

The Teaching of Vincent Cichowicz

(Extracted from Back to Basics for Trumpeters a book by Luis Loubriel)

by Luis Loubriel, D.M.A. and Bruce Briney, D.M.A.

A Presentation Companion

Cichowicz on Teaching

“I feel there is certain uniqueness to the way I teach that is quite different from the other teachers. I have worked on it as my specialty. It is not like anything I say is not known or understood. All I say has been discovered already. However, what I have discovered is a way of structuring it so in its presentation, there is a logical step or direction.

It is also knowing that when you hear something wrong in your sound you must pay attention because it is telling you something. Avoid saying, ‘I like it or I do not like it’ and leave it at that. It is deeper than that. It is saying, ‘Alright, do you understand this? Are you ready to accept the sound and the limitations that come along with it?’

I would try any inductive way I know to stimulate thinking. New thinking. Then we trust that your body will try to carry the message out to achieve that new concept. If it does not work, then we try from another direction. I never go about changing someone’s way of playing from the standpoint of physiology. I like to start the musical imagination first so you are not thinking what muscle is doing what.”

Within a Musical Context

“If the mental picture of what we are trying to play is not clear, your practice will be inefficient and you can actually harm your playing by repeating incorrect ways of playing. Your decision and method of how you are going to do something has to happen before you play. Playing should reflect your best musical thoughts.

If you do not supplement your daily maintenance with more interesting musical materials you are really stalling growth. A person may develop wonderful muscular skills but they would not be tied into what they have to do as musicians.” Vincent Cichowicz

What Former Cichowicz Students Say

“When I think of Cichowicz, the following adjectives come to mind: positive, energetic, gentle, tenacious, light, easy, fluid, and buoyant. That was his whole thing. When you are playing loudly all you’re doing is blowing fast air. For soft playing, you are blowing slower air. Loud or soft, you are still playing with a buoyant and musical sound.”

Tom Rolfs, Principal Trumpet of the Boston Symphony Orchestra

“He was one of the kindest and friendliest people I have ever met. He was a big Hi-fi guy and he was a big music lover. As far as listening and studying recordings and appreciating European orchestras and their styles, he was the one. We would listen to records every day we had rehearsals at Ravinia. He was a real music lover and a student of the instrument.”

Jay Friedman, Principal Trombone of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

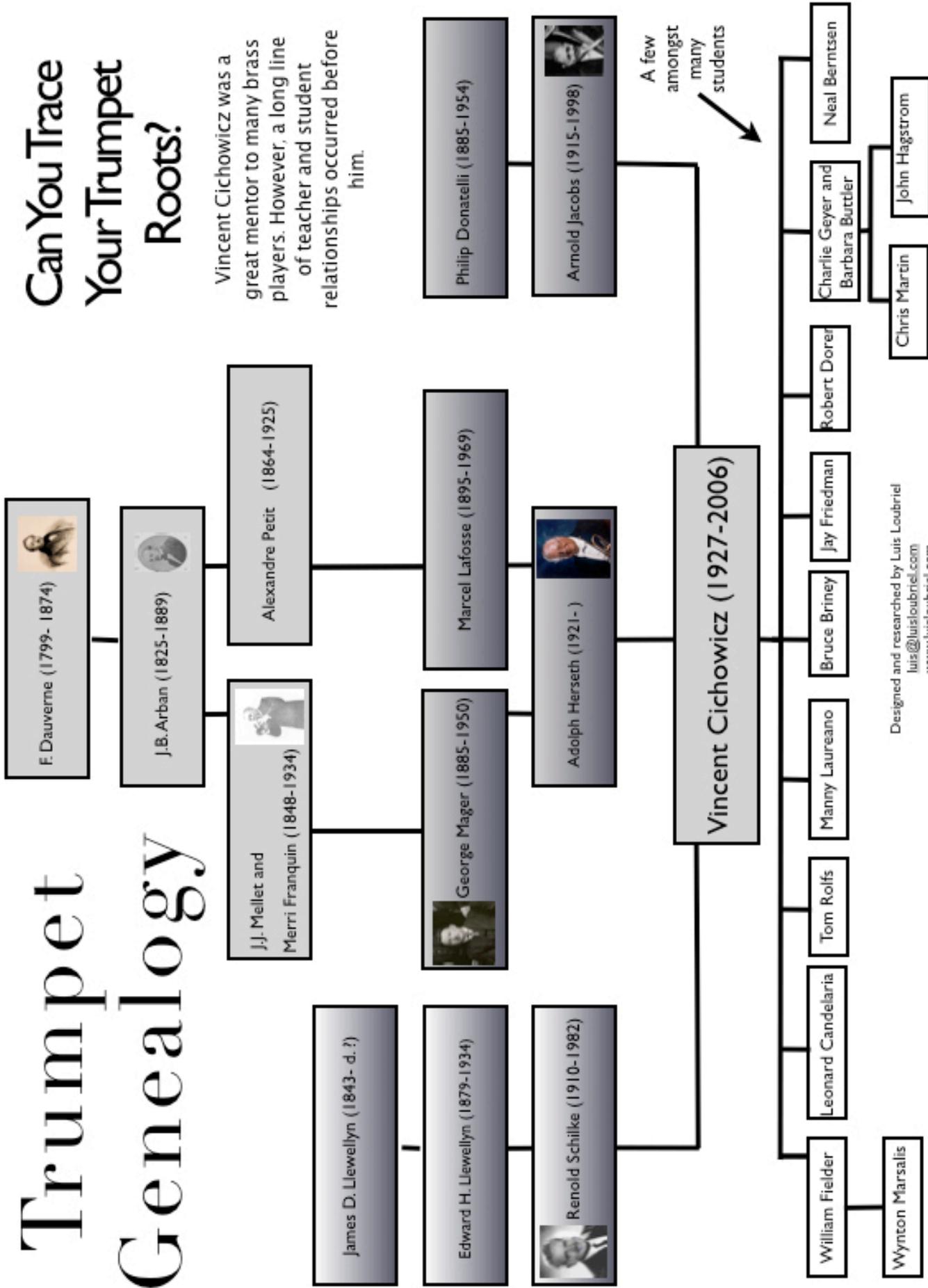
“His teaching was like the story of the two brick masons. When you asked one bricklayer what he was doing he said, ‘I am putting a brick here and then I will put more and maybe some more over there.’ The other mason said, ‘I am building a cathedral.’ By having the vision of building a cathedral, the second brick mason put each brick in place with great care. Cichowicz was showing each of us how to build a cathedral in our trumpet playing by laying down a solid foundation.”

Robert Dorer, Section Trumpeter with the Minnesota Orchestra

Trumpet Genealogy

Can You Trace Your Trumpet Roots?

Vincent Cichowicz was a great mentor to many brass players. However, a long line of teacher and student relationships occurred before him.



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Cichowicz on the Concept of Sound

“**B**y basic sound, I mean a sound without distortion in all dynamic ranges and all the registers of the instrument. That is pure and simple. That is the mechanical aspect you must achieve with all of the music that is written for your instrument. That is really the essential criteria. Anything else becomes aesthetic. That is, vibrato or no vibrato, dark sound or bright sound.

From a pedagogical standpoint, we can say that in order to produce a beautiful sound that is your own, we have to, again, make sure that you can play all of the dynamics, the complete range of the instrument, and can you do this with flexibility and accuracy. That is the definition of sound and need not be any more contrived than that. The other personal aspects become just what we have discussed as personal expression.

You can also describe the sound as vocal or singing sounds and sometimes those words strike a chord with some people. Most of the time if you refer to a free sound or natural sound it also works.”

Cichowicz on Articulation:

Articulation is based on the study of language. Detailed descriptions of tongue placement were not useful to Cichowicz. Instead, he asked the player to pronounce words such as “trumpet” or “two” to serve as a model for tonguing. “In the subject of tonguing,” he explained, “we can find several descriptive pictures of physical function. Descriptions of where to place the tongue in your mouth to get a good attack are abundant. Some of them are beautiful descriptions on how a particular player articulates. The question is, ‘Can you follow their description and play more than a half note?’ I cannot. Yet it might be a perfect description of what I am doing. From the standpoint of dealing with articulation we have to find a more natural mode.”

Ten Useful One liners:

- 1) Play everything within a musical context.
- 2) Keep simple things simple.
- 3) Stay close to the basics every day.
- 4) If you take care of your instrument, the instrument will take care of you.
- 5) We must practice because muscles forget.
- 6) If you are fascinated with what you are doing, concentration is easy.
- 7) We play our best when the mental image of sound is clear.
- 8) Playing should reflect your best musical thoughts.
- 9) The subconscious mind learns what the body repeats the most.
- 10) You have to have trust in yourself otherwise nobody will have trust in you.

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Bruce Briney received his musical education from the University of Illinois and Northwestern University where he earned a Bachelor of Music, Master of Music and a Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance. His primary trumpet teachers were David Hickman and Vincent Cichowicz with additional studies from Arnold Jacobs, Ray Mase, Charles Geyer, George Vosburgh, Ray Sasaki and Luther Didrickson. His conducting teachers and mentors include John Paynter and Victor Yampolsky. He leads a diverse musical life that reflects his passions and abilities as a conductor, performer and teacher. As the Music Director of the Millar Brass Ensemble (1985-1993), Briney recorded and released five compact discs on the Crystal, Koss, Premiere and RMC record labels. His interview of Vincent Cichowicz for the *ITG Journal* (December 1998) is an important overview of Cichowicz’ career as a performer and teacher. Briney is the Music Director of the Quincy (IL) Symphony Orchestra and Professor of Trumpet at Western Illinois University in Macomb.

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Luis Loubriel earned a B.M. and M.M. in performance at Northwestern University where he studied with Vincent Cichowicz and Luther Didrickson concurrent with private studies with William Scarlett and Arnold Jacobs. He was a Doctoral Fellow at the University of Minnesota with David Baldwin, Manny Laureano, and Gary Bordner, and earned a D.M.A. in performance at the University of Illinois with Ray Sasaki, Michael Ewald, and Ronald Romm. Loubriel has performed with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Canadian Brass, the Artie Shaw Orchestra, and the Orquesta Arabu among others. He published *Lasting Change for Trumpeters* and several articles with the International Trumpet Guild. He is Director of the Music Department at Benedictine University in Lisle, IL.

Teaching By Steps

“If you can break things down into their simplest forms, you can teach by steps. Take the air patterns, for example, and leave all of the other requirements in producing a trumpet tone off to the side for the moment. This way, you get a sense of what taking a good breath really consists of and of what blowing in a healthy manner in terms of air release is. You have to have that down initially in order to proceed to other aspects of playing. Then you put the air patterns together with the mouthpiece, or the instrument, in order to make a connection.

Learning to play the trumpet is, again, like learning language or learning to write. In learning writing you learn your ‘ABCs’ and pretty soon you begin to seek constructions and combination of syllables that make up words and it is a process of going from a basic study to a more evolved study.

It is similar to when you first begin to study the trumpet and remembering the notes is difficult. You have to think about the fingering very consciously in the beginning. As you experience that many times over, you do not think anymore of the fingerings so you see an F# on the page and you press the second finger automatically. That is generally how the mind works in learning things so there are elements of playing that are relegated to reflex rather than a concerted effort by the mind. You really can only focus on one thing at the time. That is the only way a mind can work. That is, to focus on one thing and then train the various elements of trumpet playing so they become reflexive and you do not have to think about them anymore. You instead respond to whatever musical stimulus comes into your brain.”

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Biographies:

William Fielder has been hailed as a genius by many of his peers, William Fielder is an exceptional musician. He earned degrees from the American Conservatory of Music and has become fluent in both jazz and classical music. “Prof” has worked with B.B. King, Slide Hampton, Ray Charles, Duke Ellington, Kenny Burrell, Art Pepper and Dinah Washington. Classical performances include the Chicago Civic Symphony and the American Conservatory Symphony and Brass Ensemble. He studied with Vincent Cichowicz, one of North America's foremost experts in brass pedagogy and member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for 23 years, and Adolph Herseth, who was the principal trumpeter of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for over four decades.

Charles Geyer is Co-chair of the Department of Music Performance at Northwestern University. He has been a soloist with the Music of the Baroque, the Chicago Chamber Musicians, and the Grand Teton Music Festival. He is a former member of the Eastman Brass, the Eastman Virtuosi, the Chicago Brass Quintet, and the Chicago Symphony, Grant Park Symphony, Houston Symphony, and Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestras. He has recorded and performed in international broadcasts with the Chicago and Houston Symphony Orchestras as well as the Eastman Brass, the Music of the Baroque, and the Chicago Chamber Musicians. Has given recitals and master classes worldwide. He is a former faculty member of the American Conservatory of Music, Rice University, and the Eastman School of Music. He studied with Herbert Stoskopf, Adolph Herseth, and Vincent Cichowicz.

Tom Rolfs is Principal Trumpet of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops. He joined the BSO trumpet section in 1999, serving first as fourth trumpet and later as Associate Principal Trumpet. Rolfs has been a soloist with the Boston Symphony, the Boston Pops Orchestra, and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. At John Williams's request, he was a featured soloist on Williams's Grammy-nominated soundtrack to the Academy award-winning film *Saving Private Ryan*.

Leonard Candelaria is Professor of Trumpet and Artist in Residence at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. This appointment follows an illustrious 28-year career culminating in his attainment of the distinguished rank of Regents Professor of Music in the College of Music at the University of North Texas. Many of Candelaria's students occupy positions in symphony orchestras and professional bands throughout the world, including more than forty who teach in American colleges and universities. Leonard was elected 1993-95 President of the International Trumpet Guild (ITG), a global association of trumpeters whose 7,100 members represent more than 60 countries around the world. During his presidency, he greatly expanded ITG's international scope of function through the establishment of frequent and lasting professional contact with trumpeters in Western and Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Asia and Australia. Candelaria has earned international recognition as one of America's distinguished artist/teachers.