

RITUALS

Daily Routine for Trumpeters

By, Neal Berntsen

As a student, I experienced the same sort of fluctuations with my playing that I see today in many young players. Some days, playing was easy and I sounded great - other days, playing the trumpet just felt more difficult. As I studied with Vincent Cichowicz, he helped me to realize that the difference between a “good” day and a “bad” day was in my airflow.

Good playing is the result of a relaxed, efficient airflow. Conversely; bad tone, missed notes, unclear articulation and poor intonation are often the result of body tension, which results in a restricted airflow. More specifically: a restriction in the release of a phrase’s first note. This concept is one of the fundamentals of the Cichowicz philosophy. Over time it became clear to me that in order to play consistently at a high level, I needed to create a path that would lead me to a relaxed, efficient airflow on a daily basis.

The daily routine that I follow or the “path” that I take is the genesis of RITUALS. Most successful brass players have a daily routine. RITUALS is my daily routine. It is not the only, or the best routine. It is simply - my routine. While there are no shortcuts on the journey to competent trumpet playing, the shortest distance is in the practice and improvement upon fundamentals. Over time, individuals must cater their daily routine - customize it to the specific needs of the player. Ideally, your routine contains the fundamental tools to maintain all aspects of playing. If time permits, one could expand upon the fundamental tools contained within a daily routine and create a practice session. However, it should not be the only practice session of the day. Because brass players have physical limitations that make it impossible to practice more than approximately 2 hours at a time, we must have multiple practice sessions in a day. I recommend that student’s morning practice (or routine) contain fundamentals and focus on *how* (technical aspects) they play. Later in the day, practice repertoire (solos, etudes, excerpts etc.) and focus on *what* (phrasing, musical aspects) is being played.

As stated earlier, good playing is the result of a relaxed, efficient airflow. Thus, the early pages of RITUALS are devoted to getting the air moving. Early on, make use of air attacks. By using air attacks, one can be sure that the genesis of a note is the result of air – not the result of the percussive explosion created by an articulation.

Play a variety of Cichowicz slurs daily – then, go on to Schlossberg. The few Schlossberg examples contained in RITUALS are not intended to replace the Schlossberg book. All Trumpet players need to own the book and play from it daily.

Following Schlossberg, play a flow study of some sort. The collection of; *Cichowicz, Flow Studies* or, *Rochut, Melodious Etudes for Trombone*, are good examples. At this point (hopefully) one should be moving air through the trumpet in a relaxed and efficient manner.

In my own playing, I often found that while I was successful in getting the air to flow when playing long, lyric, slurred phrases – I often lost some of my relaxed, efficient airflow when articulating. Thus, the next section of RITUALS was developed.

Selected Articulation Studies

The concept behind *Selected Articulation Studies* is to slowly introduce articulation into the relaxed airflow in order to keep the air-flow from becoming tense and inefficient. Each scale passage should be played 5 different ways:

1. All Slurred
2. Slur groups of 4 notes
3. Slur groups of 2 notes
4. Slur 2, tongue 2
5. All tongued

Transpose all of the different scale studies to different keys, thus working on transposition and technical dexterity.

Starting on page 9 is a series of different articulation patterns. Be sure that the tongue bounces on the constant flow of air, like the arm of a sprinkler bounces on the constant flow of water. Always use a metronome when practicing articulation and chronicle your progress. It is said that Adolph Herseth could single tongue a page of 16th notes at $\text{♩}=144$.

Articulation is critical to trumpet players. Articulation should be practiced every day as part of your routine. Follow this pattern of articulation practice to cover all aspects of articulation:

Monday-single tongue
Tuesday- double tongue
Wednesday-single tongue
Thursday-triple tongue
Friday-single tongue
Saturday-double tongue
Sunday-triple tongue

Selected Arban Studies

The Arban book is fundamental to the development of trumpet players at any level. I prefer the *Celebre Method Complete* (usually available in 3 volumes) to the

abridged or edited versions. Starting on page 15, I have included a variety of exercises that cover the fundamental techniques needed in the performance of most music one would come across. I have only included one key from each exercise. Students should transpose to all keys.

It is my hope that by sharing RITUALS, young players will start to have an understanding of the importance that a daily routine provides to one's overall development.