STILL PLAYING

MY JOURNEY THROUGH EMBOUCHURE SURGERY AND REHABILITATION

BY DENVER D. DILL

denverdill.com

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For anyone willing to move forward through the struggle

To my parents Ken and Joy Dill: without you and your relentless support I would be nothing

To my grandparents Fred and Mary Jane Ford: you are my greatest living role models

To Rick Ruth: without you I wouldn't be able to play

To William Goodwin: without you I wouldn't know process

To Clay Beard and Lee Anne Newton: without you recovery would not have happened

To Marie Speziale: you show people how to emanate love

To Diana Cassar-Uhl and John Manning: without you this would be nothing more than an unintelligible list of ideas

To Jeremy Wissner: you made me write the real me

To Brian Broelmann: much would be unsustainable without our friendship

To Nick Mondello: your care and generosity has overwhelmed me

To all my teachers, friends, doctors, colleagues at West Point, and others who gave of themselves: Thank you. It is because of God's love and your selflessness that this book was possible.

To Megan and Finnian: you two are the reason I make music. If I had the words, I wouldn't need to play. I can't wait to see what the future holds! In the words of Finnian at two years old: "Come on guys! I so excited!"

Author's note:

In 2007, after playing on a hurt embouchure for 15 years, I had surgery on my lip.

The surgeon found stretching, tearing, and mild herniation of the orbicularis oris. In an effort to find a cause for my limitations, I talked to embouchure experts and played for great players, but because of my extremely unorthodox embouchure (all the way to one side), nearly all of the consultations focused on the positives of what I was able to do. I would then demonstrate my limiting factors: pain, inability to play loud with a full sound, cuts and swelling, and lagging endurance.

This book is both the story of my history of injury and recovery, as well as a guide to how I employed traditional trumpet technique to return to and exceed my pre-surgery abilities. Because of my quick return to trumpet playing after surgery, I have become one of the "go-to" guys for the injured and also for the recovering. In this book I hope to spell out what worked for me and what I have seen work for others. Furthermore, I discuss my basic understanding of injury in hopes of demystifying it for you. Brass players have been around for hundreds of years; it is time we openly talk about injury and make preparations for potential workplace injuries.

I try to avoid speaking medically, as I am not a medical professional. My curiosity has led me to speak to numerous doctors, surgeons, and physical therapists. I believe that hurt players NEED to seek out these experts in their respective fields. Even if you believe you are uninjured, you should leave no stone unturned in your development!

The macro view I take on classifying injuries and trumpet techniques is intended to empower, not be an authoritative end of study. This book carries with it a number of assumptions on posture, breathing, and what goes on in the oral cavity while playing. Why not spell out exhaustively these vitally important aspects of playing?

Sincerely, it is because those resources already exist. If you are serious about your craft, you will learn as much as you can from as many as you can. As a player in rehabilitation I wanted to read and hear how other hurt players recovered. I wanted to read what their frame of mind was after having their livelihood cut open and operated on, and how long it took for them to make progress. I wanted a firsthand account, however anecdotal, of their struggles, opinions, and outcomes. That is what I hope to accomplish for you in writing this book.

I offer great detail about my thought processes before and after surgery. Readers will have a rare glimpse into the mind of an injured player. Times were tough for sure, but there is always a way out of the darkness and into the light. ***Believing*** **that you can achieve your dreams is the first step in** ***achieving*** **your dreams.**

I hope that this book in some way helps you achieve yours.

Denver D. Dill

Foreplay:

The trumpet and my hot wife

My wife is hot. Sure, men everywhere believe this of their wives, but trust me—my wife is hot. She is stunningly beautiful, the type of "hot" that causes both men and women to look at me and say, "Huh? Him?" Yup. Me. My wife is crazy hot and she loves me. You might suspect it's because of my sense of humor (who can resist her favorite of my jokes: "If a fly didn't have wings would you call it a walk?"), or my endless charm. I think, though, it is because of my virtuosic trumpet playing…in the 8th grade.

My first class of 8th grade was science. SHE walked in, the goddess Aphrodite herself. She floated from the teacher's desk to the empty seat near me and the earth stopped rotating, the heavens opened up, and somewhere, in an incense-filled cave in a remote province of China, two old wise men sitting cross-legged slapped each other a high-five. How could I determine whether AM or FM radio waves travel further through uninterrupted space (it is AM by the way) with this heavenly creature beside me?

With my heart suspended (the school nurse was out of nitroglycerin injections that day), I headed to my second class, band, only to find the angel of love there as well. For this 8th grade boy, the world was indeed a cruel and relentless place. How could I function? What instrument did this sophisticated woman of the world press to her lips, releasing poetry into the air? The oboe? (No, she didn't seem insane.) The saxophone would have placed her beyond redemption. After speaking with the band director, she was seated directly next to me! A trumpet-playing flower! As if that wasn't enough of a sign from God, she forced a girl named Amore to move farther down the section. "That's right, Amore Fitzgerald, love has a new name - and that name is *Megan*."

The academic year was a taxing one for this budding young mind, with high school looming ahead and the constant threats of poor placement (or was it a rusty nail, a dark, wet prison cell, and duct tape?) in freshman year if I didn't achieve excellence in 8th grade.

The teachers' fear-mongering tactics worked. I found myself actually coming home from school and studying. No one was better at the 8th grade than I was, but in that science class…my focus was on the lovely, olive-skinned beauty beside me.

Springtime would give birth to flowers, baby animals, and the origin of manhood for myself and the plebeians around me: the 8th grade dance. Maturity was calling and I was answering the phone (well, my mom would be driving the station wagon). I pulled together all (zero) of my chest hairs and asked the Lady of Lexington Junior High to the dance. She smiled shyly, but said she needed some time to think about it. Clocks never ticked slower. Why didn't she give me a response? Was it my button-down striped shirt, tucked into khaki pants and worn with tennis shoes? Did her parents cast a protective bubble around her beauty and grace after dark?

Days, weeks went by. What was her problem? To my horror, I realized, the problem was not hers, it was mine. I had not been romantic enough. Oh, what a fool I had been. I had watched enough Oprah to know that a woman needed romance! Relying on my Casanova trumpet abilities, I hatched my courtship plan. Our band was headed to its regional contest, and I had a solo. My trumpet would speak the words on my heart. From beside me, Aphrodite Megan would hear how her beauty and grace touched me daily. With those six notes, I would cause her to swoon, but my cat-like reflexes would catch her as she fell limp with passion! I would hold her close to my bosom until our hearts beat as one (or until my mom came in the station wagon to bring me home).

I practiced those six notes every night, knowing they alone could make her mine. The day came. We rode a school bus to a nearby high school and took the stage. My friends thought it was just a concert, but I knew my future rested in the hands of this performance. The piece with the solo was up first, and the trumpet Casanova triumphed! I didn't miss a single note. Destiny, indeed had been wrought. This pimple-faced knight had slain the dragon,

and it was time to claim my reward. So, I took a cafeteria napkin and wrote: “Circle one: Yes or No.” Her heavenly brown eyes downcast, she marked the napkin and handed it to me. I crossed the room after weeks and weeks of painful waiting, after displaying technical trumpet prowess heretofore unforged by an 8th grade man. I had my answer: “No.” I turned my tear-filled eyes toward her, only to watch her eyes glow red as fire. Her head snapped back and her mouth unhinged. I stood in horror as she dislodged her jaw and a fork-like tongue emerged. Suddenly she snatched an eagle from the air in this dark dismal cafeteria and began to swallow it like a python. As that poor bird struggled to be ingested its death kicks and twitches mirrored the lifelessness that was entering my heart.

The next several years were dark. My love of the trumpet and my desire to master it, independent of my notions that it could be an instrument of wooing (I had successfully won the favor of other girls) was deep enough to cause me to severely damage my face through overuse. Regardless, by senior year, my range was impressive for a 17-year old, and the marching band show featured my solo trumpet from the 50-yard line. To my surprise, Megan was around quite a bit. She even was smiling – at me or merely near me? – and asking for rides home after marching band practice. My high notes unshackled her heart and she again became the angel who could stop mine with a single glance. And now that I finally played the trumpet in such a transcendent way (ummm…I was actually still quite horrible) she was powerless to my clarion call.

We dated other people throughout college, and those relationships helped shape us as individuals, but once she heard the soul-gripping tones from my heavy-walled mouthpiece, my pinched, strident, red-faced, pressurized sound…she was mine for life. I progressed through graduate studies at the Juilliard School, and she came to hear the voice she had missed since high school. We then began a relationship that would ultimately lead to our marriage.

For a musician, his instrument is inseparable from his life. The interpretation and performance of music is a window into his soul.

A musician can place the nuances of his heart, his desires, his deepest secrets, and his greatest victories on display to share with a listening public. For the performer and the listener, the experience can be cathartic, even life-changing. It is this transcendent connection that makes music an irreplaceable art form. It is this significance that, after injury, causes some of the darkest, most personally unthinkable moments to take place in a musician. Music can heal and music can hurt. The musician and the music are inseparable, and that defines my story.

(Oh, and my stunning wife has been along for the ride the whole time.)

Life in the Rear View Mirror

My History of Injury, Surgery, and the Inner Struggle of My Recovery

The Injury. The Struggle.

I loved playing the trumpet from the moment my mother first brought one home for me. I had expected the big instrument with the slide (the trombone), but soon fell in love with the local library's recording of Doc Severinsen playing *Ja-Da*. I practiced diligently in junior high, and even tried to woo the girl who would later become my wife with my abilities. The summer before my freshman year of high school, it was decided I would get braces to correct some crooked teeth. I was fortunate to be raised by a family that would sacrifice for my orthodontic needs, but ultimately, my trumpet playing would suffer from my strong will and lack of understanding. In high school, in spite of the braces, I focused my energies toward practicing. My group of friends pushed each other further and further. I took a few lessons with a wonderful player, Rick Ruth, who unfortunately had to take some time away from teaching just when I got my braces off. Remembering the difficulty I had playing after the braces were first put on, I was determined not to regress when they came off and I practiced hard both before school (I lived about 50 yards from the school and would go the moment I saw the band director's truck in the parking lot to practice in the band room before my first class) and after school. One evening, while practicing, I noticed small drops of blood coming out of my bell. I had seen blood before, but this was an unusual amount. The next morning, I reported to school for my morning practice session with a bruised lip that refused to work. My band director advised me to not play for a couple of weeks. I listened to him, and when I started up again, my playing was noticeably worse than ever. Brought up by hard-working parents who impressed this ethic upon me, I worked tirelessly to learn to play again. Without my realizing, my mouthpiece had moved off to the right side of my mouth. After about a year of playing on the side like this, I was blessed with the return of my first trumpet teacher. Rick heard about my injury and praised my drive to improve. Together, we made the decision to stay with the embouchure that was working, and focus on making it better.

My lessons were the event I looked forward to most each week. I voraciously practiced everything I was assigned. There were limitations to my new embouchure; I could not play below an A just below the staff, but I had an exceptional high register for a high school student. My mouthpiece continued to slide even further to the side of my mouth as I auditioned for college, hoping to become a police officer, a youth minister, or an instrument repair technician. I found a teacher who accepted my embouchure and my work ethic at Eastern Kentucky University. During my time at EKU, I studied with great performers who gave tremendously of their personal time to me: William Goodwin, a violist, and trumpeter Vince DiMartino both invested countless hours helping me develop an approach to an extremely non-traditional embouchure. I remember bringing William Chinese food as "payment" for the three, even four hours of private attention he would give me on an almost **daily** basis. The school allowed me a key to the building, and William, a key to his office to facilitate my early morning need to practice and refine my playing.

For my efforts in my undergraduate work, I was rewarded with a full-tuition scholarship to New York City's Juilliard School for my Master's degree. Studies with Raymond Mase, Phil Smith, Mark Gould, and additional lessons with James Pandolfi gave me more knowledge and encouragement than I could have ever hoped for. I was able to share much about my private struggles with my embouchure with Mr. Mase, and he was vigilant in his guidance to me. Most students and faculty were unaware of just how much effort it took me to keep my now entirely off-to-one-side embouchure working. I would practice four to six hours a day, spending much of that just trying to get the muscles working properly. Despite this monumental effort to maintain it, I had developed an impressive dexterity with my embouchure. I could easily play from Pedal C up through Double C and play nearly all day long without "fatigue." This fatigueless world was not the result of efficiency, but more the result of clever pulling and relaxing my

lip. When you create lip tension with mouthpiece movement, strength never becomes a factor; therefore, neither does fatigue.

Yet, my need to take a few days off to nurse a broken lip callus or a small crack grew more frequent. I started to experience some bleeding at the mouthpiece friction point. During this time, I was awarded a doctoral teaching assistantship and my studies continued at the Eastman School of Music with James Thompson and Clay Jenkins. My playing benefited from fewer ensemble responsibilites. Most of my playing was practice, teaching, and substitute work in the trumpet section of the Rochester Philharmonic. I had also begun a collaboration with a talented pianist, Rebecca Wilt, and together we commissioned and performed new music at colleges across the United States.

I was an unemployed college student when I finally married the lovely Megan, my 8th grade dream girl. A dramatic near-tragic car accident befell my soon-to-be in-laws, resulting in Megan and I evaluating employment options, in the event her parents needed support. I evaluated many options and auditioned and won a position in the West Point Concert Band.

Playing in a professional band was unlike any other ensemble work I had done. A three-hour rehearsal, often followed by a concert the same night over and over again led to shorter and shorter warm-ups and the need for more and more time off when it was offered. Furthermore, in a band, a trumpet player is expected to sound as full and rich as the best orchestral players on one piece, then like a Broadway show player the next, back to orchestral, then trying to imitate the great cornetists of old (on a modern trumpet) for marches. On top of that, the job had heavy marching band responsibilities where nuance and color are secondary to projection and appearance while moving. It is a great job for diversifying one's playing. Many famous trumpet players, including Mel Broiles, former co-principal trumpet of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the great studio trumpet player Malcolm McNab, once played in the West Point Band. Because my playing already required great

amounts of personal maintenance, my condition worsened quickly. My sound grew increasingly dull, except for the upper register, which had become blindingly bright. My colleagues never seemed to notice what was going on. To this day, I believe they assumed I just sounded that way. Fortunately, I thought through my next steps carefully. Secretly, I gave up all other activities (like my beloved golf) to spend what free time I had on my playing, but after 15 years of pulling on my lip, it had stretched so much that a quarter of my embouchure was rendered limp. My limp lip would not necessarily have deterred me; I was used to creative problem solving. What ultimately made me seek medical advice was a dramatic loss of endurance, an extraordinarily dull tone, and a complete inability to play with a loud, resonant sound. It was this inability to redirect my playing toward my professional expectations I had that led me to question whether I could actually impact what was happening to my playing. Perhaps this was finally out of my control.

I experimented with many exercises, took calculated time away from the trumpet, and sought advice from players who had been familiar with my playing before this most recent damage had occurred. When I finally went to see a former teacher at his house, it was a relief to hear him confirm what I was feeling and hearing in my own playing. When injuries happen slowly and over time, they can fool the player. The player may think he's hearing things that others are not. When I asked my section mates about some of my issues, they didn't necessarily know that I was on the decline because it wasn't sudden. When this former teacher heard me for the first time after about three years, he verified my fears. He also pointed me toward the writing of Lucinda Lewis and her book *Broken Embouchures* Copyright (© 2010 by Lucinda Lewis), and encouraged me to take the scariest of steps: consulting a plastic surgeon.

About a month later, I went to see then-Deputy Commander of West Point's Keller Army Community Hospital and plastic surgeon, Colonel Andrew Friedman. This was my lowest emotional point. I

couldn't correct what was happening to my playing. Dr. Friedman examined my lip by feeling the thickness between his thumb and forefinger while I attempted to tighten the orbicularis oris. The moment he grasped the injured area, his eyes widened and he was taken aback. He knew right away that the muscle was injured. While this might sound awful, for me, it was the relief of an enormous burden. A doctor confirmed, for the first time, that there was nothing I could have done on my own to make this injury go away and make my playing return to its earlier state.

Ultimately, Dr. Friedman and I went to Toronto to see Dr. Simon McGrail. I was to undergo surgery with Dr. McGrail if he confirmed the diagnosis, which he did, and Dr. Friedman observed and assisted.

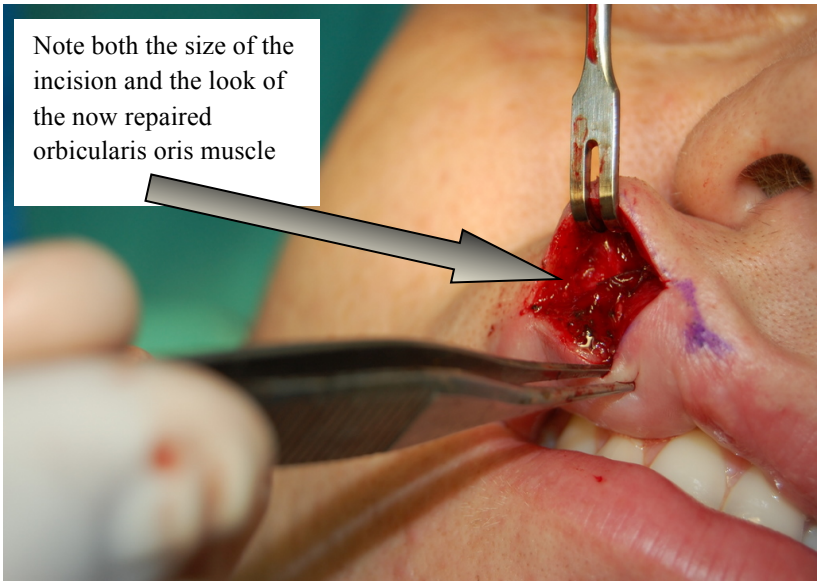
An incision was made on the right side of my upper lip, where there was mild herniation and severe stretching of the orbicularis oris. While the following pictures are quite graphic, I hope that they will demonstrate how invasive the procedure actually is, and why surgery should be considered a last resort.

The first photos show the failure of my orbicularis oris to flex completely, as should happen when saying "Poo" or "M." Followed by a photo taken once the muscle had been surgically repaired. (Not for the faint of heart or weak of stomach!)

Relaxed

Emb

Note: inability to “flex” upper



Below we have a picture of the closed incision and the dramatic swelling that immediately followed. While the swelling did go away after a few days, there was a persistent “bump” in the lip at the incision point for months.

After surgery I went for a walk on the streets of Toronto, thinking about what had just happened and accidentally drooling on myself from the Novocaine. While I was lost in the moment thinking about the past and the future, the stares from strangers started to make me uncomfortable. Suddenly a disheveled person grabbed me by the arm and said, “Man! Are you alright? Your face is all F#@!ed up!”

I ducked into a movie theater for the rest of the afternoon to avoid future motivational corrospondence from the locals.

Recovery: From Hell to Hellcat

After surgery, I took a full month off of the trumpet. I worked hard on some computer systems, got Lean Six Sigma certified, and had major leg surgery. (My body is made of blood and recycled parts.) In the second month, per Dr. McGrail's advice, I started doing some stretching exercises he and Lucinda Lewis had come up with (from her book *Broken Embouchures*). In the third month, I started trying to buzz the mouthpiece and thus began one of the most difficult endeavors I have ever taken on…my embouchure rehabilitation.

There is a lot to consider during recovery. For me, the hardest part was being a professional and making some awful sounds where my peers could hear. As I progressed, my sound and range improved, but my consistency and endurance were horrible. In my mind, I was an old-timer, sitting on my porch, wanting to tell people about the "good ol' days" when I could play anything. Thankfully, I was granted permission to become a member of the West Point Band's Field Music Group, The Hellcats, where my playing demands were more exposed but required less endurance. There were a couple of group rehearsals and performances I wish I had sounded better for, but here again, I was blessed with a really understanding and supportive team of leaders who knew what I was going through. Without their support and grace, my recovery might never have happened.

My original approach was to start over. This included moving the mouthpiece back toward the middle of my lips like it was when I

first started playing. It was exciting to think about applying all of my knowledge and experience, but being a "beginner." I took my mouthpiece out and started trying to buzz, and opened up the Arban's book to the beginning. The buzzing was impossible for a few weeks, then inconsistent for a month or two. I could not play above a written E at the top of the staff for the first couple of months. My sound was way better than I expected, but my endurance was abysmal. I could only play for about 15 minutes twice a day. I didn't give up hope.

I was careful with my approach, returning to breathing exercises, tonguing practice, all the traditional fundamentals that I had worked on growing up. I remembered telling myself that I just needed to get stronger. "Once I can get strong enough, I will have my old range and endurance back." It was this mindset of "getting stronger" and approaching the instrument like a beginner that proved to be one of the biggest inhibitors of my recovery. After weeks, then months of diligent practice in this methodical way, I became sure I wouldn't recover. This was a very real risk after the surgery.

What happened? I ended up right back in my high school mindset. I had nothing to lose. I decided I would stop "trying to do it right," and I would just treat it like a puzzle of techniques and physical elements and see how far I got, while also strategizing a career change. Fifteen years of previous embouchure difficulties had prepared me for this adventure.

I stopped everything. I put Arban back on the shelf and I set forth with an open mind, asking simple questions:

Question 1: How is my posture? I shifted in my seat until I was sitting in the relaxed, open manner that I had preached to students for years.

Question 2: How is my inhalation? It was constricted and wheezy. I had not exercised or played trumpet for several months. This was noticeable in my breathing. I set forth acquiring my old breath back.

Question 3: How is my exhalation? This, too, was not up to snuff. I struggled to manage the different types of exhalation from fast, "zippy," small air, to large, slow-moving air.

Question 4: How is my embouchure responding to the air? I revisited the foundation that allowed me to play on unorthodox settings in the past. One tenet kept coming into my head: *range isn't about strength*. Every player should be able to play reasonably into the upper register despite his strength. I told people this before my own condition worsened, but here, I was not taking my own advice. I knew if the embouchure was responsive, with an aperture small enough for a compromised muscle to manage, I should, theoretically, have my old range back, but with a much smaller, unrefined sound.

I picked the horn up, made my mouth into a small opening, and let the air out through my swollen, weak embouchure. An anemic, flat E above the C above the staff squeaked out of my trumpet. I did it again. And the G above that. I did it one more time, and the D above that eked through my trumpet. OK. What did I do next? I completely forgot everything and blew loud, in the staff, and tried to knock out a full, forte C Major arpeggio, like any meat-head would. And you know what happened? I hit that top space E and folded. Nothing I did would let me up over that partial.

The next day, I started by playing very quietly, but shooting for the upper register. I was not focused on tone, and I dared not articulate any note. It worked. Those squeaks were back despite the weakness in my lips. This time, I kept my calm and tried to let those squeaks slide down toward the notes in the staff. You know what? They did! I had just connected two octaves of totally unusable, junior-high sounding notes, and I couldn't have been happier. What this told me was that the same process that I used to develop my unorthodox embouchure would work for rehabilitation. Rehabilitation became an important word to me throughout the rebuilding process. I was not trying to learn to run again, I was learning to stand again. From

there, I would try to take a step, then walk (with a limp), and then, finally, run again.

In the middle of my fourth or fifth month of recovery, I received a call from Phil Smith asking if I would be the New York Philharmonic's soloist on Luciano Berio's demanding *Sequenza X*. Mr. Smith had heard me play the work numerous times during my time at Juilliard and wanted to know if I was up to the task. I set a deadline in my head to notify an already-secured understudy if I needed to bow out. Ultimately, I performed it, and I was able to share it with pianist, and important person in my life, Rebecca Wilt. What a blessing. There I was, about 6 or 7 months into major recovery and performing as a soloist for the New York Philharmonic with Mr. Smith in attendance. I wouldn't recommend that type of pressure on anyone trying to make the recovery, but it was nothing short of miraculous. The tools and approach I was using allowed me to put together the 15 minutes of demanding playing necessary to perform that piece.

After that performance, my playing went through several peaks and valleys for about another 10 months. I improved and also plateaued at times when something was missing from my practice. I had long held the belief that a trumpet player should use the smallest mouthpiece he can, while still achieving the flexibility and tone goals he wants. This did mean that in my seventh month of rehabilitation I went to a smaller mouthpiece. The smaller mouthpiece did not help or hinder. I think a smaller mouthpiece demands more efficient movements; the compact nature of a smaller rim gives the parts less room to move, making it less forgiving than a larger mouthpiece. After a year and a half, I changed again to a larger set-up because of the type of work I was doing, and because of a large surgical scar.

The end result of this process was that I became a much better player than I had ever been. My consistency, range, tone, volume, and flexibility are all greater than I had ever hoped. I now spend a significant amount of time helping professionals get their playing in

balance and helping injured players recover. When I encounter any music, I see the technical demands through the lens of a process. I believe that, given enough time and preparation, I can play anything put in front of me. This isn't an egotistical statement. I don't claim to play better than anyone else, just that I develop an approach to any piece of music. That approach might take days, weeks, or years. Regardless, having a systematic approach to the demands of modern brass playing is empowering.

Running from Responsibility

In my ninth month of trumpet and leg recovery, I began to feel the weight of responsibility. Technically, my playing had evolved from not being able to make a sound to repeated performances of some of the trumpet's most demanding solo literature. I had performed with the New York Philharmonic on a partially-recovered lip, and I had started running longer distances again. Expectations changed. When I was playing the trumpet, I was constantly apologizing for not sounding like the greatest player who ever held the horn. Very quickly, I had changed inside and out. I had changed from a player with a unique embouchure that could be counted on to still be playing at the end of a gig, no matter what was on it, to a disassembled, puffy, post-surgical mess, a fragile player who was still trying to recreate 20 years of habits on a new embouchure and sound like Maurice André. With this change of expectations came a deeper sense of defeat with my shortcomings.

Now that my leg had fully healed from its surgical procedure, I was able to easily achieve the Army's 2-mile running standard for its semiannual physical fitness test. Despite this success, I pushed myself. Very quickly, I could run six, seven miles at a time. The addiction grew. Over the next year my runs increased in length. This turned into me planning my days around running. Friends and I would organize our schedules around daily two, three, and four-hour runs.

The thrill of the challenge appealed to me. In retrospect, I see that it was defiant overcompensation for abandoning youth athletics to focus on music. However, it was more than just that. To see such quick, measurable progress in my running gave me a temporary sense of value that I wasn't finding in my trumpet playing. The sudden ability to go out and run a marathon is empowering, however silly that may seem. Runs were a place to talk with a friend about the difficulties of a day, or run silently to clear my head. Running became spiritual in its beauty. Watching the sun rise or set, miles from my destination, felt natural. I became very aware of myself physically.

When my mileage reached around 70+ miles a week, a new me started to emerge. (I am not talking about a small little Denver that popped out of my chest covered in slime, like in the *Alien* movies.) I became someone else, colder and less sensitive. I stopped listening to music, as though my failures in a practice room meant I was unworthy of listening. My new strength had become physical. Outsiders see physical strength as a positive, but for me it was a symptom of a larger problem. That problem was loss of self worth.

Perhaps my hot new body was the inspiration (or not); my wife and I decided it was time to start building the family we had always planned on. She got pregnant, and with her pregnancy came a new, focused deadline for living. I had exactly nine months until the world would come to a crashing halt! I knew I would go "whole-hog" into fatherhood … *but there was still so much I wanted to do!*

In a panic, I started doing EVERYTHING. I really don't know if my wife ever saw me. I was playing trumpet everywhere, with varying degrees of success (but still improving, for sure). I was painting our condo to put it up for sale. I was giving presentations on obicularis oris injury. And I was running. A lot. I don't know what happened. This pudgy dork of a Midwesterner took to the roads, running constantly. I had an ultramarathon runner-friend who would run with me. Quickly, it became distances in excess of

marathons. As our due date approached, the miles increased, as though I had to get in every last mile before the birth of our child.

The trumpet became somewhat ancillary in my day. I still practiced daily, but without any sense of purpose. I did what I thought I should and then took off running. Thumbing my nose at my trumpet, I felt great! I told the trumpet I didn't care about it. I didn't need it and I could make my own decisions. Of course, like a brat teenager, I still wanted the keys to the car (and to sound great) whenever I felt entitled. This is when the disputes would erupt between my trumpet and me. Instead of screaming, going to my room, and slamming the door behind me while I listened to Bon Jovi, I put on my shoes and ran. I would drive places to run. I started reading maps like Christopher Columbus just to find new trails or routes with amazing views. I consumed all sorts of gels, drink mixes, and meal plans.

Then, my wife gave birth to our son. It was a difficult labor, but after 68 hours, Finnian Miles Dill was born. I learned two things immediately. First, I learned that I loved my wife even more after the labor and birthing process. She was in tremendous pain, and her strength of character never faltered. I watched her give herself entirely to the task of bringing a new human into our world. I didn't think it would be possible, but having a child made me love my wife even more. Secondly, I realized…

… there was a hole in my heart.

I didn't have high hopes when I went to college. I wanted to have a good life, to return to my hometown with a wife and kids. The events at the end of my undergraduate study pushed me wildly in a new direction. I traveled the world. I knew all the "right" people. I checked off nearly every dream that a guy could want…but it wasn't until I had my son at home, sleeping in my arms, that I knew the detour was great, but that it was over. I loved him instantly. I thought that, like dating, we would have a series of interactions that

would result in a list of pros and cons of continuing the relationship into the future, but nope. This baby was mine.

Gradually, the desire to run decreased. Over the next year, my wife emerged a great mother, and my son a feisty little boy. The waters of panic subsided. I could go out and run, or I could sit and blow kisses on his stomach. I could stay out extra late on that gig in Manhattan, or I could say no, and be home to put Finnian to bed. The decisions started to make themselves. Classic parent trap? Not exactly. My trumpet practice also normalized. My love of music returned. I became more sensitive to phrasing, and to a performer's intent with a musical phrase. I started looking for new, musical ways to share my life's new love and excitement. The colder person that I had become through the difficult recovery went away.

My need to effectively convey emotion gave purpose to trumpet playing again. For all practical purposes, the main bodies of struggle were complete. I came through a long journey in the desert (no, not eating bugs) a new person. It is Life 2.0. There is still so much to do, and so little time to do it; however, now I have passengers with me. The trip is much better.

Defining the Process

How I Think of Injuries

Injury: a Six-Letter, Four-Letter Trumpet Word

Imagine an Olympic sprinter. This sprinter has conditioned himself for many years with speed drills, distance training, getting out of the blocks quickly…he's a honed sprinting machine. One day in practice, just after the gun fires, the runner feels pain in his hamstring and instantly collapses to the ground. Who would blame the sprinter for this incident? **No one!** A pulled/herniated muscle is a common occurrence in any field where humans are pushing the limits of their bodies…that is, any field except music. In music there is still a code of secrecy and shame around injuries. "What will people think?" "My approach must have been too harsh." "If only…"

Injured brass players experience a terrible stigma. Still, with compositions growing more demanding and expectations climbing, we have people that think injury is due to poor approach. THIS IS RUBBISH AND MUST NOT BE LISTENED TO!

"People everywhere get injured or hurt but no one is talking about it!" –Vince DiMartino

The summer before the start of my graduate education, while playing on a damaged orbicularis oris and a non-traditional embouchure, I was privileged to have a summer lesson with then-principal trumpet of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Mark Gould. I played some flashy 20th-Century work and the first

movement of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto #2*. It went fairly well, prompting him to ask, "So, D.D., what do you want? Why are you here?" I had hundreds of questions on my mind but the one that came out of my mouth was, "How do you make it happen when you have had a long week of playing and your face is beat up?" Mr. Gould paused, looked down at the stand in front of us, then back at me with a knowing glance. He said, "That is one of the best questions I have ever been asked by a student."

Injury can occur for an infinite list of reasons. Some of them are avoidable (overuse, misuse), and some are unavoidable (car accident, hit in the face, the natural aging process of the body). Not openly addressing these concerns does not advance us as players; it only perpetuates incompetence. Sure, we want to prevent injury, but think about how many professional, elite golfers have overcome shoulder or back injuries/surgeries and come back to win major events. Professional sports teams have numerous sidelined players waiting to play a game.

"Injuries can and do happen in all fields of athletic training, and brass playing is an athletic endeavor." - Carmine Caruso, legendary brass instructor.

Types of Injury:

Most brass players have experienced "injury," whether or not they realize it. Injury can include everything from a swollen, unresponsive embouchure after a long orchestral/band series, all the way to severe lip trauma with broken skin, blood, and pain.

While this list is by no means exhaustive, I have created a table with three classifications of injuries: Mild, Moderate, and Severe.

Mild	Moderate	Severe
Morning swelling	Dull aching pain	Shooting pain
Chapped lips	Superficial injury (cracked lip)	Dull pain that does not subside
Strident/dull sound	Skin wearing away	Blood
Small, tooth-shaped indentations	Deep, tooth-shaped indentations	"Pop" or "snap" sound from the lip, followed by muscle failure
Sunburn (dehydration)	Lip ulcers (dramatic)	Limp, un-taut lip

As stated earlier, all injuries are different, but knowledge can help you avoid escalating injuries.

Mild injuries:

Mild injuries are the most common. Nearly all players experience them at one time or another. Most people do not consider these symptoms as injuries, but they cause tiny, undesired alterations in their playing. These alterations, if left unaddressed, could turn into a more traumatic and serious injury.

Mild injuries are a common occurrence and do not require significant time off. In fact, too much time off can cause the player to lose a footing in his technique, and subsequently lose control of physical elements in his playing – leading him to become more uncoordinated and more severely injured.

A *mild injury* is comparable to a marathon runner who wakes up sore the day after a long run walking less comfortably and with less fluidity than normal. Just as some smart stretching and easy movements can quickly alleviate the tension in his muscles, so too can a smart recovery approach address simple injuries of brass playing.

In seeking medical advice, discuss these symptoms with your doctor.

Mild injury symptoms and possible solutions include:

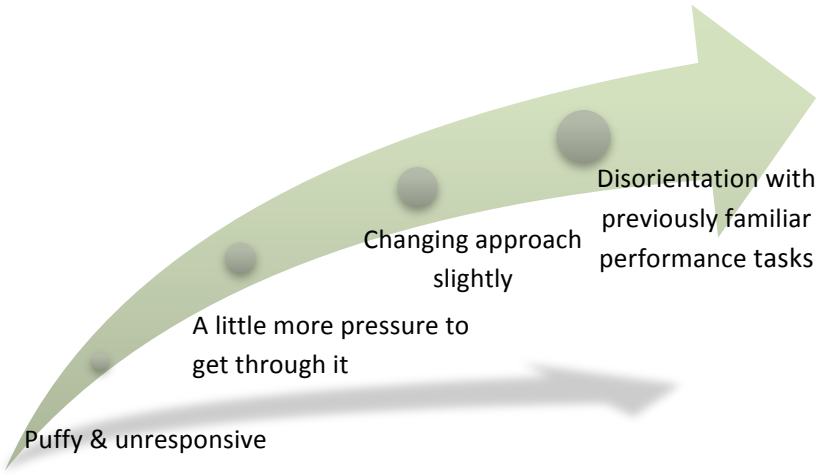
Mild Injury	Mild Solutions
Morning swelling	Alternate cold and warm washcloth compress
Chapped lips	Quiet, focused air attacks (Thibaud, Schuebruk)

Strident or dull sound	Rest more than you play
Small tooth-shaped indentations	Mid to low register playing SOFTLY (Clarke, Vizzutti)
Sunburn (dehydration)	Yoga-like approach (not power-lifting-trumpet player)

Note: *Do not assume that you can self-diagnose and treat all injuries.* That is not the intention of this book. The goal is to help identify common injuries and, when approproiate, find simple, holistic remedies.

Don't forget to question eating and drinking habits, and their effect on your playing. Medication can also have side effects that mimic the symptoms of injury.

Leaving a *mild injury* unaddressed could lead to a severe and permanent injury:



Small changes over time lead to dramatic results

It is also important to note that professionals may gradually lose control of a specific aspect of their playing due to their daily practice, thereby putting the whole system out of balance. While "auto-pilot" can be a side effect of using a routine, routines can be useful to assess and redevelop a skill that may have diminished unintentionally. Always be on the lookout for overlooked technique!

"Time is a great teacher, but unfortunately it kills all its pupils."

-Hector Berlioz

Moderate Injuries:

Moderate injuries must be addressed; if left unattended, these injuries more than likely will develop into severe, career-altering injuries. As with any injury, *moderate injuries* can be caused by an isolated event or develop gradually over time. While prevention is always ideal (not letting *a mild injury* progress) a highly-focused professional can mistake an injury for poor practice habits. Yes, improper practicing can lead to injury, but again, this is not always the cause of injury.

With *moderate injuries,* the player must proceed with extreme caution. He must weigh the cost and benefits of time off. Time off may help, but it may hurt as well. Find a colleague, professional, or specialist that you can consult and trust.

Symptoms and solutions include: (always seek medical advice from a doctor)

Moderate Injury	Moderate Solutions
Twitching orbicularis oris muscle	A short amount of time off (if available)
Superficial injury (cracked lip)	A thoughtful return to playing—set yourself up for success; be wise about the work you accept
Skin wearing away	Re-evaluate the foundations of your technique to ensure they are not changing in new, inefficient ways
Deep, tooth-shaped indentations	Take your car into your garage...for a diagnostic checkup (see a specialist)
Lip ulcers (dramatic)	Consult oral specialist

Once you have classified an injury as *moderate,* proceed with caution. Ask a close friend or colleague to listen to your explanation of what is going on, and to help you cope with the problems. Are you a person who easily worries too much and becomes paralyzed with fear? Do you take a small issue and blow it out of proportion? Conversely, are you the type of person who sees injury as weakness and would push through something that should not be pushed through? With *moderate injuries,* a player could be on the precipice of severe, permanent damage or the outer cusp of a simple *mild injury*. Either way, ignoring the injury or thoughtlessly continuing to practice and perform is NOT a solution.

Severe Injuries:

I categorize *severe injuries* as those that stop a player and prevent him not only from performing, but from being able to recover easily. With a *severe injury*, time off and careful rehabilitation are required. This rehabilitation may, in some instances, be enough on its own to put the player back on track. Other times, this rehabilitation may take place after a traumatic intervention, such as surgery.

Severe Injury	Severe Solution
Shooting pain	Schedule time away from the trumpet (you are hurt and playing more will NOT make it better)
Dull pain that does not subside	CONSULT A SPECIALIST
Blood	Know your options and ASK QUESTIONS
"Pop" or "snap" sound from the lip followed by muscle failure	Talk to people with experience in these matters
Limp, un-taut lip	Surgery may be an option, but it should be the LAST option

Once a *severe injury* is identified, the player must consider the possibility that there will not be a 100% recovery.

Lucinda Lewis has a much more thorough and detailed explanation of injuries as well as treatments in her book*, Broken Embouchures***.** It is a must-have text and should be required reading for any brass player. Consult this resource if you desire additional information on injuries, overuse, and anything embouchure-related.

Consider the following immediate steps for severe injuries:

- TAKE TIME OFF
    - 3 days or 3 weeks may be enough. There is no need to notify the entire musical community. You may be back to 100% quickly!! THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND THE PROFESSIONAL: A student should immediately notify his/her instructor and proceed only under his guidance.
- If you must work, try to take work you know you can comfortably handle.
- Systematically evaluate your practice upon returning to the trumpet after time away. PLAN FOR A SLOW RECOVERY.
- Be sure you are making decisions rationally, not emotionally. SEEK GUIDANCE.
    - Don't be afraid to turn to a doctor, trusted professionals, and loved ones immediately. They will be able to help you be more objective in your thinking.

- Do what you must to provide a living, but CONSIDER YOUR GOALS FOR LONGEVITY.
    - There may be a quick solution that gets you through a series or a set number of jobs, but be careful that the solution doesn't ruin goals and ambitions for the immediate and distant future.
- A change in equipment may be necessary, but it *IS NOT* a starting point.
    - Changes must be calculated and conservative so that the player can evaluate the success or failure that minute alterations have on his playing.
- Take a step back/evaluate the situation
    - YOU ARE HURT! This is not the time to push yourself. This is the time to reflect on what could have caused your injury and carefully proceed.
- Seek guidance
    - This cannot be stated enough. Treat a severe injury to the orbicularis oris just as you would any other body part: SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION.

On Orbicularis Oris Surgery

I receive, on average, two or three phone calls a week from injured players who are considering surgery. Right out of the gate I tell everyone the same thing. SURGERY IS A LAST RESORT. Let me say that again, another way: SURGERY IS RESERVED FOR AN INJURY THAT A PLAYER IS WILLING TO RISK NEVER PLAYING AGAIN TO HAVE FIXED.

Being hurt is often a wildly emotional experience for a professional. Many people find it beneficial to seek counsel through their church or with a therapist. Most professionals have sacrificed to get to their current positions, and an inability to perform to their standards can feel like a loss of identity. When this loss of identity happens, the incessant questions start:

What did I do wrong?

What if I can't ever play again?

What if my colleagues find out?

Will I get fired?

How will my family eat?

How will I pay my mortgage?

Playing is all I know. I can't do anything else.

As painful and depressing as these questions are, they are logical and necessary, and must be asked of anyone considering lip surgery. While it is difficult to deal with time off or poor playing in order to treat a *severe injury,* recovering from surgical intervention can be much more difficult, and *there are no guarantees*. Surgery might be the only option, but it needs to be a last resort.

Before Surgery:

Get several opinions!	Talk to people who have experienced surgery
Make financial and emotional plans for after surgery	Make sure you have financial and emotional support for your potentially long recovery
Consider how you will live if you cannot make a satisfactory recovery	Trust the surgeon you use
Make sure you are aware of all the risks!	Exhaust all other options

It is best to approach surgery with a "nothing to lose" attitude. If it works out, great. If not, you are no worse off than before.

Exhaust all resources available to you before considering surgery. Since recovering, I have met many people in music therapy and the physical therapy field. Seek them out before taking drastic action. I was already rehabilitated when I met Dr. David Shulman, a physical therapist in the Baltimore area with tremendous insight into a wide array of musicians' ailments. I am not sure he could have prevented the inevitable in my case, but we could possibly have delayed it.

I now have first-hand knowledge of chemical, medicinal, chiropractic, psychological, and massage treatments. Exhaust these options and find people that have knowledge about them.

AGAIN, SURGERY MUST BE A LAST RESORT!

Considerations for the Professional and Advanced Student:

Knowing what to do when your artistic product is affected is difficult. Many injured people I have come into contact with are seeking anonymity. They do not want people to know they are hurt. A few others, convinced that they are hurt, have done everything but alert the media. Consider the following:

Consider the type of injury. In the case of a mild or moderate injury, perhaps not telling anyone is a smart choice. We are all human and sometimes the mere suggestion of dissatisfaction in one's playing will make colleagues "hear" what they had previously not noticed. Finding a person you can speak to in confidence will be invaluable if you are unsure of the next step. Make sure you make clear that you want the conversation to be kept between the two of you. Don't assume that the conversation is confidental unless you've made your request for privacy very clear.

Know as much as you can before you tell your employer. If you are hurt and need time away from your job, be sure you have consulted specialists and doctors before you talk to your boss or union representative. Once you tell these people that you need time away, you may forever alter their perceptions of you. If at all possible, and if the injury will allow it, take a vacation or a sabbatical. If the injury is mild or moderate and you have a sound approach, three or more weeks away from your job can enable you to focus on a smart recovery.

Consider legal advice before telling your employer. It may be advantageous to seek legal advice and know your rights as they relate to your specific job.

Scholarships need not be affected. Your selection as a scholarship student means that a college, conservatory, or university has

invested in your talents. I have been consulted by students who have had their scholarships threatened by their injury. Talk to your primary teacher immediately. Compare the music department's scholastic investment to that of a college athlete. If the star quarterback was out for a season, would he be denied his scholarship?

Obligations to the institution. Unfortunately, several graduate-level students have contacted me because they are unable to perform their final jury. The approach I advise is to prepare in advance a document that spells out the "added value" the student has brought to the institution. This could be ensemble playing, teaching assistantships, solo performance, and volunteer work. Most reasonable institutions can waive the final recital requirement due to injury, based on an already established-precedent of comprehensive performances and academic work.

Furthermore, in a professional setting it is reasonable for your employer to have expectations of you and need to know your playing status. Don't be threatened or intimidated by this. If the situation becomes too uncomfortable for you in your recovery, consider having a representative speak to your employer on your behalf. You both have rights and responsibilities.

Creating Progress

Approaching the Technical Demands of Trumpet Playing

Talking Technique:

How many times have you heard a famous player say that playing high is no more difficult than playing low? How often have you read that you should strive to make minimal movements in the embouchure and tongue? Now, thanks to YouTube and the Internet, you can easily see astonishing performances by many of the great trumpeters of our time: Wynton Marsalis, Gabriel Cassone, Phil Smith, David Krauss, Håkan Hardenberger, Vince DiMartino, Reinhold Freidrich, Malcolm McNab, Allen Vizzutti, Thomas Hootan, Alison Balsom...like any great master, these musicians make playing the trumpet look and sound effortless.

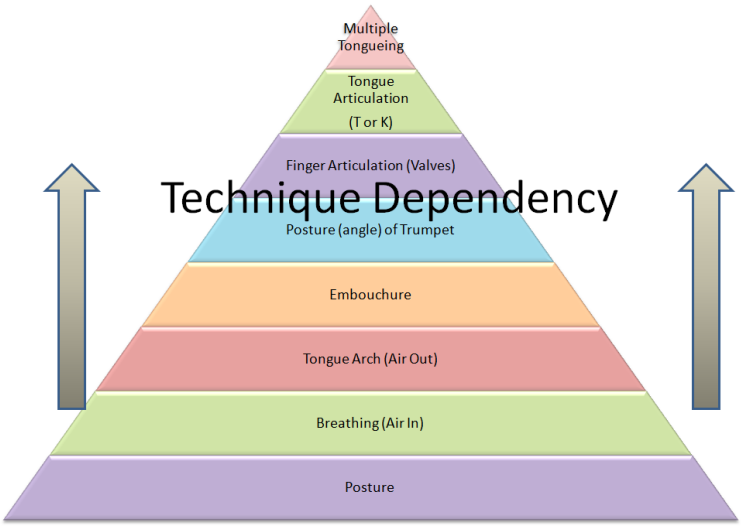
When you hear a brass player that inspires you, it is imperative that you seek his opinion on how he approaches his instrument. Find the people you want to play like and ask them how they do it.

Just as in athletics, performance and rehabilitation/physical therapy are different. The latter require an in-depth look into how muscles work and respond in various ways, while the former is the culmination of all variables working in synthesis with musical comprehension. While the greatest performers will always be the best resource on how to perform, when rehabilitation is necessary, you need to think like or see a medical specialist. Think about your playing as a race car. If you want to learn to drive it well, go study with the best drivers. If you car isn't working, go see a mechanic. Sometimes the mechanic is also an astonishing driver. In the world of trumpet, some of the best "mechanics" I have met include Kevin Eisensmith, Vincent DiMartino, Jay Saunders, Gabriel Cassone, Reinhold Freidrich, and Laurie Frink.

The next section of this book is a crash course on how I see various trumpet techniques relating to one another. Everybody is different and there will be small differences in how each person plays an

instrument. However, I have found that many students and injured players benefit most from a structured idea of the techniques involved with playing a brass instrument. The goal is to have no deficiency in the playing that cannot be logically addressed. This is true of the uninjured player as well. A smart, technical approach can be freeing, allowing the player to feel that, given enough time, he can play anything set in front of him.

Technique Dependency:



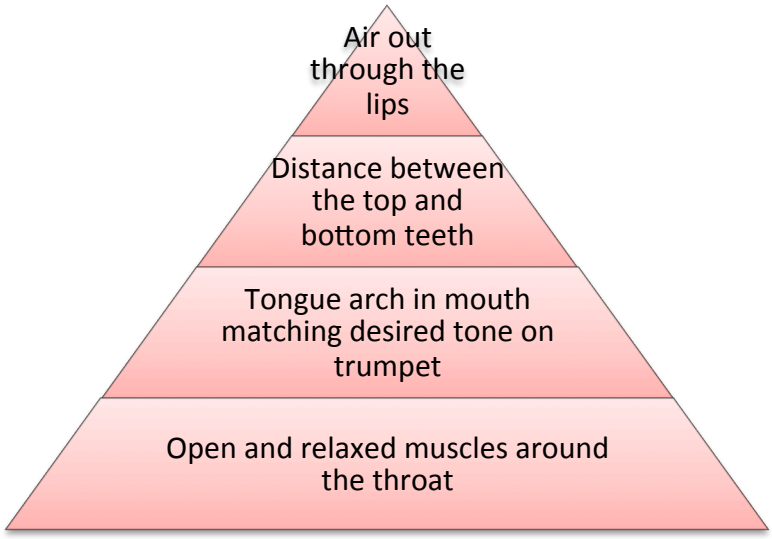
The above figure shows how I approach any physical challenge on the trumpet. Whether I am trying to refine an embouchure, rehabilitate an injured player, or learn a difficult passage in a piece of music, I use this *Technique Pyramid* to systematically evaluate the "playing machine."

Here is how it works: each technique represented in the *Technique Pyramid* includes in its usage the technique(s) below it. For example, if one wants to work on the embouchure, it is important to make sure that the posture, breathing (air in), and tongue arch (air out), are being used correctly, so we can accurately measure how well the embouchure portion of the *Technique Pyramid* is performing.

Let us consider another example: the well known Clarke *Technical Study #2*. While scores of people have used this to work on their finger dexterity, a player could/should use this etude to first improve posture, breathing, tongue arch, embouchure, posture of trumpet, and then, finally, finger dexterity.

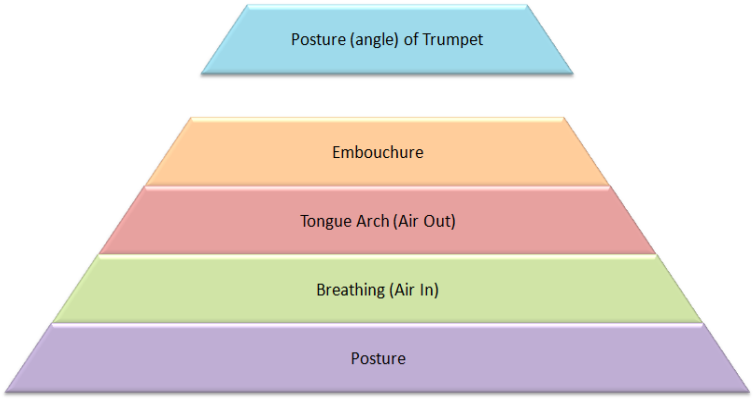
This interdependent *Technique Pyramid* can best be demonstrated with a simple exercise of playing a "G" directly above the staff with an air attack. Most people would see this as primarily an embouchure study. However, if the posture is bad, the player can not take in a full, relaxed breath. If a full, relaxed breath is not taken in, the air out will not be optimal either, and perhaps will be forced out through an over-compressed embouchure or by raising the tongue and "closing off the hose" to speed up the air. By now you should easily be able to see my point.

Each level of the *Technique Pyramid* can likewise be dissected. For example, let's examine **tongue arch (air out):**



I only went to four levels of detail on this example but could have gone further…vocalizing while sending the air out, etc.

The true artist has worked on each part of the *Technique Pyramid* and, in performance, is able to forget about the techniques and focus on the music he is trying to make. While it is extremely beneficial to analyze each part of the *Technique Pyramid* for the developing student, that will remain out of the scope of this book. This book will focus on the bottom half of the *Technique Pyramid*, though the advanced (refinement) exercises toward the end will include the entire pyramid.



Approach:

The following exercises assume that the reader is injured or seeking recovery from an injury. There will no doubt be many people who are physically impaired and cannot make a recovery to the level that they wish. If you have nothing to lose then please try carefully, after consulting with a physician, of course, to use some of these ideas to create a way of playing a trumpet or other instrument that will provide you with the artistic outlet you desire. By assuming that the reader has already had surgery, I can address the widest audience. If the reader has not had surgery, he should still continue with the exercises as prescribed, as they apply to rehabilitation and refinement in general.

At all times, the person working in this method must celebrate even the slightest progress. A negative outlook and attitude will manifest negative results. A person who is childlike in his curiosity and persistence, but with the discernment of a seasoned professional, will be an unstoppable character no matter where he directs his energies (music or elsewhere). The most difficult part will be for the professional to not go too fast or too far too soon (or too loudly). Remember to be humble in your approach. You may have had the greatest sound and endurance of any trumpet player in history but you are not practicing…you are rehabilitating.

"I've been able to train again," Woods says. "Rehabbing and training are two totally different scenarios. I've been rehabbing pretty much the entire last couple of years. Now I'm healthy enough to train without issue. My body's feeling explosive again. … I can literally train all day now." – Tiger Woods, 2012 *USA Today* interview

Rehabilitation Overview:

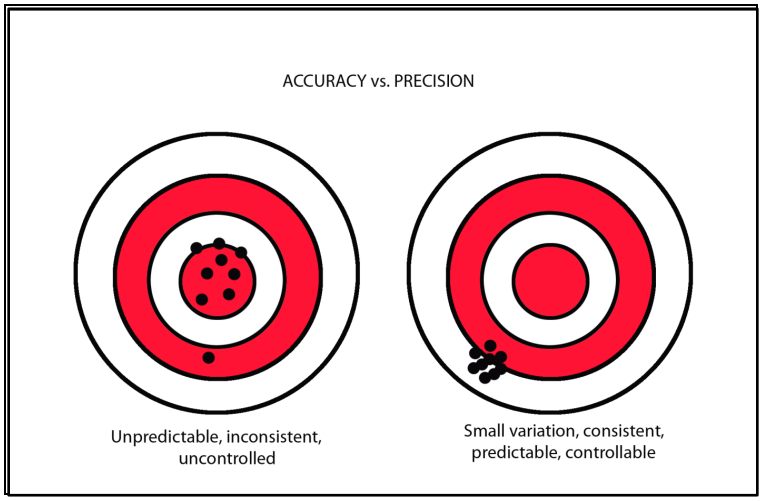
The first mistake I made in my rehabilitation was treating myself as a beginner. Rehabilitating is not the same as first learning to play the trumpet. Actually, in many ways, a player in post-surgical rehabilitation is worse off than a beginner. A beginner has very limited expectations and a very shallow understanding of how best to progress. I have found that rehabilitating professionals have to overcome their pride and their impatience as much as their physical troubles.

Rehabilitation	Beginner
Years of habits (good and bad)	Clean slate
Overcoming injury (scar tissue etc.)	Typically no physical ailments (occasionally dental)
High expectations	Little or no expectations
Strong opinions, concepts, & assumptions	Flexible ideals

The player working to rehabilitate or refine his embouchure must never lose sight of the fact that he is not starting over again. He has (presumably) already mastered posture and breath control. It is important that he does not let these skills decline as he takes time off or scales back his playing. It is precisely this knowledge and training of posture and the airstream that allows me to encourage players in rehabilitation to work from the high register quite quickly in their rebuilding. A beginner would not understand the variables at play or how they interact.

As with any process improvement, we first need to get the process, trumpet playing, in control before we can improve upon it. Once we

can re-create flaws and strengths consistently, we can adjust different physical elements to get the desired results. This is the difference between precision and accuracy. When the process is in control it will be predictable. Once output is predictable, change can be introduced to help match the actual output to the desired output.



One of the primary goals of this approach is to make the player's technique and output as precise as possible so that the player can adjust the elements to his desired target (tone, range, etc.). For example, there are players out there who can leap all over the horn and hit most of the notes, but with too much variation in their tone quality. The goal is to get the technical aspects of your playing as consistent and controlled as possible. Of the players I have encountered, none have exemplified this ideal as much as Raymond Mase. While at Juilliard, I was privileged to hear Ray Mase play in lessons and in concert. He could always be counted on to be extraordinarily precise in his playing elements: tone, articulation, pitch, etc. Anyone looking for examples of precise, consistent playing should hear him.

Your goal at all times is to maintain control of all of your actions. If an undesirable sound comes out, there should be no mystery as to

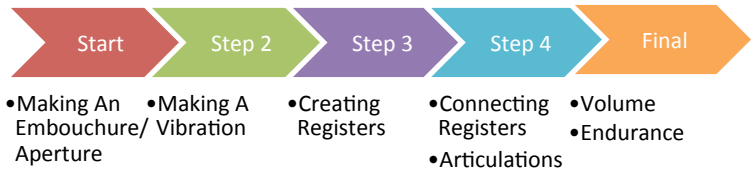
why it happened. With a thorough understanding and mastery of the techniques involved in playing, a physically sound player can climb any mountain.

In rehab, the player can set goals, but they must be reasonable. A barometer for progress: of the players I have surveyed who made what they call a “full” recovery, most claimed it took around a year and a half to return to their pre-injury level of proficiency. As with any recovery, DO NOT RUSH IT! Getting ahead of where you should be or not following the prescription can hurt you and set you back even further!

Road to Recovery

Recovering from Obicularis Oris Surgery

Road to Recovery…



I used the above chart as my means of classifying progress in my early rehabilitation. Because every person is different, the patient/reader should choose the exercises in each step not based on the order I have provided (though that will help someone looking for structure), but as he listens to the needs of his body. The only restraint I would ask the practitioner to use is to follow the steps in the order they are presented. It is OK to be in step 4, working to learn to articulate again but also taking time with some of the exercises that we started with. However, it is not OK to be in step 2, working on a vibration, and to focus on articulations. Once significant progress has been made in one step, the player may move to the next, while constantly referring back to previous exercises. Even now as a fully recovered player, I frequently do many of the exercises in this *road to recovery*. I use them to tune up my playing and I change them ever so slightly to add a new dimension to my sound and technique.

Road to Recovery ■ ■ ■

As stated earlier, this approach assumes surgery has taken place, because that is a worst-case scenario. I will attempt to present the same advice in writing that I give in person to players who are out of balance or recovering from an injury. It will also provide the outside observer with a better description of how I apply the technical information outlined in the previous section. The following steps are part of a pursuit to stop "thinking technique" and get back to making music.

Getting Started:

Approximately a month after surgical intervention, once the incision point is fully healed and cannot reopen, the player may start to retrain the orbicularis oris to focus into an efficient embouchure. Relax…this will take time. Lots of time.

The first thing I recommend is to use the stretching exercises outlined by Dr. Simon McGrail and Lucinda Lewis. Please seek out their books and input for a more detailed discussion, but for our purposes, treat the orbicularis oris like you would any other muscle post-surgery. Your goal in this month (or more) of not playing should be to get the orbicularis oris to become flexible once again and for the lips to come together in an even circle.

These stretching exercises can be done with great liberty and freedom. Listen to your body. If the lip feels that it needs stretching to relieve tightness, try a few of these exercises.

Start

Relaxed Smile

Lips surrounded by air

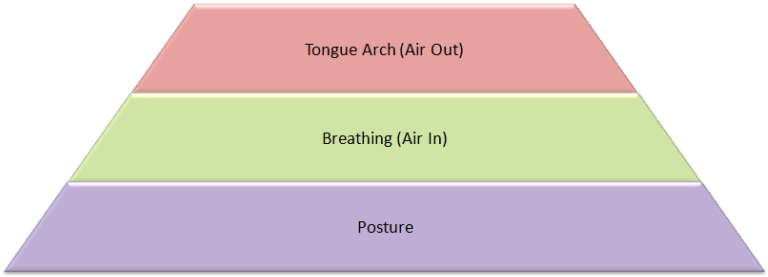
Open mouth, upper lip stretched over top

The above exercise was done as described to me by Dr. McGrail and is credited to Lucinda Lewis. This particular stretching exercise felt wonderful in the immediate weeks following my surgery.

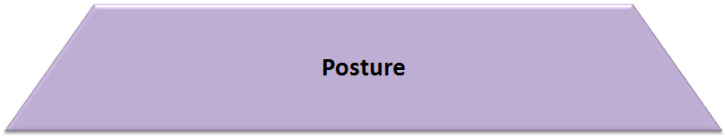
Start

Most players have experimented with time away from their instrument prior to surgery. That means that they (you) may have been away from playing for several months now. Just as a runner or cyclist would be out of shape with time away from his sport, so is it with the brass player.

While the lip is still not ready to be used for tone production, we can focus on the foundation of our *Technique Pyramid.*



Again, we start from the bottom and work our way up. This is your chance to start obsessing again and turn yourself into the most perfect, mechanically sound player your body will allow you to be.



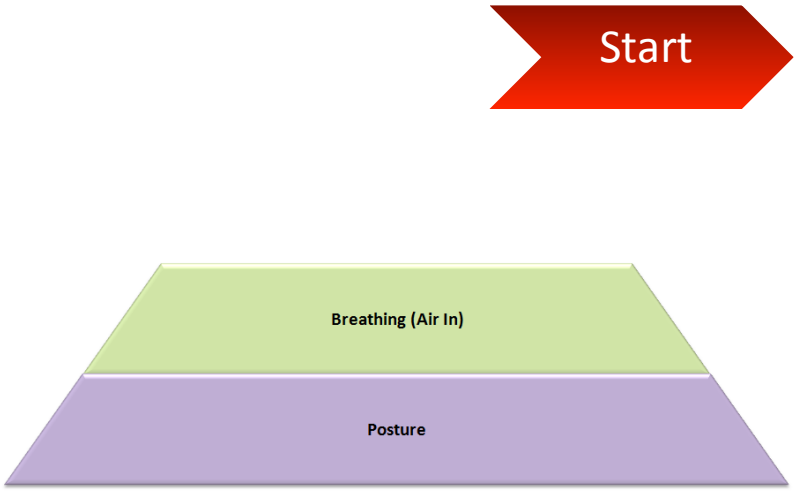
Sitting with feet flat on the floor or standing with your weight evenly distributed, hold your chest up high. Not so high that there is tension in your torso, but high enough to open up the area around the lungs and diaphragm. Think of preparing a paper grocery bag for groceries. You want the bag to be open and ready to fill. Similarly, you want your upper body to be open and ready to fill with clean, fresh air.

"Drive your bulldozer." – Jay Saunders

Since your days are not currently filled with practice and performances, this is a great time to seek counsel with a person trained in Alexander Technique. This is the foundation that all other techniques will rely on. Go ahead and obsess. Set yourself up for the best possible outcome. In my rehabilitation, when I was not playing yet, it was great fun to obsess about my posture. I would look at my shoulders, my back, the angle of my pelvis, my weight distribution. Yes, what great fun! Be grateful you have the time to dedicate to this.

The world is your oyster. Don't sit around the house all day and make no progress toward your goals. Keep a journal, go to concerts, meet with experts, study scores, make new friends, learn how to read chord changes, learn to transpose better…whatever you can do to forge ahead and feel good about your efforts, do it!

Now that you are confident your posture is in check, let's add in another variable…taking in a breath.



Odds are good that you have been able to breathe since you took time off. (If not, please find me so we can join the circus.) Many players making their way through rehabilitation have forgotten what it feels like to take a full, relaxed, deep breath. Now is the time to focus on breathing in.

There are several books on breathing. Read as many as you can. Different exercises speak to different people. The following are breathing exercises that I use frequently. Look for more and get breathing!

Ex. 1

Set the metronome to quarter note = 60. With each click of the metronome, inhale (sip) a large ball of air and then stop. Try to inhale as many sips as you can until you are completely full. After it feels like you can sip no longer try one more time. The idea is to gasp like a fish out of water. Then, release the air, and rest with normal breathing.

Do this exercise 3 to 5 times. Caution, you may get light-headed! Be smart and rest as necessary.

Ex. 2

Start

Not using a metronome, place the side of your hand against your lips (mouth open). Take in a full, quick breath as the air passes

around the hand. This will remind the body what it feels like to take a full breath. This type of breathing is for conditioning. When the embouchure is responsive it will be able to produce a full sound in all registers using no more air than that which is used in normal conversation. See image below:

Ex. 3

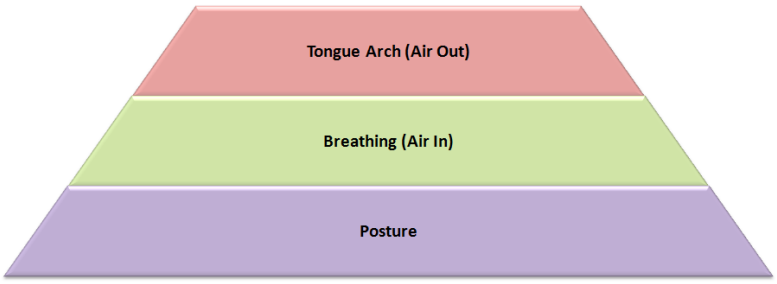
Set the metronome to quarter note = 60. Count how many beats it takes you to fill up your lungs. Try to get completely full in only one beat.

While doing these breathing exercises, keep in mind the following:

1) Do not alter the posture with additional tension, i.e. raising the shoulders, constricting the throat.
2) Stay relaxed and calm as you try to fill up quickly.
3) Listen for the sounds of tension. The breath should be quiet. If any sound is heard, it should sound like “oh” as in “hoe.”
4) Any change in your foundation/posture can affect your breath in. Be vigilant about keeping your posture optimal.

Start

It is now time for the bottom three techniques in our *Technique Pyramid*.



There is so much coordination in this part of the initial stage that all professionals can benefit from revisiting this part of the *Technique Pyramid*. For wind players, these three tiers represent the gas tank of their playing. We want to use the best quality fuel we can get our hands on (not smoking) and get it to the engine (the embouchure) as efficiently as possible. **Small changes in these areas can have a dramatic effect on even the most seasoned professional.**

For the next series of exercises, focus on keeping a relaxed, open posture and quiet breath.

Ex. 4

Set the metronome to quarter = 60. Breathe in, saying the word "hoe" for four counts and immediately exhale, saying "who" for four counts. Repeat this exercise 10 times. **Be sure that you are not stopping the air as you fill up and switch to expelling the air. It should feel like one cyclic motion.

Ex. 5

Set the metronome to quarter note = 90. Breathe in, then begin expelling the air in a controlled fashion. Ration the air so that you release it gradually over the next 10 beats, until your lungs are completely empty. Fill up again completely and repeat, this time releasing all the air over nine beats. Continue this for releases of 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. The final repetition is one large breath in and one dramatic beat of full exhalation. Rest and repeat three times.

For an advanced version of the same exercise pull out your tuning slide and do the countdown through the lead-pipe.

As you move up the pyramid be sure not to change the lower levels. For example, when working on your breathing, do not change your posture or shoulders unnecessarily. Introducing unnecessary tension in your torso could likewise introduce tension into your embouchure.

Start

Ex. 6

With your right hand, make the letter "C." Hold this as close to your embouchure as you must to blow air through the "C" without any of the air stream touching the sides of your hand. As you are able to control your air stream better and better, you will be able to pull the "C" farther and farther from your mouth. Strive to move the hand as far away as possible without letting the air hit any part of your hand.

Close hand position Far away hand position

The greatest part about working on the foundation of the *Technique Pyramid* is that you can do many of these exercises anywhere. You can try them in your car, at your desk, while mowing the lawn, or while walking down the street. I suggest a varied routine that allows you to move on to other exercises once significant progress has been made.

As stated previously, seek out additional instruction in Alexander Technique, Pilates, and yoga; or, if you need to obsess about something non-music related, try to get to a level 72 Mage in your favorite online role-playing game. However, if you choose the latter and do not make quick progress on your recovery, don't be surprised.

Step 2

Making a Vibration:

With any detailed look into the technique of playing a brass instrument, it will inevitably become necessary to focus on how the lips vibrate. This is even more important when recovering from surgical intervention. Our focus in Step 2 is to regain the suppleness of the lips if rehabilitating, or to make the lips as responsive as they can be to even the slightest amount of air, if focusing on refinement.

You should have firm corners; make them solid and stable, and then forget about them. You may get tired, especially post-surgery. With time, your firm corners will be able to handle their role as the foundation of your embouchure.

THE EXERCISES THAT FOLLOW ASSUME MASTERY OF THE BOTTOM TIERS OF THE TECHNIQUE PYRAMID.

Ex. 7

Relax both lips as much as is comfortable and blow air through the lips. The lips must be relaxed enough to vibrate like a horse. Do not get out of control; you are not going to win an impersonation contest with this new skill. The goal is simply to get the blood flowing into the lips and for them to start moving again.

Step 2

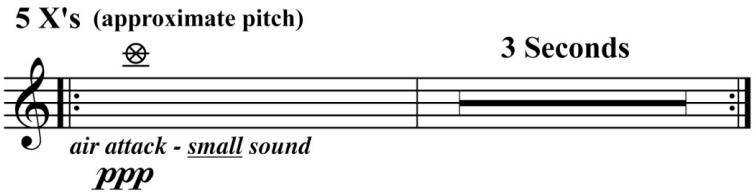
Ex. 8

With a firm, but not tight embouchure, lightly place the mouthpiece on the lips and "try" to get them to buzz. Focus on keeping the embouchure firm, not on the resulting sound. The results may be scary at first, including poor response, and even violent shaking of the mouthpiece when in contact with the lips. Have no fear! THIS IS NORMAL. The register and pitches that come out are not important yet. If you have to err on one side or the other, err in the direction of the upper register. That will be key to being able to successfully form a small aperture in the near future.

As stated earlier, range is not a result of strength. By now you should have debunked that falsehood and can approach the following exercises:

Ex. 9

Pay attention to the dynamic marking. This is not a strong, full sound at this point. You are recovering, the sound may be unstable, but you are trying to relearn to focus the embouchure into a small, efficient aperture. Start with an air attack. DO NOT BE TEMPTED TO USE THE TONGUE. Rest often.



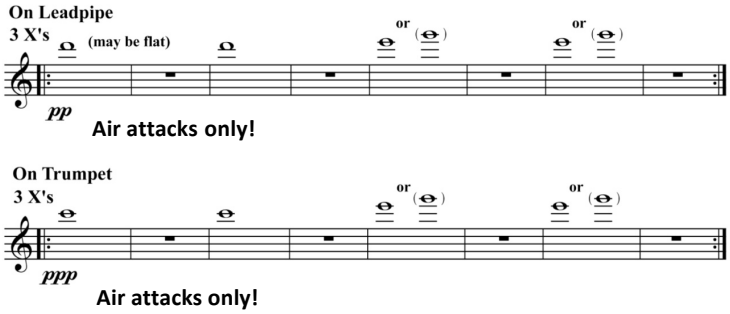
As you continue to gain footing, go back to exercise 9 any time you lose aperture focus and need your bearings again.

Step 2

Many musicians have had luck rehabilitating using the mouthpiece. During my recovery I was unable to keep my lips from falling into the mouthpiece and stopping the vibration. To combat this, I simply removed my tuning slide and played on the lead pipe quietly in the upper register. The little bit of resistance that the lead pipe offered helped the lips to focus properly. Also, holding the trumpet while playing the lead pipe reinforced the physical sensation of my posture with my new embouchure.

In exercise 10, the pitches indicated are not as important as the process. As you regain your footing you will be able to hear and play with the natural overtone series of the lead pipe. Again, focus on playing quietly, with fast air. Don't forget about the foundation of your pyramid. Are you setting yourself up for success?

EX.10



Rest (off the mo

***Pitches must be approached from above.**
If you are going to miss, miss from above.

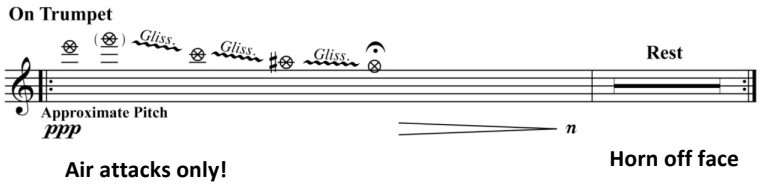
Over a few days or a couple of weeks, you should be able to learn to play exercises 10 and 11. By play, I mean with a small inconsistent sound that is far from performance ready. Don't worry. Making the vibration is the first step. Refinement will come with careful, diligent practice.

Step 2

Now that you have created the vibration you need to keep the aperture small (because of volume, not tension) you can try to work the vibration toward the middle register with the same embouchure.

Be careful to play quietly and to make the absolute smallest lip movement that you can. Train to be as efficient as you can, even now.

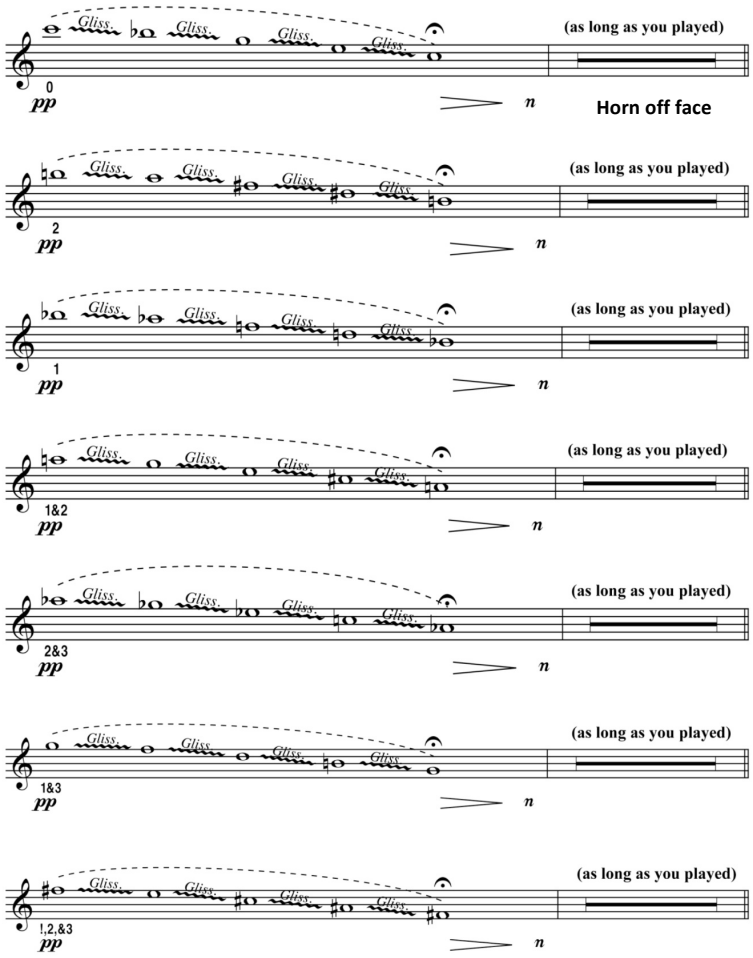
Ex. 11



Continue in this manner until in the staff. If at any point you feel like your aperture has opened up, stop. Take the horn off your face and rest for a couple of seconds. Then return to Exercise 11. No matter your skill level, striving to play this exercise quietly with minimal pressure will result in a more focused, responsive embouchure.

Step 3

CONNECTING REGISTERS: The following page demonstrates how the above exercise can slowly be expanded into the middle register.



Focus your thought on the glissandos. Strive for minimal pressure.

Horn off face

Step 3

Once you can play the previous exercise successfully, start to work on the exercise that I feel is the most beneficial exercise in rehabilitation:

Ex. 12.

Starting on a C or G in the staff, play as quietly as possible with an air attack. By quiet, I mean that a person sitting 3 feet away from your bell would struggle to hear the tone. I call these "whisper notes." These tones are to be played so softly, you can hear the fluorescent lights buzzing in the ceiling overhead. I cannot stress enough that the goal needs to be to try to get the lips to vibrate with the smallest, minimal amount of air. If the embouchure responds quickly when air passes through it, then it will be a more efficient, explosive embouchure in the future. This, along with minimal movement, is the key to endurance. Try to get the biggest "bang for your buck." You want to develop an embouchure that is hyper-responsive to even the slightest amount of air. This exercise, if done correctly, should in no way be fatiguing even for a person returning to playing after several months off.

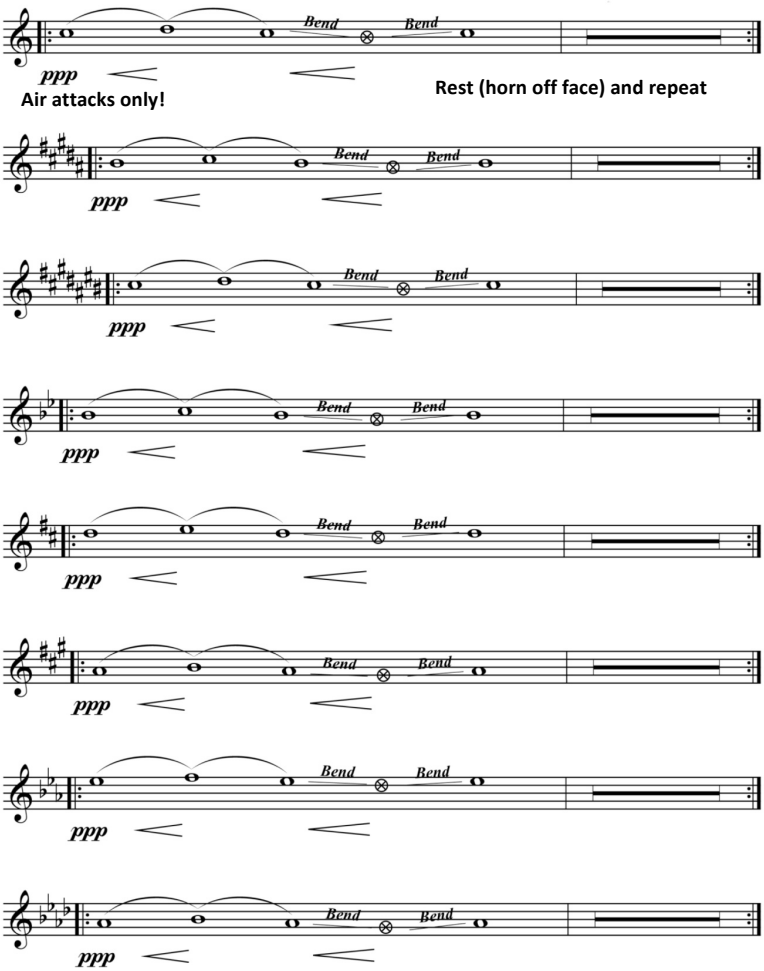
Range – Redefined:

Now that you are starting to get an explosive embouchure, you can work on your range. For these next exercises, I will define range as the distance covered from one note to the next without changing the embouchure setting. It is this definition of range that should guide you through the rest of your rehabilitation and back to training. Now that you have proven to yourself that high notes do not require more strength than low notes, you can focus on getting a vibration and then expanding the range of vibration from that position. Start small. Start with a half step. Think horizontally. This approach will pay dividends when you've recovered and you're performing music with extreme leaps and changes in register. Be careful, play quietly, use minimal pressure and have patience. This is the fun part!

Don't forget to practice while looking at the notated pitch. The patterns are simple, so practicing from memory would be easy. Focus your energy on looking at the pitch and developing new muscle memory. This will also better serve you once you are out performing again. You won't be tempted to freeze up when you see certain notes in print on a gig.

I know I developed a "fear of D." There was a period of several months that when I saw a written D above the staff, I would clam up and the note would not come out, or would require a great struggle. When I wasn't reading music, I had no issue overcoming this "fear of D" so I had to practice seeing that pitch and playing it successfully. It also helped that I practiced playing that high D in every way that I could think of. I played it sharp, I played it flat, I played it dull, I played it bright. I air attacked it. I articulated it. I approached it from above and below. This experimentation around a pitch builds confidence because it gives us options. There will be times that the ensemble will play the D higher than "correct" and times it will be lower; when we have limited options, the margin for error increases.

Step 3



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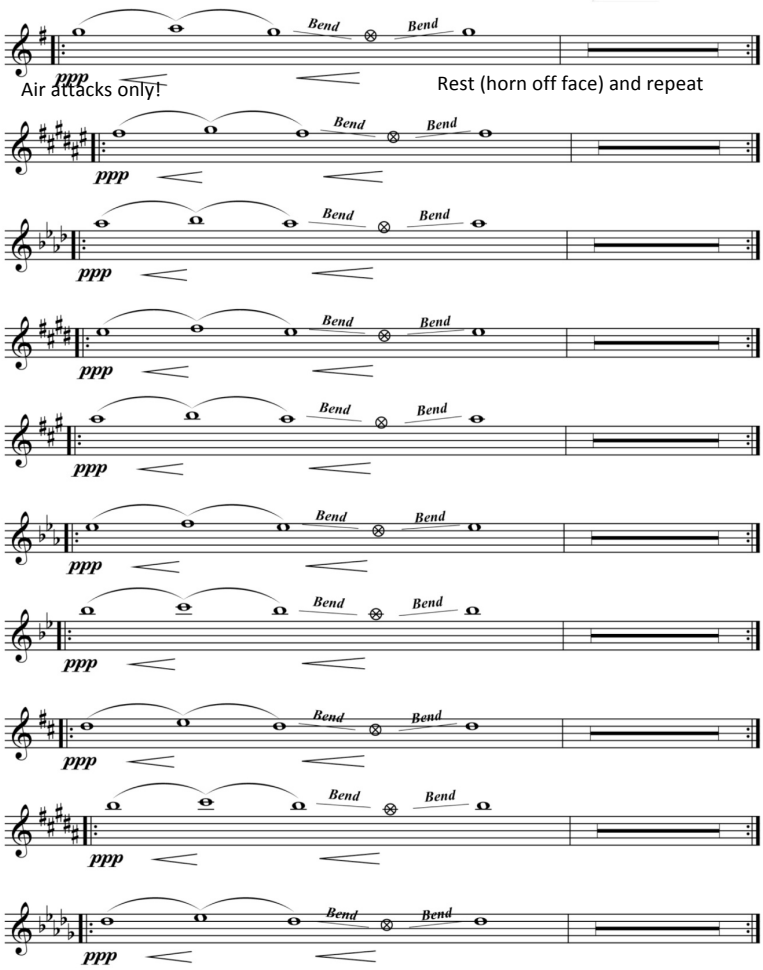

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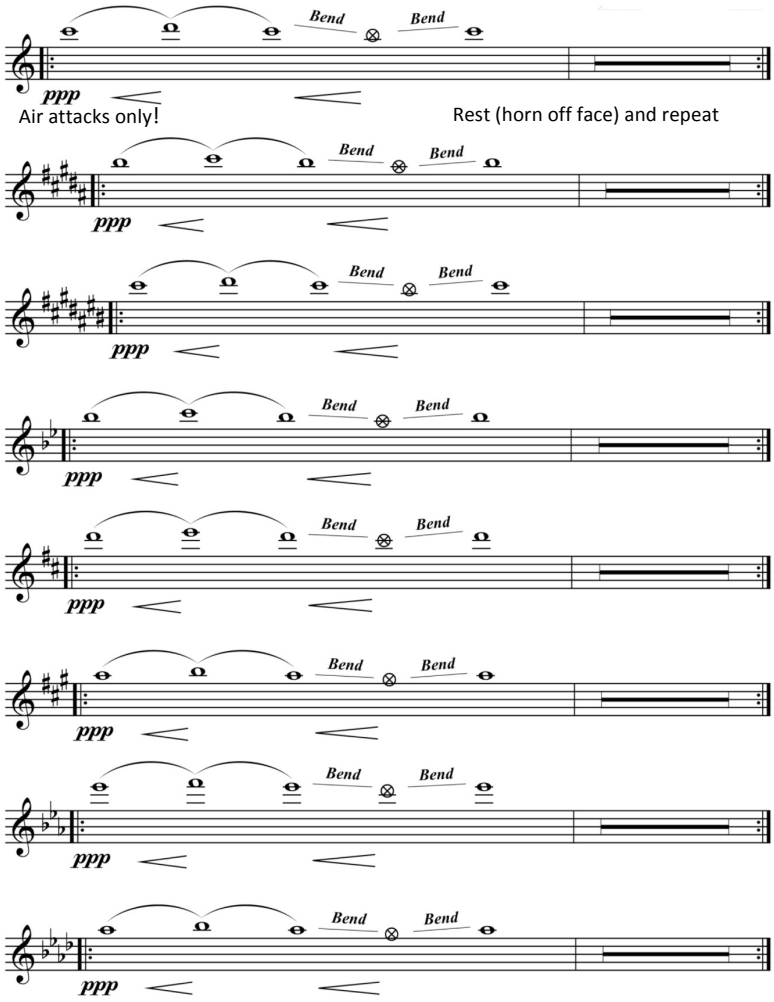

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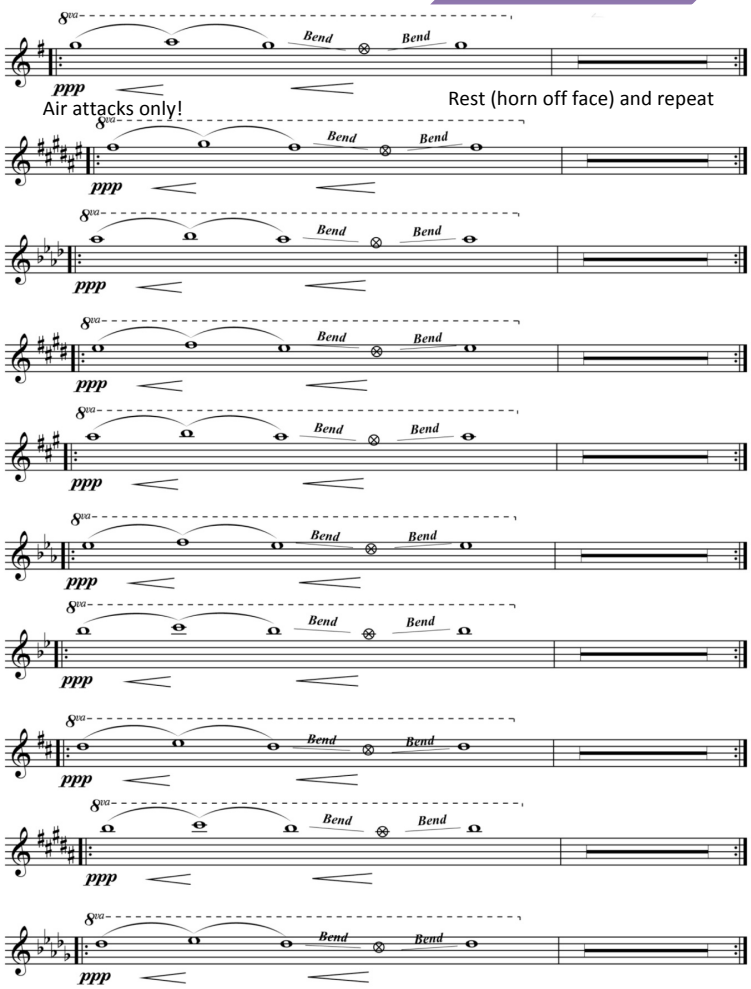

Air attacks only!
Rest (horn off face) and repeat
8va
Bend
Bend
ppp

Step 3

Once the preceding exercises have allowed satisfactory progress, begin playing whole-steps and half-steps in the middle, upper-middle, and the upper registers. I have found that despite the simplicity of being able to play in the extreme upper register, most players experience a boost to their confidence by having this register returned to them, or given to them for the first time.

Reminder: You must challenge your mind on these exercises. IT IS NOT STRENGTH BUILDING. It is more about coordination and air management. Be smart. All of these exercises should be done with minimal pressure. Pressure toward the teeth through the mouthpiece will sap your endurance and flexibility because the lips will be less free to vibrate, thus requiring more air for the same result. Don't forget to air attack the start of each exercise. You can introduce additional parts of the technique pyramid at a later time. The focus now is on keeping a vibration as you transition from pitch to pitch, not on the tone.

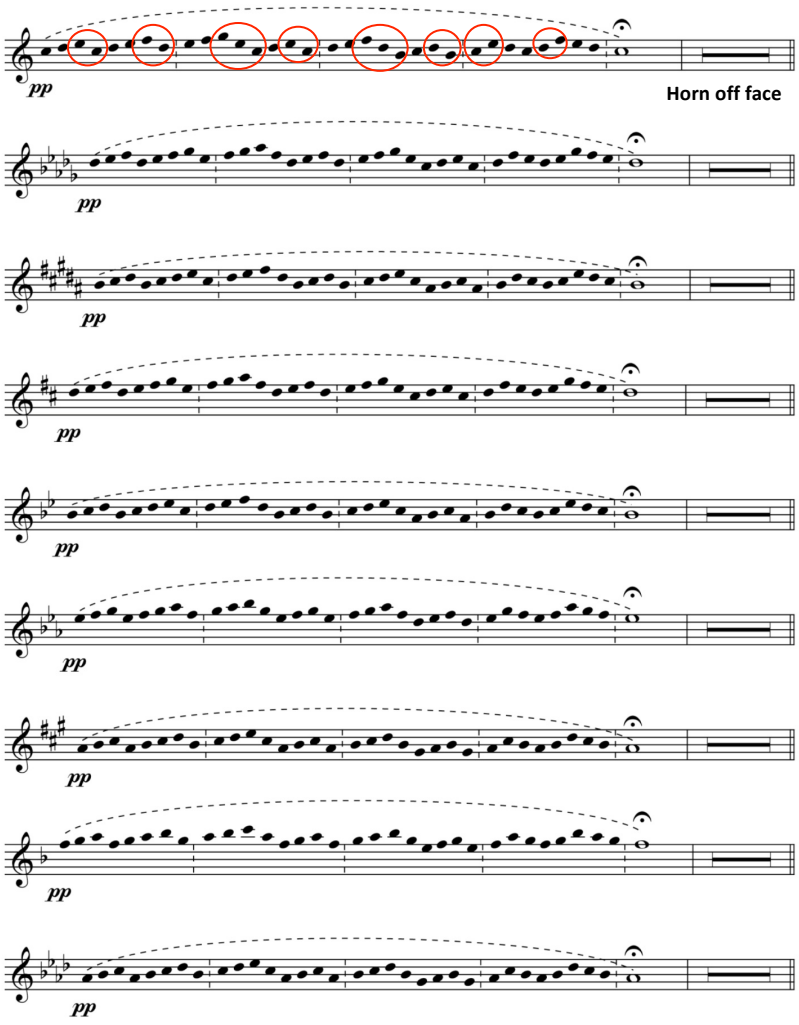
Stay positive. These are your rebuilding blocks!

Step 3

From this point on, you will revisit the previous exercises and expand the range covered in each line. I have taken a much-loved pattern and removed the stems from the notes. For rehabilitation, rhythm does not matter quite yet, your goal should be to again, play softly, make minimal movements, and if the vibration stops for any reason, stop, remove the trumpet from the mouth, and then try again. Give it time, practice intelligently, and progress will come.

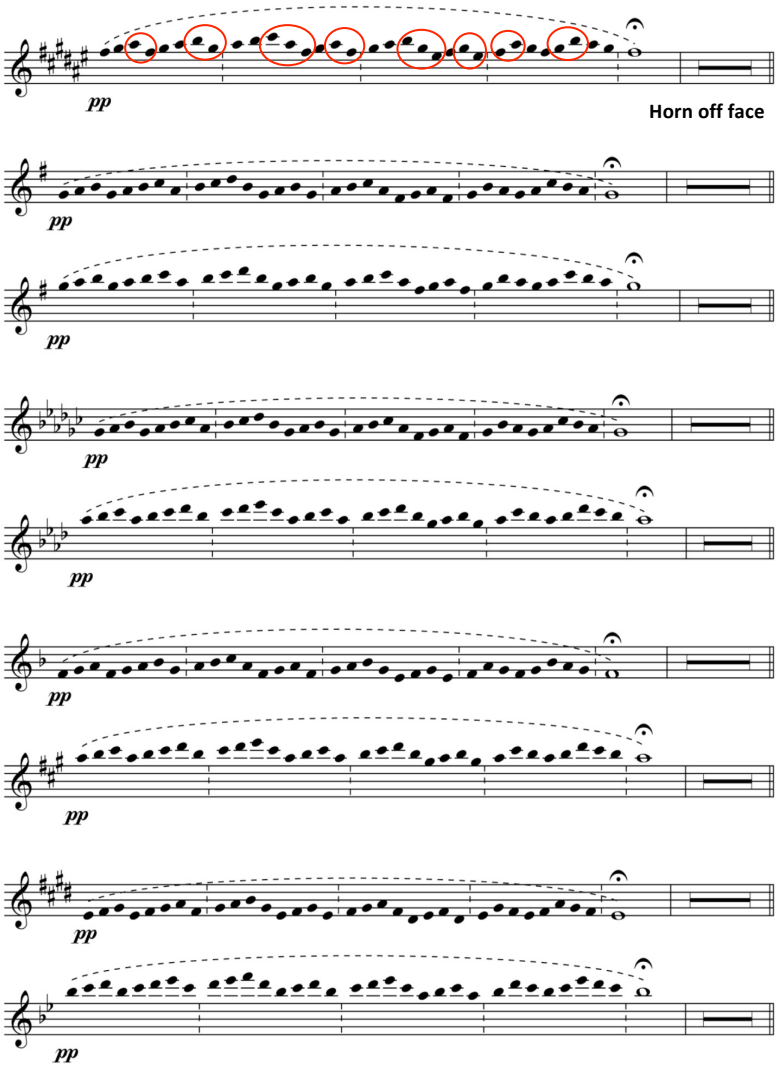
Pay special attention to larger intervals in the following exercise. I circled the notes that should be out of time and with a glissando when necessary. When I demonstrate this, I typically play the circled notes 4 times longer than the notes surrounding them. The glissando will insure minimal lip movement, and that the lips never stop vibrating. Don’t underestimate the benefit of this type of practice!

Step 3



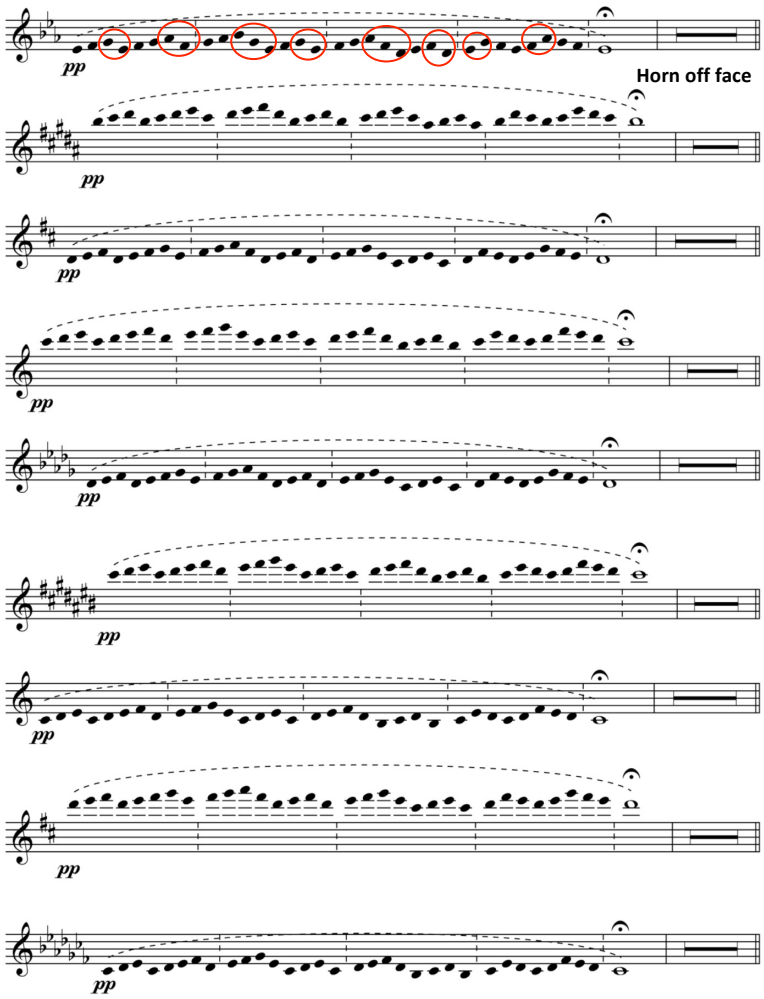
Rest (horn o

Step 3



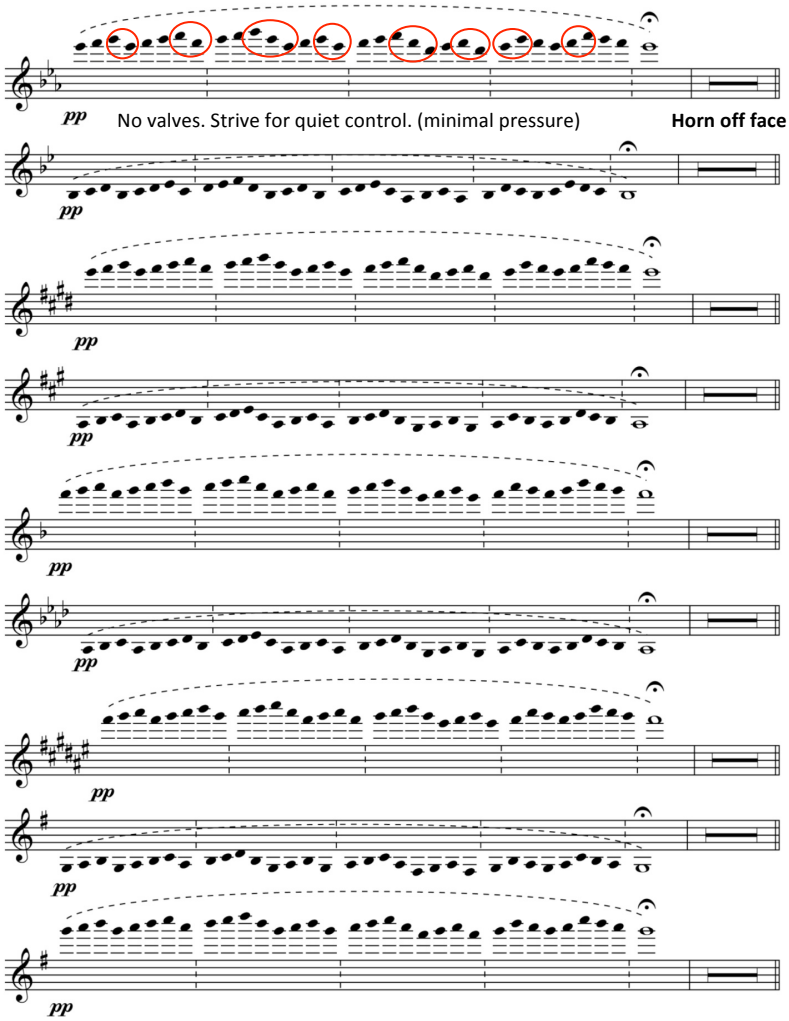
Rest (horn

Step 3



Rest (horn

Step 3



Rest (horn c

End of the Road?

What? So soon? What about lip slurring octaves, and double tonguing? If you have approached this material in a smart, patient manner, you can gradually return to any of your beloved method books. Be warned that the tendency will be to play too loud, and forget about technique too soon in an attempt to make music again. There will be missteps. We are all human. Nevertheless, as you systematically approach each interval, articulation, and obstacle, be comforted in knowing that the foundation of your pyramid is sound and you can always return to it for a tune-up.

It took me over a year to properly return to popular methods. Even now, I use the *Technique Pyramid's* exercises frequently.

There is no hurry, no trophy at the end. After rehabilitation, you will be a different player than you have ever been. You will have new difficulties, and aspects of your playing will be easier than ever. Do not force yourself, or let others force you, into a stereotype of a player. Go on stage and remember how far you have come. When you encounter a less than desirable situation, draw upon your efforts. You do not owe anyone an apology. All you can do is offer your best. Most audience members are searching not for a practitioner of the sport of trumpet playing (generally that is only desired by trumpet players) but instead to have an emotional connection with the performer and a composition. When the audience and the performer are engaged in a musical dialogue, they become a team. Both want to experience something special. Any technical error, though frustrating in retrospect, will be overshadowed by the love emanating from performer to listener in the community of a concert.

Have courage. Be thankful. Live life well. Musicians are poets without words, and painters without brushes. Our music, at any proficiency level, can inspire, motivate, empower, calm, and strengthen those it touches. What an amazing honor to be in the company of such artists!

Problem Solving Applied:

The ideas in this book are designed to help empower the performer to approach, diagnose and solve as many playing issues as possible. Many players are unaware not only of the missteps that they took in their development, but also the correct steps. Know this: until we get to interpretation and musical decision-making, playing is merely a matter of physics. I recently had an acquaintance say that I "exuded confidence" when talking about the trumpet. I found that distressing because I was worried that I seemed like the bull-headed players that we've all met. However, later in conversation he revealed that he meant "confident when talking about trumpet technique." Aha! Well, then yes. There should be no mystery around trumpet technique. It is the same muscles and principles at work in all players. The physics don't change. Sure, the bodies of the practitioners do, but the underlying foundation should be rock solid. Anyone willing to believe that all things are possible with the proper approach will be able to address any issue he encounters. Below are some examples that I frequently work through with recovering players and professionals experiencing peculiar issues.

Double Buzz

A side effect during my rehabilitation was a persistent double buzz from G to A above the staff. I was nearly convinced that I had lost my marbles until I asked a few simple questions.

Question 1: How is my posture?

Question 2: How is my breathing?

Question 3: How is my air? It was at this third question that I wasn't sure I was executing optimally. I then proceeded to combine the next two Steps in the technique pyramid together. By overly tightening my embouchure and slowing down my air I was able to create a double buzz on every note. This is worse than the original problem, you might say, but once you can double buzz at will, you

can also remove the double buzz at will. All I had to do was change the air to lip-tightness ratio and voilà, fixed.

Volume

Another problem I experienced was learning to play bright in the upper register. I know many players desire to sound "dark" (haha … it is a trumpet, after all) in the upper register, but I had a hollow sound above High C for quite some time. I experimented with tongue position and embouchure firmness, then I again ran through the *Technique Pyramid* from bottom to top until I got hung up on embouchure. I was trying to create volume by blowing harder. Of course, this was not the solution. Once I focused on keeping my lips explosively responsive in the upper register, I could choose my desired tone color by using my tongue arch or equipment. With my pre-morbid embouchure, I could not play loud in the staff. I could play strident or harsh, but never loud and full like the best symphonic players. After rehabilitation, my lips are so supple and responsive that I can play twice as loud as before with minimal effort.

It is imperative that you believe you can approach any technical obstacle. Too many great players have given up on particular aspects of their playing (the upper register, multi-phonics, large leaps, long passages) simply because they couldn't formulate an approach. At the same time, some tremendous players have progressed almost mindlessly to great heights because they never encountered a technical hurdle that a little bit of extra practice couldn't fix. It is this second group of players that requires the most work in rehabilitation. I go to great lengths to get them to actually understand how their body works and how to fix, in great detail, particular aspects of their playing. Some people just don't encounter the same number of technical obstacles as the average player. And then there are those of us that seem to encounter EVERY technical

obstacle. The best part is that both paths can lead to chairs next to each other on the same stage.

Important Notes

The Details That Mean the Most

Get Out There and Perform!

After surgery, I knew that I would be nervous about performing again, and I was determined not to develop a mental block to performing. Nervousness while performing had not been a problem for me. Sure, there were times when I would have a jittery shake in my tone, but it always went away. I addressed the fear that I would be too mentally fragile to perform by…performing.

This started with my practice. I moved my practice times and location to a more prominent place in the West Point Band's building. I made myself play in an open area where others could hear my daily struggle. This was tough to do. It wasn't like I sounded a little bad. I sounded terrible. People would walk by and offer encouragement; some would gently tease, others would stop and talk. No matter what my colleagues did, I knew they were listening. I would play games with myself. Sometimes I would know someone was around and I would practice "performing" an etude or excerpt for them (unbeknownst to them). Other times, when I was working on a horrible-sounding double buzz or a particularly "flarp" note (***Flarp***: a note that is under-supported but lipped up into pitch, sounding both flat and sharp), I would force myself to continue to work on them within earshot of my colleagues. I needed to practice sounding bad publicly so that I would not let the pressure of a performance get to me.

I started not only saying yes to work that I would otherwise have passed up, but I started seeking out "low-profile" performance opportunities. I played everywhere, in every setting, and in every genre/style. One of the hardest jobs I accepted was filling in for a vacationing organist at a church, playing the hymns on my trumpet. (Upon re-reading Clarke's *How I Became a Cornetist,* I learned this exact type of playing was pivotal in his development.) Playing these simple songs on my trumpet was brutal. It took everything I had to make it through the 3rd, 4th, and 5th verses.

On-the-job playing was scary at first. When I was granted my request to become a member of the West Point Band's Hellcats, I was both thrilled and scared. I had wanted to be a member of the Army's only field music group ever since I came to the West Point Band, but was nervous about the level of my playing ability. The Hellcats perform flag pole calls (*Reveille* and *Retreat*) and they play for over four thousand cadets at West Point every day as they march in to a large mess hall to eat. On top of that, the Hellcats perform patriotic shows, give demonstrations and lectures, and administer the profoundly poignant playing of *Taps* at official military funerals. Nothing scared me more than the fear of folding while playing *Taps*. I can still travel to a few cemeteries where I have flashbacks of nervousness just before playing *Taps*. I prayed on more than one occasion that the Lord would give me the strength to get through that simple, but important work. It wasn't until I had made a thorough recovery that I chipped my first note in *Taps*, but boy oh boy, sometimes I was hanging on for dear life!

There were some Hellcat performances and rehearsals that I wish had gone better, but I always gave my best. That is a hard struggle for a professional. The idea that someone is paying you to deliver "the goods" on demand and in a certain fashion despite any outside circumstances is a serious notion. I can only say again how blessed I was to have a few key leaders that were willing to sympathize with my struggles.

The best thing a recovering player can do is fail in public — stand on stage and just fold. It really is an empowering experience. You are forced to admit that other aspects of life are important. You stare your demons in the face, kiss them on the mouth and live to tell about it. It isn't so bad. Sure, no one wants to play poorly, but what happens is that you learn to offer up your best and to forget the rest. What else can you do, but prepare thoughtfully and diligently? There will always be better players. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR! No one could recreate the path that any of us took to be musicians. Each one of our struggles is totally unique.

When we get on stage, we are openly professing love to an audience and their attendance reciprocates that love. It has been my experience that if I give the audience my heart, they respond with theirs in kind. Sometimes, this means a nearly flawless performance and sometimes it means there a few passages I would like to take a mulligan on. Often, these technically imperfect performances mean the most. I could cite numerous examples of amazing artistry, but, Miles Davis' recording of *Baby Won't You Please Come Home* is a perfect example. The double buzz before the recap, the airy tone…the raw emotion. Wow! It is this type of honest, human playing that inspires me daily.

If you are recovering, you must practice performing. Don't be timid. Your struggle is real and can make you a better person. Get out there and give your heart!

Approach Everything From a Point of Strength!

Every recovery will be slightly different. To say there is an emotional struggle associated with a loss in playing is an understatement. There is often a devaluation-of-self burden that the injured carries around with them. Even uninjured people may struggle with a particular aspect of their playing, which correlates to a very real, inner struggle with self worth.

In my own recovery, I was initially grateful for every successful sound I could make. It wasn't until about seven months in that a small amount of self-deprecation crept into the back of my mind. It was about the same time that I was heeding my own advice of "failing in public." As my technical and musical goals continued to increase I was unknowingly demanding more of myself, and would consequently feel worse when my playing didn't live up to these increasing expectations.

Some years back I read an interview with the great golfer Jack Nicklaus. The reporter asked Mr. Nicklaus how he knew it was time to retire from the professional golf tour. Mr. Nicklaus responded that he "no longer attacked the hole." He then went on to describe how when he was younger, he was fearless in his belief that he could hit the ball more than a hundred yards away from the hole and still place it on the green near the target. He said he had started second-guessing and over-thinking his shots to the point where HE was the main obstacle in his playing. This interview addressed an issue in my own recovery. After a few months of playing, I started to worry about certain types of playing, or playing with certain people. Instead of being grateful to be playing again and having a nothing-to-lose approach, I was worried that I would fail. The worrying, in fact, caused me to sound worse. It was as though deep down I wouldn't let myself succeed. Somehow, I had become unworthy of being a trumpet player in my own mind.

Once a player reaches this point, he must find a way to push through this struggle. For me, the solution came in the form of

strength. I had, over time, reintroduced various well-known method books into my playing. I have a deep love of opera literature, and when I started playing in *The Art of Phrasing* from the Arban book, something clicked. I had not played these short musical segments since my freshman year of college. I started to realize and measure just how much I had matured as a musician. I was playing the same notes that I did in college, but with a much deeper understanding of phrasing, rubato, articulation, color, and energy. I realized that the hours spent listening to great operas had impacted my playing. It was empowering. I knew I could sit down and play several of the excerpts in an extremely musical way that would distinguish my playing from others. Let me say it another way: I knew that I had value in the musical community. It was this small flicker of light that propelled me through the inner struggle.

Even when I wasn't playing Arban, I was being very thoughtful in my interpretation of all types of playing. My practice continued to evolve. It changed from "working issues out" to "finding new ways to make colors and sounds." When I practiced lyrical, long passages, I could measure my improvement by the variety of sounds and colors I could make. The more I did this, the bigger the pallet grew until I had a wide array of options available to me on every note. If I desired a large sound that projected to the back of the hall without being harsh, I could do that. If I wanted something more covered and intimate, I could do that. When I was playing in front of conductors or with other top-level players, I no longer felt worried. I knew with certainty I could instantly produce changes in my sound to match their playing and the wishes of the maestro.

When the player is able to do this, his self-confidence grows tremendously, but purely. Ego steps aside. The player is not overcompensating or threatened by requests from the podium. Why? Because he knows he can accommodate nearly any request. This empowerment is not to be taken lightly. Realizing that you do indeed have value is vital!

I encourage all players to find their value early in their recovery. If you were particularly good at a certain type of playing before injury, return to that playing as quickly as is reasonable.

When you walk out on stage or in rehearsal, remember no one has walked in your shoes and seen all that you have seen. Each story is unique and is worth being told. When you play, you are telling your story. It is OK to let yourself have some skills that set you apart! Even if it is only the way you play a single note, but no one plays that note with such a sound…pursue that note and start to add others to it. Are you good at double buzzing? Don't shy away from it. Learn to control it. Learn to play with it. There are no rules! Every sound has a place, and every musician has value. The more unique your playing, the more irreplaceable you become!

Faith and My Recovery:

I am a Christian.

A non-Christian may be thinking, "Oh boy. Here we go again…" Trust me, I get it. Even as a Christian, I sometimes cringe upon hearing one of my fellow believers share some aspects of his belief. Faith can be an uncomfortable proposition, even for the faithful. Yet, my belief that Christ was a real person who walked the earth, said some outrageous things, performed miracles, and was the Son of God in human form is central to the process of my recovery and plays as pivotal a role as anything else I can share. Writing these details has been a difficult process for me. Before we go further…*I am not a role model*. Hang out with me for awhile; you'll soon agree with this. In my desire to be honest and transparent about my recovery process, I've concluded that this section is necessary. Even if you have vastly different beliefs, please do not skip this section. It is vital to your understanding of my mindset as I went through a tremendous physical and mental struggle. If you get to the end of this section and think my faith is quackery, that's OK, too.

When I was hurt in high school, I prayed that I could somehow still be able to play the trumpet. I was a hurt kid, but I had faith. Growing up in the church, I was exposed to Christian teachings and the Bible. And, I was (and am) a follower of Christ that does and says un-Christian things. This is not about perfection, it is about perspective. My faith demands trust in an Almighty Creator. Belief in an all-powerful, omniscient being means I am in his hands and he will provide for me. This simple faith that I would always be taken care of, despite my choices and struggles, still empowers me today.

During my undergraduate studies, I struggled with my impairment much more than I let people know. I prayed frequently that God would either make me a great trumpet player or take my playing from me entirely. I was so scared to continue floundering in the mediocre waters that I felt like I was treading. My embouchure never fully collapsed, despite frequent cuts and bruising; I also

never encountered a burning bush on my walk from the dollar parking lot to the music building. God let me go the direction of my heart. I loved and still love to play music. I am called to this desire, this need to convey emotion with my own, unique voice – the voice I have only found in trumpet playing.

When my embouchure finally gave out, I felt relief. Part of me said, "Phew! I am so sick of wasting all of my life practicing! I cannot wait to see what God would prefer I do." I meant that to my core. My faith assured me that my life was much more than the cumulative hours that I spent practicing and studying music. That made me more accepting of the very real possibility of never recovering.

One verse of the Bible that has stuck with me is Mark, 11:24:

"*Therefore I tell you, anything you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be.*"

To my very core, this verse speaks to me. I believe this verse so much, I use my requests to the Lord ultra-sparingly, because I know he will give me whatever I ask for, whether or not it is what I need. The goal, of course, is that I might get through my thick skull that I should want *God's* will and not my own.

Perhaps I am a hypocrite, but there have been a handful of times that I have employed the verse in Mark without adding the caveat at the end that says, "not my will Lord, but yours." Here and now, I confess that I have said to God, "GIMME, GIMME, GIMME!" (Like I said, I'm no role model.) With my faith, it's like I have this winning lottery ticket dangling in front of my face 24/7. Seriously? *Anything I want, just ask??* On every (albeit few) occasion I have asked the Lord for something specific without regard for his will, I have been granted my request. Yes, 100% of the time – wish granted.

To put this all in perspective: I was sitting in my favorite chair with my leg in a cast and my lip roughly the size of an apple when this

verse came into my head. I knew, without question, that my prayer asking God to provide me a job in a different field would yield a new, wonderful career. I knew that if I prayed for a recovery, he would make that happen. This time, though, I put on my grown-up Christian pants and said, "Lord, I trust you. Your will be done." Easy, right?

What I haven't shared is how badly I wanted to quit playing. Schooling from the most esteemed institutions, resume bullets that make me sound immortal — and I was bolting for the door. I felt and occasionally still feel, fed up with it all. The practicing, the hours spent practicing scales and arpeggios that I learned forever ago, the performing for people without words of affirmation from colleagues and peers…NO THANKS! Surely, I was seeking protection, for myself and my ego, from the very real risks of *failure*. But, God can be quite the jokester. A few weeks into what I had already deemed (hoped) would be an unsuccessful recovery, the phone is ringing for me to play everywhere with all sorts of high-profile people. *Gee, thanks, God! Here I am not able to play a full octave on my instrument, I am completely fatigued after only eight minutes of playing, and in two months you want me to perform at the highest level?* Well, yes. Exactly. I asked for his will, and he showed me. It was my turn to not only wear my grown-up Christian pants but to tighten the belt, put on the boots and get to walking. I had my doubts about how things would turn out, but I knew to follow God's lead. I might fail, but the lesson in doing so would be valuable. You know what happened; I didn't crash and burn. The calls kept coming, and my playing only got better. I discovered a purpose in my trumpet playing that was much, much higher than my desire for worldly success.

My faith in Christ empowered me to believe I could try anything and still be provided for. I believed (and still do) that I will not only always have plenty, I will always have excess. I believe that every prayerful request I make will be answered, but when I request HIS will be done, the results will be beyond anything I could have asked

for. Letting go of my egotistical need to do something or be somebody is the greatest lesson of my trumpet struggles. When I play, I am mentally stronger. I don't ever want to bomb on stage, but I know it wouldn't matter if I did. Why? Because my value as a child of God is not wrapped in my ability to play the hardest literature (though that might be a great skill to have as I share the abundance of his love in my life). Because, in spite of who I am, how I sometimes act, or what I sometimes say, I belong to Jesus and he takes care of me.

Goals, ambition, and competition push us to new levels of excellence. This is motivation at its purest. Yet, do we first consider what, in fact, we are chasing? Are we satisfying our earth-driven urges to "achieve," or are we focusing our God-given gifts and talents in service to a better world? What is the outcome of realizing our ambitions, if they are motivated by earthly urges? How many actors, musicians, and athletes have achieved their childhood dreams, only to feel a heightened sense of emptiness? I have known many musicians who've sacrificed and invested themselves completely to win an exclusive professional job, only to become disillusioned with the position over time. Someone stated this idea to me: Worldly success (distinction) leads to disappointment with success (disillusionment), which leads to deliberate disconnection. Worldly success is like eating from a dumpster – we may be physically "full," but we remain wholly unsatisfied. Be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it.

Without a loving God who guides my actions and lets me live through grace, success will always be fleeting. With God in my heart, I know success, even when others perceive failure. I enjoy a unique perspective of life's events, and still get it wrong frequently.

The struggles are here and are as real as ever, but because I've seen grace, I can't unsee it.