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DEVELOPING YOUR EARS

BY BECKI RONEN WALENZ

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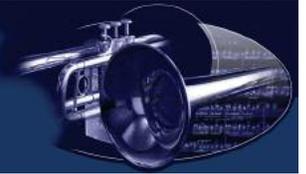
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DEVELOPING YOUR EARS

BY BECKI RONEN WALENZ

As trumpet players, the development of our ears is crucial to our success. Our ears can enhance our musicianship and our leadership in ways our students often are unable to recognize without proper guidance from music teachers or private instructors. Below is a list and description of educational ideas to encourage your students to listen actively and purposefully as trumpet players.

The most common way to teach this concept is to encourage students to listen to recordings of a piece of music they are preparing in a lesson. Let's pretend the student is preparing the Haydn *Trumpet Concerto*. Encouraging them to find at least three professional recordings of the work, all performed by a different ensemble and soloist, will help their ears in two main ways: 1) It will force the student to recognize different musical interpretations, and 2) it will help the student hear what it means to play with quality tone, intonation, and style, setting an aural example to work toward.

Another common way to engage your students' musical ears is by encouraging them to listen to different instruments while playing in an ensemble. Once comfortable and confident with their own part, listening "across the ensemble," as it is commonly phrased, will encourage and teach important qualities like intonation, blend, and balance. It will also help students acknowledge how different instruments interpret articulation and musical style, and how they can use this information to enhance their own musical abilities.

Listening with a critical ear while practicing is a topic worthy of frequent discussion. Ways to encourage careful listening include: 1) Record portions of a practice session on an iPhone, iPad, or personal computer, play it back, and decide what needs more work and what has improved. 2) Find a variety of spaces to practice in with different acoustics, challenging the student to hear differences in different acoustical settings. 3) Teach the student first to sing the melody of the piece, and then play it on trumpet to develop general pitch recognition and ear training. 4) Encourage your student to play duets with friends, or with you in their lessons. Not only will it help sight-reading skills, but it will also teach their ear to acknowledge

qualities mentioned above, like pitch, intonation, blend, balance, and musical interpretation.

Finally, explain to your students that you, as their teacher, will be listening carefully and with undivided attention every time they come to a lesson or perform in public. As their teacher, you want your students to perfect the musical techniques they are assimilating through your guidance. It is your job to help your student comprehend and connect with you when discussing how to improve on the trumpet. If they don't learn to listen patiently and carefully to the sounds they are making day in and day out, they will never acquire the aural skills necessary to improve their own playing.

As teachers, we must remember to balance our verbal communication with an equal measure of musical communication in a private lesson. Both play a vital role in our student's listening skills and in their overall progress as a trumpet player.

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About the author: Becki Ronen Walenz completed the MM degree in trumpet performance from the Crane School of Music at the State University of New York at Potsdam where she studied trumpet with John Ellis. In the fall of

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