

PREPARING REPERTOIRE: FROM STORE TO STAGE

Preparing solo repertoire can be a daunting and even confusing task. This guide gives a sensible step-by-step process for finding, learning and performing trumpet music.

STEP 1: SELECTING REP

First thing's first, pick something to play:

Your teacher should always be your first source for repertoire. They know your playing and can help you choose appropriate music. However, they're not the only source you should use. If you don't bring any ideas to the table or effectively communicate your own likes and dislikes, you might find yourself playing something you dislike.

Top repertoire sources:

1. Your teacher
2. Your own listening
3. Western's jury lists
4. RCM Syllabus (coming Oct. 2013!)
5. Your peers
6. Music library stacks

Take advantage of as many resources as you can find to hunt down repertoire that interests and challenges you. Western publishes a list of recommended jury music, and the Royal Conservatory is publishing a new, comprehensive trumpet syllabus this fall. You can also find other undergraduate trumpet syllabi around the Internet.

Most importantly, listen! Get in the habit of regularly listening to trumpet and brass music. Not only will you discover new pieces and composers, but you'll also be building your own sound concept – one of your most important tools as a brass musician. In order of preference, here are my top listening sources:

- **Western's music library** – it's one of the best in the country.
- **Naxos Music Library** – over 86,000 albums to choose from. You can log in anywhere on campus, or use your Western ID for off-campus access.
- **iTunes or cdbaby** – if you don't mind paying, there are many great artists featured, including newer releases.
- **YouTube** – it's convenient, but beware: there are plenty of terrible performances.

Now that you've chosen a piece (that your teacher approves), time to get the music:

Start at the library. You can "try before you buy" or use a library copy while you wait for your purchases to arrive. However, you should buy your repertoire: you're going to write on it, and you'll probably need it again. For last-minute purchases and standard repertoire, **Long & McQuade** is convenient. For larger orders or more obscure repertoire, my #1 source for sheet music is **Hickeys.com**. They have a huge selection of brass music, reasonable shipping rates and fast turnaround times.

STEP 2: LEARNING REP

Getting started is often the hardest part:

When you first sit down with a piece of music, it's fine to sight read the piece once or twice. This will give you an idea of the challenges of the piece, what it feels like to play, and its overall structure. After that, though, it's time to get to work. **Running the piece over and over is not practicing.**

Look at the checklist on the right. For most pieces, you can run through the entire list in an hour or less, but it will save you countless hours of frustration and inefficient practicing. A little organization (and a lot of listening) goes a long way.

Marking your breaths is a simple process that can be the difference between effortless, beautiful playing and a tense struggle. Here is a very simple three-step process:

1. Take a nice, comfortably full breath and start playing a phrase.
2. When it's *musically and physically* appropriate to breathe (not just convenient!) stop playing and mark the breath.
3. Take another great breath and pick up where you left off. Repeat Steps 1-3.

Once the initial organization is out of the way, the real work can begin. Practice small, manageable sections. Use your metronome to gradually work up tempos for fast or technical sections. Break down difficult passages – simplify them (lower, slower, softer) to understand the basic gesture then build it back up. Strive to play every note with your most beautiful tone and total ease.

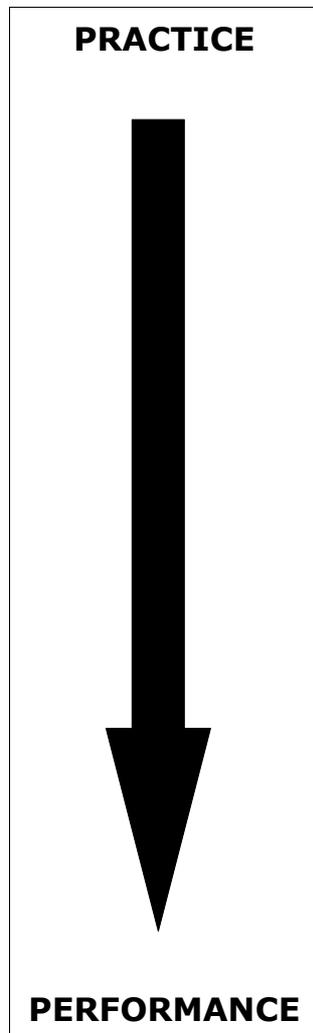
As you learn the piece, your teacher will be a huge help. Don't be afraid to ask them specific questions or admit to having trouble with a certain passage. But also get the most out of your teacher: **practice thoroughly before seeing your teacher, and don't expect them to practice or interpret the music for you!**

New repertoire checklist:

- Listen to at least 2-3 recordings
- Check gear: instruments, mutes, etc.
- Look up any unfamiliar terms
- Photocopy bad page turns
- Break the piece down into sections
- Mark your breaths
- Make a practice plan
- Schedule your performances

STEP 3: PERFORMING REP

Your jury isn't a mountain to climb. It's the last step on a very gradual slope. Your journey through the year slowly takes you from low-pressure rehearsals to graded performances:



The practice room. Imagine yourself on stage in front of an audience. Record yourself and listen back. Invite a friend or two to hear you. Push the envelope when practicing so you know your limits in performance.

The lesson. Be prepared and take the opportunity seriously. Respect your teacher's input and take it back to your practicing.

The rehearsal. Know the music (not just the trumpet part) well in advance to maximize your time (and money). Leave enough rehearsal time to feel comfortable with the entire piece and try a few run-throughs.

The coaching. Bring your pianist to a lesson for a half hour coaching.

The masterclass. Your first public performance! Thanks to your preparation, you can use this opportunity to experiment, take a few risks and build confidence.

The class recital. Another public performance opportunity. Look for the grammy in the back who never stops smiling!

The jury. Look back at all the work you've done preparing you for this moment. Be confident and enjoy the music!