

## ***William Adam's 15 Guiding Principals For Great Trumpet Playing***

1. The imagination is the driving force behind music making. Hearing the desired result vividly in your imagination will activate whatever physical activity it takes to make that sound.
  - a. Of course this requires that you constantly imprint your memory / imagination with excellent trumpet performance examples in every possible style.
  - b. Mr. Adam often recommended that we listen to Bud Herseth – principal trumpet of the Chicago symphony, Maurice Andre classical trumpet and a phenomenal piccolo trumpet soloist. And of course Doc Severnsen, who is an all around great trumpet stylist with a fantastic, exciting sound. So many other great players, too many too mention here.
2. Every day and every repetition causes a more dependable result. Inconsistency eventually vanishes as the body makes a habit out of the most efficient way it finds to get the desired result.
  - a. This approach requires faith in the process as well as the ability to completely divorce your mind from any awareness of sensory perception. (More on sensory perception later) Your mind/imagination must stay intently focused on a beautiful sound; Mr. Adam called this “goal orientation”. Much like an athlete focuses on envisioning his or her immediate goal, trumpet players must keep their mind intent on their musical goal. As teachers we often see students that become discouraged when after a relatively short time practicing these concepts haven't yet achieved favorable results.
  - b. There is simply no quick fix to mastering and maintaining a musical instrument; it takes a substantial amount of time and patience. Playing the trumpet requires a great deal of energy; the fuel for that energy is the breath. Developing the breath by slowly and consistently expanding our capacity helps to maintain the balance between our physiology and the physics of the horn. Developing these fundamentals takes a great deal of time, consistency, and patience. Add to that the possibility that your teacher may need to help you develop a more efficient way to play and it becomes a lifelong process of growth.
  - c. Two excellent quotes from Mr. Adam: Remember, “You never get rid of a bad habit, you must replace it each day with a good habit”  
“If you've achieved your goal, one thing has happened – your goal was set too low.”
3. Most physical problems are air problems. When the air and the imagination are working, the embouchure, tongue, etc. can settle into balance. If the air never flows steadily, the rest of your system will be in a constant state of adjustment and compensation.

- a. Here again our imagination is crucial, focusing intently on a beautiful sound and blowing steadily through that sound with a slight acceleration of the breath will achieve the desired result. The human brain can only concentrate on one concept at a time. If we allow our mind to wander, if we try and create a sound by sending messages to our physical system, then we become too aware of sensory perception and lose our goal orientation of the sound.

Quote from Mr. Adam:

“We are capable of one thing at a time with considerable ease. When we have to be concerned with two things at a time, playing becomes more difficult, and when we are confronted with three things, it literally becomes impossible. If we keep our minds on a beautiful sound, on accelerating the sound, on not forcing the sound, and forget the embouchure, many problems will disappear”

4. Physical and psychological tensions are the trumpeter’s greatest foes.  
Tension is created when we don’t pre-hear exactly what we are trying to perform. Performing music is a great deal like reading. As children we learn phonics, which guides our brains to create sounds from images of letters. Much like reading, a musical note must create a sound in our brains. When we read literature our brains turns those letters into sounds, which become words then sentences and paragraphs ultimately formulating concepts the author is trying to create. When we read prose we are no longer aware of the individual letters or words. Our brains digest all of those images into an idea. That idea or story often creates a visual image within our mind that same skill must be in place when we perform music. Our mind must hear every note and automatically interpret every interval, phrase marking, articulation, and rhythm without dividing each of those elements into separate ideas. If we begin playing too quickly we lose focus and our brains can no longer decipher the sounds in front of us. Faced with too much information and too rapid a pace we lose concentration. The solution: – slow down, practice slowly, always practice and perform with calm minds. Without calm minds psychological tension will create physical tension.
5. A trumpet player needs to be involved with every note they play in an energetic way both physically and mentally. It takes a lot of energy to play well; it shouldn’t take a lot of force. If it does you are fighting against yourself and / or the physics of the instrument.
  - a. During lessons Mr. Adam went to great length to reinforce absolute concentration, often having students sing a passage. He knew the mind absolutely controls our physiology. When the mind is intently engaged in the sound and you blow through the sound, then and only then will your physiology align with the physics of the instrument. If he mentioned any concept of physicality he did so to create a mental picture. “As you begin to play a note make believe you’re standing at the plate ready to swing the bat. There is no tension or apprehension in that state of readiness.

Here's another one -- "The readiness we need to play the trumpet is like we're standing at the edge of a pool ready to jump in". (He would demonstrate that, and then have you try)

6. We don't want our bodies to fight the physics and acoustics of the trumpet. Those natural laws don't change. Therefore, we have to change our approach.
  - a. I believe this is why Mr. Adam introduced blowing the leadpipe. Starting with the least amount of resistance possible to get the air flowing steadily before we blow the actual horn sets the air into motion through the embouchure. (One of us should demonstrate blowing air through the mouthpiece as we slowly add it to the receiver)
7. Unnecessary tension comes when the body is working against itself. Opposing muscle groups, which are at war, create isometric tension.
  - a) Example: – Often when faced with a difficult passage -- high or fast, the inhalation of the breath becomes rather quick, shallow and often compressed. In other words we are not taking a full-relaxed free breath on the inhalation. One concept Mr. Adam used was to say that each breath you take should be full and relaxed (warm, wet breath). Furthermore, as you're taking that breath your mind must already be focused on the sound you're going to produce. At the top of your inhalation it's like snapping your fingers. The necessary energy to play whatever is in front of you is activated by your imagination of that particular musical passage.
8. Start the day by playing on the leadpipe/mouthpiece combination. Use plenty of air and try to get the most resonant sound you can. On most Bb trumpets the concert Eb is the natural resonant pitch of the leadpipe.
  - a. Here again the purpose of blowing the leadpipe is to begin with the least resistance to ensure that the breath is flowing freely prior to playing the instrument.
  - b. This might be an opportunity to reinforce blowing the leadpipe vs. buzzing the mouthpiece. (Possibly demonstrate how the pitch that is played on the mouthpiece is not the actual pitch when you add that to the leadpipe)
9. After you have set up the airflow and warmed up the embouchure (without creating embouchure tension), transfer that approach to the trumpet.
  - a. At this point we may want to reinforce concept number two "Most physical problems are air problems"
10. Start with long tones or slowly moving flow studies with smaller intervals. Every single thing you play all day is a tone study!
  - a. In essence, each morning we teach ourselves how to play the trumpet, just as an athlete warms up slowly we must begin each day moving copious amounts of air through a beautiful sound. To achieve that sound our mind must be calm, focused only on the sound we're trying

to create. (Mention number one again listening and imprinting beautiful trumpet sounds). It's also important to rest as much as you play, don't be in a hurry. Remember the danger of doing repetitive exercises on a daily basis is that we may lose focus as our mind wanders, don't wander. Stay focused on the goal.

11. Establish a relaxed but energized airflow and a rich resonant tone on every note from the very first note.
  - a. Mr. Adam developed what is now commonly referred to as the routine. Although there were many common exercises given to students, there was actually never one set routine. Mr. Adam would tailor his lessons to the needs of the individual student. Many of the exercises are based on Herbert L. Clarke and Max Schlossberg studies. Whichever generation you studied with Mr. Adam, these exercises always began in the middle register slowly expanding up and down. These studies when done properly (big leap of faith here) form the basis of principal number two " Everyday every repetition causes a more dependable result."
12. Start in the middle register and gradually expand up and down alternating higher/lower- higher /lower, etc.
  - a. This approach ensures that we don't overtax the system as we warm up. Slowly beginning to expand the breath and our sound allows us to "wake up" our system, greatly improving sound and endurance as we go.
13. Carry the beauty of the sound and the free flow of energized breath into all of the other contexts: expand the register, expand dynamics, go through all the various articulations, lyrical playing etc.
  - a. As mentioned previously, we should strive to prepare ourselves like Olympic athletes. World-class athletes work on strength training, stretching and various developmental / maintenance exercises each day. Then they spend time training for their specific event. We must do the same. While it is absolutely necessary, playing only exercises all day does not train us for the event: music performance. We must balance our practice by consistently working on lyrical studies, etudes, solo literature, reading and especially transposition, which by the way is great ear training and was a fundamental of Mr. Adam's approach.
14. At all times remember to imagine a beautiful sound. Keep your energy up but never tense. Move that energized air through the your sound. Stay calm and mentally focused ..... never anxious.
  - a. Always maintain a calm mind. Easier said than done.
  - b. What disturbs a calm mind: Not hearing exactly what you are trying to play.  
Going too fast.  
Playing too loud.  
Being distracted. Concentrate only on what's in front of you, keep your mind on the goal / sound. If you find your mind wandering, stop,

put the horn down collect your thoughts and reacquire the sound without any mental interruptions.

15. Never get angry with yourself and never try to go so fast that anxiety is created. If you do those things you are actually practicing being anxious and upset when playing. Of course that is how you will feel emotionally when you play if that is how you have practiced. Relax; it is supposed to be fun. We don't work at music we play music!

a. (This is where we mention learning to believe in yourself and possibly touch on Gestalt theory?)

Reading recommendations:

Psycho-Cybernetics

Inner Game Of Tennis

Zen In The Art of Archery

As A Man Thinketh

16. Final thoughts:

Mr. Adams understanding of psychology and how it interacts with our physiology formed the cornerstone of his teaching. He often suggested that we read books and do our own research into the powers of the mind.

Much of his approach was based on a distillation of the principals of Gestalt and Aikido, these two distinct philosophies share a common thread, that the whole is greater then the sum of it's parts or the law of simplicity.

**Gestalt** psychology is a school of thought that believes all objects and scenes can be observed in their simplest forms. Sometimes referred to as the 'Law of Simplicity,' the theory proposes that the whole of an object or scene is more important than its individual parts.

**Gestalt** Laws of Perceptual Organization. ... According to **Gestalt psychology**, this apparent movement happens because our minds fill in missing information. This belief that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts led to the discovery of several different phenomena that occur during perception.

Gestalt psychology, school of psychology founded in the 20th century that provided the foundation for the modern study of **perception**. Gestalt theory emphasizes that the whole of anything is greater than its parts.

**Aikido** does not translate precisely into english. It is comprised of three Japanese words *ai*, *ki* and *do*, none of which has an exact English equivalent. To understand where aikido comes from, what it's name means, and what it is about, one needs to know something of the traditions of thought behind it. Aikido is a modern Japanese martial art developed by Morihei Ueshiba as a synthesis of his martial studies, philosophy, and religious beliefs. Aikido is often translated as "the way of unifying life energy" or as "the way of harmonious spirit".

The word '**Aikido**' in Japanese is made up of three characters or kanji. The first and most important is '**Ai**' which **means** to meet, to come together, to harmonize. In Japanese this also means love and this is the truer translation of the word, '**Ki**' basically means spirit or energy and '**Do**' means the path or the way.