

Appendix 8.4b -- For Students

HOME PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

BEST PRACTICE(S)

The thinking player's guide to intelligent practice

A TIME

Daily practice is important. It is better to practice a shorter time every day than to limit personal practice to one or two days before your lesson. We recommend practicing the length of one TV episode (30 minutes). When beginning, divide the time into a pair of fifteen minute practice sessions, with a break in between. As you develop, the practice time should increase.

A PLACE

“The music won't come to you... You must go to the music.” Have a place where you have to walk by your music stand with the exercise books already open to “encourage” your practice.

A RECORD

Record the amount of practice time on an assignment sheet. Parents or caregivers are asked to initial the assignment page each week.



ESTABLISH A WARM-UP ROUTINE

LONG TONES OVER A VARIETY OF DYNAMICS

Remember that the breath is quiet, wide and deep. Commence with long tones using a wide range of *crescendos* and *diminuendos*, while maintaining a beautiful quality of sound. Another way to do this is to choose a hymn tune or song (or make up your own) to play in a relaxed, lyrical manner. Be fluid with the tempo and expressive with the melodic line in applying dynamics. Try not to use notated music, freeing you to really listen to your sound and sense the flow of your breath and the line as you play.

SLURS AND FLEXIBILITY

Doing flexibility exercises on one-fingering builds strength in your chops and face. Learn to gauge the air to lock in the various pitches and listen for tuning as you move between keys. Keep the corners (of your lips) firm, trying not to move them (watch in a mirror). Some teachers advocate a slight up and down pivot of the horn. Pivot the bell of the horn gradually up as the notes descend, and gradually down as you ascend. This is a north-south, vertical motion, without using added pressure for higher tones.

While extending the final tone, pull the horn away as far as possible to where you almost lose the tone. The object of this exercise is to apply less and less pressure on the lips, which frees up the sound. Another approach is to extend the final tone as long as you can hold it, using as little air as will maintain the pitch. One should be able to hypothetically increase the length of the held note by using the least air possible, while maintaining the air stream enough to have good tone.

RANGE EXTENSION

Begin flexibility exercises in a comfortable range, eventually working up and over upper higher register notes. Don't worry if you miss the high note. The point is to "exercise" the muscles, using sufficient air support, to systematically strengthen and extend the range. Pedal tones help build both the lower and upper registers, as well as relaxing the lips. Avoid the tendency with lower tones to get flabby with the embouchure in the lower register. Maintain firm corners.

With all these exercises, be sure and take breaks to allow the blood flow to return, especially after working on high tones. Counter with some low tones and then take a break. Practicing the piano or guitar is a good break option.

SCALE PATTERNS

It doesn't take long to review all the scales you know each practice session. This builds motor memory of the fingering patterns, so after a while one hardly thinks about the scale fingerings or slide positions. One approach is to move up or down by steps (C, then D, then Eb, then F, etc.) or using the circle of fifths (C, F, Bb, Eb... or C, G, D, A...). It is customary to finish a scale with the corresponding arpeggio (F scale: F-A-C-F¹-C-A-F). Hold the final scale or arpeggio tone, in a relaxed way, as long as possible. Work on a new scale and arpeggio each week, familiarizing oneself with tuning, by using trigger(s) or alternate fingering adjustments that need to be made in a particular key (See Appendix 14.2 - **Alternative Fingerings and Positions**). Over time there are other ways to extend the practice of scales, using multiple octaves, scales in thirds, and arpeggios based on cadences which include the dominant seventh chord (See Appendix 9.8 - **Arban's Companion**).

ARTICULATION

It is a good practice to avoid much tonguing articulation when first warming up. The tongue, when used properly, is really acting like a valve turning the already moving air flow on and off. Remember that tone is dependent on the air, not the tongue. As your warm-up progresses, slowly introduce tonguing exercises, for instance, articulating four eighth notes on each scale tone, and then holding a final half note. Use a metronome to keep measured, strict rhythm. In a group lesson or ensemble setting, this exercise can be done as a round. Divide into groups. Each group commences two notes apart, with all holding the final home pitch until everyone is finished. This exercise requires listening for pitch within the scale and lining up the rhythmic pulse.

ESTABLISH A PRACTICE ROUTINE

FOCUS ON A PLAN

The world runs on deadlines. Be sure that you (or your teacher) have decided on what needs to be accomplished that week. For instance, complete a page in your method book, work on a new scale and arpeggio, and/or complete a portion of a solo or some measures out of the band repertoire. Device applications that can aid personal practice include Tuner & Beat Master, Pro Metronome and the Strobe Tuner Pro.

- **Look for the trouble!** “We do not practice what we know...we practice what we do not know.” Choose not to play through pieces, but rather anticipate the difficult passages that your teacher may have already circled, and work on those. (As some would say, “Only practice what is in the circle.”) Use a tuner to get notes consistently centered on pitch. When necessary, adjust pitch with valve triggers, slide adjustments or alternative fingerings. (See Appendix 14.2 - **Alternative Fingerings and Positions**).
- **Slow is beautiful.** Start slow, but in strict rhythm, using a metronome. Gradually move the tempo up, only when the “circled” passage has been perfected. For example, when working out tough passages, practice at 50% tempo until mastered, then increase by intervals of 10% until you can play a passage at 110% of the required tempo. Another way to practice slowly is to “freeze frame” passages of interest, such as changes in inflection of a musical line, or notes before and after a tricky interval [A]. Sometimes it can be of benefit to build gradually up to the interval, by breaking down a “leap” into smaller mini leaps, or steps. Familiarize yourself with each step in between before playing the leap.

[A] BREAKING DOWN INTERVALS

Andante con espress. ♩ = 72
"Freeze Frame"
BOTTOM NOTE before the leap, OR "Freeze Frame"
the **TOP NOTE** of the leap

Build Up the **INTERVAL** by **STEPS**

"His Provision" (Ivor Bosanko)
© 1991 Salvationist Publishing
Solo Cornet part (GS 1864, m.31-36)

- **Counting works.** Sometimes it is helpful to first count through the piece, working out tricky rhythms, and then singing through the passage, always with a steady pulse [B]. With technically demanding passages, play first the main beats; then the main, plus half-beat increments; next the main plus half- and quarter-beat increments; and then everything else [C]. The idea is to keep the airflow throughout the passage, with the fingers lined up accordingly.

[B] BREAKING DOWN THE COUNTING

Allegro grazioso ♩ = 176

"Triumphant Faith" (Stanley Ditmer)
© 1953 Salvationist Publishing
(FS 191, Movement II, m.5-8)

[C] BREAKING DOWN THE BEATS

Allegro vivo ♩ = 162

Practice the **MAIN BEATS**

"Are You Joyful" (Dudley Bright)
© 1992 Salvationist Publishing
Solo Cornet part (FS 494, m.5-6)

Practice the **MAIN** and the **HALF-BEAT** increments

Practice **FIRST THREE NOTES** (1-e-an-rest)

Practice **WILLIAM TELL** (1-rest-an-da)

Finally play the full passage.

- **Bit by bit putting it together.** Once the “circled” difficult spots have been isolated and learned, play through the exercise or passage. Take into account everything that is under and over the music, that is, terms of expression (*dolce* or *marcato*), articulations (*staccato* versus *accents*) and dynamics (*piano* and *forte*).

- **Record yourself.** Use your phone or other device to record run-throughs. Listening to yourself perform is invaluable. Be sure to obtain a copy of the score or piano accompaniment part to see how your part fits in with the piano or ensemble, preferably coupled with a quality recording.
- **Warm down.** Don't forget to take a few moments to warm-down with long, low tones to relax the facial muscles and your body.



