

Introduction

The Balance

Efficient trumpet playing is a balance between three elements; air, tongue level, and embouchure. This balance cannot be explained in scientific terms, therefore it must be accomplished by feel through proper practice. That is the purpose of this book; to provide trumpet players with a course of study which will enable them to find their balance and become more efficient in their playing.

Trying to describe the balance with statements such as “The balance is 1/3 air, 1/3 tongue level, and 1/3 embouchure” is pointless. The balance is in a constant state of flux, changing from day to day, gig to gig, and note to note. Your balance can change when you change instruments, when the playing environment is unfamiliar, when you are sick or tired, or for many other reasons. It is best not to over analyze your balance, but to develop it naturally over time and by feel.

The Balance is discussed and demonstrated in **Video 1**.

Air Power & Control

You will discover early in your study of these materials and after viewing the videos at www.BolvinMusic.com that we have plenty of air to play the trumpet. The secret to efficiency lies in the control of that great reserve of air power. When doing the breathing exercises in Lessons 1-3 Part 3, don't hold back the first time through. On the repeat control the air and go for the musical result.

Tongue Levels

There are four basic tongue levels or tongue positions in trumpet playing. These are achieved by the use of the syllables *aw*, *ew*, *ee*, and *ss*. Each syllable represents a range on the trumpet. While playing, you should think of the syllable for the register that you are playing in. For example when playing low C, think *aw*. There are not exact tongue positions for individual notes; rather each syllable represents a register on the horn. These ranges may vary slightly from player to player.

A good exercise is to vocalize: *aw-ew-ee-ss* 4 times.

Tongue levels are discussed and demonstrated in **Video 1**.

Aw or *Taw*

Aw (or *Taw* when tonguing) is used in the lowest register of the horn, from low C down to low F#. It is very important to develop a fat, vibrant sound in the *aw* register, without any restriction to the air flow. This is the foundation for everything we do in the higher registers. Watch Video 1 for a demonstration of the *aw* register.

Ew or *Tew*

Ew (or *Tew* when tonguing) is used in the middle register, from low C# up to third space C. Although it is easy to use *aw* or *ee* in the middle register, you will get a more centered sound and gain more accuracy when thinking *ew*.

EE or Tee

EE (or *Tee* when tonguing) is used in the upper middle register, from third space C up to G, A or Bb, depending on the player. Remember that tongue levels are not exact positions. They will vary from player to player and with the playing conditions.

SS or Tss

SS (or *Tss* when tonguing) is used in the upper register. It's a hissing sound made with the tongue raised at the front of the mouth. Where the *EE* register ends and the *ss* register begins varies from player to player. Most players will start using *ss* around high A and Bb. For the purpose of this book, I've marked *ss* beginning at high A.

Before playing, I recommend vocalizing through the tongue levels a few times to get the feel of them. Start slowly and say or sing: *aw*, *ew*, *ee*, *ss* a few times. Feel the motion of the tongue while doing this. Close your eyes and use the "mind's eye" to ***Watch The Tongue***.

How To Practice

I recommend that you spend at least two weeks on each lesson. Practice each lesson daily in the prescribed order. These are exercises. Do not play them over and over in one day, trying to perfect them. In fact, the best way to practice an exercise is once through daily. If a lesson or part of a lesson is giving you real trouble, then you may stay with it longer, but at some point you must go on. The lessons are progressive but you may find some early exercises harder than later ones. You also should make note of particular exercises that were troublesome for you and return to them at a later date.

Resting is very important when practicing this material. Rest between each section for at least 5-10 minutes. Do your breathing exercises during the resting period. After you complete the lesson, take a break before continuing with additional practice.

When To Practice

This course is designed to change your playing habits, so I recommend that you start your day off with these lessons. This way, your body is not influenced by the habits that you've developed over the years. If you feel you must do a particular warm up before starting the lesson, try to keep it to a minimum.

The High Notes

If can not hit a high note, make three attempts at it and then stop, resting between each attempt. Always start at the beginning of the phrase or exercise. Don't just try for the high note. Do not overdo it! You do not have to hit the highest note to complete a lesson. This is especially true of the Range Elevator and Glissando exercises.

Models

Models are different articulations that can be used with an exercise. Many of the exercises in this book are to be played tongued and slurred. For additional practice, you may add the following models to many of the flexibility and interval studies:

Slur two notes up

Slur two notes down

Slur four notes

Slur all

Dynamics

All of these exercises in this book should be played at a comfortable dynamic somewhere around *mf* or louder. Once you feel comfortable with an exercise, you may play it softer to gain even more control.

Haa-Too Breathing

Say **Haa** while breathing in with your mouth comfortably open. Fill up completely but remain relaxed. Exhale while saying **Too** with the lips slightly together..

Do not hold your breath. The idea is to breath in and then out in one smooth, uninterrupted motion. Keep the chest up always and you will feel the abdominal, back and chest muscles at work. These are the "blowing muscles".

Repeat 5x. If you feel hyperventilated, stop and rest.

Haa-Too Breathing is demonstrated in **Video 1**.

CG Breathing

This is the breathing exercise that trumpet teacher Claude Gordon taught his students.

Begin by walking in place at a medium pace.

Breathe in through the nose for 5 steps.

Hold in for 5 steps.

Blow out through the mouth for 5 steps.

Hold out for 5 steps.

Repeat for 5 minutes.

CG breathing begins with Lesson 9 and continues throughout this course. With each lesson, you will add one step to the exercise until you reach 10 steps.

Once you have mastered CG breathing by walking in place, it is time to power walk.

Power walking is walking outside at a medium and steady pace while doing the CG breathing. You will find it is much more difficult than walking in place.

CG breathing is demonstrated in **Video 2**.

The Breath Push

The Breath Push is accomplished by first taking a full *Ha* breath and blowing an easy, steady stream of air- *too*. After two beats of steady air, use the abdominal muscles in an upward push to force out more air while simultaneously increasing the blow. The chest and back muscles will also contract in and upward, working in unison with the abdominals. You can generate a great amount of air power this way; likely too much power therefore creating an unmusical result. Controlling this great reserve of air is a big step in achieving efficiency on the trumpet.

Use **The Breath Push** when you see the symbol



For further study on **The Breath Push** or Air Kick, read **30 Minutes A Day** by **Clint “Pops” McLaughlin** www.BbTrumpet.com
The Breath Push is demonstrated in **Video 1**.

Glissandos

Glissandos are introduced in **Lesson 10**. Using **123**, begin on **F#** and slur quickly up a 5th to **C#**, hitting all the “in-between” harmonics (in this case just **A#**). **Glissandos** continue with wider intervals; octaves, sevenths, 10ths , etc.

Glissandos are demonstrated in **Video 2**.

To Private Teachers

The lesson plans in this book make an excellent resource for private lessons even with beginning students. Beginners may not be able to play an entire lesson, so start with Part 1 and each week try to add another part. Even if you don’t use the prescribed lesson plans, the exercises in this book can be quite useful.

Acknowledgements

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Watch the videos at www.BolvinMusic.com

About the author

Eric Bolvin is a professional trumpet player, composer-arranger, author and educator living in San Jose CA. He holds a B.A. degree in performance/theory from San Jose State University. His private teachers include Claude Gordon, Carl Leach and David Burkhart. He is the author of “**The Arban Manual**” and “**The Really Big Student Songbook**”. You can listen to his cds and see all of his publications at www.BolvinMusic.com. Eric Bolvin endorses **Curry** mouthpieces and **Conn Vintage One** flugelhorns.

Notes