Daily Conditioning Studies for Trombone

The Magic Six Notes

B = breath attack; T = tongue; Ns Br = nose breath

Intervals (one per day)

2nds

3rds

4ths

5ths

6ths

min 7ths (adjust upper notes as necessary to maintain the minor interval)

Maj. 7ths (adjust upper notes as necessary to maintain the major interval)

8ves

Carmine Caruso
Harmonics

Level 1
1st pos.
2nd pos.
3rd pos.
4th pos.
continue in 5th, 6th, and 7th positions

Level 2 - add notes to the top as your development allows.
1st pos.
2nd pos.
continue in all positions

Tongue/slur study

Tah dahl dahl dahl dahl Tah dahl dahl dahl Tah dahl dahl dahl dahl

Tonguing-on-a line
rhythm pattern may be simplified or elaborated

continuous line of air

continuous line of air
Chromatic pedal exercise

T = tongue; NT = no tongue (small glisses are OK); Ns Br = nose breath

Carmine Caruso

continue until failure, pause 10 seconds and continue...

semple legato (fast breath after the turn-around if possible)

Extend the upper range as your development allows.

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The "Speak"

Breath attacks only throughout. The idea is to make each note "speak" as clearly and cleanly as possible. Set embouchure FIRST - then order "IMMEDIATE AIR - IMMEDIATE SOUND" (like saying "PA"). Concentrate the energy into the AIR ONLY. Feel activity and movement in the ABDOMINALS ONLY. Maintain firmness in muscles surrounding the embouchure throughout each set. Breath marks indicate SPACE between notes (do NOT breathe in - just stop blowing). All notes should be well separated. Work these in different registers.

("Long setting" - nose breathe throughout each set)
Circle Slurs

The following merely illustrate the basic idea. The ultimate objective is the ability to "trill" through the repeating note units indefinitely and as fast as possible. Vary the given examples in terms of speed and specific repetition pattern according to your specific needs.

IMPORTANT GOAL: minimize movement of the part of the embouchure that is outside of the mouthpiece rim (very challenging).

Other variants:
- inversion
- begin on any 1st position note

2-notes (trill drills)

A.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{...etc. in remaining positions}
\end{array}
\]

B.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{...etc. in remaining positions}
\end{array}
\]

3-note Circle Slurs

A.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{...etc. in remaining positions}
\end{array}
\]

B.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{...etc. in remaining positions}
\end{array}
\]
A very important priority for these drills is establishing and maintaining firmness ALL AROUND the embouchure. Feel a "RING OF STRENGTH" surrounding the mouthpiece rim and endeavor to keep all lip action INSIDE that ring. This focusing and concentration of movement into the center of the embouchure is fundamental to the development of embouchure strength, agility and refinement.
Soft-Loud-Soft (S-L-S) on "6 Notes"

Always using Breath attacks and Long-setting

continue through the "6 notes"

S-L-S on Intervals

...etc. to failure

Rotate through the interval cycle with a different interval each day.

VARIATION: reverse the dynamics (Loud - Soft - Loud)

This is a very intense exercise. Do it ONLY when you are fresh
- NEVER when your embouchure is fatigued.

Endeavor to maintain tone QUALITY and PITCH through all dynamic levels.

Think in terms of CHANGING AIR SPEEDS. You set the embouchure for the pitch.
The degree of loudness/softness is determined by the speed of the "blow".
This exercise is infinitely variable. Use it on any pitch pattern and focus variously on different registers.

The important feature is juxtaposing the abdominal with the jaw vibrato. This exercise does MUCH more than help develop a beautiful vibrato. It does wonders to strengthen and refine the "air-embouchure" relationship.

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Daily Conditioning Exercises for the Trombone

*how to make them work for you...

These instructions and special techniques are to be applied to the conditioning exercises. They are quite detailed but essential to gain optimal benefits from the exercises. READ AND UNDERSTAND THEM.

**Your mental focus** - the quality of your attention - is far more important than the specific exercises. Your mental focus always begins with a mental conception of the most beautiful, pure, and engaging trombone sound you can imagine. Imagine the sound at a medium dynamic level and as a pure, straight tone. This sound concept will give direction to these exercises. Be TOTALLY present with 100% awareness of what you are HEARING and of all RELEVANT BODY SENSATIONS.

**Posture and Breathing**
(read this slowly, carefully, and OFTEN)

How you align, carry, and use yourself is of the utmost importance. The following should be your main priorities during the warm-up and conditioning phase of practice so as to become automatic habits:

1. Stand or sit TALL so that your spine is lengthened (but not stretched). The most critical area to feel this length is in the abdominal area – keep the rib cage and hips FAR APART from each other. The abdominal muscles are hinged to the bottom of the rib cage and move the air like a lever. Long levers work better than short ones. DO NOT CRUNCH UP THE ABS. It is the abdominal muscles that power the flow of the pressurized air that fuels the embouchure in making the sound or "buzz."

2. Neck is relaxed and long, both front and back. Head is poised and balanced over the spine. Shoulders are relaxed and wide.

3. Chest is lifted upward with the chest cavity feeling big and roomy. This position is maintained at *every* phase of the breathing cycle. The chest is NEVER collapsed or caved-in, even when you are completely empty of air.

POSTURE IS THE KEY TO CORRECT BREATHING. The posture must be set BEFORE you take your breath. When your posture is right, the air will naturally go to the right place. *Be constantly monitoring and correcting your posture.*
Embouchure

These studies will help you discover and stabilize your optimum embouchure configuration. The following are general guidelines - exact details are always dependent on the individual's physiology.

1. Feel strength ALL AROUND the mouthpiece. The mouth corners should firmly push into the teeth in a downward direction. The moving, active part of the embouchure is the buzzing tissue inside the mouthpiece. Think of the tissue that immediately surrounds the outside of the mouthpiece rim as a frame that anchors the buzzing tissue. You want this frame to feel firm and with no elasticity - otherwise the onset of the buzz is liable to be delayed and/or distorted (i.e. “fffoowah” or “boowah” attacks).

2. The inside skin around the lips should feel as if it is glued to the teeth and gums all the way around. DO NOT ALLOW ANY AIR POCKETS that will cause the embouchure frame to move or distort its shape at the start of the tone.

3. Learn to play in all registers with this basic set-up.

4. The embouchure is set and focused BEFORE you start the blow - not AS you start the blow. This will insure consistent quality attacks.

The “Long-Setting” Technique

Several exercises use the “long-setting” technique, which was devised by Carmine Caruso. This is a specialized technique used ONLY in specially designed conditioning exercises. The object is to eliminate the interruption of the basic embouchure setting that occurs when the breath is taken through the mouth. While breathing through the mouth is the normal and correct procedure, the “long-setting” technique is a powerfully effective training maneuver to establish and stabilize a healthy embouchure. The player takes the initial breath in the normal manner, through the mouth, but all replacement breaths for the remainder of the exercise are taken through the nose while maintaining the mouthpiece placement and pressure and maintaining the muscle tension and focus of the embouchure. “Long-setting” exercises are designed to accommodate the longer time necessary to breathe through the nose. (Note: if congestion or other physical circumstances make nose-breathing difficult, either lengthen the rests or eliminate the “long-setting” technique altogether until the congestion has cleared).
What to concentrate on:
1. After the first breath, NO AIR comes in through the mouth - it can ONLY come in through the nose (note: the throat and mouth cavity must still be open and relaxed and chest always "up and spacious").

2. During the intake through the nose, the mouthpiece placement and pressure, and embouchure firmness ALL AROUND the mouthpiece SHOULD BE MAINTAINED - just as they were on the previous tone. Be consciously aware and very intentional about the STILLNESS – the INACTIVITY – of the entire embouchure while you are breathing in through the nose (OK, there is that very tiny, miniscule adjustment INSIDE the frame if you are going to a different pitch - but do that well before it's time to “fire the air” into the embouchure.

**Breath Attacks**

Several exercises use the technique of “breath attack” which simply means starting the tone without the use of a tongued articulation. This is another specialized training maneuver not normally used in performance. It has proven effective in developing and maintaining the embouchure and clarifying the relationship of the blow (the air) to the embouchure in tone production. When the air and embouchure are working properly together, the tone will start immediately and cleanly and will be virtually indistinguishable from a high-quality tongued attack.

The following guidelines will foster success:
1. Begin with the lips together. DO NOT PRE-FORM AN APERTURE (the opening in the lips). Understand that it is the “blow” that makes the aperture. Another way to look at it is: YOU DO NOT MAKE the aperture, YOU ALLOW THE AIR to make the aperture.

2. When starting the tone DO NOT HESITATE with the blow. Think: IMMEDIATE AIR - IMMEDIATE SOUND.

**Timing / tapping the foot**

Clean technique is the result of all of the muscles involved in the physical action working together in perfect synchronicity. The technique that Mr. Caruso advocated to promote synchronized muscle action while doing his exercises was tapping the foot while mentally sub-dividing the beat. The main purpose of the foot-tap is to give the body a clear, kinesthetic sensation of the beat to which all of the involved muscles can relate. The foot-tap has the same function in coordinating the “ensemble of muscles”
that a conductor has with an ensemble of musicians. For this reason the physical foot-tap is preferred over the use of a metronome. It is essential that the foot be the time-keeper and LEAD the physical actions, and not, as sometimes happens, the unconscious follower of the physical actions. To refine this process further, the beat (thought of as quarter-notes) immediately proceeding the physical action of moving to the next pitch is to be mentally subdivided into four 16th notes with the action occurring between the fourth 16th and the next beat. As Mr. Caruso put it, “the important question is not WHAT to do - that’s too complicated to think about anyway... the important question is WHEN to do it.” He also said many times, “timing is the essence of my studies.”

Tapping the foot is, of course, NOT appropriate in an ensemble or performing situation. This is another device to be used as a training maneuver only. If done consciously and deliberately, it need not become an unconscious habit.

Guidelines for using the foot-tap effectively on the Caruso long-tone exercises:

1. Tap deliberately but unobtrusively with the toe of one foot.

2. Mentally sub-divide the beat preceding an action into four 16ths. Do not start any movements until AFTER you have counted the fourth 16th. The space between the fourth 16th and the next beat is where the movements happen in the interval exercises, and the chromatic pedal exercise. For the level 2 harmonics, make a deliberate up-beat feel with the foot and make sure the foot is controlling the action, not following it.

Notes on the exercises

The Magic Six Notes

I have yet to find a long-tone exercise that sets and warms-up the embouchure as efficiently as this one. It takes less than three minutes to do but it must be done correctly and with COMPLETE ATTENTION for its magic to work.

1. Imagine a beautiful, resonant, perfectly straight, medium-loud trombone sound on the middle F starting note.

2. Set your posture and alignment: neck relaxed and “up” - head poised over the spine - chest “up”. Put the trombone in place without compromising that position and start the time with your foot (around 60).
3. Take a full, unhurried breath through the mouth (imagine you are *inhaling* the beautiful sound you are mentally hearing) - set the embouchure - "fire" the air into the horn.

4. Maintain your posture - *do not collapse the chest or lose the upward direction of the posture while you are sustaining the notes*. Concentrate your energy into the AIR ONLY by avoiding ALL unnecessary movements.

5. This is a “long-setting” exercise so all replacement breaths are taken through the nose - while maintaining the embouchure placement and setting EXACTLY as they were at the release of the previous note.

**The Interval Exercises**

These are done like the “Six Notes” except the tongue is not used at all in articulation. In this way the clarity of the *relation* between the “blow” and the “buzz” is maximized.

Do NOT make high-range development the first priority. *Timing* and *economy of effort* are the MOST IMPORTANT aspects. *This exercise is NOT a high-note contest* - it’s about TIMING and SYNCHRONICITY of movement.

Keep going until failure at which point you should keep blowing until the count for that segment is finished; then, rest about 10 seconds and continue at that point on a “second-setting” until it fails again. That’s it... “third settings” are not advised. Do not get “greedy” and try to force higher notes with, strained exaggerated effort - otherwise, that is the way you will learn to play those notes.

**The Harmonics**

*Long-setting*. Keep the blow smooth and steady. The objective is to move through the harmonics in perfect synchronization with the “down-up” of the foot tap and with a SMOOTH “blow.” Avoid “kicking” the air to change notes. Think of each set as a *long-tone that changes pitch*.

**The Tongue/Slur Study**

*Normal breathing*. Goal should be a full, even, resonant sound on all notes; a clean, coordinated slide and tongue action with no glisses or jerking; and a smooth “blow” with no accents.
Tonguing-on-a-line

**Normal breathing.** Maintain a constant “blow” through the notes so that the pressurized air flowing in the mouth cavity is propelling the tongue action. The actual rhythm pattern can be simplified or made more challenging to suit the players needs.

Chromatic Pedal Exercise

**Long-setting.** Begin with your best quality low B-flat - resonant and unwavering - and strive to maintain that standard down through the descending sequence. Do not avoid glisses, but also do not drag them out. The ideal is to hear and feel an unbroken, seamless connection between the two pitches. **Allow** the jaw to open minutely with each half-step descent. During the nose-inhalation be intent on leaving the jaw in the position of the note just played, maintaining the mouthpiece contact, and not letting go of the embouchure focus.

When you have come to the end of the chromatic pedal, rest for a few seconds and, with the kinesthetic memory of the low notes still strong, play the chromatic scale in a smooth legato style, using normal breathing. The idea is to develop, further strengthen, and maintain a kinesthetic relationship throughout your entire range with a unified embouchure configuration.

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