



# itg journal, jr.

"a trumpet newsletter for the young and the young at heart"

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Douglas Wilson, Editor

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## PROFILE OF A TRUMPET STUDENT—MASTER CLASS IN CHINA!

BY JACOB LARSON, NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

My student entered the room at 1:00 P.M., as so many have done during my 48 years of teaching studio trumpet. He was dressed in typical college clothing, and carried several professional model trumpets. He owned a Bach B-flat, a Bach C, and a Schilke piccolo. Again, this was not unusual. What makes this scene different is that I was not at the University of Oklahoma, in the United States, but at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China.

This was my third day at the conservatory, having traveled there to attend a symposium on music education with my wife, a Kodály specialist. China, rapidly moving to absorb the best of international teaching and thinking, has been looking at Western models as a means of augmenting their already outstanding school programs.

While attending the conference, I was invited by Zhonghui Dai, professor at the Central Conservatory of Music, to give lessons and a workshop. Not knowing what to expect from the students, I approached the lessons with some apprehension. During the past years, I have given workshops in Guatemala and Hungary, and know that language and cultural differences can be a challenge in teaching the subtleties of a musical instrument.

My student was Li Hua, age 24, and a second year student in the program. He is from Tian Jing City and owns his own instruments. Like others of his age, he speaks English quite well. Next year, he will attend the Royal Academy of Music in London and study

with James Watson, principal trumpet of the Royal Philharmonic. Representatives from the Royal Academy come to Beijing at least once a year to audition students.

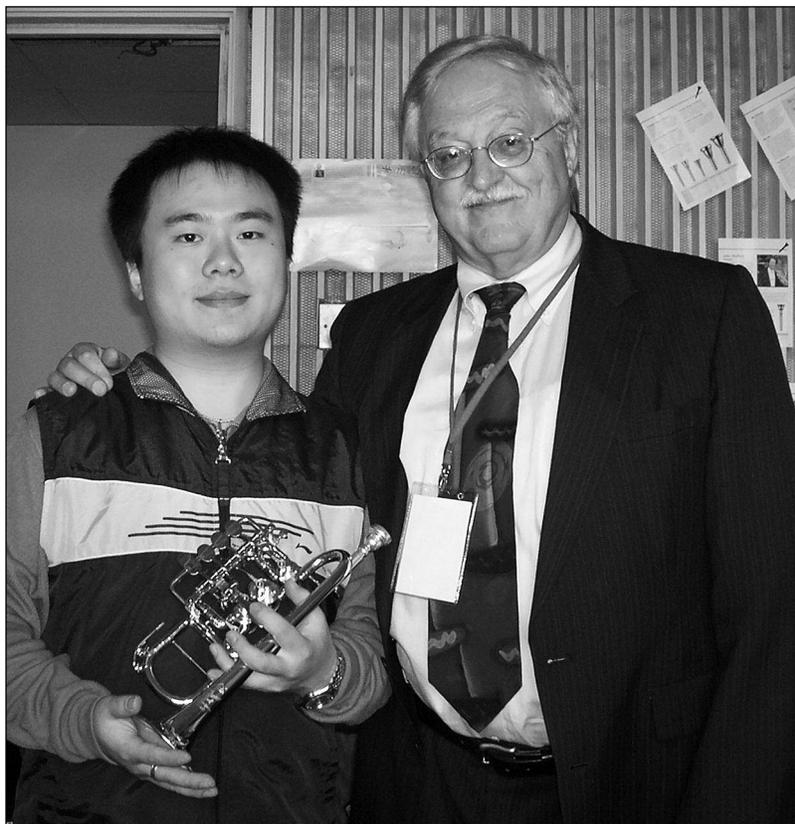
Simon (a name Li has adopted for English speaking visitors), like the other 24 trumpet students at the Central Conservatory of Music, practices about five hours a day. He uses books by Clarke, Schlossberg, and Vizzutti. Prior to attending the conservatory, he played trumpet for about six years and sang in a choir. During the week of my visit, he was also performing one of the trumpet parts of the Mahler *2nd Symphony* with a professional orchestra in Beijing.

The conservatory program emphasizes performance of orchestral repertoire and solos. During the lesson, Simon played Stoezel's *Concerto in C Major* and *Slavische Fantasie* by Carl Hoehne. Like his fellow students, he was very receptive and open to suggestions and new ideas. He is dedicated to becoming an artist player, and aware of what he must do and

how hard he will have to work in order to perform and compete at a professional level.

**"Simon, like the other 24 trumpet students at the Central Conservatory of Music, practices about five hours a day."**

I was most impressed with how well the students played and how appreciative they were of my efforts. They listened carefully, paid close attention, worked very hard, and were brilliantly prepared for their lessons. Their sense of orchestral style and interpretation of the music was outstanding. They are a credit to Zhonghui Dai and a program that values music and music education.



Li Hua (a.k.a. "Simon") and Jacob Larson at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing



# BRASS TACTICS

BY ROBERT BACA, EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

*The following is used by permission from Kjos Music Company and has been excerpted from "Brass Tactics, Answers to Commonly Asked Questions, Neil A Kjos Music Company (see the web site, <http://www.kjos.com>). It may be obtained in entirety from Kjos Band News Spring 2006 Vol. 13.*

For the student, there is often a fine line between progress practice and prolonged paralysis. Efficient progress depends on the way we approach the many instrument challenges that lie on the road to successful musicianship. The intent of this article is to direct the student toward good habits early on by answering some of the most common questions that come up early in their developmental process.

## TAKE A BIG BREATH

**How do I clear up a pinched sound?**

A failing embouchure, tight muscles, and poor posture are the three main causes of a pinched sound. It is important to know the lips themselves have very little to do with brass playing. They must remain flexible in order to vibrate properly, which is how the sound is created. It is the corners that keep the aperture the same shape throughout the range of the instrument. If they fall back into a "smiling" position, a "pinched" sound is created. Always think of a relaxed "Ah" sound with warm, moist air. The corners are developed similarly to weight lifting; small weights first, lots of repetitions. Students should play in the middle register, always thinking of a beautiful sound.

## LOW AND HIGH ARE JUST THE SAME

**How can I increase range?**

Acoustically speaking there is no such thing as low and high, only slower and faster frequencies. Here are a few imaginative ideas that can help.

- Always think of playing through the sound, never at the

sound. This keeps the muscles energized, loose, and ready to play.

- Sing, Sing, Sing... to lock the pitch center in our head for sure footed playing in all registers.
- Listen to players who make it sound easy then imitate up to the level of our physical limitations.
- Make these ideas habitual by playing exercises that start slowly in the middle register and expand in both directions.

## CLEAN ARTICULATION

**How can I play with clean articulation?**

Articulation is sound. Clear articulation is easiest when one can compare their articulation to the sound they are imitating. I tell my students to narrow articulation to a couple of taste buds to get a clean attack. If one plays with a "tha" sound, the tongue is likely articulating between the teeth. If, we think of our tongue too much, all we will have is a mouth full of tongue.

## PLAYING IN TUNE

**How can I play better in tune?**

Ninety-nine percent of pitch problems can be solved by simply hearing the note in tune. The best habit is to sing everything one plays. The more one sings (with guidance), the closer one will come to nailing the pitch.

## GET A GOOD PRIVATE TEACHER

A good private teacher provides the best chance for a successful musical experience. Along with imitating the live sound of a top notch player, the student learns regular accountability, confidence, attention to detail, the larger world of their instrument, and the endless resources for the inquisitive that a good teacher can provide.



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# TRUMPET CLEANING

**A CLEAN TRUMPET WILL IMPROVE YOUR ABILITY TO PLAY CONSISTENTLY!**

BY PHILIP T. CANSLER, PORTLAND, OREGON

All trumpet players struggle to maintain a steady level of playing from day to day. We can sound great on one day, and within 24 hours our problems will have returned. There is something you can do to make a huge difference in your playing—and it has nothing to do with practicing. It starts with the answers to these questions: How long has it been since you cleaned your instrument? More importantly, have you ever cleaned the receiver of your trumpet?

All trumpets should be cleaned at least four times a year. To start, take the instrument to your bathtub and run the water to the temperature you'd like for a lukewarm bath (never hot!). Put the bell under the spout and let the water run through the trumpet for three or four minutes, allowing the water to empty into

the tub. Avoid letting water spill over the bell onto the valve area, and definitely do *not* submerge the instrument, as you don't want the felt pads in the valve casing area to get wet.

Next, mix a few tablespoons of baking soda with approximately five cups of warm water and carefully pour it into the bell. Let the mixture sit in the trumpet for 45 minutes before flushing the instrument. When clearing the instrument of the mixture, make sure you press down each valve separately and in groups until the water runs clear, with no residue. This might take four or five minutes. Empty the water from the trumpet by turning it upside down and opening the condensation valves. Now you are ready to take the instrument apart.

Bring the trumpet to a countertop or other work area that will be out of the way for the next twelve hours. Take out the valves and all the slides. Wipe down all the parts and let them sit

*itg journal, jr. staff:*

Douglas Wilson, Editor	<a href="mailto:junior@trumpetguild.org">junior@trumpetguild.org</a>
Gary Mortenson, Advisor	<a href="mailto:editor@trumpetguild.org">editor@trumpetguild.org</a>
Joseph Walters, Layout	<a href="mailto:ads@trumpetguild.org">ads@trumpetguild.org</a>
More youth information:	<a href="http://www.trumpetguild.org/itgyouth">www.trumpetguild.org/itgyouth</a>

For more information pertaining to Youth Trumpet issues, please visit the <i>ITG Youth Web Site</i> at <a href="http://www.trumpetguild.org/itgyouth">http://www.trumpetguild.org/itgyouth</a>
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overnight. (Avoid using a cloth towel, as the oils may stain it. It is best to use a thick, absorbent paper towel.)

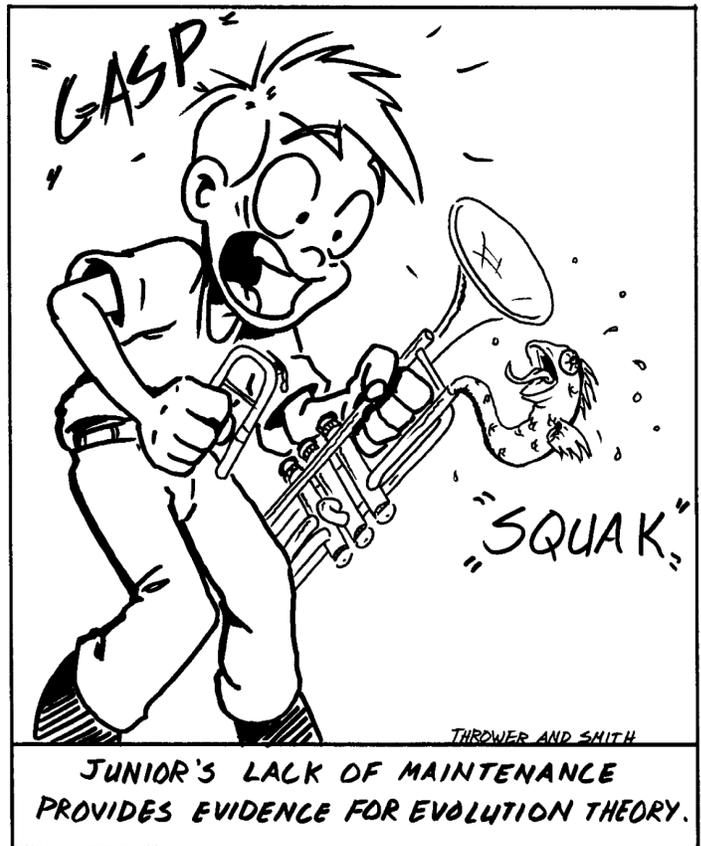
The next morning, wipe the slides and valves again until clean. Then apply slide grease (to the slides) and valve oil (to the valves). Use a mixture of slide grease and valve oil to help any slides used for tuning certain notes work more quickly and easily (first and third slides on most better-quality trumpets). Work the slide back and forth until it operates smoothly. This might require wiping off the slide and starting over with the lubricants.

The best trick to improve consistency and response is to clean the receiver. There is a small ledge just below where the mouthpiece fits. This ledge can collect a film of bacteria, and it rarely gets cleaned sufficiently with just the water flush. Although it can be a hard area to clean well, doing so will make a huge difference in your tone and articulation.

To demonstrate this point, play a scale with an accented articulation before cleaning the area. Then straighten a paper clip and run it several times around the ledge of the mouthpiece receiver. Now play the same scale again. Depending on how much film you pulled out, you should hear a vast improvement in articulation and tone. You might want to do the paper clip cleaning before flushing the trumpet with water.

Lastly, do not forget the most critical part to be cleaned—the mouthpiece. This should be cleaned with a mouthpiece brush in warm water.

After finishing these procedures, you should notice an immediate improvement in the consistency of your playing!



## GETTING READY FOR AN AUDITION

BY MICHAEL STEWART, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

At some point in our trumpet life, we will most likely decide to take an audition for seating within a group. This can be very nerve-wracking, especially if you are unsure of your abilities or if you get nervous when speaking or performing in front of others. We have all experienced these feelings, but here are some Dos and Don'ts that can make your next experience a little easier and hopefully more successful!

### The Music

- DO: Make absolutely sure that you have all of the correct music needed for the audition. You are responsible for this. It is never the judge's fault (and rarely your band director's fault) if you do not.
- DO: Prepare the music to the best of your ability. Learn all sections of the music. Saying "I'll be okay as long as they don't ask for this or this" will almost guarantee that those are the sections they ask you to play.
- DO: Bring your own neat copy with your personal markings on it. Occasionally, you will not be allowed to use it, but be prepared to help yourself as much as possible. Also, practice some with a "blank" copy of the music, so if this happens you will still be prepared.
- DON'T: Bring any music that is not needed for the audition. If you happen to drop your music or something gets misplaced, you will get more nervous trying to find the correct pages.

### The Audition

- DO: Arrive well before your audition time. This gives you extra time to register or sign in and to find the rooms in which you are to warm up and perform. Arriving "just in time" will create more tension and nervousness for you.
- DO: Warm up for at least 10 minutes before you play and then rest at least 5 minutes before you play. Mentally going through each song is also a great way to prepare.
- DO: Ask to play a few notes in the room before you start the actual audition material.
- DO: Always empty your spit valves before you start each selection.
- DON'T: Worry about how others are doing—well or poorly. They don't actually affect the way you play.

### Your Presentation

- DO: Greet the judge when you enter the room and let him know who you are.
- DO: Stand tall and be confident in what you are about to do.
- DO: Dress appropriately. That doesn't always mean wearing a coat and tie or dress, but casual nice clothes are the norm. Shorts and gym shoes, tattered pants (even "pre-ripped") and t-shirts are rarely the best choice.
- DON'T: Complain about your day, being unprepared, or not knowing what was expected. These are, again, all your responsibility. No whining!

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### Your Mouth & Your Body

- DO: Get a good night's rest before the audition, especially if you have an early performance time.
- DO: Drink lots of water the day of your audition. This will help keep "dry mouth" from hurting your performance.
- DO: Brush your teeth after your last meal (or snack) before you play to prevent any stickiness or tackiness inside your mouth or on your lips. Chocolate and pop/soda drinks are both very bad for your chops.
- DON'T: Run around before your audition. Being short of breath makes it very difficult to play. Relax and rest.

### Your Instrument

- DO: Make sure it is in good working condition, especially the valves. The judge can only go by what he hears, and faulty valves will make things very hard on you.
- DO: If you have more than one, make sure you bring the right instrument and mouthpiece. Don't use your marching band horn just because you didn't want to carry the extra weight to school.
- DO: Try to make it look nice. At least wipe off any dirt and water marks from the bell.
- DON'T: Complain about your instrument. Like the music, the judge has no control over the condition of your horn. It's up to you to have it working.



## HOW TO CHOOSE A MOUTHPIECE

BY KATHY ESSMILLER, EDMOND, OKLAHOMA

Understanding the physical properties of the trumpet mouthpiece plays a critical role in the trumpet player's mouthpiece selection. Each component of the mouthpiece impacts a specific aspect of the trumpeter's playing. The rim of the mouthpiece affects flexibility, while the cup most dramatically affects tone color. The throat and backbore work together to control air resistance, and have a direct bearing on intonation. As trumpet players investigate mouthpieces, they should understand the elements involved in mouthpiece structure (the rim, the cup, the throat, and the backbore) and the effect each of these rudiments has on the tone produced.

### Rim

The first consideration is the rim, as it actually encounters the lips, and is the initial indicator of a good feel or fit. The rim is critical because it controls the free movement of the lip muscles and the response which follows. It is generally agreed that the rim should be slightly rounded, although not too wide, with a distinct but not excessively sharp inner edge or bite (which helps determine what portion of the lip vibrates). While a wide cushioned rim is comfortable, the greater amount of metal present can restrict the lip in its flexing or movement. A slightly rounded medium rim is standard. A distinct inner edge is necessary for accuracy, but if it is too sharp it can cut the player's lips. Rounding will increase the comfort but in excess will impair accuracy, especially in slurred passages.

### Cup

The cup determines the color (timbre) of the tone. A deep cup allows a larger portion of the lip to vibrate, producing greater volume and a larger, warmer, and darker sound. A shallow cup brightens the tone and facilitates the playing of high notes. Deeper cups require a disciplined and developed embouchure; with a larger mouthpiece, the lip muscles must be well trained—it will be impossible to force the high notes. Young players (or those seeking quick results) should work with a medium depth

cup—advanced players will benefit from a deeper cup.

### Throat

The funnel-shaped entrance at the bottom of the mouthpiece is the throat, which controls the air resistance. If it is too small, the tone clutches, and the high register lowers; if it is too large, the mouthpiece will lack resistance, leaving the player unduly tired. Medium sized is best, as it offers sufficient volume, an excellent all around register, and maximum endurance.

### Backbore

The backbore works in tandem with the throat to control the flow of air through the mouthpiece, affecting tone quality and intonation. A correctly constructed mouthpiece will expand the backbore so as nearly to match the diameter of the trumpet bore at the point where the mouthpiece ends and the trumpet begins. If the backbore is too small, the high register will be stuffy and flat. If it is too large, the response may not have enough resistance and the instrument will be loose, with the octaves stretched and the high tones slightly sharp. As with the cup, a tighter backbore affords a more brilliant sound, while the larger the backbore, the mellower the sound.

Once trumpeters have acquainted themselves with the effect variations in mouthpiece construction will have on their playing, it is time to go to work. As musical artists, the primary consideration is tone quality and intonation. The consensus among both manufacturers and musicians is that if equally good results are achieved with a small mouthpiece versus a large mouthpiece, the larger mouthpiece should be chosen, keeping in mind that a mouthpiece can be perfect for one player and impossible or inadequate for another.

Investigation and experimentation are best undertaken with the guidance and supervision of a trusted teacher, who will no doubt be ever-present with the familiar reminder that no mouthpiece in the world will take the place of diligent, consistent practice!



*itg journal, jr.* is always interested in what is going on in the trumpet world. If you would like to see an area covered in future issues, or have an article you would like to contribute, ITG members should contact us at [junior@trumpetguild.org](mailto:junior@trumpetguild.org).

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