

Stamp: "Symphony No. 1"

Håkan Hardenberger and his Warm Up Routine.

Background.

At a seminar hosted by the Norwegian Trumpet Forum in March 2001, the Swedish trumpet artist, Håkan Hardenberger demonstrated his own warm up routines. He started by talking briefly about his own trumpet background:

I was lucky that I got a good teacher, Bo Nilsson, right from the start. Later I went to Thomas Stevens, James Stamp (at age 14) and then to Pierre Thibaud at the Paris Conservatory.

All these teachers had their predecessors and great teachers. Stamp who someone has called a "West Coast gimmick", was a student of Max Schlossberg, who came from Europe and played in New York under conductors like Mahler and others. Thibaud was a student of Sabarich, who again was a student of Fovau (etc. back to Arban).

Two building blocks - vibration and air

It is so simple and primitive that it gets complicated. They demand that we play a certain note – yet we have no means to visualize it - this note. When a pianist wants to play an F sharp – bamm – then he knows it's there – and there it is. Same for a violinist. We have no such possibilities.

We have 7 different combinations of overtone series – we have to train our body to hit notes and to visualize them.

In the morning when I wake up, I take everything down to the "least common denominator".

As a trumpeter, what do we have to work with?

We have two raw materials, one is the vibration of the lips, and the other is air. This is what we have to work with - the two building blocks. What happens when something is wrong is that the balance between vibration and air is disturbed. What you practice at the start of your day is to achieve this balance. I almost look at my warm up as a kind of meditation – one take it down to the "lowest common denominator" and let what is not good slowly disappear.

The "kernel" of Stamp - the "bend" notes.

Those of you who know about Stamp, know the "bend" notes? This is the kernel of the whole system. It is the same with Schlossberg if you look in the beginning of Schlossberg – he is not using "bending", but trying to achieve the same, that is, the balance between air and vibration.

We all know how it feels when you are stiff and then try to blow it away - buaaach (HH blows strongly with his lips) – like this. Then you have destroyed it for the rest of that day.

What I start with is – almost without wanting to play – just placing the trumpet on the lips to make what Stamp calls "poo" – the "poo"-attack – no tongue – just air – absolutely not strong – and then you see what happens. (HH plays a G, softly with a "poo" attack, holding

it for a long time). Then I try to listen to where my tone is that day – if it is full of archxxx – if the lips feels like (HH stamp his foot on the floor) – then I know it will take longer today.

From the very beginning those (points at his ears) are as important as any other part of our body when playing the trumpet. If there is any experience I have gained when listening to people all over the world, it is that people are not using their ears properly. Even those who "have ears"! One goes by feel all the time and by this one fools one self into a corner.

Now comes the "bend" – which means that you bend the tone out of the centre and then return to the centre to get a cleaner centre.

Any questions about what I just said? - because this is the central point! (HH plays a soft G with "poo" attack, bend down to F#, then slowly back to G).

A tone is never static. Even this one (HH hits a note on the piano) – it is on its way to some place.

We have a tendency with this, as I said, fight-instrument – when we play a G – bamm – a G is there and then we play it static and keep it immobile – baaaaHH. A tone is always on its way (HH plays a G again and bends it down and back).

I stay in the register on the trumpet that offers me no resistance – between G and (low) C. Here I do bends at first. (Bending again) – did you hear the "gravel" in my tone? It is completely normal at the beginning of a new day – and that is where the meditation process is: "gravel" in the tone? Ok – let the "gravel" disappear. (HH bends down, first G-F#-G, then F#-F-F#, etc. – two times bending on each)

Anyone who wants to try?

What one must not do is to push against the tone (demonstrates bending with a "push") – but like this (without "pushing") – to let the tone "rest" and keep its freedom.

There has to be some questions about this? This is the most important thing I will say during these two days.

What do you do when you bend?

What happens is, that you make a small vocalising (sings halftone interval O-AA-O) – just a small change in the throat. You make no extra push with the air. If you start to push with air, you introduce a fight against the trumpet instead of letting the trumpet "walk" with you and let your mind control the trumpet. I use to tell a little metaphor: When I was a little kid we had a very big dog, a St. Bernhard, and when we were out for a walk, he was out walking me. In my relation to the trumpet I try to be different: I decide over the trumpet and not vice versa.

The Stamp book (edition BIM) says that you should use force when bending?

Yes - absolutely wrong! It's the same with the Schlossberg book written by his son in law. Schlossberg wrote out exercises like a doctor prescribing medicine for each of his students. Most certainly very precise! In fact I have a copy of Stamps lesson when he as a very young man went to Schlossberg – a little prescription for next weeks exercise. Someone then collected these notes and put it together as a book. What we also know is

that Arban, Clarke etc, the text in the books serve no purpose. It is not what you practice, but how you practice.

Many do not succeed when they try these bends. The tone does not change – it is still a G or F regardless of what they do (HH makes "locked throat sound" with his voice). This is a sign of stiffness. You have to solve that problem first.

(HH bends again, but add a new tone, G, F#, F, F#, G). I use a lot of time in the morning on this if I have time. This is my main section.

When one gets "gravel" in the tone one often tries to force it – and then one does not hear it (laughter). Or how? This is what we do.

Once in my life I was forced to work a lot on this. In Paris one time I became ill – measles or something like that. I was so sick I could not play for a whole month. When I started up again it sounded like a "saw mill in upper part of Norrland". I had a terrible amount of "gravel" in the tone. Earlier I had never been used to that. I had a very dry practice room where I could hear my tone very clearly. What I did was, I went to a corner where it became very clear. Then I thought – now you have to take it easy. If you are overwhelmed by panic, you will never play again. I stood there for hours and did bends and used my ears. It is all about not losing the balance. If you have this basic attitude all the time: You shall not force anything! (plays bends, two semitones down). I do this in the morning and get "gravel" in my tone, as I did a while ago, it is not the end of the world. You just continue with the next exercise. You do not have to get rid of the "gravel" right away – but just use the meditation moment: calm now – now it is gone – now everything is fine.

After so many years I have a feeling that I can get back to. If you haven't been "there", that's quit another matter. Later when we are going to talk about articulation it is all a matter of "a pure hit".

How many of you play a sport like tennis or golf?

It is the most useful therapy for a brass musician inasmuch as it builds on the same feeling. The same feeling as when you hit with a perfect stroke. If you have never experienced it, you must search for it with your teacher. But you have to search for it in an "anti violence" manner. This is what I try to introduce now. Ok?

Do these bends until it feels good. It should be lovely to play the trumpet right from the start of the day. To place the trumpet on the lips should be a good feeling. Stamp always did this. (HH places the trumpet with the mouthpiece against his cheek). This is the feeling!

Do this with your trumpets!

In the cheek – not close to the teeth – but in the cheek. Like this! - a lovely feeling - soft and warm. (HH places the trumpet light on the mouth and plays some short soft tones with "poo" attacks).

What is this "poo" attack? Like "ball hits". The ball is coming towards you – and there you hit it (HH simulates a tennis player).

In the instrument is air (taps on the mouthpiece). I will meet this with my air coming from here (points at his lungs). In the middle is this "poor bastard" (points on his lips and plays

"poo" tones). If the air is in front (plays – PHU-ooo) - or there is no air – then there is no proper "hit".

The purpose of playing with "poo" and not with a TAH attack is to play softly. If one uses the tongue it is so easy to "push" the tone. If one work with the "poo" attacks, one builds the reflexes: here in my body is my G. (HH plays C' G C softly with "poo").

If you practice (HH plays C' G C strong) – then it is not practicing – it is "blasting" the trumpet. The feeling for the trumpet is not developed.

Mouthpiece practice

This is even clearer when you go to the next sequence in the warm up – the mouthpiece practice. They can also be found in the Schlossberg. He worked a lot with this. It is not anything new. Just like the pedal tones are nothing new. Recently they have discovered a printed supplement to the Arban-school, from the time of Arban – with supplementary exercises with pedal tones by Arban him self. All telling you it is just a "gimmick" so and so – that is not true!

Here we have less help. It becomes more evident if we have "gravel" in the tone or if we play out of tune. Everything becomes clear. The better to continue practicing with the "poo" attack.

When you sit down and practice this - (HH plays a tone on the piano) – it has to be as easy and uncomplicated - (play a low C on the piano, then on the mouthpiece) – it was not. Surprise!

Why is this? I has to do with what happened yesterday – am I tense?, etc. 99% of you will play this with bad intonation when you start because you are tense.

As I said – use your ears from the start of the day. Later it is too late. (HH plays a low C and repeats it several times on the mouthpiece with a "poo" attack). There were days, especially in the beginning, when I had to do a hundred of these.

(HH plays Stamp 1 on the mouthpiece)

What do we have? – Yes (plays same sequence on the piano) – whole tone – whole tone – half tone – whole tone. Do it! I will play it first (on piano).

What happens when I ask someone to play this without the piano is that the last tone when you return is not a C but a C# or something else.

You go by feel and do not use your ears (plays Stamp 1 out of tune) – Wow, I play Stamp! – I will be great! But it is not only about playing the exercise but also using your ears! This interval here is important (plays G-F-G-F-G-F) – that it is the same every time - and not diminishing.

It all start here (plays Stamp 1 on the piano). Can you play it without me playing it on the piano?

(counts) – 3 – 4 (the audience repeat on the mouthpiece).

Thibaud often said that the feeling here should be as when turning on the water tap. (plays the next sequence D-E-F-G-A - the audience repeat - HH hit the D on the piano) - Not the same tone! (laughter).

Listen! – (HH plays same sequence on the piano) – here (F-G-A) – a big whole tone step – then a whole tone step, but less. Can you hear that? Kind of d-minor, we are in.

(HH then plays E-F-G-A-H on the mouthpiece - the audience repeat)

(HH hits E on the piano – not the same tone as the ending tone of the audience)

Ok – this goes on all the time with "poo"-attacks.

(HH plays a G above the line - the audience repeat)

I heard several losing the balance.

(HH demonstrates by playing a "forced" tone on the mouthpiece)

The whole idea with this is the "poo" with a reflex. To land on the tone like a lunar landing - Apollo.

It takes years of practice to develop the right reflex on this. Nevertheless it can go to hell sometimes. But you increase your chances. You know where every tone is in your body.

This goes up to here (plays high – above high C then down to low C).

Now this little chapter is closed.

Stamp: "Symphony No. 1"

Then it is this (HH plays C'-D'-C' G-A-G C on the piano) – this is Stamp: "Symphony No. 1."

Why is it not (plays C'-G –C)? Accordingly Schlossberg. Why does Stamp add (plays C'-D'-C' G-A-G C)?

To counteract gravitation.

Yes – "inverted bend" you could say - to achieve the right balance with my instrument. (HH bends G-F#-G on the trumpet and lift his right hand up when bending down)

Consequently (plays G-A-G and lower his hand when going up to A)

(plays the whole Stamp 3 sequence, let his right hand go down on D, then up, then down for G to A and hand highest on last low C)

The whole idea: To let us think when going up a tone, then back (plays C-D-C on the piano) - is it the same tone?

(Audience play) Same tone when we get back. Think water tap – constant air stream all the time.

This exercise continues down (HH on mouthpiece H-C#-H F#-Ab-F# H) - then on and on – down to pedal C.

At this moment you are actually warmed up.

Stamp on the trumpet

When this is done on the mouthpiece one plays... (HH plays Stamp 3 on the trumpet)
What then later happens in the Stamp exercises, is that one expands the established feeling in different directions. You make bigger intervals. You land high and low. What you should take with you as a little "golden egg" is the feeling established with the "bend" tones. It is precisely the same with Schlossberg. His exercises are in the wrong order in the book, but it is exactly the same case. Everything expands – all disciplines gets more difficult. You get into articulation, you get into finger exercises, you get into different stuff and it is very easy that some of this make the balance tip over.

Maggio, Gordon and Stamp

Is there any connection between Louis Maggio, Claude Gordon and Stamp?

Yes – it is a variation on the same theme. I did a lot of Maggio as a boy – it is actually a primitive version of Stamp. It is more focused on the muscular strength. They are both (Maggio and Gordon) guys who came from the popular area – studio musicians.

Stamp was a man with two heart attacks who had to find a minimally strenuous way of playing. He played first trumpet in the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra and got bad health. He then started reflecting on how he could play using very little energy. He developed his system based on that. His system builds more on flexibility and relaxation, while Maggio and Gordon are more based on the muscular part. But there are parts of Stamp going in that direction. When you get down and then ascends again (plays last part of Stamp 3 – from low C down to pedal C and then ascending 3 octaves) – it is the same case. You go down to the pedal tone to establish a feeling that is both strong and protecting.

The 3 main systems in Stamp

There are 3 main systems in Stamp, 3 main warm ups.

1. The one that is closest to Schlossberg (plays Stamp 3a) – and so on. It is built on fourths and fifths. You work to develop the flexibility of the muscles. The least complicated. This is the one that is best to start with.

2. This one you can use if you are tense and need to relax – the one with the sixths. (Plays Stamp 3 b - takes in air after the first A) – it develops the dark side of your sound. When you work with the sixth it is an interval you have to keep down. I use this one when I have played a lot on the piccolo trumpet.

3. This is the long Stamp exercise, (plays Stamp 4a) with it's inverted figures when ascending (Stamp 5). This is the one closest to Maggio.

There is also another, Harold Branch who also has the same way of thinking. He keeps the same fingers as on the note before the pedal note. (A, valve 12 – down to pedal F with valve 12)

(HH plays F-C – A, – F, then back -A,-C-F) to enhance the feeling of building a pillow on the pedal note as a protection. There exist some terrible texts about smiling. Then you thin out the musculature.

This warm up takes approx. one hour for me to finish.

Use of air

The use of air?

Yes, if you use too little when playing the bends you will notice it – same with too much air.

The long warm up (play Stamp 5) is also a breathing exercise.

If you have established the right balance it is a fact that we all can breathe. In the morning or the evening when you are tired you yawn – AAHH – this is the most perfect breathing exercise there is.

Everybody - yawn!

It cannot be improved on – all body functions respond exactly to how they should. There is no worse bullshit than those saying that you should influence the diaphragm when inhaling. The other night I had a long and nice conversation with Birgit Nilsson about this. She was as angry as me with all those trying to explain that you can push with the diaphragm when inhaling. Completely improper! It only creates tension. This (pats his own chest) is equivalent to this (points at the piano) – a resonance box. If I have done nothing to disturb the resonance box then the breath can be natural. Then the feeling of air out is much the same as air in. There are many who make a nice air intake and then later disturb everything.

(HH plays a low and high note). Same case all the time – if you keep the "golden egg" from the morning practice.

When I make a joke and say "Symphony no. 1 by Stamp", I mean that when I play it, I try to play it as beautifully as possible. Everything could be like a solo in a Brahms symphony. And your ear has to take part in this.

What's important for me is to separate: When I practice – I practice and when I play, then I play. Many practicing at home play to favour their own ego: Look what I can! Then one does not practice correctly. The same person when performing on an audition or at a concert – then he suddenly start practicing.