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I

Breathing Techniques as Applied to Trumpet Playing

The trumpet performers who have spent a lifetime in order to become artists of the instrument are invariably aware of the importance of correct breathing when applied to their performance. Many students and some teachers are not aware of the importance of proper breathing. Instead, the emphasis is usually focused upon the embouchure.

It has been proven by many master trumpet players that the embouchure will only develop correctly if the player uses the breathing apparatus proficiently. The purpose of this chapter is to focus more attention on breathing functions so the embouchure will be allowed to develop normally, through proper breathing.



Inhalation

The first step of breathing is the inhaling of air. The body should be relaxed in order for the air to enter into the lungs without muscular constriction.

Mouth - Because the mouthpiece rests against the lips in the center of the mouth, the trumpet player must inhale through the corners of the mouth, the lips should be stretched slightly. As soon as the breath is taken the player must set the lips in the embouchure position quickly. To set the mouth in correct embouchure position after inhaling, think of silently pronouncing the word "DIM". This will seal the lips and allow them to vibrate freely.

Tongue - While inhaling, the function of the tongue is to remain down, as low as possible, in the bottom of the mouth. Any raising of the tongue will only diffuse the stream of air entering the oral cavity. The tongue has a very important function in exhalation but while inhaling, the tongue must be kept relaxed and down in the floor of the mouth.

Throat - The throat must be relaxed during inhalation, especially the area of the larynx or voice box. The muscles of the neck must also be relaxed; if tensed, the neck muscles will constrict the throat in both inhalation and exhalation.

Lungs - The lungs contain a great amount of connective tissue, giving these organs an elastic quality. During inhalation, the lungs expand downward and outward. The individual must be careful not to raise the shoulders and rib cage. This will only constrict the lung capacity. The tendency is to breathe too high, in the chest area, instead of concentrating on the lung expansion area below the ribs.

Diaphragm - The lower chest cavity is bounded by a large dome-shaped muscle known as the diaphragm. The diaphragm plays its major role in inhalation. It must be pulled downward in order to breathe deeply. To expand the diaphragm, the individual must push the abdominal muscles (muscles below ribs) outward. Think of the air pushing these muscles outward into an expanded position.

Ribs - At the bottom of the rib cage, the lower ribs not connected to the sternum can expand in an outward motion by contracting the intercostal muscles. This is not in the area of the chest but just below. The contracting of the intercostal muscles will move the area of the chest but the movement should be involuntary.

Abdominal Muscles - The function of the abdominal muscles during inhalation is primarily to expand outward. These muscles are located below the rib cage. It is advised to think of pushing these muscles outward from within, thus expanding the area with air (expanding the lungs downward).