

Practice Routine – Food Groups

“How do you go about changing your warm-up daily routines to break up the monotony?”

Great question. The answer is, I don't have a daily routine.

I have a priority list - a shit-list if you will - of things that ‘suck the most’ and I tend to those things. But it doesn't have to be with a particular exercise, and it certainly doesn't require a sequence of exercises. Some people find it really helpful to have a ‘Groundhog Day’ approach to their technical studies. I *do not*. I feel like that is my kryptonite. I *have*, brought some exercises into the fold for long periods of time, but those are long gone, and I'm onto other things.

So the concept would be like - and this is what I can offer you; this would probably be a pretty helpful way of looking at it - like the food pyramid, right? The basic food groups. In trumpet-speak that would be: sound (just sound production; resonance), flexibility, articulation quality; range (which kind of works with flexibility), finger dexterity, harmonic freedom; these kind of things are the basic food groups.

And you don't need, in fact I would go as far as to say you *shouldn't* keep the same exercises where all you need to do is make sure you're hitting all the food groups. If you can look at an exercise and categorize it based on what function it serves, then you can choose when to play it. Or when to play other things like it. Or how to modify other exercises to make it more like that one. Or how to take an exercise that only is the equivalent of just carbs - like bread.

Okay, bread inherently isn't bad for you, but *only* bread is bad for you. So if you want to turn bread into something more interesting - turn it into a cool crazy open-faced sandwich that has a nice, well-balanced diet for that meal- well then you have to figure out, “What else can I do to this bread to make it something more nutritious?”.

So for me, that might be taking an exercise and introducing dynamic contrast to that exercise. Or playing it all throughout my range, or play a Clark study modally, in every key. I've given this example before but I'll give it again. [plays Clark study modally]. So I'm playing the same pattern, in a same sort of relative pattern in every mode. Something like that.

Then you can start to turn that one exercise which might just be the equivalent of a slice of bread, and turn it into a big nutritious sandwich of goodness where you're working on. And maybe it's [plays trumpet], whatever. Change it up with articulation, change it up with volume, change it up with the range you're in, play one in the extreme upper register - *your* extreme upper register - one in the bottom of your range, work your way towards the centre, work your way from the centre outward, I don't know! Use your own creative juices to figure it out.

That's the difference between you and me, or him or her, is how we diversify our diet of musical intake. And I think that it's a very sad thing when players limit themselves to pre-prescribed meal plans that allow for no creativity and not enough diversity. So hopefully that was helpful.