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**MARTIN SAUNDERS, COLUMN EDITOR**

## **COVERING THE BASICS**

**BY BRANDON CRASWELL**

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## COVERING THE BASICS

BY BRANDON CRASWELL

**T**he trumpet is an extremely demanding instrument that requires daily maintenance to keep the embouchure (“chops”) in good playing condition. When certain elements are left untouched, for even a few days, those areas are immediately affected. For example, if I fail to play flexibilities or lip slurs during daily practice sessions, my flexibility around the instrument is not nearly as proficient as it is when I address this area daily. The following is a list of what I feel should be addressed daily, and various exercises I use to “cover the basics.”

### Sound

A player’s sound is the most important thing to develop as a trumpet player. Our sound is what gives us our individuality. In other words, our sound is our voice on the instrument. Without a great sound, nothing else matters very much. Every player’s sound is unique, and it is important to develop a sound that fits your ideal of what it is you want to sound like. Often times, players become obsessed with the “faster, higher, louder” mindset, and allow their concept of sound to suffer to allow for efficiency in other areas. It is important to remember that without a great sound, most audience members will quickly become disinterested in the performance.

Ways to work on sound include long tones, Cichowicz flow studies, James Stamp *Warm Ups and Studies*, Schlossberg *Daily Fundamentals*, and anything that is simple enough that your mind is only focused on sound, and nothing else.

### Range

Range needs to be addressed daily if you hope to get around the instrument in all registers fluidly and evenly. The idiom you are interested in performing will dictate the range you must have at your disposal. Although it is ideal that range be a by-product of efficient trumpet playing, realistically we must “practice high to play high.” It is important to remember the upper register must be approached in a sensible fashion because it is easy to damage the tissue if we don’t achieve a balance by practicing in both the high and low registers.

Practicing for improvement in the upper register can include chromatic scales in two octaves, expanding around a middle note or ascending by half steps, and playing scales that approach the upper register in a systematic way that allows for tangible results one half step at a time. Other useful exercises are playing the Getchell *First Book of Practical Studies* up an

octave after playing them where written with the right energy and sound. Further studies on range have been addressed in Claude Gordon’s *Systematic Approach* to the upper register.

### Flexibilities

Flexibilities, or lip slurs, allow us to get around the instrument in a fluid and effortless manner. They are extremely useful in expanding the upper register, but also aid in our overall fluidity between registers and intervals. There have been many books written that concentrate on developing flexibility. Some of the authors of these books include Bai Lin, Earl Irons, Max Schlossberg, and Charles Colin.

### Articulation

Having a good attack to the front of our notes can make an immense difference on the sound released from the trumpet.

Being able to vary hard and soft attacks, as well as covering single, double, triple, and “K” tonguing is essential for efficient articulations. There are many method books that utilize articulation,

but a few that I have found most beneficial are by J.B. Arban, Chris Gekker, St. Jacome, and Edwin Goldman.

### Technique

I find that my technique gets extremely lazy if I don’t work on it daily. For basic finger exercises, there is nothing better than the Herbert L. Clarke *Technical Studies*. Being able to play the Clarke studies in all keys major and minor, slurred and articulated, will ensure the technique needed for covering playing challenges musicians will face as they mature. Books that cover technique include methods by J.B. Arban, St. Jacome, Herbert L. Clarke, and Allen Vizzutti, and the *Speed Studies* method by Robert Nagel.

It is imperative that the areas of sound, range, flexibility, articulation, and technique are covered daily. Formulating a practice regimen that works for you and allows for covering all these basic fundamentals will ensure that your daily maintenance on the instrument is never ignored. With these basics intact grounded by the efficient use of the air stream, trumpet players of all ages should experience very encouraging results.

*About the author:* Brandon Craswell teaches trumpet at The Hodgson School of Music at the University of Georgia in Athens. Adept in both the classical and jazz trumpet world, Brandon recently finished a North American tour of the Broadway Musical *42nd Street*.



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