

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

ENHANCING THE LEARNING AND TEACHING OF TRUMPET THROUGH SIMPLIFIED APPROACH: A CASE STUDY OF AUSTICA MEMORIAL COLLAGE, NANKA

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Abstract

Most students love playing musical instruments and they see it as fun but a majority of these students shy away from choosing trumpet as their choice of an instrument because of the seemingly wrong impression they have that trumpet is very difficult to learn. This can be attributed to the traditional method employed in the teaching and learning of trumpets over the years. Studies have shown that the cognitive abilities of the students grow and expand longer when they study with a simplified method. Through an active and more simplified teaching method that is student-centred, the researchers of this study investigated students' participation in trumpet learning at Austica Memorial Collage, Nanka, Anambra State. This research further adapted a unique method of teaching the trumpet with a dual concept of formal and informal teaching methods. The study also suggested that basic skills and disciplines be adopted towards instrumental music performance. It was found out that when the students understand the fundamentals of playing the trumpet, learning becomes easy thereby giving them self-reliance in trumpet learning. The study recommended that students should always be given time for personal practice and the opportunity to express themselves since this can lead to creativity and improvisation.

Keywords: Trumpet, Simplified method, Teaching and learning, Austica Memorial College, Nanka.

Introduction

The trumpet is an instrument that plays a vital role in music performance but is perceived to be the most difficult to learn because of the method of sound production and the fact that it has only three valves which represent all the 12 musical notes/keys in music. Understanding the trumpet is mathematical unlike other instruments like the woodwinds strings etc. that has all the musical notes/keys on them with easy identification.

The trumpet is trans-gender in the sense that it can be learned and handled professionally by both males and females despite the age limit. The trumpet is a rugged instrument that can also survive outdoor rigours unlike other instruments like the woodwinds that are very fragile with their reeds that are easily affected by some climatic or atmospheric conditions. The fact that the trumpet is a universal instrument cannot be over-emphasised because it can future in both indoor and outdoor performances with orchestral, chamber, gospel bands, Boys Brigade and can also be used by schools etc. From years of experience, it was observed that the wrong impression most people have about playing the trumpet is that it is difficult to find a compendious published method with the combination of fundamentals that will bring down the learning process to the learner's perception. Teaching is based on the perception of the learner; it is the perception of the

learner that determines the method to be applied towards achieving success with the consideration of individual differences based on the type of lips, position of teeth, level of understanding, etc. Morris (1969) concurred to the above that teachers of cornet and trumpet are constantly faced with the problem of discovering diagnostic and prescriptive procedures which might be useful in the teaching-learning situation. To be an effective diagnostician, the teacher must be thoroughly familiar with the techniques used in playing the cornet or trumpet (p.1). The traditional music pedagogy used in schools over the years has tried but has not focused on the usable outcome, especially in some of our Nigerian schools. Onuigbo in Ojukwu and Onuora-Oguno (2016) assert that "if learning is not remembered or made use of, there is no need learning at all because learning involves applicability to life (p.36). Applicability to life is not just to pass an examination but to be developed as a skill. Ojukwu and Onjuora-Oguno further stated that a method of teaching can be considered successful if it results in progress towards a set objective geared towards the promotion of functional education as stated in the National Policy on Education.

The fact that teaching instruments will not just promote functional education, but will also develop musical skills for the child cannot be over-emphasised. In concordance with this fact, Onyedum & Onuora-Oguno (2019) opines that: "performing by playing a musical instrument is an effective way of developing students' musical skills and creativeness that enhance the development of musical understanding" (p.105).

On the same note, Campbell & Scott-Kassner in Onyedum & Onuora-Oguno (2019) summarized it saying:

Making music is equivalent to playing musical instruments. Because musical instruments are an extension of the musical self, when children play, they are often demonstrating what they know and can express musically. To play a musical instrument is to deliver to others ideas that are not easily expressed verbally (106).

The researcher, from experience, discovered that children develop trumpet learning habits when they are fully involved in the learning situation, and to sustain this habit, critical attention should be given to the method or theory used in teaching the trumpet.

Basic Steps Applied in Learning the Trumpet

The trumpet, among other wind instruments, is more difficult, especially in terms of tone production. So it warrants a serious undertaking cognizance of activities starting from the practical playing of the instrument before the rudiments of music. The basic steps the researcher applied has to do with practical than the theoretical method which includes: fundamentals that precede trumpet playing, basic trumpet skills, then knowledge of music rudiments.

Fundamentals That Precedes Trumpet Playing

Nothing is more important than starting correctly. Posture, breathing and hand position should be taught and practised correctly from the beginning. "Practice makes perfect" Whatever we do in the rehearsal room or at home will be what we do in performances.

1. Posture

Marvin, et al. (1986) observed that posture directly affects a trumpet player's prowess because body alignment influences respiratory function; however since each person differs physiologically at the structural level, the ideal standing posture for a trumpet player should be determined on an individual basis.

Good posture while seated

The trumpet player's feet are flat against the floor and his back is straight. He is not leaning against the chair, even though he is seated towards the back (If you are taller, you might need to find a taller chair or you may need to sit more to the front of the chair and your feet more underneath to have proper balance). Notice that the shoulders are relaxed and the neck is not bent. Always keep the head up and looking straight forward, then bring the horn to your face. Some players will need to hold the trumpet at a lower angle because of their dental structure. Arnold Jacobs, the great tuba player and master teacher, has good advice about seated posture. He advises that you should sit in a way that you can stand up immediately. This sounds simple but will probably take some adjustment before you can do it. Try it, and if you have to lean forward before you stand, you do not have it quite right yet. Keep your back off the chair and sit on the front half of the chair.

Good posture while standing

The trumpet player's upper body looks identical to his posture while seated; he does not need to lean back, forward, or tense his neck muscles. Your feet should be slightly less than the shoulder's width apart. Practising while standing up is naturally helpful to healthy air support, as it eliminates the tendency to slouch.

1. Breathing Technique

The purpose of these exercises is to help develop natural and effective breathing habits for excellent brass playing. These exercises are intended to help develop efficiency, coordination and flexibility in your breathing, but not actual physical strength. Donald, C. L. (Internet Source) Opined:

When doing these exercises, breathe fully and think of breathing simultaneously throughout your respiratory system. This means that you should not think of filling from the bottom up or the top-down, but rather simultaneously throughout. Although huge breaths may sometimes appear to be partially regional (i.e. thoracic or abdominal expansion), it is generally not helpful for the brass player to consciously induce regional breathing. It is far better to simply focus on inhaling large quantities of air with good posture and to allow your body to function naturally.
<http://www.iteaonline.org/members/pedagogy/pdfs>

2. Hand Positioning

Good hand position, option 1.

The left hand supports the weight of the trumpet with the index finger. The ring finger is available to extend the third valve slide, and the thumb operates the first valve slide. Players with small hands may choose to place both the ring finger and the pinkie in the third-slide ring to facilitate triggering or in some cases the pinkie alone. Notice that the fingers of the right hand are curved on top of the valves and the pinkie is out of the hook. Most band directors prefer this position for beginning students.

Good hand position, option 2.

In this variation, the right-hand stays the same but the lefthand has moved so that the ring finger and pinky finger grip the valve casings below the third valve slide. The weight of the instrument now rests upon the ring finger of the left hand, which can be preferable for students with large hands.

Basic Trumpet Skills

The trumpet basic skills examined for this study are discussed below and could be demonstrated on the instrument. This section is intended to provide context and justification for each trumpet specific skill included in this study.

1. Embouchure and its effect on tone

An embouchure is something all wind instrument musicians have, whether they know it or not. It is all the physical parts of our face that go into blowing air into our instruments, including our lips, tongue, oral cavity, chin, teeth, etc. All trumpet players use it every time they play, and every single embouchure is unique.

Even though there are no two embouchures alike, proficient trumpet players have common characteristics that give them a mature sound. Some people have a natural great sound the first time they pick up the instrument, but the rest of us have to develop a great tone on our instrument. So how does an intermediate trumpet player get that beautiful sound? The answer is more than just random playing your trumpet, though this will more likely help than not playing at all. The key is to develop your embouchure, just like an athlete works to make his or her body stronger, faster, or quicker. We can train our embouchure with specific exercises to target improvements in flexibility, range, endurance, and our overall tone or sound. Each musician has different strengths and are as for improvement, and these exercises can be tailored to the individual for maximum benefits. [Daniel <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu>] Building the embouchure facilitates Flexibility, Rang, and Endurance. It also facilitates other techniques like buzzing, articulation, tonguing and intonation.

2. Buzzing Mouthpiece

- Ø (Daniel, n.d.) Elaborated on making 'Buzz': All sound is vibration. With the trumpet, the vibration is provided by the lips and the air column. The “buzz” is the sound your lips make which is amplified by the trumpet into a gorgeous sound (with practice). For trumpet players who have been playing for awhile, you can probably already make a good buzz sound. If you feel that you do not have a great sound or would like to see how to improve your tone, there are a few things you can check.
- Ø 1. Start with just the mouth piece, no horn.
- Ø Hold the mouthpiece with your left hand to your face. (One trick to try is to place your pinky finger over half the mouthpiece opening: the resistance makes it feel more like the real horn.)
- Ø Lick your lips, place them together as though you are saying “B” like the beginning of the word "Beautiful." This will tighten the corners of your mouth like you just had a big bite of lemon.
- Ø Place the mouthpiece directly over the centre of your lips. Ideally, this should be where the mouthpiece should go, but not crucial. Put the mouthpiece where you get the strongest buzz!
- Ø Take a deep breath.
- Ø Blow air through the middle of your lips. Use a lot of air! Use your stomach muscles to help push the air out.
- Ø Hold the sound of the buzz steady for as long as you can. From the middle of your lips, you should make a funny buzzing sound, similar to that of letting out the air from a balloon. When you get a buzz going, your lips might itch and tickle if you are doing it right. Strive for a clear, “fat” tone and a steady sound. Think “ten-pound bumblebee.” Mouthpiece buzzing will strengthen your lips more than almost anything else you can do.
.https://digitalcommons.usu.edu

2. Articulation/Tonguing

The tonguing is one of the most significant exercises that build every trumpeter in so many skills including flexibility. The method of tonguing found in the First Division Book is of the syllable "tu" Weber's explanation in Brookshire (1976) is as follows:

When we start a tone we 'tongue' it unless certain marks indicate otherwise. To tongue a tone on the cornet or trumpet you merely say 'Tu' (or a similar syllable preferred by your teacher) as you start your tone. Teachers differ as to the exact spot for your tongue to touch. Ask your teacher which he prefers. Do not put your tongue between your teeth. Do this (tongue) as you start every tone until we learn otherwise (p.5).

From the years of experience, the researcher has gathered as a trumpeter and trumpet teacher, we don't patronize Weber's idea on tonguing due to the syllable sound used. But one major fact about tonguing is that every tone should be made with the tip of the tongue. On the same note, the Take One series in Brookshire (1976) approaches tonguing through the jazz articulation and they opined that:

The symbol for legato tonguing is 'dah;' the symbol for staccato tonguing is 'dot.' In jazz, you should legato tongue so that the notes are almost tied together. Jazz staccato tonguing is short and snappy. Legato tonguing is away long and smooth. Try to have silence between the 'dot' and the 'dah' (p.6).

I still do not agree with this approach because I think the student will tend to stop the tone with the tongue, using the "dot", the "dit" and their reference to short playing tends to mislead and could develop bad playing habits. I believe that using jazz articulations to teach a beginner is a very bad approach because it contradicts the basic traditional fundamentals of trumpet playing which the student is supposed to first get acquainted with. From the experience and encounters we had with most of our trumpet students, effective tonguing is achieved through the use of air sound instead of the syllable or word sound. This can be achieved using the word "Too" as in the word "took." In most cases, some students can tongue naturally from the beginning, so it will not be necessary to refer to the section of tonguing. The legato and staccato styles are to come later.

3. Intonation

Intonation is the pitch accuracy of a musician or musical instrument. Intonation may be flat, sharp, or both, successively or simultaneously. Tone generation on trumpets is influenced by many parameters. Variation of the played intonation is caused by the instrument, the player, or both. The intonation of the instrument is determined by the mechanical dimensions of the instrument and the mouthpiece. The flowing can go a long way in building every trumpeter's sense of intonation. An internet source added that: "Learn to hear and sing intervals. Since trumpet playing is so similar to singing, you must learn to sing intervals and recognized your pitch. Your vocal tone doesn't have to be nice, but it has to be in tune".

<http://www.brianperkinsmusic.com/wp-content>

Procedure/Method

The following method for teaching the trumpet was actively applied on fifteen (15) students from the class range of JSS 1 to SS 1 classes at Austica Memorial Collage, Nanka. This learning method was preceded by a careful selection of students that are physically sound without any health challenges.

STEP1: Introduction and Anatomy of the Trumpet

These fifteen students were first given orientation on general music including trumpet learning to build their perception and correct the impression they had about the trumpet. After which the researcher brought out the trumpet, and they were asked to draw and label the trumpet. The researcher dismantled the trumpet, then show them how to reassemble it telling them the names of each part, then he went further in telling them recursive measures and care for the trumpet.

STEP2: Embouchure

The students were asked to carry the mouthpiece, with the researcher practically showing them the best positioning of the embouchure, they were asked to make the same clear sound with only the mouthpiece. It took them about three days to get the right positioning thereby producing a good sound.

STEP3: Bussing and related Techniques

At this stage, the Buzzing technique was introduced with different exercises that will help in building the embouchure. The buzzing technique was also used to build the students on other trumpet techniques like articulation/tonguing, long tones and intonation. At the end of this step, the students were expected to use the mouthpiece to play some simple melodies they are familiar with, with the effective application of the techniques mentioned above.

All these techniques were done in high and low tones and the exercises were done with oral counting and stamping the head to easa metronome.

STEP4: Playing the Trumpet

The students were asked to fix the mouthpiece in the trumpet and play the sounds of the open note from lower C to higher C. Then the researcher wrote the scale of Key C major, indicating the fingering. When the students got squinted with the scale of Key C major, short melodies they are familiar with were notated for the musing sol-fa notes.

STEP5: Aural Training and Musicianship

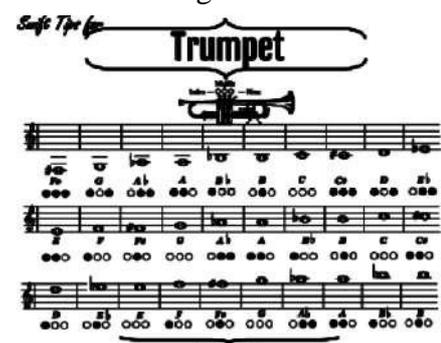
At this stage, for the student to be independent thereby playing all those melodies they are familiar with, on their own without anyone writing the sol-fa notes for them, they need musicianship and aural training. The researcher introduced them to the self-trial and error method of aural training, which gradually trained their ears. The self-trial and error is a process where the students are given short melodies to discover and note down the sol-fa notes on their own. They were also given the trumpet charts which help them in playing other keys.

STEP6: Sight Playing

This is the final stage where the students were introduced to the basic rudiments of the music thereby encouraging them on sight playing.

Below are some exercises the researcher used in teaching them and building on the rudiments of music.

The Trumpet Fingering Chart



TONGUING EXERCISES

Play these exercises tonguing lightly to the root of your upper teeth. Choose a tempo that you can play these six bars on one breath (usually about ≈ 100 bpm).

The image displays ten staves of musical notation, each containing six measures of music. The exercises are designed for tonguing practice. The first staff starts with quarter notes, followed by eighth notes, and then sixteenth notes. The subsequent staves introduce more complex rhythmic patterns, including groups of eighth and sixteenth notes, and finally, a continuous stream of sixteenth notes. Small 't' marks are placed above the notes to indicate the tonguing points. The exercises are arranged in a way that allows for a gradual increase in difficulty and speed.

Conclusion and Recommendation

I believe that music is not just food for the soul, but the most effective tool to calm troubled hearts by releasing frustration and most times for enjoyment throughout one's life. This approach or method used by the researcher can serve as formal and informal methods of learning the trumpet. One of the main responsibilities of the teacher is to instill in the students that accomplishment comes through hardwork and self-discipline. The fact that to enjoy playing an instrument, one must be proficient enough to be creative thereby making an important contribution in the band or orchestra and also with the ability to feature in any musical context, cannot be over-emphasised. This can also be achieved only through hard work. The major aim of this work is to help develop daily routines structured toward continual development.

The teacher must know more about the students' background and perception towards the instrument he or she wants to learn. The more familiar the teachers become with the student, the better he/she relates and gets motivated. The student should always be given time for personal practice and the opportunity to express themselves, this can lead to creativity and improvisation.

From experience, I have realised that the more interest was shown towards the student as an individual, the more confidence he will place in the teacher. The result should not be dependent on proficiency but on building musicianship and character.

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