasing. Try any one of the three apertures and alternate playing it softly ***p*** (picture a small coffee shop gig with you and an acoustic guitarist), ***mf*** (maybe a jazz gig with a quintet in a larger room), and ***ff*** (playing at a large hall with an orchestra or big band wailing behind you!).



Vary your dynamics and apertures in private practice and rehearsals, and get used to it, because this important concept will help you excel in just about any musical situation you can think of!

Al Kay, Head of Brass at Humber College, is very active as a jazz and classical soloist, a member of True North Brass, and a Yamaha artist and clinician. His website is www.alkay.ca.

The Modal Continuum

by Brownman

Photo by Marcus Ali

Much of what I'll talk about in this column will have already been talked about in the vast lineage of brass history, but I'm not a big fan of re-inventing the wheel. I am, however, a huge fan of discussing the multiple ways these techniques can be implemented, maintained, and harnessed for the forces of brass good (or evil, depending on how far from the bell you're standing).

Modes

Jazz of the late 1940s through the 1950s, particularly the period which historians have dubbed "cool jazz," utilized one of the more prevalent musical devices in jazz history – modes. Most simply stated: modes are scales built from different starting points on a root major scale. In a C major scale, playing it diatonically from C to C yields your Ionian mode. Now, start the same scale on the second diatonic note – D – playing from D to D (D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D). That sequence has historically been anointed the name Dorian mode. And that's it.

A mode really just denotes where you're starting in the scale. The nomenclature for naming these modes depends on where you've started – the mode adopting the name of the starting point. For example, a G Mixolydian scale (the fifth mode) is built using the diatonic scale from a fifth below (since it's the fifth mode of C). Thus, a G Mixolydian scale would be G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Note that you're using a C major scale to build this mode. Another way of thinking of this concept is in terms of key signature. For example: if you were building a G Phrygian scale – you know this is the third mode of some major scale below. To find it, you'd go down a major third, yielding E♭ major. So a G Phrygian would be built using the key signature of E♭ major – G, A♭, B♭, C, D♭, E♭, F, G.

Below are two tables explicitly spelling out each modal scale built using the two major scales we've discussed so far (C & E♭):

1st mode: C Ionion	C D E F G A B C
2nd mode: D Dorian	D E F G A B C D
3rd mode: E Phrygian	E F G A B C D E
4th mode: F Lydian	F G A B C D E F
5th mode: G Mixolydian	G A B C D E F G
6th mode: A Aolian	A B C D E F G A
7th mode: B Locrian	B C D E F G A B

1st mode: E♭ Ionion	E♭ F G A♭ B♭ C D E♭
2nd mode: F Dorian	F G A♭ B♭ C D E♭ F
3rd mode: G Phrygian	G A♭ B♭ C D E♭ F G
4th mode: A♭ Lydian	A♭ B♭ C D E♭ F G A♭
5th mode: B♭ Mixolydian	B♭ C D E♭ F G A♭ B♭
6th mode: C Aolian	C D E♭ F G A♭ B♭ C
7th mode: D Locrian	D E♭ F G A♭ B♭ C D

Eventually, through practice, these scales will become available at the tips of your fingers, rather that having to "build" them using this musical arithmetic each time. But why are they useful?

Chord-Scale Relationships

What's fascinating about modes is that their real use leaps to the fore once they are arpeggiated. By arpeggiating each mode, a relationship to a chord is revealed. Returning to C major as the root scale basis for our examples, arpeggiating D Dorian gives us D, F, A, C – outlining a Dm7 chord. The implication to improvisers? You can improvise over a Dm7 chord change using a D Dorian scale. And, similarly, over a G7 using a G Mixolydian scale. Why is this so powerful? In the key of C, a Dm7 preceding a G7 is called a II-V (two-five), and is arguably the most-used chordal motion in jazz (traditionally speaking, at least). So now, you, brave brass improviser, are armed with two powerful scales for improvising over one of the most-used chord motions in jazz history – and they're both based on the same root scale.

Modal compositions during that period ("Maiden Voyage," "So What," "Freddie Freeloader," etc.) had few chord changes in them, but instead created a structure over which the improviser, unlike bebop, didn't have to possess an extensive knowledge of chords and harmonies, and could focus on melodic improvisation.

I often hold up iconoclast Miles Davis as a prime example of how modal chord-scale relationships have been put into practice. Modal composition, with its reliance on scales and modes, represented, as Davis called it, "a return to melody." In a 1958 interview with Nat Hentoff of *The Jazz Review*, Davis elaborates:

> [Modal jazz] ... gives you a lot more freedom and space to hear things. When you go this way, you can go on forever. You don't have to worry about changes and you can do more with the [melody] line. It becomes a challenge to see how melodically innovative you can be. When you're based on chords, you know at the end of 32 bars that the chords have run out and there's nothing to do but repeat what you've just done – with variations. I think a movement in jazz is beginning away from the conventional string of chords ... there will be fewer chords but infinite possibilities as to what to do with them. [16]
>
> *– Miles Davis*

I highly recommend Mark Levine's *Jazz Theory Book* for even more elaborations on modal jazz.

So, practice your modes, buy some modal jazz so you can hear them used in real music (if you don't have Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue*, please run, don't walk, to your nearest music outlet and make that purchase), and I'll see you back here next time – in the Continuum.

Since returning to Canada from New York City, the last decade has seen Brownman – now widely considered a vanguard for the evolution of jazz in Canada – extremely busy as a session musician and with leading seven highly-acclaimed ensembles of his own. He has won multiple awards nationally and is currently touring the globe as the featured soloist with the legendary NYC jazz-hip hop artist GURU (of Gangstarr fame) for his JAZZMATAZZ ensemble. Check out www.brownman.com.

[16] Ashley Kahn (2001). Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece. foreword by Jimmy Cobb. Da Capo Press, USA. pp. 67 68. ISBN 0-306-81067-0.

The Modal Continuum Part II

by Brownman

In our last installment, we took a look at major modes and chord-scale relationships. In this episode, we'll continue to examine modes, specifically the melodic minor modes. But before we forge forward, let's summarize quickly the major mode applications. Below is a list of each mode (corresponding to each starting point on a major scale).

1st mode: C Ionion
C D E F G A B C – can use on Cmaj7
2nd mode: D Dorian
D E F G A B C D – can use on Dmin7
3rd mode: E Phrygian
E F G A B C D E – can use on Emin7(♭9)
4th mode: F Lydian
F G A B C D E F – can use on Fmaj7(#11)
5th mode: G Mixolydian
G A B C D E F G – can use on G7
6th mode: A Aolian
A B C D E F G A – can use on Amin7(♭6)
7th mode: B Locrian
B C D E F G A B – can use on Bmin7(♭5)

Classical theory acknowledges three types of minor scales: the natural minor, the harmonic minor, and melodic minor. The natural minor (or pure minor) is merely the Aeolian mode of the major scale. The two other minor scales yield more interesting applications for the improviser. We will focus on the melodic minor (ascending) – also known as the jazz minor – and its modal applications.

A C melodic minor scale is built: C, D, E♭, F, G, A, B, C.

Below, each mode of the melodic minor is summarized, along with their commonly-used names, the scale itself, chord change the mode is often used on, and a few alternate names for the particular mode.

1st mode: C Jazz Minor
C D E♭ F G A B C – can use on Cmin(maj7)
2nd mode: D Dorian-♭2
D E♭ F G A B C D – can use on Dmin7(♭9), Phrygian-♭6
3rd mode: E♭ lydian-Augmented
E♭ F G A B C D E♭ – can use on Emaj7(#5), Lydian-#5
4th mode: F Lydian-Dominant
F G A B C D E♭ F – can use on F7(#11), Lydian-♭7
5th mode: G Mixolydian-♭6
G A B C D E♭ F G – can use on G7(♭13), Hindu
6th mode: A Aolian-♭5
A B C D E♭ F G A – can use on Amin7(♭5), Locrian-#2
7th mode: B Altered
B C D E♭ F G A B – can use on B7(#5,#9), super Locrian

Jazz Minor

In its root mode, melodic minor – or jazz minor – finds its most obvious application for improvising on a Cmin(maj7) chord change. Want to put it to use immediately? Take a look at the changes to "My Funny Valentine" – you'll find a min(maj7) as the second change of the tune.

Dorian ♭2 (or Phrygian #6)

The second mode of the melodic minor scale has no standardized name, but is often referred to as the Dorian flat 2 (or ♭2). Building this scale, using C melodic minor as our root scale, yields: D, E♭, F, G, A , B, C, D. Note the mode name comes from the fact that this scale looks just like the Dorian mode of the major scale, but with a flatted 2nd. Also notice here that it could alternatively be looked at as the Phrygian mode of the major scale with a sharp 6. It is very often used as a substitute for the Phrygian mode.

Lydian Augmented

The third mode of the melodic minor scale is known as the Lydian Augmented scale. Using C melodic minor as our root scale, the third mode would be spelt E♭, F, G, A, B, C, D, E♭. Arpeggiating this chord (E♭, G, B, D), spits out an augmented major 7th chord, making this mode appropriate for improvisation over E♭maj7(#5). This change is an often-used substitution for stock major 7 changes.

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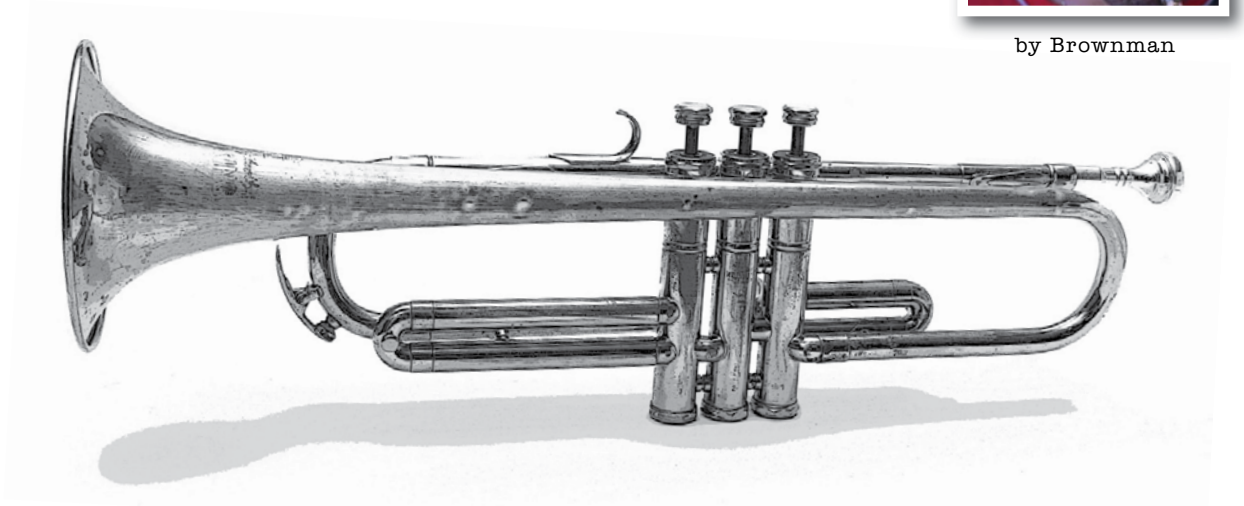
by Brownman



THE MODAL Continuum Part III

Lydian Dominant (or Lydian ♭7)

The fourth mode of the melodic minor scale is often called the lydian dominant or the lydian flat 7 (♭7). Building the scale, again using C melodic minor as our root scale, yields F, G, A, B, C, D, E♭, F. Note the sharp 4th, a characteristic of the lydian mode of the major scale, and the flatted 7th, characteristic of the mixolydian mode of the major scale. This mode feels and tastes essentially like a mixolydian mode with a sharp 4th, giving it a very unique sound for improvisers to explore over dominant 7th changes. This sound was widely explored in the bebop era, and many boppers garnered criticism for such non-traditional textures. Thelonious Monk's "Raise Four" features a prominent raised 4th in the melody. Improvisers will find much use for this mode over a dominant sharp 11. For example, the above scale would provide interesting improvisational options over F7 (#11). Bebop musicians occasionally called this a flatted 5th – writing the chord as F7 (♭5) – but this chord symbology has come to imply the diminished scale over time.

Mixolydian ♭6

The mixolydian ♭6 scale is the fifth mode of the melodic minor scale and is used most often over dominant seven chord changes. (The mixolydian ♭6 mode is also referred to as the mixolydian ♭13). Although you don't hear this sound very often, it is a strong choice for creating interesting lines over dominant chords. The flat 6 in this scale can also be thought of as a sharp 5 note, and subsequently you can play this scale over dominant 7 sharp 5 chords, like G7 (#5).

Aolian ♭5 (or Locrian #2, Half-Diminished Scale)

The sixth mode of the melodic minor is often called aolian ♭5, since it is actually the aolean mode (of the major scale) with a flatted 5th. A stock A aolian mode is A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, using C major as our root scale. Building the 6th mode of a C melodic minor gives us A, B, C, D, E♭, F, G, A, thereby explaining the name convention for this mode. This mode is also known as the Locrian #2. To see why, let's build an A locrian scale. This would be the 7th mode of B♭ major, yielding A, B♭, C, D, E♭, F, G, A, B♭. Sharpening the 2nd note of this scale yields the same note sequence as the 6th mode of the melodic minor scale, and hopefully makes clear why the name Locrian #2 is also used for this mode.

Altered (or Locrian #4, Super Locrian, Diminished Whole Tone)

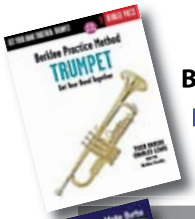
The seventh mode of the melodic minor scale is often called the diminished whole tone scale, because it combines elements of both the diminished and whole tone scales. To understand how it gets its name as "altered," let's first build this scale, again using C melodic minor as our root scale. This yields: B, C, D, E♭, F, G, A, B. A close examination of each note in the scale will reveal a flat 9, a sharp 9, a flat 5, a sharp 5. In other words, all the possible alterations in a 9th chord are included in this scale. This makes it a strong choice over B7alt, noting that B7 (#5,#9) can also be used here, as well as B7(#9). All three chord change nomenclatures imply that use of the seventh mode of the melodic minor scale for improvisation would be an apt choice. The sound of the altered scale is a complex one, as is the chord it implies due to all the alterations, but is one of the most important sounds in post-bop jazz.

Practice Tips

As a horn player, learning to deal with how these modes sound will be paramount, but doing this in the proverbial vacuum of the practice room may be difficult, and I highly recommend having a piano close at hand. There's a fantastic book called *Patterns For Jazz* by Jerry Coker that contains hundreds of patterns designed to help horn players practice navigating commonly-used jazz phrasings and patterns. It's innocuously simple looking, but this book is designed to help the improviser get many permutations and variations of jazz phrasing under their fingers, over multiple chord changes. Highly recommended.

So – don't forget to practice your modes, put to use some of the tools available to you (like *Patterns For Jazz*), and I'll see you back here next time - in the Continuum.

BRASS PLAYERS READING SUGGESTIONS



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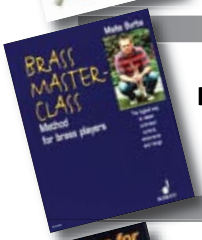

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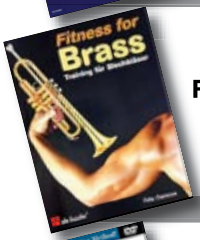

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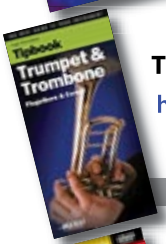

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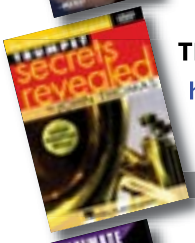

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