

Limited Practice Time

“If I only had 15-20, 15 to 20 minutes a day to practice, what would I do?”.

Great question. I would make sure that that whole well-balanced diet that I just spoke about was being tended to in those 20 minutes.

And that means just picking a few exercises; maybe exercises that *primarily* target the thing that would suck the most - whatever it is that you're working on - some kind of scale study, pick the key of the day that you're least familiar with. Maybe the chord scale in a piece of music, in a song that's the place where you always just kinda "[mumbles], now we're in a chord I'm more familiar with!", or you just resort back to licks or whatever. Take that least familiar chord scale, and play all your technical studies in that chord scale.

Make sure that there's a good amount of trilling [plays trumpet], something like that. Make sure that you've got really nice, fat, resonant two-note trills going on, and work your way all through the range in that chord scale so that you become more familiar with that chord scale. Play a bunch of scales studies, slur them, articulate them with every type of articulation that you feel like you should have in your toolbox. Play super, super quiet and super, super loud, in general if you only have 15 to 20 minutes, then there's no time to waste noodling around in 'mezzo-mezzo' land.

Get to the things that are hardest to accomplish, both physically and regarding coordination and all that, and that would be as soft as humanly possible, and as loud as humanly possible. And if you do the majority of your playing near the extremes, anything in the middle is going to feel super easy in comparison.

So 15-20 minutes of just noodling, brain-droppings, whatever - not gonna get you anywhere near as much as if you were to do extremely shocking transitions back and forth between

super pianissimo and super forte. Maybe it's just like [plays trumpet] and maybe it's just straight from hot to cold or maybe it's [plays trumpet] crescendos and decrescendos; whatever it is. But find a way to really exercise your dynamic contrast and that'll keep your chops active in ways that they wouldn't be if you were just hanging out in 'mezzo-mezzo' land.

So there's that aspect of it, there's the dynamic contrast, and making sure that you're picking whatever exercises you're playing, make sure that they are based on the fundamental concept of fine-tuning coordination, in a very rudimental way; fine-tuning the coordination of the basic essential building blocks of other more complex things.

Also, if it's going to be 15-20 minutes only, keep the horn on your face the entire time. Do not take the trumpet off of your face for the entire 20 minutes. And when you get tired (I'm gonna kind of like simulate being tired) [plays trumpet]. That's your pedal G, right? Best note, that's your best friend right there. If you don't already know that, then say hello to your new best friend. [plays trumpet] There's a slot for it. [plays trumpet]. When I'm playing those pedals, instead of taking the horn off my face and letting rest occur at the speed of your circulation -

Basically, your chops are gonna come back to life after some period of rest, because your heart has been pumping blood through your whole body and eventually it pumps through your chops enough to flush out some lactic acid, and to get your chops ready for another round. Resting is nowhere near as restful, and rejuvenating as playing in the double-pedal register. Playing in the double-pedal register gets your chops vibrating much more, much more.

And that means, 'out with the old, in with the new' much quicker. It means flushing away the lactic acid a lot quicker, it means bringing much more blood, much quicker to your face. And so that's one of the biggest things, it's if I've only got 20, 15-20 minutes, half an hour,

whatever, even if it's an hour I pretty much never take the horn off my face. I'll just go back and forth between playing my exercises and double-pedals.

And that also goes for, like in the middle of a phrase; if I'm in the middle of, [plays trumpet,] and it's like I can't hold my chops together anymore it's like [plays trumpet], “Woo I'm not getting it! The buzzing is not happening, my lips are malfunctioning because they can no longer sustain their [grunts], they just need to let go [plays trumpet] okay, woo, done” [plays trumpet]. I will not try to continue going through the exercise, smashing the mouthpiece into my face, just to, just to make it through to the end of some arbitrary checkpoint, finish line, or anything. I'll just immediately pull the plug, and get down into the basement. And play those double-pedals, and get my shit back together.

And it's amazing how just, two minutes, two minutes of double-pedals, between double-pedal G down chromatically to double-pedal C sharp; it's amazing how quickly that rejuvenates you. It's amazing. And a lot of times, when I feel like I'm done; I'm done for the day, that's that, I'm toast -which already takes quite a lot- but when I get to that point, *if* I get to that point on any given day, that I've played that much, that I'm stopping - I'm not gonna play anymore because I feel like I'm toast - then I'll warm down.

And warm down: double-pedals. What happens when I'm finished playing some double-pedals? “Let me just check in, let me see, I feel like, man I feel good I got that tingle [inhales, plays trumpet] whoa! Okay, things are back, alright well back in the game.” And I'll go for another round, and then when I'm tired again, same thing. I'll just get back to the double-pedals. And then, you know, you just keep going, over and over and over again.

So actually, I advocate for taking breaks; but I don't advocate taking breaks from the *horn* I advocate taking breaks from playing what you're playing. To stop, and play double-pedals. And, if you are going to take the horn off your face let it be [does sounds]. Well, whole bunch of potential Covid spraying over here, yeah it's a very wet activity, isn't it? The double buzz

or deep double-pedal register buzzing without the horn. Those kinds of buzzing activities they bring so much good, they bring so much good to your chops in just a couple of minutes. Like you really - you gotta do it.

So 15-20 minutes a day to recap, for me, I'm getting to all the food groups. I'm gonna slur, and single-tongue, and double-tongue; I usually don't triple-tongue, I only beef up on that when I need to in a piece; but it rarely ever happens and I can double-tongue evenly enough that I can [does sounds]. So I don't usually spend any time triple-tonguing. But I will hit all my chosen types of articulation, I will make sure to cover my entire range; even in 15-20 minutes if you're playing unfamiliar patterns, you can still be gaining more harmonic fluency, even in just that short period of time, but you just gotta narrow it down to just this one scale that you need to make better friends with.

Or maybe it's just the passage from this one chord scale *into* this chord scale, you know - I might spend my time only playing v7 - I ; tension/release, in one particular key; exploring lots of different ways of resolving from the tension chord. Or whatever, something like that, just stick to one concept and do it a lot.

And introduce, even though it might be an improvisational concept - musical concept, harmonic concept, you can still be working on it with, your best classical tone, like forte fortissimo and pianissimo again, mind you; and cover your entire range in both of those dynamic levels. And switch into double-pedals when necessary. A little bit of lip flexibility, *some* kind of flexibility exercise, something that's rhythmically - just stay rhythmically sophisticated.

Play *in-tune* and *in-time*, which means play along with some kind of practice aid; the apps like iReal Pro, or iTabla, or Drum Genius, or TE Tuner - there's so many out there, no shortage of stuff that you can practice along with. But make sure that you're playing for that entire 15-20 minutes that you're playing in-time and in-tune no questions asked. Because you

have a reference to work with; that's a great way to squeeze all the juice out of the 15-20 minute practice-time.