

Notes on the Warm-Up: Learn to Love the Process

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Why warm-up?

Music is evaluated by the product. Because of this, we frequently place the most emphasis on matching a product and neglect the process of how to achieve the result. In W. Timothy Gallwey's book, *The Inner Game of Tennis*, he writes, "When a tennis player is 'in the zone,' he's not thinking about how, when or even where to hit the ball...The ball seems to get hit through a process which doesn't require thought." In musical terms, a performer with this type of consistency would be considered a natural player. What this refers to is someone who is connected with how their body performs a process on a subconscious level. The warm-up is the player's opportunity to do a "system check" on how playing will be that day. As humans, one constant is inconsistency. There may be a variety of performance, environmental, physical, or mental factors that keep our playing from starting the same from one day to another. The purpose of the warm-up is to normalize those factors and keep our playing consistent and natural day to day. What follows is the process I use to achieve that daily consistency.

What is a warm-up?

A good warm-up addresses all the player's needs to be successful that day, all while giving time to "reconnect" with the trumpet. For me, this involves breathing exercises, long tones, flexibility exercises, and articulation exercises, with range exercises interspersed. I usually devote about 15 minutes of my morning to this process before moving on to my daily practice, performing, or teaching. For some days it takes longer to get all aspects of my playing up to a level where I am satisfied, while other days necessitate a more compressed routine. To that, I have my "essentials" in my warm-up if I only have minimal time.

Another aspect of a good warm-up is that it is exactly that, a warm-up, not a "wear out." A player should not need a rest after a warm-up. If this is the case, it is likely the warm-up is too expansive and/or the player is actually practicing. There is an important distinction between warming-up and practicing. The former should get a player ready for what is to come next in the day's playing schedule (rehearsal, practice, lesson, etc.). The latter has its own purpose. Unfortunately, this line is sometimes blurred, making it necessary to evaluate what components comprise the warm-up.

My process

My warm-up involves breathing, long tone, flexibility, articulation, and range exercises. Some I have devised, or derived from existing material (with examples included in this handout). Others are from established sources and I will describe my routine with them. One important performance instruction is that I initiate all exercises with a breath attack until the *Articulation* section. This is to verify the exhaled air is fast enough to create vibrations and eliminate accidental heavy tonguing.

Breathing

I begin with reminding myself what appropriate "trumpet breathing" is. So much of our lives are spent away from the trumpet, and so many playing problems disappear when we breathe appropriate for the music, that it is worth spending a couple minutes reestablishing proper habits before getting the instrument out. I typically use a Breath Builder when I arrive in my office and begin unpacking and checking e-mails, but that is purely as a visual check and not necessary to proper execution of the exercises. It is the process of keeping every breath as consistent as the first that is being developed.

I use four patterns, with a metronome set to ♩=60, meant to increase awareness of the breath.

1. *Inhale for 4 beats, exhale for 4 beats* - This gives time to fill my lungs completely and exhale completely without adding tension.
2. *Inhale for 2 beats, exhale for 2 beats* - Same process as before, but moving the air faster.
3. *Inhale for 3 beats, exhale for 1 beat* - The focus is on the one beat out as that is similar to the exhale needed to play the trumpet.
4. *Inhale for 1 beat, exhale for 3 beats* - The focus is on the one beat in as that is similar to the inhale needed to play the trumpet.

Mouthpiece

Here I use the first sequence of the Long Tone Studies developed by Vince Cichowicz. I use an app on my phone to sustain *do* and *sol* and begin in the key of C, following the sequence down to the key of F#. I also treat the exercise as a pitch bend, adding a glissando between every pitch to ensure I am blowing a consistent tone and connecting each note. This is a time to also listen and verify I am playing the correct intervals (not just pitches). This exercise can be a great way to learn the sound of each interval. After all, an F# does not have the same tuning tendencies from key to key, but *sol* to *fi* does. With the drones playing, it gives a chance to listen to for the correct difference tones, training the ears rather than the eyes. Mastering this process will lead to consistent tuning in all areas of playing.

Trumpet: (Moving) Long Tones

This is again the Cichowicz pattern, but I start at the bottom where the mouthpiece exercise ended and work back up. I also add a tone to the pattern as I ascend. For example, the first pattern goes to *Do*. The second (in G), goes to *Re*. This lets me play the final sequence (in C) up to the second octave *Do*. What is important here is building the process of the breathing exercises and mouthpiece long tones onto the trumpet. Just because metal has been added and fingers need to move does not mean the approach to playing changes.

Flexibility

The flexibility exercises are intended to build on the long tones with faster motion. The patterns I use can cover one or more octaves. They always begin in the middle or low register where the best sound for most trumpet players consistently happens and can serve as a model for the upper register.

Flexibility Exercise Examples

The image displays six musical examples of flexibility exercises on a single staff in treble clef. Example 1 is a long note with a glissando across the staff. Example 2a features a trill (marked with a '3') on a note. Example 2b features a trill (marked with a '3') on a note. Example 3a is a descending eighth-note scale. Example 3b is an ascending eighth-note scale. Examples 2a, 2b, 3a, and 3b are all marked with a '3' above the notes, indicating a triplet or trill.

Articulation

The final area addressed in my warm-up adds the tongue to the air. If the previous exercises can begin without the tongue, then an explosive attack can be avoided, and the tongue simply layered on top of the existing air column. This is a key aspect of playing. Many playing problems (poor endurance, weak sound, intonation inconsistency, unnecessarily heavy articulation) can be traced back to bad blowing. The tongue will take up the slack caused by bad blowing and we subconsciously tongue harder to get notes started,

reducing our reliance on good air. By spending the bulk of the warm-up on breath attacks, the tongue can go back to a complementary role best described as being the last component of the breath, rather than a separate element.

I typically use the second study from the Clarke *Technical Studies* and play it in Major, Minor, and Whole Tone sequences, varying my articulation patterns between single tongued slur/tongued patterns, double tongued patterns, and triple tongued patterns. The first time is always slurred to create the baseline model. I also rotate my keys by day, typically doing the study in four keys per day. This has the advantage of getting through all keys twice per week throughout the different octaves of the trumpet. Not only is this a tongued articulation study, but it works to coordinate the fingers, which are also responsible for articulation.

My other articulation study incorporates dynamic changes and accented playing. I follow the pattern around the Circle of Fourths and alternate between *forte* and *piano* for the beginning dynamic. The tempo mark given is a suggestion for a starting point, but should be decreased if necessary, and increased to develop technical proficiency.

Articulation Exercise Examples

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is in treble clef and begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 104+. It contains a sequence of quarter notes with accents, followed by a series of eighth notes with slurs, and ends with a half note with an accent. The second staff is in bass clef and contains a sequence of quarter notes with accents, followed by eighth notes with slurs, and ends with a half note with an accent. Dynamics are marked as forte (f) and piano (p) throughout.

Concluding thoughts

The exercises included here are not meant to develop technique, but rather evaluate performance ability for the day. The technical improvement should be reserved for dedicated practice sessions. Some days these exercises will be played perfectly. Other days, nothing will work. Most days will be somewhere in the middle. More time should be spent working on what is subpar, and less time can be devoted to what is already good. Range is interspersed throughout the warm-up for the player to easily take the existing patterns of the exercises and utilize them as needed. Separating these exercises out for their own section of the warm-up would start to move into an area of “range practice,” whereas a warm-up must prepare players for what may come, high and low. Remember to allow a short rest between exercises so as not to be fatigued by the end. Through disciplined adherence to productive processes throughout the warm-up, performers can learn to achieve consistent results and masterful products everyday, all while tapping into their natural potential.

Additional Reference

Gallwey, W. Timothy. *The Inner Game of Tennis*. Rev. ed. New York: Random House, 1997.

Millsap, Kyle. “Learn to Love the Process.” *International Trumpet Guild Journal* 42, no. 2 (January 2018): 46-47.