

Solo Class Lecture #31  
MASTER CLASS PRESENTATION  
*ELEMENTS OF BRASS PERFORMANCE - BASIC ASPECTS*  
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***ARTICULATION***

The term articulation refers to the way in which we enunciate the sound. This also means that we must be concerned about the entire shape of the sound that we produce, the beginning, middle and end of the note. Most players refine the start of each pitch without realizing the human ear determines the definition of any sound by the end or conclusion of the auditory source. Therefore we must learn to define the length of the pitches by the end of the sound and accept the concept that "the end of one note is the beginning of the next". By focusing our attention to the end of the note we can learn to vary the articulation and develop consistency in the projection of any style of music. The syllable that we must employ in order to accomplish a defined or short note is "DHOT". The "d" consonant eliminates the harshness and airy attack that is associated with "ta" or "tu" etc. by sealing the tongue before the articulation begins. The "ho" in the center of the syllable helps to keep the throat open at all times and the "t" at the end of the sound provides clear definition and correct placement for the next articulation.

Legato articulation, or suspended releases are achieved with a "Da" or "Dah" syllable. Keep in mind that whether it is a defined (short) or open-ended release, the support (compression of the air) is a constant. In other words, we must keep the air moving regardless of the tongue position.

***RANGE***

It seems that all trumpet players are concerned with their ability to play in the upper tessitura. For the most part this concern is valid, however this element should include the concept of "Playable Range" or in other words the range of pitches in which we can do all of the technical and musical aspects that are possible in the most moderate ranges of the instrument. We should work to develop consistency in sound throughout the entire playable range and work all aspects of our playing in all ranges every day to ensure our ability to gain complete control of the horn. An important issue related to range is the understanding of "Air Speed" and "Amount of Air". While it seems simple on paper, most players confuse these two aspects in performance. In order to play in the low register we must use a greater amount of air traveling at a slow speed. The inverse is true in the upper register - we must use a small amount of air traveling at a high rate of speed. We have all heard someone say, "Take a big breath to play high". This generally creates too much air passing through the lips, the embouchure spreads apart and the sound stops. In the low register practicing very softly as low as possible will help to keep the focus of the embouchure and slow the speed of the air down so that we don't force the embouchure open by creating too much speed of the air.

***BREATHING***

This is the most important aspect of playing any wind instrument and can be described easily but is rarely put into practice effectively. Correct breathing affects every aspect of performance and is usually the basis for technical and musical problems when executed incorrectly. Simply stated; take a deep breath, involve (expand) the lower abdominal area first and then let the air lift and expand the rib cage. At the point of relaxed capacity: exhale through the instrument. It is very important to keep the face, neck, shoulder and back muscles relaxed during the breathing process. I strongly advise the use of breathing devices to gain a visual sense of the breathing mechanism and I advocate practicing breathing away from the horn before playing a single note each day.