

Method Books and Establishing a Daily Routine

There are many method books on the market. Some tend to introduce material too quickly; others omit items you might personally consider essential. While any method book offers the benefit of providing overall structure to the teaching of the instrument, the conscientious instructor should be open to incorporating additional exercises that complement the method book. As you gain experience as a trumpet teacher, you will discover that no single method book—or trumpet clinician—approaches all pedagogical issues more successfully than all others. By becoming familiar with and mixing and matching these different approaches, you will eventually be able to assemble your own teaching methodology, incorporating the best ideas encountered from a variety of sources.

By around the tenth or twelfth week of school, a daily routine will have been established. This routine should be used through December and ought to include the following:

- breathing exercises
- buzzing exercises without mouthpiece
- buzzing exercises with mouthpiece
- long tones with trumpet
- a daily warm-up that gradually goes up the scale
- vocal exercises
- method book exercises and
- mariachi repertoire.

In order to perform their first few pieces with the rest of the mariachi ensemble, trumpet students will need to be comfortable playing in keys with three or even four sharps. One method which may be used in teaching the concepts of sharps and naturals is to introduce a middle C# as a variant of the open middle C natural that they already know. Both notes appear on the first line below the staff, so students must be told that whenever they see a sharp before middle C, a

different fingering is required. They must use a “123” fingering, depressing all three valves with the third valve slide pulled out, rather than leaving them all open.

A more formal explanation of key signatures leads the students to understand that each individual signature tells them which notes to play sharp and which ones to play natural. Introduction of the F#, G#, and D# follows. Although the first ensemble song will probably have three or four sharps, if your students practice these notes every day, they will understand the concept and have no problem playing them in the concert.

Take special care in selecting mariachi repertoire for the December “Winter Concert.” Here are some areas of consideration:

- Range
- Rhythmic features
- Part-playing and
- Cultural sensitivity.

There should be a range of about a fifth and include mostly long tones. Make sure each piece includes places to rest, since beginner trumpet players tend to tire easily. Beginner students should perform in unison, as the standard mariachi practice of performing in harmony will not be introduced until the second semester.

It is recommended that directors obtain a catalogue of mariachi sheet music and acquire literature appropriate for beginning trumpet players. The director may also choose to make arrangements of non-traditional mariachi pieces such as “Jingle Bells” and “Away in a Manger” for performance in the Winter Concert. Like all music teachers, however, it is imperative that the mariachi instructor remain highly sensitive to the students’ religious beliefs, specifically on the topic of what is acceptable and appropriate “Christmas” repertoire, as they come from all points throughout our increasingly multicultural, multi-religious (and non-religious) society.

Once this first concert is over, it is time to expand the technical abilities of the students. Lip slurs should be introduced, along with scales in sharp keys in range order:

- Concert G Major (A Major scale for trumpets – lower octave)
- Concert A Major (B Major scale for trumpets)
- Concert B \flat Major (C Major scale for trumpets)
- Concert C Major (D Major scale for trumpets)
- Concert D Major (E Major scale for trumpets)
- Concert E Major (F \sharp Major scale for trumpets)
- Concert F Major (G Major scale for trumpets)

Nothing is deleted from the warm-up routine; rather, it is expanded. Trumpet players must develop the discipline to practice on an everyday basis, as “lip memory” is crucial when learning new notes and new exercises.

The Beginner Trumpet Etudes presented below are a good example of a beginner warm-up. Special care has been taken in introducing students to long-tone production. Learning to differentiate between the various note values is also incorporated into the warm-up, as is range expansion. Steady work in the method book will ensure that students are learning new musical terms and beginning to recognize and perform more difficult rhythm patterns. The relationships between the skills developed in the exercises and warm-ups—such as note values, lip position, stamina, and embouchure—and the musical requirements of the repertoire introduced, should be made explicit by the director, helping the students make a direct connection between their daily routine and the repertoire they are learning.

Beginner Trumpet Etudes

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The image displays eight numbered musical staves, each containing a single line of music. The staves are arranged vertically and numbered 1 through 8 on the left side. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The music consists of various rhythmic patterns, including quarter notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, often grouped with slurs. Some staves feature longer note values, such as half notes and whole notes, with slurs underneath. The etudes progress from simple rhythmic exercises to more complex patterns involving sixteenth and thirty-second notes.

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