

Pat Harbison Jazz & Brass Clinic 2004

Some guiding principles behind the William Adam approach:

1. **The imagination is the driving force behind music making.** Hearing the desired result vividly in your imagination will activate whatever physical activity it takes to make that sound.

2. Every day and every repetition causes a more dependable result. Inconsistency eventually vanishes as the body makes a habit out of the most efficient way it finds to get the imagined result.

3. Most physical problems are air problems. When the air and the imagination are working, the embouchure, tongue, etc. can settle into balance. If the air never flows steadily the rest of your system will also be in a constant state of adjustment and compensation.

4. **Physical and psychological tension are the trumpeter's greatest foes.**

5. A trumpet player needs to be involved with every note they play in an energetic way...both physically and mentally. It takes a lot of energy to play well. It shouldn't take a lot of force. If it does you are fighting against yourself and/or the instrument.

6. We don't want our body to fight the physics and acoustics of the trumpet. Those natural laws don't change. Therefore, we have to change our approach.

7. Unnecessary tension comes when the body is working against itself. Isometric tension is created by opposing muscle groups that are at war.

8. Start the day by playing on the leadpipe/mouthpiece combination. Use plenty of air and try to get the most steady and resonant sound you can. On most Bb trumpets the concert Eb is the natural resonant pitch of the leadpipe.

9. After you have set up the airflow and warmed up the embouchure (without creating undue embouchure tension), transfer that approach to the trumpet.

10. Start with long tones or slowly moving flow studies with smaller intervals.

Every single thing you play all day is a tone study!

11. Establish a relaxed but energized airflow and a rich, resonant tone on every note from the very first note.

12. Start in the middle register and gradually expand up and down alternating higher/lower/higher/lower, etc.

13. Carry the beauty of sound and the free flow of energized breath into all the other contexts: expand register, expand dynamics, go through all the various articulations, lyrical playing, etc.

14. At all times remember to imagine a beautiful sound. Keep your attention on that sound. Keep your energy up but never tense. Move energized air through your sound. Stay calm and mentally focused...never anxious.

15. **Never get angry with yourself and never try to go so fast that anxiety is created. If you do you are actually practicing being anxious and upset when playing.** Of course that is how you will feel emotionally when you play if that is how you have practiced. Relax. It is supposed to be fun. We don't work music. We play music.

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This is from a post I made on the Jamey Aebersold Jazz Forum:

First, I will make a confession. The things I am about to describe to you are not actually how I think/play all the time. This is the PARAGON or ideal. This is how I think/play when I am playing at my very best and I am convinced that this is how all players who are truly great think when they are playing at their peak.

The way most people think as they learn/practice is not the same as the way they think when they perform. Jamey talks about this in terms of the left and right sides of your brain. The left side is calculating and learns technical and factual information. The right side is more creative/conceptual. Most people learn material (especially theory) largely through the left-brain. Then, by “over practicing” that material they internalize it so that it is available to the right brain during the act of creative performance.

Clear your mind and then read the following word silently:

BANANA!

What happens when you read that word? You see a series of letters and that stimulates a thought process that is very similar to how we should play. When I read that word I feel as if I say the sound of that word in my imagination. Try it again. It feels as if I am actually saying the sound of the word in the front of my mind.

You might also observe that as you say the sound in your imagination you can sense what it would feel like to say the word. You can feel the way your tongue, teeth, lips, etc. would form the word. You can feel how it would resonate in your chest, throat, sinuses, etc. The muscles are already “ready to go” into action! If you were to read the word aloud you would find that the very same things would happen, except that the body would actually spring into action and make the sounds.

All of this happens in an instant just from looking at the letters on the screen. Beginning with your infancy you have learned how these sounds are made and your muscles, nervous system, conscious and unconscious mind, etc. work together to learn and then remember how to make the sounds (which you associate with the written letters and the imagined sound of the word). You don't consciously think about what your body must do to say the word. You just know what to do because you have done it thousands of times over the years.

In the case of reading aloud the stimulus is seeing the written word. If we were conversing you would simply think of the idea you wish to convey. The unconscious mind would explore all of the information it has stored (vocabulary, grammar, syntax, prosody, etc.) and your conscious mind would think the words that convey the thought you wish to communicate. Virtually simultaneously your nervous system and muscles would spring into action and say what you are thinking WITHOUT CONSCIOUS THOUGHT other than what you desire to communicate.

When great musicians are involved, ALL MUSIC IS PLAYED “BY EAR”...even if it is being read from a page!!! Great playing is always driven by the vividly imagined image of the desired sound. The imagination controls the physical processes: activates the airflow, positions and adjusts the embouchure, controls the motion of the fingers, etc. It is the role of the conscious mind to listen to what's going on around you and to imagine the

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sound of the missing part. If you are reading music the dots tell you what sounds to imagine. If you are playing a memorized piece it is your memory that supplies the missing part. If you are improvising it is the unconscious creative mind that supplies the missing part. This is all that you should be consciously aware of while playing. Sing the sound of the missing part in your mind and trust your unconscious mind, nervous system, and muscles to do what you have ordered. Your unconscious mind will do the very best it can based on your present level of skill and experience. We practice fundamentals in order to store efficient ways to make all of the various sounds we might desire in our unconscious minds as kinesthetic memories.

Concentration for a musician means screening out all other thoughts (including theory, technical analysis, physical feel, etc.) and focusing 100% of your thinking in the world of sound. The visual and the tactile are distractions for the conscious mind when you are playing creatively.

Physically, we focus on sound and that activates our mind and our body to "self-correct" our technique. Of course, what actually happens is that the unconscious mind and the body will work together to correct mechanical problems through repetition. Then, during practice you (or your teacher/mentor) will evaluate your playing and prescribe simple studies that should be practiced repetitively until they are relegated to the level of reflex and are available to you on command without conscious thought of anything but how you want the music to sound.

Remember that certain activities are part of a learning process. Avoid arrested development at all costs. Many people think that having great chops, knowing 100s of patterns, being able to whip through all of your demolished scales in broken 4ths at m.m=400, etc. are the goals of your musical development. Au contraire! These are just tools you are trying to acquire. If I own thousands of tools it only means that I have an impressive workshop. It doesn't mean that I can necessarily build anything beautiful or useful. The goal of playing is to imagine the sound of the missing part and to make it audible to your audience and the other musicians.

So...what is all the emphasis on scales and chords about? It is about possibilities! When I sing the missing part in my imagination I have to trust my unconscious mind, neurological system, and muscles to remember how to make that sound. If I haven't practiced that sound (or at least dozens of sounds that are similar and related) then odds are very great that I won't find it in time and no one but me (in my mind) will hear the way I wanted the music to go. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that I play every note on my instrument, every interval, every scale, every arpeggio, hundreds of melodies, parts of solos I have learned from listening to the masters, etc. over and over and over. I don't just do this until I can do it without mistakes. I do this until I know that I can find these things and execute them **reflexively**, regardless of what else is going on around me.

Therefore, when I am playing a tune I know I am not thinking at all about scales, chords, what something is called, how it would be written, what the fingering is, how well or poorly I am doing, how it feels, etc. There is no time for that. All of that is distraction during the act of music making. If I can't trust those things to work it means I need to practice a lot more, transcribe more music, work on my piano voicings, work on my singing, etc.

Some Thoughts on The Carmine Caruso Method

The Myth: Caruso exercises are designed to improve your playing by making the muscles of the embouchure stronger.

The Truth: Caruso exercises are designed to improve your playing by improving the coordination of all the muscles involved in playing (not just the embouchure) and eliminate excess muscular activity and effort.

Caruso was a saxophonist and violinist who understood a few basic principles that could improve any musician, regardless of instrument. These principles included:

- 1) All of music consists of intervals. If a musician improves their ability to negotiate all of the various intervals they will naturally improve their ability to execute any piece of music.
- 2) On any instrument, a musician plays cleanly when all of the various moving parts (muscles) move simultaneously. Refining a musician's rhythmic sense will invariably improve their ability to play cleanly.
- 3) Most bad playing habits result from imbalance of muscular activity. Some muscle overworks and/or other muscles are not active enough. Often this imbalance results when one group of muscles tries to compensate for another group of muscles. This results in tension and inefficiency. When the muscles are synchronized these compensatory muscular activities are minimized.
- 4) You learn from frequent repetition. Don't consciously "fix" anything.
- 5) The purpose of practice is to repeat a muscular activity until it is a habit. Consistency comes from repetition.
- 6) Synchronization and timing are the main goals. All muscles in the chops, hands, breathing apparatus, etc. respond to musical and timing demands. Good timing solves all technical problems.
- 7) When playing, we are dealing with too many body motions to even list. The synchronization of these motions gives the desired results. Timing is of the utmost importance. Accuracy is the result of subdivision of the beat. Subdivide the beat immediately prior to any pitch change or articulation into four sixteenth notes. All motion should happen after the fourth sixteenth. Even finer subdivisions (than the sixteenth) will eventually produce more refined timing.
- 8) It isn't how fast you play, but rather how fast you change from note to note that produces clean technique.
- 9) Feel the upbeat as clearly as the downbeat.
- 10) Don't think of any particular physical aspect of playing. Just play! Practice the whole body, not specific parts.
- 11) Steady blowing makes a musical sound. Inertia keeps the air and chops moving regularly.
- 12) Breath intake and blow is a pendulum-like action. Don't hold the breath or hesitate. Like everything else, the breath responds to the time.
- 13) Steady breath is not forced breath.
- 14) The instrument is an extension of the body!

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- 15) Each note complements the next. Don't set for where you are going. Play the note you are playing right now.
- 16) Relaxation is a product. Tension is a symptom. When the body works properly it will be relaxed. There is MINIMUM work effort for the desired result.

I recommend the book *Musical Calisthenics for Brass* by Carmine Caruso. I also recommend the Caruso Forum on the Trumpet Herald website
<http://www.trumpet Herald.com/forum/viewforum.php?forum=20&1072>

The following bullet points come from a letter I wrote to a student. I think that a lot of the ideas here can help almost anyone.

1) The driving force in everything we play is the tone quality. Get a great sound in the "easy" register at a full but comfortable volume and gradually carry that sound and that feeling of freedom into all the other registers, dynamics, articulations, intervals. We get that sound by a combination of mental imagery and flowing breath.

2) Don't go any faster than you can go. As soon as you start to panic...even mildly...you should slow down the tempo, take a deep breath, and calm your mind. There is no reason to practice panic. If you are like most people, you have already mastered panic. Practice in such a way that you learn to be still and calm, yet intensely focused on the sound of the music.

3) The ideal state is one where you don't "care" emotionally. I don't mean that you should be "careless". You should be "CAREFREE"! Worry and care are distractions.

4) When you play, 98% of your conscious thinking needs to be focused on vividly singing the sound of the "missing trumpet part" in your imagination (pitch and tone quality). The remaining 2% of your consciousness is focused on keeping the air energized and flowing freely through the sound you are imagining. If you hear it clearly enough, your unconscious mind will work with your body to make it so. You just keep your mind in the sound, keep the air accelerating through the sound, and repeat. **Use the force.**

5) If you have a clear concept of YOUR SOUND, then by all means imagine that sound when you play. If not, pick someone who has the kind of tone AND RANGE & FACILITY that you wish you had and model the sound in your mind on that sound. Some great sounds to consider emulating are Freddie Hubbard, Clifford Brown, or Booker Little. There is a definite link between the quality in their tones and their facility and range. Odds are that if you model your tonal concept on Don Cherry and Chet Baker (like I did as a kid) you will also develop a range and technique comparable to theirs. Anyway, eventually you won't be able to hear the music any way but your own way. Most people find that personal concept through a process of imitating the sounds of the players they love. Just the fact that you love them is a step toward your own personality.

6) If you get a funky sound or you miss notes (over OR under shooting), you should ignore how it feels (for now). Do not get angry. If you do you are attaching too much emotional value to the result of your playing rather than being swept away by the process. Concentrate intensely (like a laser) on hearing the sound you desire in your imagination. Your unconscious mind does the fixing through repetition. Your conscious mind just focuses on the bull's-eye and stays carefree.

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7) When in doubt, put a little more energy behind the air (rather than less). Feel like you are blowing all of the tensions in your body right out on the air stream. The airflow is a cleansing and relaxing act.

8) Remember, we associate familiar with good and unfamiliar with bad. As things evolve there will be times when things feel "bad". Don't freak out. Trust the process.

9) Playing is all about balancing relaxation with energy, and mental focus with emotional freedom. Remember that this is fun. It is more fun the better you get. That is why we do this...to get to the point where the fun flows unimpeded!

From posts I made on <http://www.trumpetherald.com>

For me the key here is the way we focus on sound and how that activates our mind and our body to seemingly "self-correct". Of course, what actually happens is that the unconscious mind and the body work together to correct physical problems through repetition.

This sound orientation works on at least two different levels simultaneously. First and most importantly, the way we imagine the sound is the equivalent of a baseball player or tennis player keeping their eye on the ball. With a clear bead on the target the unconscious mind, the nervous system, and the muscular system collaborate to draw on stored experience to achieve the desired goal. It is the imagination that activates all of the necessary muscular activity in a kinesthetic response to the mental stimulus. Those same muscular activities could be activated and controlled by the conscious mind in a more kinetic way (thinking about the muscles), but that would be a far less efficient, far more self-conscious, and far less music conscious way to achieve our purpose.

Secondly, the actual sound coming from the instrument gives us a product to evaluate. The quality of sound is the best indicator of efficient playing. When the sound is great in all registers, at all dynamics, regardless of articulation, etc. then you will know that you are playing in a physically appropriate manner.

The mind is the control panel. It doesn't really matter if the student (or the teacher) knows exactly how the instrument and the body work. It matters that they know how to work the controls!

Concentration for a musician means screening out everything else (including theory, technical analysis, feel, etc.) and focusing 100% of your thinking in the world of sound.

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Pat Harbison is available for concerts and clinics as a soloist and also with his band, ***Conspiracy Theory***. His books and recordings are available online through his website. Pat Harbison plays Bach instruments, & mouthpieces & Charles Davis mutes.

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