

MYSTERY TO MASTERY BOOK 1



10 Year Anniversary Updates

The success of MTM Book 1 has been nothing short of astounding and I am so glad that after 10 years of reflection, I would not change the exercises in the book. The systematic approach of developing efficient playing habits is logical, easy to understand and works.

As you would expect however, some approaches have changed and developed over this 10 year period so this update offers a few ideas to incorporate when working through the book.

These refinements in thinking have all been well and truly covered in the numerous free videos at www.mysterytomastery.com and in the eBook version of book 1, so this is merely a supplement for those working with the hardcopy of book 1.

Page 9 - Play As You Would Sing

These days I mean this even more literally than when I first published the book. The lips interact with the air the same way the vocal cords do when humming or singing. We are simply moving the generator of oscillation from the vocal cords to the lips. Strangely, when we pick up the instrument, we force air far more than we would ever consider when humming or singing.

Expansion, Reduction and Elasticity of the Breathing Machine - Close your eyes and hum a long tone with a piano note or a drone. After a full breath, notice how the reduction in size of the breathing mechanism feeds air to the vocal cords effortlessly. It is the elasticity of the breathing musculature that reduces to its position of repose that creates the efficient movement of the air.

There is more than enough energy in this form of playing to create a huge sound in the lower and middle register as long as the lip oscillator is loose and responsive. Any extra grip/pinch in the centre of the lips means that air has to be forced to create vibration. This is not an efficient way to play and does not sound as good

Page 10 - Breathing Correctly Is The Secret

My understanding of how sound waves are propagated and how resonance is created has developed over the years and thankfully this knowledge explains in further detail why the breath is so important.

CONSIDER THIS: Picture an opera singer like Luciano Pavarotti. A lot of the sound develops in the oral cavity and nasal passages above the vocal cords; the bulk of the sound develops below the vocal cords. The sound wave created by the oscillation of the vocal cords goes both ways from the vocal cords so the body below the vocal cords plays an extremely important role.

Think of the mechanical implications of this as a brass player. The instrument outside of the lips is equivalent to the head above the vocal cords and the oral cavity and body equals the body below the vocal cords of the singer. The trumpet holds approximately 300mls where the body can hold 3,4,5 even 6 litres; where do you think the bulk of the sound is generated.

Tension and strain in the body reduces the quality of tone production whether you are a singer or a brass player. The practice of breathing correctly and allowing the elastic breathing mechanism to work naturally is the easiest way to create the best sound.

The use of extra abdominal support is required when playing loud passages in the upper register, however, do not fall into the common trap of believing that this support is what creates the pitch. This support is merely allowing the increased airflow to fuel the louder volume; the pitch is determined by SHAPE (Jaw, Tongue and Facial Muscles). Watch the videos on SHAPE at eh website.

Page 12 - The Great Compression

This section is vague and I would just omit it on a re-write. I now don't like the very thought of compression in the body. I would much prefer to use the idea of freedom of airflow, even in the upper register. Although it can be argued that there is compression, and compression in the source of sound, that it not the mental image I want to develop. The MTM approach is about setting up healthy visualisations to eliminate unnecessary tension in the body.

Page 14 - Blow Up A Storm

This heading is misleading. The word blow suggests an abdominal kick of the air that is far too violent for the purposes of playing the trumpet. I much prefer the word RELEASE when referring to the movement of air after a good breath.

There are many teachers and methods that recommend the "punch me in the stomach" abdominal support method when playing the trumpet in any register or at any volume. I simply cannot endorse this approach. This excessive use of the abdominal musculature encourages the valsalva maneuver which is a closure of the throat.

The amount of support required is over-estimated causing crippling tension which drastically reduces flexibility, sound and endurance. Humming and singing at different volumes is a great way to discover what an appropriate amount of air support is.

I do not mean to suggest that there is no abdominal support required whatsoever to play the trumpet. All I am saying is that there is far less than what you would imagine and over doing it creates massive tension issues that will negatively affect your progress.

Page 15 - Light Bulb 4 –

"Pitch change is a result of airflow change, not a conscious change in the tension of the lips"

This is the line in the book that has inspired me to do these updates. Those of you that have watched all of the videos and checked out the eBook will know my approach to this now. To those of you who have questioned this, I commend you for recognising the difference in the hardcopy to my current teaching.

To develop range and learn how to overcome plateaus, you must learn that pitch change is a result of SHAPE change and variation of the resonance of the oral cavity. This light bulb suggests that more air will instigate pitch change. This is misleading! More air will increase volume. If you are trying to change pitch by forcing air, you will constantly hit the same barriers you have been struggling with for years. Watch the video "Lips and Air Misconception". You don't strum a guitar harder to change pitch you simply change the tension of the string by moving your finger.

The term Aperture Corners didn't exist in 2004. To break through ceilings, a conscious awareness of aperture corner tension is essential. Recognising SHAPE change including aperture corner tension and tongue position (oral cavity resonance) is vital when exploring new sensations. A clear understanding the function of the pitch change mechanism will allow you to stop forcing air.

Pushing air when trying to develop range is simply a compensation for the lack of awareness of the SHAPE required to create higher pitches.

GOLDEN RULE 3 - I understand what I was trying to say but I would write and explain it very differently today. The message of overblowing and creating tension is as valid as ever, I just don't like the way it is written here.

Page 17 - The Tongue - Air Speed Regulator

"The forward arch of the tongue regulates air speed"

This might be true in part but is NOT what stimulates pitch change. The change in the cross-sectional area between the roof of the mouth and the tongue changes the resonance of the oral cavity. Tongue position is an important part of changing pitch on the trumpet but is still only part of the equation.

The lips are where the body meets the trumpet and it is the tension at the aperture corners that dictates the velocity of the vibration of the lip oscillator. For optimum resonance and ease of playing, you must find the perfect balance between the tension at the aperture corners and the tongue position in the mouth.

IMAGINE THIS: The air column of your body/trumpet machine starts in the lungs and finishes at the bell (although the air at the bell and in the room plays a major role).

The trumpet holds approximately 300ml of air (or water if you were to fill it) and the body holds 4 litres or more so where do you think the bulk of the sound is generated. This entire air column of oscillating air molecules is disturbed at the lips if there is a disparity between the body and trumpet.

If the frequency coming from the body is different to the desired note on the trumpet, the vibration of the lip is disturbed creating all kinds of negative sound and efficiency issues.

Force and strain is instinctively used to compensate for a misunderstanding of the correct SHAPE.

Page 18 - Note Production

Although there is nothing wrong with these pages I would like to draw your attention to the concept of the 2 R's. Release and Respond. The tongue is used to "release" the air after which the lips "respond" to the airflow. Issues arise if you think sound is developed by forcing the lips to vibrate.

When air is released from behind the tongue, the lips begin to vibrate thanks to their elasticity.

Page 19 - "Brass playing is 90% air and 10% lips".

Although I understand the message I was trying to convey, I really don't like this type of statement. Sound creation is a result of a mental picture and mechanically is 100% air, lip and instrument.

Page 20 - "Moving Along" - Mouthpiece Buzzing.

Being my first book and a total unknown player and teacher, I felt compelled to add some mouthpiece buzzing so as to not alienate too many people.

I recognise that many great players have done mouthpiece buzzing for years and many great teachers endorse mouthpiece buzzing. There are also many great teachers and players who have never mouthpiece buzzed and in fact can't do it.

My issue is, when done incorrectly, which is most of the time is that it stimulates negative tension in the body. Mouthpiece buzzing also sets a mental picture of creating the sound AT the lips which causes manipulation.

The Playing the leadpipe allows you to get a vibration at the lips without unnecessary tension in the body. I cannot stress deeply enough how important singing and playing the leadpipe is.

Page 21

I am not a particular fan of the pictures as they suggest a forced "blow" rather than a release of air.

So all in all, there are no too many changes but the detail in which I like explaining and demonstrating to students has developed quite dramatically and continues to do so as the days go by.

Make sure you complete **Mystery to Mastery Book 1** before beginning book 2. The technical issues people have are problems in the lower register that than become far more apparent when attempting to expand into the upper register.

The learning process is that of trial and error. Your practise is experimentation based on advice and observation. There is only one way to play, your way; and this may be different to everybody else on the planet.

Although there are different subtleties from style to style as far as approach goes, the main technical issues that arise are not determined by the style of music you wish to play, rather they are caused by a misunderstanding of how sound is created and what the body needs to do.

If you are prepared to accept that there may be a better way to go about playing and that you are not as efficient as you could be, then you are ready to start making great improvements to your performance.

Sit down next to a piano, take a breath and hum or sing a comfortable note with the best sound you can. Relax your jaw, shoulders, neck, chest and abdominal muscles and recognise how your body trumpet works. Now copy that feeling when playing a low C then through the book. Enjoy!