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JAZZ CORNER

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JAZZY FLOW STUDIES

BY ERIC WRIGHT

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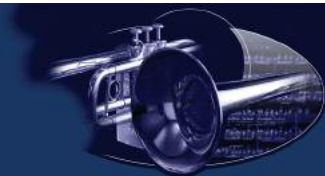
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JAZZY FLOW STUDIES

BY ERIC WRIGHT

The use of simple melodies as warmup exercises has long been a tool of common practice among trumpet teachers and their students. They can vary from the very rudimentary, like long tones or scales that focus on the lower register, to more complex melodies that incorporate wider intervals and longer melodic lines that cross through several registers. What they all have in common are the instructions: 1) to play them at a deliberate tempo, 2) to focus on maintaining a steady tone, and 3) to make smooth connections between the notes. Often, these warmup exercises are described as “flow studies” with the explicit focus on maintaining the consistency of air flow into the trumpet in order to develop the breath support that leads to clearer tone and a better quality of attack and articulation. One of the added benefits of these exercises is that they usually progress through most, if not all, major keys. This familiarizes students with the tonalities typically used in Western music while allowing them to develop their sense of melodic intonation as well as the various fingerings of the trumpet.

The “First Studies” of the *Arban Method* provide basic examples for the use of long tones and simple melodies as warmup exercises. Arban’s exercises are grounded in the military history of the trumpet and the evolution of 19th-century cornet playing. These early exercises focus primarily on developing clear and precise attacks and articulation. Although many of the early exercises such as Nos. 9 – 27 can be played as flow studies using “legato” style phrasing, Arban only addresses “Slurring and Legato Playing” in the second part of his method. Max Schlossberg’s *Daily Drills and Technical Studies* go a bit further toward developing the idea of using “Long Note Drills” to develop smooth connections. Here he takes what are essentially bugle calls and turns them into legato exercises. These are perhaps some of the earliest approaches to exercises that evolve the concept of flow studies, especially Nos. 16 – 37.

Other approaches like those of Claude Gordon and Carmine Caruso combine chromatic melodies and arpeggios to great effect as warmup exercises. But it was the teaching techniques of James Stamp that popularized the use of simple melodies as warmup exercises. Stamp used simple scale melodies buzzed on the lips and on the mouthpieces as warmup aids. He then progressed to more complex intervallic

melodies that were also played on the trumpet (see *Warm-Ups & Studies* by James Stamp, Editions BIM, 1978). These exercises were used to extend one’s range into the register of pedal tones and then into the higher registers of the trumpet. Stamp maintained that it is crucial, when playing legato intervals, to “stay down when going up and stay up when going down,” followed by the explanation, “there must be no indication of which direction (up or down) the slur is going.” This was meant to correct the tendency that many students have of anticipating an interval by changing the mouthpiece pressure on the lips or varying the air pressure in the mouth. In technical terms this usually results in a rise in pitch when the interval is ascending and a decrease in pitch when the interval is descending.

In his teachings, Vincent Cichowicz made explicit use of the term “flow study” to describe the types of melodies he used to teach techniques of breath control and refinement of tone quality. Like Stamp’s exercises, these melodies are built around simple melodic formulas such as scales and arpeggios that incorporate changes of melodic direction and relatively small intervals of thirds and fourths. The emphasis is on maintaining a steady flow of air into the trumpet in order to avoid any

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interruption of tone between intervals. However, rather than extending practice into the pedal tone register these exercises focus on the practical registers of the trumpet from low F# to high C. The end result of these exercises and many others like them is that the player has the opportunity to

“warm up” his ears at the same time as he warms up his lips, lungs, and fingers to the physical effort required to play the trumpet.

In jazz improvisation, familiarity with basic melodic and harmonic principles is crucial in maintaining clarity of expression throughout a harmonic progression that may modulate to several different keys while maintaining a relationship to a primary tonal center. Jazz idioms have two primary ways of defining tonal relationships: 1) through the dominant-tonic relationship as usually expressed in the *ii-V-I* chord progression and 2) through the incorporation of blues-based melodic constructions that singularly define harmonic relationships. During the course of an improvised solo these relationships have to be defined by the voice-leading characteristics of the sequence of tones as they relate to a specific tonality.

JAZZY FLOW STUDIES

Eric Wright

Based on V7-1 Cadences via Blues

Example #1—Major via V7 & Blues



Example #2—Major via Blues and Relative Minor



Example #3—Relative Minor via Blues



Example #4—Dorian Minor via Blues



Example #5—Major via Blues & V7(#9)



What follows is a brief set of “Jazzy Flow Studies” that are taken from exercises used to develop ideas of melodic voice-leading in jazz improvisation. Each of these examples is based on the idea that the dominant chord when combined with elements of the blues scale invariably resolves most strongly to the root of the tonic chord. The version of the dominant chord that is used prominently in these studies is the dominant 7th with flat-9th and sharp-11th. This is combined with the flat-3rd, flat 5th, and flat 7th tones that are prominent in the Blues tonality to create melodies that contain characteristics that are common to the jazz idiom. These principles can be used to construct any number of melodies to help develop a better understanding of the melodic possibilities in jazz and blues. These principles are delineated more fully in a forthcoming work, tentatively titled *Rhythm-Melodic Convergence: A Voice-Leading Technique for Jazz Improvisation*.

These examples can be played as warmup melodies or as flow studies in all keys without preference to register. They should be used to build familiarity with specific voice-leading characteristics within major and minor tonalities by associating “aural imagination” with muscle memory. It is suggested that they be played at moderate tempos, ca. 80 – 100 beats per minute. Eventually, as they become more familiar they can be played at faster tempos and the motives may be incorporated into jazz improvisations. However, the ideas of good breath support and steady air flow, necessary to maintaining a clear, full tone, always apply.

About the author: Eric Wright is lifelong devotee of Jazz trumpet playing and cites Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, and Woody Shaw among his primary influences. He received his bachelor’s degree from UCLA, and later was awarded a master’s degree from Rutgers University where he studied under William Fielder. From 1990 to 2003 he actively pursued a career as a freelance musician in Los Angeles, California, performing in a variety of settings from jazz to salsa to classical music. He has performed with artists as diverse as Ricardo Lemvo, Teddy Edwards, Chris Calloway, Bobby Caldwell, Tito Nieves, and Johnny Pacheco. Wright teaches trumpet at

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