

Solo Class Lecture #30  
MASTER CLASS PRESENTATION  
*ELEMENTS OF BRASS PERFORMANCE – GENERAL CONCEPTS*  
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There are many elements that go into outstanding Brass playing. Musicality is the most important aspect. Everything that you play, whether it is a technical exercise or lyrical study, should be done in a musical manner. One of the most important and often overlooked methods of developing your musical ideas is to listen to and study great singers. Great performers express musical ideas that transcend the instrument.

It is not possible to separate the technical requirements from the art of expression. Total command of the instrument is what allows us to express our ideas without limitation. The finest players can modify, control and vary all aspects technique in order to present the music.

All of the characteristics of a fine Brass player; musicianship, tone quality, sensitivity, style, control, consistency [range, strength, endurance, response, pitch and dynamic spectrum] begin with the warm up. The term "warm up" means many things to many people. The warm up is as much a mental element as it is a physical one. Some players confuse the ability to play the correct pitches with the ability to express musical ideas. A substantive warm up will develop the ability to perform every aspect of brass playing in any possible performance situation.

Each characteristic of fine playing must be addressed during the warm up. There are situations when the period of time available to feel "comfortable" varies. A good basis in fundamentals will allow you to play your best under a variety of circumstances.

**The following are some basic guidelines to gain greater command of the instrument;**

Start each day with breathing exercises, both inhaling and exhaling. The exercises should be done to expand/relax the breathing mechanism and control the volume and speed of the air stream.

Lip buzzing (without the mouthpiece) can improve your strength, response and sound. This type of practice will give greater focus and firmness to the embouchure; relying on the control of the muscles. Oftentimes we are not buzzing the same pitch that they are playing. Lip buzzing can also greatly improve ear training, pitch and range.

Mouthpiece buzzing accomplishes many of the same things as lip buzzing, but it should cover a wider range. Articulation should be incorporated during this part of the session. Clear and clean articulation at all range and dynamic levels is a must. Air attacks, staccato and legato patterns should also be included.

Long tones are the basis for a great sound. The ability for the embouchure to maintain a centered sound throughout the entire playable range at all dynamic levels will develop necessary control. Use a tuner to improve your focus.

Explore the entire range of the instrument as early as possible in the warm up. Developing all aspects of playing throughout the entire playable range is extremely important.

Vocal studies, transposition, extremes in dynamics, vibrato, sight reading, finger patterns, scales, double/triple tongue (every aspect of your playing), and etudes must be incorporated into the daily routine. Remember that "practicing is practicing", what you do "in the shed" prepares you for performance and is not itself a performance.

Keep a record of the materials and aspects of your practice sessions. This will provide tangible documentation of progress through each aspect of performance. When a particular exercise loses the "challenge", replace it with another.

A fine player must be able to combine these elements when time does not allow for an extended warm-up. A warm-up is the performance foundation, which is refined and developed over time.