

Starting, Switching, & Sustaining Young Horn Players

Melissa Morey • Morey Horn Studio • www.moreyhornstudio.com

Today's Goals

- Give you practical help for each stage of horn playing
- Demystify the horn (a little)
- Encourage more horn players at all ages
- Provide resources to use beyond today's presentation

Starting Horn Players

- Look for:
 - Musical ear – good pitch matching and pitch memory
 - Keyboard, voice, or string background
 - Independence and determination
- Try to:
 - Start more than one player
 - Encourage lessons with a horn player
 - Solidify basic techniques

Switching Horn Players

- Considerations:
 - All the same considerations as younger beginners, and...
 - Pair them up with someone who already plays horn, if possible
 - Be aware of the learning curve discrepancy and frustration that arises
 - Switching from any instrument is okay; beware other brass habits

Sustaining Horn Players

- Important Basic Techniques – all ages
 - HHH! (How to Hold the Horn)
 - AIR
 - Embouchure
 - Vowels
 - Spit Trick

Important Basics – HHH!

- Downward leadpipe angle; outward leg angle
- Don't drop it!
 - Adjusting for student size
 - "Comfy Horn Strap" by Valerie Wells
 - Adjusting right hand position
- Dial up the music stand

Important Basics - AIR

- Aerobic air vs. "sitting in a chair" air
- Relaxing vs. making effort

- Big vs. small; Slow vs. fast

Important Basics - Embouchure

- Upper lip vibrates; lower lip provides stability
- “push the mouthpiece away” with the upper lip
- Diamond image; violin image; bird beak image
- Player = singer; mouthpiece = microphone; horn = speaker

Important Basics - Vowels

- “How does the note taste?”
- Player = singer; mouthpiece = microphone; horn = speaker
- Tongue position changes air speed and size
- Helps with note accuracy

Important Basics – Spit Trick

- Collect it all in one main location
- Use gravity to move it to lowest two places on the horn
- Empty efficiently and with minimal damage

- How You Can Help

- Cleaning/maintaining instruments and mouthpieces
- Position in the ensemble; horn or acoustic shields
- Rotate seating; create supportive community rather than competition
- Get creative with parts
- Encourage lessons with a horn player, solo and small ensemble opportunities
- Know and explain how horn is different than other brass instruments

- Demystifying the Horn: Stopped Horn

- Stop the horn with hand or stopped/transposing mute
- DOWN a ½ step; F-side horn fingerings
- Hand is sealing the bell but still out as far as possible; watch the thumb gap

- Demystifying the Horn: Intonation

- Play and tune from the inside out; AIR, vowels, embouchure, horn, right hand
- Right hand position is #1 offender; bell position is #2
- Slides other than main tuning slides should be pulled 1/2 inch; tuning slides vary

- Demystifying the Horn: Bells Up

- Pivot seated playing position from the waist, up and back
- Bell is behind the head of the person to the right
- Right hand position doesn't change

- We all need to remember:

- They are *learning* a performing art, they are not yet performers
- Young muscles aren't yet stabilized and don't build strength/stamina like adults
- Better to prioritize good habits than expect excellent sound at all times