

## The Midwest Clinic International Band, Orchestra and Music Conference 2022

Handout for: The teaching Concepts of Vincent Cichowicz

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### Vincent Cichowicz – the man, his life, his career

23 years member of Chicago Symphony Orchestra: recordings, performances, working with top conductors and colleagues – very formative to his concept of sound and artistry.

40 years professor at Northwestern University: being a mentor for hundreds of students, each with individual challenges, honed his ability to communicate the very fundamental aspects of trumpet playing.

Areas of Focus for developing skills:

- Musical image (Sound)
- Respiration (Breathing)
- Articulation (Style)
- Embouchure (Set-up)
- Practicing (Building Consistency)

What was/is the goal: **To gain the skills we need on the instrument to be able to use it as a tool to express music/art.**

This takes practice, patience and time & good instruction.

Good instruction means finding someone who's concepts work, and someone who has a deep belief in your success and your ability to achieve it. This was Vincent Cichowicz.

Our goal in lessons was/is to understand the concepts so that **we can become our own teachers in the practice room.**

**In the practice room, there are three enemies: distraction, giving up, and frustration.**

Mistakes are never the enemy, they are never bad, they are opportunities. They teach us where there is an obstacle, and then with careful observation and clear, simple concepts, we remove the obstacle.

Rarely adding things to our playing – only taking away that which does not serve us toward healthy, vibrant sound. Cichowicz' teaching concepts: Always simple – not always easy.

A student's journey on the trumpet: May become performer, teacher, community musician, etc.. All are valuable. Just enjoy what you are doing in that moment and see where it takes you. The journey will encompass many things... Mr. C worked with each student from exactly where they were at in that moment. "Fixed" problems (inefficiencies) all day, every day. It was the student's responsibility to remember the solution and to implement it consistently and in other contexts. The goal was never to cover a lot of material or to teach everything one needed to know – only to have a solid foundation.

- 1) Playing Skills - this includes things like healthy sound, good technique, clear articulation, range, dynamics, wind usage, endurance, power, finesse, etc..
- 2) Performance Skills - channelling nervousness, efficient body usage, stage presence, general confidence and poise, awareness and musical perception in an ensemble, etc..
- 3) Career Skills - learning repertoire, transposition skills, goal setting, long-term vision, seeking opportunities, making a contribution, collegiality and etiquette, etc..

Development of **fine musicianship** is the link that ties together all three categories. This happens naturally when you *listen to great music* and *practice with intention*. Mr. C enjoyed very much the student that had something meaningful to say in their playing – art to express. Slavic background – passionate and sensitive. While suggestions were made to encourage musical playing, he believed this was something that would develop naturally through **exposure, curiosity, and intention**.

**Trumpet Playing success: What does it look like? - 3 things in this order:**

- 1- Understanding Function – the ability to play
- 2- Building Consistency – the ability to play well every time
- 3- Mental Training – the ability to play well every time under pressure

### 1 - Understanding Function:

"you need to understand how it works, so that when it starts to not work you have something to fall back on and can get it back on track." – V. Cichowicz

Song and Wind – **foundation of all playing**. This has been often misunderstood to mean only lyric style and only big wind. The concept applies to all styles and all dynamics and all music. The reason for lyric playing and full rich sound to start (several years), is because that type of healthy playing teaches all other styles how to function efficiently and effectively.

**Wind= fuel** – only what is needed to play the music. (varies with the music) **Wind is the bow.**

Common pitfalls: no support (breath too low or too high)(result is flat or wobbly sound – no healthy resistance or spin, not reaching point of resonance/or blowing past it (results in harsh, rigid, blaring sound which has short endurance and quickly deteriorates to no vibration. The connection between notes is vital – it must not be broken (wind always one long note) *Even* on short notes – the wind is still long!

**Song= message** being sent from the brain to lips. (pitch, timbre, tone, dynamic, style, artistry)

**This is the essential element.** Develop a clear aural and artistic concept through **listening** to music.

2- **Building Consistency: Bank good playing.**

“Neurons that fire together wire together.” “Don’t try and fight an old habit, replace it with a new habit”- A. Jacobs

[Flow Zone for developing skills (diagram)]

**practice the skills needed more than the piece you are playing**

Consistency cube / ICE/ Wind Patterns, dance, sing, listen to recordings, etc.. be creative. take time.

Wind Patterns – most widely used teaching tool of Mr. C. 3 things – appropriate style and amount of wind (slow/fast/gentle/vibrant/open ended/ smooth/ etc...), fingerings, singing in your mind. Wind patterns are not intellectual, they are a physical reminder and should sound like the music. Do it a lot.

[Diagram of brain and how it retains... Excellent illustration of why wind pattern is such an effective tool.]

3 - **Mental strength:** Self Talk. Visualization. Affirmations. Activation notes (sticky notes) Not useful without the first two categories.

### **Cichowicz teaching tools/materials, concepts, quotes:**

Mouthpiece (with buzz aid) - less responsive so must play correctly. Never force air, let it be free

Long Tones: from middle, up and down – smooth connection between notes, strong musical concept.

Clarks – 2x, slower tempo in one breath. If run out of air there is pressure on the air.

Slur2/tongue2 - Cantabile, no stiff tonguing, if tension, 2<sup>nd</sup> note of slur will be cut off.

Flow studies – to play phrases in succession and have freedom of breath between phrases.

Vocal studies – concone, roschut, bordogni.. we are singers. Phrasing, sound quality, expression.

Etudes – Brandt orchestral, Bousquet, Charlier, Arban, Bitsch, Clodimir, Sachse, etc.. Develop style

Tape recorder – excellent for listening to rhythm, espressivo style, character of articulation, dynamics

Correct breathing means no hiss to the inhale – and not deflating..Allow yourself to breathe fully and freely, do not force. Notes must have movement, not like a typewriter. Tension or rigor mortis results in missing the higher notes, release those notes, not like tympani. Avoid isometric tension – we need a suppleness to the muscle strength. Are you really singing while you play or is just mechanics? Do not think of past or future when you play. Be singing in the present moment. Everything is very natural - the breath, the release, the singing wind. You must have a clear picture of what you want to sound like. Respiration for playing is just a more active version of regular breathing. Trumpet is an active, supple endeavor. Most common problem is locking on the air. When you release properly, you don’t feel like you have too much air, you can talk on the same breath after playing. Articulation is still flow. The T changes with desired styles, the U is always there. Keep the wind in suspension between the notes for staccato. French “tu” is the right place for your tongue. Avoid using words like open and relaxed, it implies no activity and no shape. Everything is horizontal. Don’t hit the note, draw it like a bow across the string. First notes must be released. You can’t save the wind, all you’re doing is bottling up. The inhale is natural. First notes are critical. One should not think of “practice” – everything is performance (play your best).

Use metronome – rhythm is at the top of the list for auditions. The body must remain supple. You must communicate to music at all times. If you understand the execution of playing, you can play under any circumstance. The mind is where anxieties happen, not in the playing.

*Practice is learning – Ritual is not learning.* The mind must be fully involved. Become fascinated with what you are doing -this maintains motivation and curiosity. Repetition is essential. Always make statements, don’t ask questions in your playing. Imaging: set yourself up in performance mode. You must have ambition and positive self-image. This leads to confidence.

### **Books with teaching materials of Vincent Cichowicz**

CICHOWICZ/DULIN-LONG TONE STUDIES-Studio 259 Productions.com

CICHOWICZ/DULIN-FLOW STUDIES (VOLUME ONE) (VOLUME TWO-W/RUSSIAN STUDIES)- Studio 259 Productions.com

CICHOWICZ/DULIN-LONG TONE AND FLOW STUDIES FOR TROMBONE, EUPHONIUM & TUBA- Studio 259 Productions.com

CICHOWICZ/DULIN-VINCENT CICHOWICZ’ FUNDAMENTAL STUDIES FOR THE DEVELOPING TRUMPET PLAYER-Hal Leonard

CICHOWICZ/DULIN- VINCENT CICHOWICZ’ FUNDAMENTAL STUDIES FOR THE DEVELOPING TROMBONE PLAYER-Hal Leonard

