



# itg journal, jr.

*“a trumpet newsletter for the young and the young at heart”*

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Kristin Mortenson, Editor

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## Spotlight on Callum James

Contributed by Christine James

In August 2001, five-year-old Callum James of Ellesmere Port, UK, picked up his uncle’s cornet, and after a few “blows” decided he would like to learn it. That September, he started having a weekly lesson at school with Phil Gregory, and hasn’t stopped playing since! Three months later, he joined a local charity registered brass band—the Ellesmere Port Silver Band ([www.ellesmereportsilverband.co.uk](http://www.ellesmereportsilverband.co.uk)). In March 2002, Phil decided that Callum, now age six, had progressed enough to enter for the ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) Grade 3 exam taking place in July. By April, Callum was still “cornet mad” so he started having private lessons with Phil for an hour a week at home. Also in April he saw the BASBWE (British Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles) day at the Royal Northern College of Music advertised and went along. Callum joined in a workshop held by John Miller, who invited him to participate in the ITG Youth Competition at the ITG



Conference in Manchester. In April and June, Callum took part in a couple of local competitions, taking 2nd and 3rd places.

In July 2002, Callum went to the ITG Conference Youth Day and had the time of his life! At the Youth Competition he was awarded a Special Commendation for his performance. Later that month, he took his Grade 3 exam and passed with distinction. This made him keener than ever! In August, Phil suggested to Callum about going for an orchestral audition. Callum liked this idea and auditioned for the National Children’s Orchestra. In November 2002, Callum was offered a trumpet position in the NCO Under-11s for 2003! The following month—two days before his 7th birthday—Callum took his ABRSM Grade 5 exam and passed that exam with merit. He continues to have weekly lessons with Phil Gregory.

Callum is so enthusiastic about playing and performing and has been fortunate to meet some great people who have encouraged and helped him this past year. Thanks to ITG European Correspondent Vera Hørven, who contacted numerous people about obtaining a better instrument for Callum (his old cornet was just about falling apart!), he received an Elkhart CR350 cornet from Vincent Bach International Ltd. He also received a trumpet (on loan) from Taylor Trumpets and an Olds cornet from Kanstul Instruments. Finally, he has received two mouthpieces from Terry Warburton and an ITG gift membership!

Although playing the trumpet/cornet is the love of his life, Callum also goes to football club, and likes cycling, colouring, going to the cinema, watching Looney Tunes on the television, and having his friends ’round to tea.



**WANT MORE TRUMPET?**

Consider becoming a member of the International Trumpet Guild! Membership applications are available in the *ITG Journal* or online at [www.trumpetguild.org/join/join.htm](http://www.trumpetguild.org/join/join.htm) Student/Senior memberships are only \$25/year!

# A Game Called “Twenty Pitches”

By Gary Mortenson, Kansas State University

In any piece of music, the toughest note for many musicians is the first pitch. It’s hard because we have to pick it out of thin air. I hear trumpet players continually miss the first note, struggle several times to hit it, and then continue the phrase with the knowledge that they have gotten off to a bad start. Every time this happens, the player reinforces a bad habit—that it’s acceptable to miss the first note, and that you can go ahead and take several stabs at it. I remember a former teacher, Raymond Crisara, telling me, “every good note leads to another good note, but it begins with the first good note.”

Can you imagine a conductor letting the orchestra or band take a couple of attempts to begin a piece of music? It just doesn’t happen in the real world. You start a piece of music, you come in on the first pitch, and you live with whatever happens because you have to go on! Practice should always seek to pattern itself after the real world of performance, so the first attack is something that should be practiced carefully and with your full attention.

Here is a game that will let you concentrate on initial attacks. It takes just a couple of minutes to play, but if you play it three times a week for several months you will start to gain the confidence you need to play with more conviction from the very first sound that you produce.

- 1) Do this in a room with NO distractions, and give it your undivided attention.
- 2) Pick a pitch in a specific register and pick a specific volume level that you want to produce.
- 3) Raise the mouthpiece to your lips and with no hesitation take a breath, and produce that desired pitch and volume level. You should only hold this pitch for a short time (if you crack it, don’t allow yourself to slide to the correct pitch). You’re just playing it and releasing it.
- 4) Take the mouthpiece off of the lips and evaluate the sound that you just made. Was the pitch correct? If not, were you too high or too low? Was the volume level correct? If not, was it too soft or too loud?
- 5) *You get no second chance at a first pitch.* If you missed it, the mouthpiece comes off the face, period! Regardless, the mouthpiece *always* comes off of the face before you go on.
- 6) Now, do this same thing nineteen more times and keep score. Play pitches all across your range, and at various dynamic levels (not all loud or all soft). If you hit twelve of twenty pitches/volume levels correctly, write down the date and the score. For example: 6/22/03-12/20. Keep a little diary and see if over time that fraction after the date doesn’t start to improve!

It is very important that you learn to play by eliminating tension and self-doubt. If you breathe in, and hesitate for even a split second, you let a lot of negative energy creep into your consciousness regarding that first pitch. Imagine how hard it would be to talk to a friend if every time you took air before a sentence, you hesitated, closed the throat, and grunted before beginning to talk. Your friend would think you were weird! When we talk, we take in air, form the first word, and start the air out to talk, with no hesitation. This is the way we should communicate musical ideas as well!

I hope this little game will help you gain the confidence you need to bring the mouthpiece to your lips and to know that the first sounds you make will be those that you want. There is great satisfaction in overcoming the demands of such a challenging instrument. With hard work and dedication comes improvement and success.

\*For more detailed information on this subject, read the “Pedagogical Topics” column titled *The Initial Attack* by Randall Reyman in the June, 2003 *ITG Journal*.



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## A Quick Lesson in Correct Breathing for Young Trumpet Players

By Joseph Bowman, University of Tennessee at Martin

The essential element that defines us as musicians is our characteristic tone quality. Names like Adolph “Bud” Herseth, Joe Alessi, Philip Farkas, and Arnold Jacobs bring to mind a certain sound: a rich warm tone that resonates and projects in any concert setting. While most young trumpet players spend time developing technical facility and strive to improve their range, they will find few performing doors open to them if they cannot produce a good, focused sound. The role that relaxed air/breathing plays in tone production is crucial to the development of this characteristic sound. The goal is to be able to produce a sound that will serve in any facet of performance: solo, chamber, orchestral, commercial, or jazz.

### The Role of Air and Breathing

The great tuba pedagogue and performer Sam Pilafian states that three elements are needed to be a great player on a brass instrument: an efficient embouchure, great ears, and great breathing. When playing a brass instrument,

the role of breathing is crucial, yet it often does not get the attention that it deserves. Most students start developing poor breathing habits the moment they pick up the instrument.

A good breath on a brass instrument should have the following characteristics:

- 1) Sit or stand in a relaxed manner with good posture. The spinal chord should be straight, with the head in proper alignment. Do not tuck the chin into the chest or allow the head to lean forward.
- 2) Elbows should be slightly away from the body to allow for full breath expansion. Arms must remain relaxed.
- 3) Inhale as if you were yawning. Do not “sip” the air or make high-pitched noises when inhaling (this is a sign of muscle tension). A deep, yawning sound should be produced to ensure a relaxed and open throat. (The tongue lies very low in the mouth.)
- 4) Allow the air to release (exhale) from the lungs as if “sighing”. Do not hold the air before exhaling, as this will cause chest and neck tension which will hamper tone production.

This type of breath should be used every single time you play the trumpet. Any tension will only result in dampening the sound vibrations. (Have you ever tried to hit a bass drum with your hand on the drumhead? It doesn't ring, does it? Muscle tension has the same effect on brass sound production.) Some simple breathing exercises adapted from Sam Pilafian's *Breathing Basics* seminar follow.

**Exercise 1: Vacuum Pressure.** Create a demand for air in your lungs.

- Use the back of your hand to create a resistance when sucking in air. Take your hand away and allow the air to rush in, filling the lungs. Exhale naturally. Rest and Repeat.
- Repeat the same exercise, only this time reapply the hand suction near the top of your breath, then release and fill up to peak air capacity. Rest and Repeat.
- Your shoulders, arms, and hands should feel heavy after several of these, and your face will begin to feel warm.

**Exercise 2: Powerbreathing.** Move air quickly in and out.

- Use the word “HOW” or “WOW” to bring the air in. Breathe in through the mouth for one second, taking a full breath, and exhale through the mouth for one second. Do ten of these, followed by rest.
- Variations on powerbreathing. Lock hands in front of you. Inhale through the mouth for two eighth-note counts. Exhale through the mouth one quarter-note count. While exhaling, pull interlocked hands away from each other; create a resistance. Repeat 10 times without rest.
- Repeat the exercise, only this time push the hands against each other. Two eighth-note beats in, one quarter-note beat out. Repeat ten times. Rest.
- Last Variation. Breathe in using three triplet eighth-note beats, and then exhale using a quarter-note beat. Repeat ten times. Rest.
- After doing this exercise, but before you play your instrument, always bring your body to a relaxed state by doing the following exercise: Inhale for four very slow counts; exhale for four very slow counts. Repeat four times.

**Exercise 3: Capacity.** While we can't make our lungs bigger, we can increase the volume of air we consistently take in. Use a metronome for proper timing.

- M.M. = 60, quarter note is one beat. Breathe through the mouth for five counts, hold for fifteen, breathe out for five. Rest. Repeat.
- Same exercise, but while holding the breath, continually “sip” in more air.
- Breathe in for six counts, then out for six. Work to form the oral cavity into a “HOW” or “WHO” shape.
- Breathe in for seven counts, then out for seven. Think of the air behind the buzzing chops. The air creates the sound. Think slow, hot air for the best possible sound.
- Breathe in for eight counts, then out for eight through the nose, then nine and nine, and ten and ten. The goal is to calm the mind and the body before you begin your instrument warm up.

These exercises move a good deal more air than is ever really used to play a brass instrument. Why, then, do we want so much breath capacity? Why does an offensive lineman bench-press 500 pounds? So that when the 250-pound linebacker comes at him, he can easily push him out of the way. We use massive amounts of air in these exercises so we become more comfortable taking the full breaths we use to play our brass instruments.

If you regularly practice breathing exercises and understand the mechanics of a good, relaxed breath, you are much more likely to have the warm, resonant sound we associate with great trumpet players. The results of your breathing efforts will become apparent when you take the stage!



## Famous Trumpet Player Anagrams!

(Rearrange letters to spell the names of trumpet greats; answers at bottom of page.)

- 1) glorious 'n' smart
- 2) aim to a grand hall
- 3) a nice eardrum
- 4) others had help
- 5) never is second

*Clue: New Orleans born, the world was his home.*

*Clue: First to record the Hummel.*

*Clue: French elegance on piccolo.*

*Clue: Retired after 50+ years at one job.*

*Clue: Never was second on Johnny's show.*

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## Upper Register Trumpet Playing

By Michael Stewart, Lead Trumpet, Chicago Grandstand Big Band

Why should you play higher? Well, maybe you just like the sound of high notes. Maybe you find that as you get older, the music in band or orchestra is getting harder and higher. Whatever your reason, to be successful on trumpet you do need to develop a strong upper register. This doesn't mean you have to be a "screaming" lead trumpet player. It means you should be able to perform the literature presented to you in traditional or common ensemble settings. Compare high notes to heavy loads. If you can comfortably carry just 20 pounds at a time, then carrying a few gallons of milk to a car requires a pretty serious effort. But if you can carry 100 pounds, that milk is not such a burden. Likewise, if you can only play a G on top of the staff, then the F# just below that is still pretty difficult, and your chances of being able to perform it consistently are really not very good. On the other hand, if you can consistently play a D above the staff, then that F#, or G, or even B above the staff is really not going to give you many problems. So, how do we get there? We need to remember that we are using muscles—including those in our embouchure and face, and our abdominal and breathing muscles. These all need to be developed in a way that allows us to produce the strength and air flow required to play well in the upper register. Exercises that target these muscles groups will help. It's very important that you use the same embouchure set-up in the upper register that you use when playing in the middle and lower ones. Your embouchure will, of course, become more firm, especially at the corners of your mouth, as you go higher, but trying to "reset" for higher notes will only cause problems down the road. You need to build your embouchure, not search for a "magic" lip or mouthpiece position. Here are some basic playing exercises you can do to help build range and efficiency.

- Scales: Start low and play, range permitting, two octaves at a time. Play smoothly (slurs or legato tongue) and go up and down in one breath. Rest every couple of minutes.
- Arpeggios: Start with one-octave arpeggios, then extend each pattern into your upper register. It may be necessary for you to write these notes out.
- Long tones: Slowly play the first five quarter notes of an ascending scale (C, for instance) and then hold the top (fifth) note (G) for four counts. Come back down and hold the first note for four additional counts. Chromatically work your way up to the top of your range. Again, use one breath per exercise, and then rest.
- Melodies: Write out a simple four-measure melody that stays in the lower third of the staff (or use a brief melody that you already know). Then, write it again, a step higher, and again until you've written it in the uppermost area of your range. Play this melody in each key. Always be musical and try to maintain a good tone.
- Warm down: When you've finished with your "workout," be sure to allow your chops to relax by gently playing some long tones or soft scales in the lowest register of the horn. You may, at first, find this to be difficult because your embouchure will be stiff from all of the high note tension. Persevere, as this will also help your low playing and lip responsiveness.

Dynamically, you will probably find that you need to play some melodies or exercises at a greater volume than others, or at least, you may need to use much more effort on some. This is fine, as long as you remember that the overall idea is eventually to be able to play in the upper register in a relaxed fashion. The more comfortable you are, the better you'll play. Work toward playing with freedom, not force.



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For more information pertaining to Youth Trumpet issues, please visit the ITG Youth Website at: <a href="http://www.trumpetguild.org/itgyouth">www.trumpetguild.org/itgyouth</a>
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**Anagram Answers:** 1: Louis Armstrong, 2: Armando Ghitala, 3: Maurice André, 4: Adolph Herseth, 5: Doc Severinsen