

## Conventional and accepted pedagogies

### **i) Song and Wind and putting the cart before the horse**

After a discussion with one of the Danish proponents of “Song and Wind,” a lot of my observations and thoughts fell into place. To paraphrase what was said: “Arnold Jacobs never wanted to call “Song and Wind” a method. His explanation of it was simply an observation of a psychological approach employed by all the highly successful players whom he acknowledged and respected.” Ironically enough the teachings of Jerome Callet (a highly polarising figure within the brass playing world) were similar observations of some of the very same highly successful players. Callet’s observations were in a mechanical and technical vein as oppose to Jacobs’ observations of psychological approach. Another aim of this method is to combine as many successful pedagogical methods into one. For too long the worlds of Claude Gordon, Jerome Callet, Arnold Jacobs and many more, have had respective dogmatic and almost tribal followings. The world of brass and wind pedagogy has been polarised by this and it is time to move past this approach. The sooner we realize that all pedagogical approaches, **that yield useful evidence**, are of merit, the sooner we can tailor individually to different student’s psychological needs and become truly qualified to call ourselves pedagogues.

Another discussion with a very accomplished Norwegian player led me to another thought about teaching. To paraphrase: “When students or kids come to me and ask me to teach them to be able to do what I do, (wonderful control of the upper register and general beauty of tone and efficiency) I usually tell them that I can’t because I don’t myself know. I can refer them to solid practice routines, but the truth of it is that I don’t think very much about what I am doing. I just play.”

### **ii) Don’t think so much. JUST PLAY AND HAVE FUN.**

The day I stop thinking about how to improve as a trumpet player both technically and musically will be the day I give up both professional playing and teaching. In many other professional fields, there is an obligatory aspect of maintaining your qualification called “Professional development”. For me, the fact it isn’t obligatory in music is just a formality. Professional development is even more necessary in the field of music as employment opportunities and the job market are changing so rapidly. To be able to offer a product that is relevant in today’s society we are obliged to develop our thinking and skills. Teaching students exclusively to play repertoire that was regarded as the height of musical fashion and technical prowess over 200 years ago is not only ignorant, it is immoral. Many conservatory students embark on there (often grossly overpriced) 3-7 year education with the dream of an orchestral job at the end of it. The likelihood of this becoming a reality is unfortunately incredibly low, not just because the level and relevance of teaching at many conservatories does not prepare students for an orchestral job, but also because we are training too many high-quality musicians for the number of orchestral jobs available. As a modern trumpeter, it is my strong opinion that it is of utmost importance that classical faculty staff at higher education institutions recognize the merit of a more rounded musical education. Developing truly sound fundamentals and the acquisition of appropriate knowledge should allow you to perform a taxing concert in any genre and be able to do it all again the next day (potentially in another genre). For me, trumpet playing and being a “lifelong student of the trumpet” is a calling, a vocation and a way of life. It obliges me to always search for greater knowledge and understanding and of equal importance develop a means to give the knowledge further in a useful way.

If you approach a teacher with a specific list of problems or difficulties and they answer that they don't know how to teach you that, my advice to you is simple: find another teacher. For example: a student that approaches a teacher saying: "I don't have any musical problems but I feel my ability to express myself is severely limited by my embouchure. I have difficulty playing high and loud. Even at more normal dynamics, my sound does not project and my endurance is poor. As a result of these things, I doubt my ability to get through even relatively simple pieces and suffer a lack of confidence which induces performance anxiety. How should I solve these problems?" **(This is the situation that I found myself in and many if not all of the people I have helped have approached me with elements of)**. If the teacher begins teaching the student fundamental drills and exercises with an approach that, the student, is already familiar with, then the result is highly unlikely to be different even after years of intense study on the student's part. It is not the melody we play or the series and combination of notes and intervals that force us to play correctly. It is a development in the understanding of what we are trying to do. There is a psychological AND mechanical aspect to this.