

FLEXUS

**TRUMPET CALISTHENICS
FOR THE MODERN IMPROVISOR**

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About the Authors

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INTRODUCTION

As an improvising trumpet player, you face unique physical challenges:

- You are more often than not operating at the limits of your technical ability.
- The mouthpiece is on the lips for long periods of time, creating endurance problems.
- Emotion can take over, making you play louder and with more intensity.
- In an improvised solo there is often a dizzying array of articulations, dynamics, register changes and tone variations.

All of these conditions are difficult to duplicate when practicing.

In preparing a written piece, even a very difficult one, your body learns to accomplish the consecutive muscular demands of the piece through repetition. The improvising musician doesn't have this luxury. By definition, improvisation is spontaneous and unrehearsed. Such unrehearsed, unplanned movements can leave the body scrambling to coordinate itself, which invites extraneous motion and can exacerbate existing bad habits.

It's a fact that the content of your improvisation is determined in large part by your technique. You tend not to conceive ideas that are physically beyond you. Therefore, to expand your vocabulary, you must improve your instrumental skill.

Although you can't practice inspiration, you can prepare your body to execute what you are inspired to play. Therefore, to improvise music with a wide variety of elements, you have to practice a wide variety of techniques. As in all things musical, consistent practice is necessary for consistent performance.

FLEXUS contains a wide range of technique- and endurance-building exercises that address all of the fundamental elements necessary to play the trumpet freely and easily. It is designed to help improvisors in all musical idioms—jazz, classical and any others. FLEXUS synthesizes the teaching techniques of Laurie Frink, John McNeil and Carmine Caruso, and represents an evolution in trumpet practice that combines time-honored exercises with new and unique concepts to create a technical approach for the 21st century.

FLEXIBILITY • THREE

Leave the mouthpiece on for the duration of each two-line segment.

Five

1 2 2 3 1 3 1 2 3 1 3

Six

1 2 2 3 1 3 1 2 3 1 3

2 3 1 2

1 2 2 3 1 3 1 2 3 1 3

2 3 1 2

Seven

2 3 1 3 1 2 3 1 3

2 3

FOUR • FLEXIBILITY

FOUR • INTERVAL STUDIES

The following exercises accustom you to slurring over consecutive fourths and fifths. Play each line several times without stopping. Try to maintain a steady airflow throughout.

One

Line 1: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, Ab4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4

Line 2: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, Ab4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4

Line 3: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, Ab4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4

Line 4: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, Ab4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4

Line 5: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, Ab4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4

Line 6: C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, Bb4, Ab4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4

ONE • ARTICULATION

Reset after every line.

Sometimes use legato tonguing, sometimes staccato.

Five

(. . .) sim.

0

2

1

1 2

2 3

1 3

1 2 3

QUICK REGISTER CHANGES • ONE

Ten

Exercise 'Ten' consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' above it. The second staff contains two measures of eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' above it. The third staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' above it. The exercise is transposed ascending chromatically.

Transpose the pattern ascending chromatically. On the tri-tones and diminished arpeggios, descend to the lowest chord tone possible. Eventually, arrive at this final version:

Eleven

Exercise 'Eleven' consists of five staves of music. The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' above it. The second staff contains two measures of eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' above it. The third staff contains two measures of eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' above it. The fourth staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' above it. The fifth staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' above it. The exercise is transposed ascending chromatically.

FIVE • QUICK REGISTER CHANGES

FIVE • OCTAVE DISPLACEMENT

Octave displacement is a common technique used to create the angular melodic lines often found in contemporary music. However, considerable skill is needed in order to make it a part of your improvisational repertoire. To develop this skill, begin with an exercise that is tonal and easily heard, such as the one below. Once you have developed the ability to comfortably play Exercises One through Three, atonal exercises such as those on pages 128 and 129 will be easier to execute.

Exercises One through Three are based on the following line. The first four pitches are then displaced whenever they occur—first up, then down.



One

