

Comments Welcome

It only took me about 40 years to write this book! I guess I'm a slow learner. Each day I'm amazed as I hear about new players and the incredible things they can do on trumpet.

I was very fortunate to have great mentors and role models as I developed my own style and technique. I truly believe this book would not have been written without their inspiration and love for the instrument.

Please take a moment, if you have read my book, to share your thoughts. Although the book is published, I have had four different printings and have made some corrections and changes from the original. I will probably make more each time I print the book and your suggestions may influence the next edition. In any case, I would like to hear from you and be able to share your thoughts with others.

The book is now also available in Norwegian, translated and prepared by Odd-Roar Hult.

Thanks. Mick

Sunday, December 23, 2007 from Ritchie Clendenin

Mick,
...I have found that PEAK PERFORMANCE is an excellent book for recovering my chops. I have been playing two measures of eight notes in your Flow Study and several lip trills in the Trills Study. Your method is excellent for players at all levels. In the brass band world, we have many "comeback" players that join community bands. The concepts and exercises would be very beneficial to those cornetists.

Since I have used JAKE'S METHOD for many years, I notice similarities to your book. Both methods have excellent instructions and exercises. Both authors stress important concepts and common sense in a concise manner. Both methods declare that the method teaches one "how to practice." If I were still teaching brass pedagogy, I would require the Jacoby and Hesse books for the class instruction.

I think many brass players would be interested in the Ascending Bending concept and other topics.
Thanks for the copy of your excellent book.

Ritchie Clendenin
Co-Principal Cornet, WSC-Colorado Brass Band
Professor Emeritus of Music Cal. State Univ., Fresno

Monday, February 25, 2008 - 04:26 PM from Steve Leisring

Now that I finally given it a good look, let me say the following:

I think this is the best down to earth straight ahead trumpet book I have seen since Don Jacoby published "Jake's Method" in 1990. I loved his book, (he was one of my teachers) and I love your book, for many of the same reasons. It has clear down to earth practical reasons for doing the exercises, based upon real experience and years of careful thought on the subject. As I went from page to page, I cannot tell you how many times I thought "yeah" yes! it's about time!! Your list of ten "further study materials" could not be better! So many concepts you have put down I could not agree more with and I appreciate the difficulty in sometimes getting these simple but complex ideas on paper in a concise clear way. I am truly impressed with this book and I am going to require it of my students starting next Fall.

I start every first lesson by telling students they must become their own best teacher and spend a great amount of time trying to prove that to them. It was great to see it written!! I am going to give it another even more clear reading and play the exercises as well. I had to stop and tell you today however, how impressed I am with the format, content and approach to your book. It s clearly YOU and for a teacher to be able to get that across in a book is so difficult. Jake's book is just like a lesson with him. I am quite sure your's is too and for this congratulate you.

Congrats!!

Steve

STEVE LEISRING
Principal Trumpet, Kansas Brass Quintet
Assistant Professor of Trumpet, University of Kansas, School of Fine Arts, Department of Music and Dance

Tuesday, February 26, 2008 - 09:03 AM
Jim Fady

Mick,

Congratulations on your outstanding book! Certainly all players, from aspiring amateurs to accomplished professionals will benefit from your well-conceived and explained exercises. Your text material, so often missing in other trumpet study books, makes "becoming one's own teacher" a much easier proposition. I know that over the past few months, your "ascending bending" and "scales with trills" have done wonders for my range and endurance difficulties. Some how, daily playing of the "ascending bending" exercise series over time seems to almost automatically establish the properly cushioned embouchure and tongue position essential for playing confidently in the upper register. Also, I have found that my sound has developed more core and resonance in all registers. I suspect that as word gets around, there will be great interest everywhere in this fine book!

Thanks for sharing the fruits of your many years experience as a top-notch professional player and teacher!

Jim Fady
Brass Band Junkie

Friday, February 29, 2008 - 03:58 PM
Charles Decker, Professor, Tenn Tech University

For those of us who seek ways to supplement what we already use, Mick's book is a well conceived addition to a trumpeter's library. The exercises are both practical and somewhat unique, or at least I haven't seen them set quite Mick's way in other texts. I require trumpet majors at Tennessee Tech University to purchase Mick's book and all have said they feel the exercises have been helpful in developing improved control of the instrument. They have commented also on how they like the clear and concise text to clarify the why and how of each exercise. You earned my vote for an important supplemental text of thoughtful exercises and comments to our standards (Clarke, Arban, Schlossberg, etc.)!

Charlie Decker
Trumpet Professor
Tennessee Tech University

Thursday, March 27, 2008 - 09:17 PM
David Baldwin, Professor, School of Music , Univer

Mick Hesse's new book is jammed with great ideas about trumpet playing and music making. I've tried several of his techniques (that were new to me) in my teaching and they really work! I can recommend this little gem highly and enthusiastically. ---

David Baldwin, Professor,
School of Music , University of Minnesota;
Board of Directors- International Trumpet Guild

Sunday, April 6, 2008 - 04:13 PM
Bobby Faulkner

As one of the original Geezers, I have had loads of fun and benefitted greatly from Mick's great teaching. I am a come back player(I don't know what I "came back" from,since I was never very good,even though I thought I was at one time).I have been studying with Mick for about 3 years now,and he is the best teacher I have ever had. He tried out some of the exercises in his book as he was creating them on me and some other of his students.These exercises have helped me greatly in my quest to find the embouchure that would work for me. I continue the quest under Mick's excellent leadership.

Bobby Faulkner
Trumpet player "wannabe"

Friday, May 23, 2008 - 02:49 PM

Lewis Buckley

Speaking as one who had basic flaws as a player (despite having served as Principal Cornet in one of our nation's premier service bands, prior to serving nearly 30 years as its conductor), I am impressed with Mick's book as an excellent aid for those of us who are serious about playing well. By the way, in the interest of full disclosure, Mick and I were friends and classmates at the Eastman School; however, that only led me to look at his book, it doesn't affect what I have to say about it.

I'm guessing my life story as a trumpet player is familiar to a lot of folks; I could play a lot of notes, but I had a lousy sound (at least compared to professional players), poor breath support, not much of an embouchure, and therefore poor dependability, especially on initial attacks. And worst of all, my practicing was more habit-based than improvement-based, so I spent my life not getting better. Fortunately, by my late 20's I was making my living as a conductor!

When I retired from the service, I spent two years in serious study with a superb teacher (James Ackley, now at the University of South Carolina), who treated me like a beginner and taught me how to teach myself how to play the trumpet. I have learned late in life how to play the way I've always wanted to. And a big part of that was being really disciplined about doing what I needed to do in my practicing rather than what I wanted to do.

Which brings me to Mick's book. This is an outstanding book for the serious player who wants to improve - at any age. But it's not a "silver bullet"; if you're looking for the quick answer, neither this book nor any other will provide it. Some of the most important words in the book appear in the introduction: "... It [this book] is NOT, however, a substitute for reading and working with the many other fine books now available. ... I have become my own teacher, and you must do the same."

If you're ready to do that, then this IS the book for you. It won't waste your time with someone's latest, greatest "theories" about magical ways to become a better player; it represents the life experience of a talented, intelligent student of the trumpet, one who reached a highly accomplished professional level of performance musicianship.

Everything in it is down to earth and practical; if you do what it recommends, in the spirit of study and self-exploration, you'll almost certainly get better. Not only that, but it helps get you into a mindset that fosters improvement and growth.

I've worked it into my daily routine, and I'm grateful to have it. Without putting words into Jim Ackley's mouth, my personal experience is that Mick's and Jim's approaches to trumpet are in many ways similar; they are both rooted in figuring out what works, in a practical way. No mystique, just good stuff.

So if you're ready, this is a book that will help you get to where you want to go as a trumpet player. I commend it without reservation, and I hope it will soon become a standard part of the world of enlightened trumpet pedagogy.

Lew Buckley

Conductor Laureate, U. S. Coast Guard Band
Conductor, Manchester (CT) Symphony Orchestra
Conductor, Metropolitan Wind Symphony

Monday, June 2, 2008 - 09:28 AM

Jason Ham

ITEA Journal Volume 35 Number 3 - Spring 2008

..... the importance of a book like this for euphonium and tuba players should not be overlooked, as I know that I learned so much of my own pedagogy for euphonium playing, in large part, from trumpet books.

The book is, overall, basic in its scope of performance, but takes some original twists. It has six chapters and 37 pages and contains a healthy amount of information in a relatively short space. It is based around the concept outlined in the first chapter, "Ascending Bending."

To quote Mick: "To play in tune with others we often bend our pitch up or down while playing together in ensembles. In time this skill becomes second nature to us.... The practice of purposely bending a pitch a half step or more is a bit different. Training your lip to bend the pitch as much like body building or calisthenics...."

From this opening idea, Mick basically takes this concept through the rest of the book, incorporating other concepts such as warm up, scales with trills (which I found a nice idea), and arpeggios, all with an emphasis on proper practice. Of particular note, I was glad that Mick included how to properly tune with a piano in his book. I don't think I have ever seen the proper way to tune with a piano actually written down in a method book.

Mick (and company) has done a great job with the layout of Perfecting your Practice. He has some really great ideas in here that have wonderful application in the world of the euphonium and tuba.

Jason D. Ham, Yamaha Euphonium Performing Artist

Wednesday, June 11, 2008 - 11:03 AM

Chase Sanborn

Mick's new book offers sound, practical advice and some new exercises for building trumpet skills. His "Ascending Bending" routines are unique; they help to build an efficient, strong and flexible embouchure. The flow studies alternating between just two fingerings help to establish constant airflow and smoothness of musical line. Any trumpet player will benefit from this book!

Chase Sanborn

Jazz musician at heart, guest artist, clinician and author

University of Toronto

Sunday, June 22, 2008 - 07:27 AM

BOOK REVIEW (Ronald W. Holz) nabba.org The Bridge, (May 2008 issue, page 31) editor Doug Yeo.

Hesse, Mick. Perfecting Your Practice for Peak Performance (For Trumpet or Cornet).

Studio 1023 Publications. Farmington, NM, 2007. Paperback; Size: 44 pages, 8 1/2x11 ; multiple musical examples, exercises, charts organized into 6 chapters; Bibliography shared throughout the text. Price: \$12.95.

Knowing how and what to practice can be confusing for brass players, especially when it comes to selecting exercises that truly build tone, stamina, and good pitch. Mick Hesse comes to his book backed by many years as a professional trumpet and cornet player with the widest range of experiences, including an extended period in Norway when he interacted with the brass band culture there. His short, compact, but knowledge-filled workbook will prove to be an ideal supplement for any brass players or brass teacher, especially when combined with a full-size brass tutor.

Hesse bases his approach in the development of good tone, intonation, and lip flexibility in a series of exercises he calls "Mick's Ascending Bending." These are essentially an innovative variation on the old long-tone studies. One brief example will suffice. Play a C below the treble clef, holding for 4 slow beats, then play that same note fingered 1-2-3--not a C sharp, but C! Then return to the open C. One then ascends up the scale, bending the pitch, strengthening the lip muscles. While doing this, the player trains the ear towards centered pitch and focused sound. Later he expands with the similar exercises involving larger intervals, lip trills, and related gestures. I found after even short use that this was of great benefit. These exercises truly strengthen lip muscles and allow the player to avoid the typical spread, unfocused sound.

Other technical areas addressed in some detail are tonguing, scales, and arpeggios--all aimed the essential goal, the embouchure, which Vince DiMartino defines within the book as "the ability to play any note, in any order, at any dynamic, at any speed, at any time." Wow--that is a great definition and a great challenge. Hesse's books provides help towards that goal of developing a stable embouchure for all playing situations.

The author packs his book with great advice that you rarely see in other books of this nature. His advice on practicing in context--never right on the point of the problem, but backed up to see what the many factors are that caused the problem--or his advice on letting the breath 'conduct' your phrase are just two examples of excellent advice, advice backed up by additional exercises.

Hesse writes clearly yet sparingly, and he always refers the player to other authorities, other sources, unlike some brass pedagogues who see themselves as the only authority. He provides daily practice charts that can be copied and used over and over again, and which can be of great benefit in providing a disciplined approach to practice.

This short handbook is printed on sturdy, heavy weight paper that should endure for quite some time. The print is clear, both in text and in musical examples. At only \$12.95, less than the cost of a CD, it is a bargain, most players being able to glean any number of brass teaching and playing nuggets of truth within these few pages. While ostensibly labeled as a short method of cornet and trumpet, all the principles shared apply to the other brass instruments, and Hesse is in the process of developing a bass clef version.

Dr. Ronald Holz
Music Department
Professor of Music Literature
Asbury College
859-858-3511, Ext. 2246
1 Macklem Drive
Wilmore, KY 40390