

Preface

I remember when I was in 7th grade and I was rehearsing for the 8th grade graduation. We were outside, under an overhang for a hallway, next to the central plaza at my middle school. I was playing an old Conn 8D that my parents had found— a candidate to become my first double horn. I was fascinated by the unlaquered “antique” finish and the wonderful tone quality of the horn. It was magical. It was at that exact moment that it came to me— someday I would write a book about horn playing. I was going to call it “The Silver Horn.” My father, however, didn’t like the fact that the horn wasn’t shiny and new and that it had a couple of patches on the bell. He really wanted me to have the “best” that we could afford. I didn’t know enough to disagree with him. We didn’t buy it. I received a nice new silver King horn, but I never forgot that day.

A couple of years later I was teaching my first student. A parent in my youth orchestra wanted me to teach her son, mostly because I was the first horn. I protested that I didn’t know how to teach, but she simply said, “Just show him what *you* do.” Thus my teaching career was born. I took my teaching pretty seriously but it was not until 1985 or so, when I got my first Macintosh computer, that I really started to turn out pages of my book. A lot has changed in the world of classical music and the world of horn playing since those days. What hasn’t changed is our fascination with this beautiful but challenging instrument.

“*Real World Horn Playing*” came from many years of teaching and performing. It started as simple exercises for specific problems students were having and soon grew to include foundational imperatives gleaned from the time-proven instruction of great masters such as Arnold Jacobs, Max Schlossberg, Phil Farkas and Verne Reynolds, to name a few. This consolidation of fundamentals and my own insights is intended to provide students and professionals with practical studies and clear direction on playing the horn.

From listening to other professionals, students and countless auditions of all instruments, I have come to the conclusion that in the real world of performance, the requirements are relatively few and simple. To get a job and keep it, you need to play in tune, with rhythm, accuracy and musical style and expression. By learning the fundamental aspects of horn playing you can at least have a chance to succeed in a very difficult business. The sad fact is that most players do not play in tune, with rhythm and accuracy. They are out of the running almost immediately.

Even if you are not out to be a professional player, you will have more success, and, more importantly, more fun playing the horn, if you can do it well. The concepts and exercises in this book are designed to build a solid foundation for playing. It all starts with holding a steady tone and goes from there. You will find that I have not written out every possible variant of my exercises. This is intentional. If you want to get the most out of this book you will get involved with the process and take the seeds offered here and sow your own ground. You should use your imagination and make up more exercises and then utilize what you learn with the solos and passages that you must perform.

If you are reading this preface and plan to go straight to the exercises, looking for an answer to some problem you are experiencing, you *may* find something that way, but I would suggest that you read the entire text first, even though I have included a lot of text with the exercises. The exercises themselves, with some exceptions, are actually fairly generic, although they have been, in fact, massaged to conform with my concepts. The concepts are, after all, the important thing, so for best results you should take the time to read them before you do the exercises.

Although there is a sort of chronology here, especially in terms of the progression from long notes to shorter ones, as I put the book together I realized that I couldn’t just put everything in a logical order that would take you from one level of playing to another, higher one. A lot of people want that, especially adult students: sort of a list of things to do to be a horn player. I don’t think that is possible or even desirable. Give the book a chance to take you back and forth a little. See how the different things relate to each other. Make your own discoveries.

This book can be used with beginning students to professionals. It is not intended, however, to be everything to everyone. I’m still adding things that I learn from my teaching and playing. It is a lifelong process that I thoroughly enjoy.