

Musical Communication.

Playing a brass instrument is a way to express and communicate our thoughts and feelings. It is also a vehicle to people's hearts. Our goal as musicians is not only to strive for a higher quality product but also to ensure we affect people with our craft. Therefore, communication in music can't happen merely through the process of playing right notes and rhythms, it happens as a combination of these factors and the most important ingredient in the mix: the human element. In order to be an active and important voice in the communication process, it is very important to determine and understand our role in an ensemble or as a soloist. Understanding the message trying to be communicated and how we can help to clarify it and express it in a clearer manner is what differentiates a good musician from an excellent one, a good ensemble from an excellent one. Playing flawlessly should always be something to strive for every time we pick up our instrument but it is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal should be to affect and communicate. Understanding and respecting phrasing in melody as well as in accompaniment is one of the most important tools we have to clarify and strengthen the message. Preparation and study of the music is essential, as well as understanding the history of the piece and composer we are performing. By taking these aspects into consideration we will be able to give a more accurate version of that message and will enable us to be involved one hundred percent in the story being told. The clarity in form achieved through musical phrasing will tell a much stronger tale. It is like the speaker who takes time and pays attention to every comma and punctuation mark in a speech. Not only the message is clearer but also much more interesting. Dynamics are like colors in a painting. We need to expand them to their max. Taking advantage of the huge spectrum of dynamics we have as brass players is a really powerful tool. We need to explore our soft playing in our practice time diligently every day. It is a lot harder to make our point clear throughout a soft passage than it is during a fortissimo passage. Always approach soft playing with a good sound and a healthy air stream. Louder dynamics sometimes are approached not musically at all, it is important to remember that we need to protect the musical line and effect to our audiences before anything else. Playing always with our best sound is a must and will enhance any musical experience we take a part of. Sing, sing, and sing..... Music can't happen without it. Singing is the most important element in music. After all, our instruments are merely extensions of our voice. It is really important we listen to singers every day. If we accomplish to sing every time we play, our goal to affect and communicate will become a lot easier. Technique and basics are always things we accomplish through mechanical processes, but singing and expression are not easily accomplished. As instrumentalists, our goal should be to express and communicate that mental voice which sings musically and has no hesitation in delivering the message at its best. The voice in our head has no limitations and sounds better than any instrument we have heard. We need to come as close as possible to that voice in our brass playing.

The human element is the most important factor we need to take into consideration when trying to communicate through music. It is my believe music exists with the whole purpose of creating a better quality of life for society. Our personal input in every note and phrase we play is key in order to achieve that magical link between the audience and the performer. We must strive to pour our soul into the music and really let our feelings and emotions carry our musical ideas to new stratospheres. Once that link is created and we experience the reaction and emotion of an audience, performing becomes addictive. Not only because of the natural excitement we feel through the applause and acceptance, but also because that communication channel is so vibrant and so direct it is difficult to describe and substitute. We never want to get away from that level of understanding and communication without words and our message is obviously being heard and appreciated. Communication through music is the best gift we have, sharing it should be our contribution to a better quality of life and better society.

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