

Ellefson Warm-up No. 4

Assembled for the 2017 Alessi Seminar

Each day is like peeling off the dirty layer of a lint roller; begin fresh, clean and positive, unsoiled by bad habits. A thoughtful warm-up is the preamble to *excellence*!

Throughout the warm-up, quietly and intently *contemplate the concept of excellence*.

Excellence must be achieved on the first sound and carried through in all sounds to follow. Insist on *excellence*.

Be a "sound machine" not with volume but with resonance and vibration. Think: free, resonant, easy, healthy. No extremes during warm-up; just fantastically rich sounds.

Procedure:

Loosen up the body, take a few deep breaths, buzz the mouthpiece for approximately 30 seconds.

When performing this first exercise, keep a "glissando buzz" even between notes that are on different partials.

No flexing or clenching on arpeggio partial changes. Just blow freely. Air. **Sound.**

The musical score is written in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. It consists of seven staves of music. The first staff begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking. The music is characterized by long, sweeping lines with various fingerings (6, 7) and accents (*v*) indicated above the notes. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The piece concludes with a final note on a whole rest.

Rest and stretch to stay loose. Enjoy creating sound.

A single staff of music in bass clef, 4/4 time, containing a whole rest.

As the slide goes out, keep the integrity and shape of the air.
 From low E-flat and below, lip the notes, don't use the valve.

Do a different starting position each day and apply the step-wise pattern. 7 days/week, 7 positions.
 Use valve only on slurs, not glisses.
 Repeat any dropouts until connections are successful and reliable. No airballs, no bumps.
 Use gentle yet insistent air on all connections.
 Slow slide gliss in bar 1. Legato tongue bar in 2. Fast slide gliss in bar 3.
 Wide lip vibrato on fermatas on first two beats, then non-vibrato to center the sound.
 Breathe on barline as needed.

Plenty of energy on the attack and sustain on accented tenuto notes.
Match timbres throughout partials.
Continue each sequence in all seven positions.

$\text{♩} = 84$

etc.

$\text{♩} = 84$

etc.

$\text{♩} = 84$

etc.

Musings on Ellefson's Warm-up No. 4:

When assembling my “Warm-up No. 4,” I was reminded of the motto I shared in my first (“If I Only Had the Time”) warm-up. It is not **what** you play but **how** you play it that really matters. During my masterclasses, I am often asked to suggest an exercise to help a particular difficulty or deficiency. While I can probably come up with something to help to address the issue, the more vital discussion is one of CONCEPT. If a clear concept is not present, any exercise, no matter how well conceived will likely prove fruitless. Yes, one can go through the motions of addressing a problem but unless the concept is also adjusted, success will be accidental or at least delayed. Long tones do not make our sound better. Long tones with an elevated concept, will improve/maintain our sound

Interspersed in the preceding pages are thoughts to help guide both concept (i.e. mental/psychological) as well as the physical approach. Regarding the physical, it is important to have a basic understanding of how the “sound apparatus” works. Knowing what constitutes a healthy embouchure is important as is knowing how to take a healthy, productive breath. It is not necessary to obsess about the physical apparatus. Look at the embouchures of the top players in the world. They are remarkably similar. There is a reason: the structures are efficient and healthy. Just do it like they do. If you are a teacher of young people, insist that they play with a healthy embouchure, as adjusting becomes more difficult with every day.

Posture is an often neglected, yet vastly important, ingredient in our performance product. Stay tall. Stay light. Stay long. Stay up. Don't allow the bell, shoulders or torso to sag. Doing so hinders both a healthy breath and an efficient bell angle. After all, we are engaged in producing and projecting sound...why point that sound at the floor? Doing so compromises both presence and timbral nuance. No “serenading the snakes”! Apply just enough muscle engagement to produce free, effortless, robust sound. Keep face, neck, arms and hands free of unnecessary flexing or clenching. Over-engaging produces that dreaded word.....*tension*.

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Q: When approaching the first notes of the day or after a long rest during the day, which part is “warm-up” and which part is fundamental practice? When does interpretative study begin? In other words, when does the warming-up end and the practicing begin?

PE: *“All sound should be produced with the highest degree of fundamental awareness and integrity. Adding the element of artistry and interpretation only enhances fundamental reinforcement; only though this can the highest level of music making occur.”*

After going through this warm-up, you will be ready for the really important work—the practice session(s). View the warm-up similarly to stretching before an exercise

workout. The most effective work in each gets done when our muscles are limber and ready to accept exertion. Too much too soon inhibits progress and creates force and tension. Breathe and do mild stretching throughout. Keep the body from locking. Stay loose. Shoulder circles, arm swings, head rotations. Keep face soft.

During your warm-up and practice, ***separate yourself from distraction***, whether it is your phone/device, your homework, your worries. Deal with them either before or after your time on the horn. Don't let distraction invade and intrude on the time you are investing in your progress. You WILL improve more quickly if you do. Improvement is the goal...right?

MINDLESS = USELESS...Stay present!

DISTRACTION = POISON TO PROGRESS...Stay focused!

Body of practice session, after warm-up:

Sound- requires constant attention

Articulation:

- clean, crisp, clear attacks
- rapid tonguing studies both on one pitch as well as slide technique velocity studies. Get that single-tongue going!
- smooth slurs, both natural and tongued legato
- lip slurs and flexibility. Extreme flexibility, while impressive to some, is not necessary for an orchestral player. It is important for non-orchestral fields.
- Multiple tonguing, again not necessary for an orchestra player (but handy when needed!)

Dynamic extremes- both loud ***and*** soft

Range extremes- both high ***and*** low

Scales, arpeggios and intervals (in tune!) through entire register. Learn how to navigate from top to bottom with consistent timbre and dynamic.

Solo repertoire

Etudes

Excerpts

Record yourself frequently. Study what you hear and ***learn.***

Identify what you don't do well and address it every day.

Just do it.

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