

LONG TUNES

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$\text{♩} = 60$
Entrance Bar

Line 1

Line 2

Line 3

Line 4

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

Continue up or down by half-steps

Purpose | The Why

Stay with Page 1 if you're learning well! Dive into these further pages only if you learn well by doing so. We'll get more detailed with each page. I share many details below, but sometimes less is more, and simply playing an exercise well can supply all the learning one needs.

For others, like myself, I share further thoughts below. I hope you enjoy this exercise as much as I do. Please email any suggestions or breakthroughs to me at jeff@jeffnelsen.com

SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND...
VARIABLES TO INVESTIGATE AND HABIT WELL

Accuracy
Timing
Range
Ease
Efficiency
Breath Attacks
Intonation
Colour Matching
Flexibility
Always Play Musically
Getting over "tonguing first note" hesitations
Symmetrical phrasing
Articulation
Sound Production

Process | The How

The above sheet music page and explanation is enough for massive growth. Play the exercise well and you will reap rewards. Read on for a collection of further ideas on where to look for growth while playing this simple exercise. These are just my ideas. Keep your approach as simple as possible while aggressively finding areas of growth in all possible facets of horn playing while making music.

Important Caveat - Pain is a serious thing. Listen to it, stop when it hurts, and seek professional advice.

LINE 1 SOUND PRODUCTION WORK

Decide what your final dynamic will be for each set of 4 Lines. Count a full bar before Bar 1. Bar 1 is an entrance bar. Your note can begin anywhere in this bar. Spin your air forward and work with your lips, horn, air and more until you get a pppp "Whisper Tone". Keep your timing constant throughout. (Don't start right on beat 1, and don't tongue it.)

Slur out of bar 2 into bar 3 while still in ppp (push your comfort zone). Then crescendo symmetrically to any dynamic through to bar 5.

LINE 2 TIMED SOUND PRODUCTION WORK

Start right on beat 1 with an air attack. A useful approach singers often use is: **"Put the vowel on the beat."**

Play everything else like line 1, while looking for ways of making it easier and more beautiful.

LINE 3 D-TONGUED ARTICULATION PRODUCTION WORK

Building on lines 1 & 2, now add a D consonant to what you've set up. Keep thinking about putting the Vowel on the Beat, while adding the softest 'D' possible. Think of tonguing so softly only you know you're doing it. Try to just put the tongue in front of your spinning air beginnings from lines 1 and 2, and then release your vowel on the beat. Keep your line sounding as connected as your slurred lines 1 & 2 while adding soft and clean articulation.

Keeping as many things in Line 3 the same as 1 & 2 will help reduce pushing our air too much, or other potentially "extra" things we might do when we tongue notes. Articulation is a better thought than tonguing.

LINE 4 ACCENTED SOUND PRODUCTION WORK

Building on skills learned from lines 1-3, add a crisp T consonant to the beginnings of all your notes. Have the first accent be crisp while not making the rest of the note loud. Think Tahhhh - not TAHhhhhh.

Lines 3 & 4 can cover the spectrum of articulations from inaudible to Stravinsky explosions.



Specific Detailed Ideas on Variable Awareness

BAR 1 Entrance Bar (See above and below for more thoughts). I call all thoughts and actions before I make sound my “Grid”. Habit good breathing, lip relaxation and readying, and vocal air movement, all while getting ready to move air forward into your entrance bar.

BAR 2 Balance your mixture of air and horn sound to have a pure sound. Seek to have no extra “blowing air” sounds in your sound. Sometimes we’re over-blowing, so less air actually helps here. Think of your lips absorbing the moving air stream. Stay ppp, steady, and beautiful.

BAR 3 While still in ppp, make a smooth liquidy legato slur. Think of some Canadian Maple Syrup flowing up a staircase. (Yup, it happens all the time.) Start a gradual crescendo. Take your pure mixture of air and sound, and make that mixture louder. Do not push with air alone! Make your sound louder through attention on the sound and how you imagine it sounds in the back of the hall. Crescendo symmetrically until beat 1 of bar 5, where you arrive at your intended dynamic. Find any room to relax your lips that you can, try to relax them, all the while keeping your pure beautiful sound. To relax, I think of my cells spreading apart in my lips, or I feel gravity and everything lowering, or my lips getting softer...

BAR 4 Use a smooth liquid legato through the pitch changes, and continue to crescendo to the final dynamic you’ve chosen. Keep relaxing whenever possible. If I’m crescendo-ing to forte or louder, at this point I’m using quite a bit of mouthpiece pressure so my lip aperture can open more and my lips can flap into the mouthpiece more. More firmness/pressure on the bottom lip and the “posts” where the mouthpiece first meets the top lip can allow the top lip to vibrate more. The fact that our lead pipe angles downwards helps take the pressure off the middle of our top lip as well, so the top lip is more free to vibrate.

BAR 5 Land on this last note in a final way, being careful not to push. The climax should happen the same whether you change pitches climax on the same pitch. The last 3 beats of silence are for working on timing your exhalation, inhalation, embouchure, and everything else that is involved in making your next sound. Habit your trust-worthy “Grid” as you ready for the timed breath attack on bar 6.

BAR 6 Have the note begin with only air (no tongue) exactly on beat 1 in a clear, soft ppp sound. You’re taking what you’ve learned in the Entrance Bar, and timing it to happen at a specific moment. Put the Vowel on the Beat. Create that perfect storm of air, lips, metal, space, and time. Balance your air to sound ratio. If you’ve gotten louder than ppp, get back to that great ppp you had in line 1.

BARS 7, 8, 9 - Same as Bars 3, 4, 5

BAR 10 Begin the note beautifully in ppp with a soft “D” tongue, a tongue that only you can hear. I think of DAAAAA where the consonant is the same size as the vowel. Arnold Jacobs would say, “Think tOH”. Put the Vowel on the Beat. Stay ppp.

Process | The How

BAR 11 Stay ppp and “D” tongue the next note and begin the crescendo. Keep the same connected line you had in your slurred lines 1 & 2.

BAR 12 “D” tongue the melody through a symmetrical crescendo.

BAR 13 “D” tongue the final note. Work your grid on the last 3 beats for the upcoming accented melody.

BAR 14 Accent the beginning within ppp. Put the Vowel on the Beat. ...and stay ppp.

BAR 15 Accent the next note while staying connected and ppp, thinking of the same line as your slurred lines 1-3. Begin the crescendo.

BAR 16 Accent the melody through a symmetrical crescendo, all the while increasing in density, width, intensity, decibel level, or whichever way you think about this crescendo. Mix it up for each Long Tune.

BAR 17 Create an awesome, accented final note!

FURTHER LONG TUNE VARIATIONS

Start fff and end ppp

Use pitches from your repertoire while using the Long Tunes rhythm

Play accented 1/16th notes on every 1/4 note beat (with rests between) staying in the dynamic structure, creating the same line you did on **LINE 4**

(learn how to create a symmetrical line with short notes like in Til Eulenspiegel)

Use a practice mute - the resistance makes for even softer entrance bars and ppp, and some different learning

THOUGHTS FROM SOME PROS:

“I LOVE the long tunes! They’re so simple in concept and produce very appealing results. They provide super-awareness of two things: warm, concentrated air support and an extremely efficient buzz. I find these extremely important in producing easy, flowing, and beautiful musical lines. They have helped me in the orchestra with really soft entrances. I approach a soft note like the beginning of a long tune, and align the articulation with the momentum I already have in place with my air and embouchure. They have also helped me recreate the mental awareness of what a note feels like before I play it. Every day can be slightly different than the last, in terms of where individual notes want to buzz. I spend a couple minutes a day playing long tunes in different ranges of the Horn, and they help me find where I feel notes for the day. Lastly, they bring a sense of ease to playing in general. No over analyzing...just feel and play.”

—Jesse McCormick, Second Horn, The Cleveland Orchestra. Ohio USA

“I guess my favorite thing about ‘Long Tunes’ is that you have taken what is normally a fairly boring but necessary exercise, long tones, and added a melodic twist to them. Further still, with the incorporation of the “Ghost Note” in bar 1, we learn to better understand how and when our lips respond to the airflow. Lastly, the use of sequentially changing how we begin each new phrase adds another layer of variety to these exercises. Long Tunes are great.”

—Michael Lewellen, Principal Horn, Fort Wayne Philharmonic Indiana USA

Big Goal #1 | Sound Production Understanding

EVEN FURTHER THOUGHTS

BEGINNINGS OF NOTES

The Long Tunes exercise is simple in construct so it can help us look at things repeatedly, and without excessive complication. While engaged in playing, our moments of change are spread out, so each event happens pretty clear of the next/previous event. First we count, then breathe, then spin our air in a way that serves the sound we want, then we start experimenting with variables until we get a shadow of a sound...and so on. This begins with an Entrance Bar:

BAR1 "ENTRANCE BAR"

The note can start anywhere during the entrance bar. Spin your air at a constant rate while changing things * to find the point of one cell vibrating - the "Ghost Note" or "Whisper Tone". Moving our air independently of embouchure manipulation is a useful ability. Once your air is going out, let it stay constant while you work with your other variables. Basically, don't slow your air down or speed it up to get the note to start. Learn how to manage lips and mouthpiece pressure to create sound. You're learning how to start a note from nothing while also building trust in your ability to play super-softly.

Once you feel the sound and/or vibration starting, see if you can hold the sound at that soft volume and color. Push your comfort zone. Optimally, it can feel like you're leaning your air onto the horn with soft lips between. I like to think about the air vibrating between the lips rather than the air making my lips vibrate. Of course, as we go higher, lower or louder, lip softness changes.

* There are many variables at play when starting a note. Here is a starting list of somethings you can change. Keep experimenting! Open your mind and be creative while listening to your bell and your body.

- Lip Aperture Size and Shape and how it crosses into the air stream
- Firmness of lips and face muscles
- Tongue shape
- Mouthpiece pressure
- Mouthpiece angle
- Resonance - Oral Cavity size/Soft Palate usage/open chest
- Jaw placement
- Air Density
- Air Angle and where it hits your lips
- Air Column Size

Big Goal #2 | Balanced Sound Production System

HABITING AN EFFICIENT EMOUCHURE

While playing Long Tunes, constantly be looking for any place in your lips and facial muscles where you can “relax”. Careful not to relax too much, but otherwise, find that awesome balance between things moving, resisting, and vibrating.

Once I have the note sounding the way I want, I look for any place in my lips that I can be less firm/tense. I focus on keeping the sound the same while experimenting with lip relaxation. I want less lip muscle work while getting the same quality of sound.

I constantly look for room to relax my lips because often I think I’m as efficient as I can be and then I find some more room for less muscle work. It sometimes feels like letting go of the side of the pool while not being sure I can swim. Sometimes we must let go first to find out we’re fine with less security.

Be sure to take up that shift in workload with other things like more air and/or more mouthpiece pressure. Yes, too much mouthpiece pressure is bad, but so is too little. If we’re not using the metal mouthpiece as a tireless source of resistance, we have to use our lip muscles. I prefer using the metal...it lasts longer! Find your balance per unique scenario of pitch, dynamic, colour, length, and more.

Doing this balancing of my lip work on a daily basis has, over a short period of time, created a habit in my sound production approach that has my lips working better, and LESS.

STARTING STRUCTURE FOR LONG TUNE WORK

I do two 15-minute sessions a day.

My first notes on the horn are Long Tunes starting on that written concert f (horn middle c) I set a timer for 15 minutes, and go up by half-steps until time is up.

My second session is later in the day. I play a few mid-range notes, and then I go above the staff. I take it easy, being careful not to get too tired.

WARNING - Remember these are essentially long tones. I was quite stiff the morning after doing a couple sessions. I was concerned, until later that afternoon. Then I was very excited. Things felt great, and sounded pretty good too!