

MIDWEST CLINIC OUTLINE

Michael Davis/Bill Reichenbach Clinic:

21st Century Trombone – Brass Fundamentals for the year 2004 and beyond

- I. Introduction
- II. Performance with rhythm section
- III. Importance of Air
 - A. Demonstration of Breathing Exercise
 - B. Execution of Breathing Exercise by all clinic attendees
- IV. Visualization and how it applies to brass playing
- V. STP – Sound, Time & Pitch
 - A. Long Tone demonstration w/CD accompaniment
 - B. Embouchure Wake-Up Call demonstration w/CD
 - C. Flexibility demonstration w/CD
- VI. Performance #2 w/ rhythm section
- VII. Triads and their importance
 - A. Basic triad exercise
 - B. Alternating triad exercise w/CD
- VIII. Styles
 - A. Chorale excerpt w/CD
 - B. Jazz phrasing
 - C. Lead playing w/CD
 - D. Rock Horn section playing w/CD
- IX. Developing the Ear
 - A. Ear training exercises
 - B. Happy Birthday example
 - C. Next step: listening with ears wide open
- X. Questions
- XI. Performance #3 w/rhythm section

BRASS BASICS – MICHAEL DAVIS

BREATHING

The way in which you use your air should always be in a relaxed manner. Your entire torso should fill and expand with air as you breathe. The process of inhaling should start from below your rib cage and continue to the top of your throat. Allow your rib cage, abdominal muscles and back to expand and stretch in a very natural and calm way. Once you begin playing, continue to focus on the relaxed use of your air. When you are playing, be aware of a full, complete breath everytime you inhale. Visualize pushing the air through the end of your lead pipe and all the way to a spot at the back of the room. Consciously focus on the speed and intensity of your air stream.

BUZZING THE MOUTHPIECE

Practicing with the mouthpiece alone is a helpful aid in our development as brass players. It enables us to separate the technical aspects of playing a brass instrument with the more essential element of getting the lips to vibrate in a natural way and produce a tone. Always strive for a focused, centered, free sounding buzz in all registers. Practice melodies, i.e. Happy Birthday, when you buzz with the mouthpiece. If you are experiencing difficulties with a passage of music, try to buzz it with the mouthpiece. You'll be amazed at how much easier it is to play it when you return to your instrument.

CONCEPT OF SOUND

The most important part of achieving a beautiful brass sound is having the mental picture of what that is before you start playing. Have a picture in your head and a sound in your ear before you play. There are several ways to achieve this. First and foremost is to listen to other brass players that have a great sound. Some of my favorites include Phil Smith, Chuck Findley, Urbie Green, Bill Reichenbach and Gene Pokorny. I also use the sound of other instruments to help form my mental image. Examples: Pat Metheny's smooth, lush guitar sound, Eddie Daniel's incredible control and fluidity on the clarinet. An additional tool in helping you achieve your ultimate sound is to use adjectives to describe what you consider to be a great sound, i.e. beautiful, clear, rich, focused, smooth, round, centered, warm, etc. Write three or four adjectives on a piece of paper and keep it on your stand while you practice. Keep referring to that perfect sound in your head while you practice. A final way of helping you visualize a great brass sound is to use unrelated images that are consistent with our objective. Examples: the effortless of a dolphin swimming through water; the smoothness of a glider floating through the air; Michael Jordan's total command and grace on a basketball court.

RANGE

The development of a strong and reliable upper register is an important part of playing a brass instrument. In an effort to try and make the upper register as effortless as possible, try visualizing what a piano player does when he or she moves to the upper register of their instrument. The sound, pitch and control of the notes stay the same. It is simply an extension of the middle register. As brass players, we can use the same approach by not allowing ourselves to reach or strain for high notes, but simply extend our normal approach to the upper register. Focus on a faster, more intense air stream as you go up. I like to think of the air as having backspin, similar to the motion of a tennis or golf ball. Playing melodies in the upper register is a very musical way to develop a strong and reliable upper register.

*For more information on Michael and his publications visit www.hip-bonemusic.com
or for beginning brass players www.clubhip-bone.com (coming January 2005)*