



The Living Warm Up

For French Horn

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Why the Living Warm-up?

We have all heard about the necessities of a good warm-up for the brass musician. Getting the lips active and flexible for the musical responsibilities of the day can often be overlooked and can lead to playing problems. This being said, there are no two embouchures that are exactly the same and people have different needs on a daily basis. The Living Warm-up is not just a warm-up but a guide to help you discover your own daily needs. The best course of action is to not play ALL of the studies in this packet but to pick and choose the ideal exercises that will obtain the highest level of flexibility, concentration, clarity, and beauty of sound. I suggest only doing 1-2 exercises in each section.

Journaling or keeping a diary can make this whole system complete. On a daily basis, write down how you feel before, during, and after the Living Warm-up. Are you ready to begin your practice or rehearsal capably after the warm-up? Are you tired or fatigued after the warm-up? Are there individual aspects of your playing such as articulation, flexibility, tone, dynamics, range, etc. that do not feel prepared at the end of your warm-up? These are questions to ask yourself on a daily basis and then use this information to adjust the number or types of warm-ups accordingly. Understand that your daily needs will change based on variables including the type of ensemble in which you are playing, the amount of practice on the previous day, and even environmental conditions such as the temperature or weather. Be patient and above all else, seek out complete physical and mental focus with these exercises. Approach these studies with relaxation and a positive heart. Remember if we are not enjoying ourselves, music can NEVER occur.

“One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.”

Bob Marley

Breathing

Just as we need gas in our car, our horn requires the fuel of life: AIR. We need to start each day by training our breathing apparatus. As the breath is a naturally occurring event, we need to understand that in addition to fueling our own body's natural functions, we need to also train our air to empower our sound. Below, I have outlined some simple exercises to begin each day. This list of exercises is by no means complete and I would encourage you to explore further by checking out **The Breathing Gym** by Samuel J. Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan published by Focus on Music. You can find this online at www.breathinggym.com. This book is accompanied by a DVD and is extremely helpful in demonstrating proper breathing technique.

Oral Shape:

Without getting into lengthy discussions of anatomical devices such as soft palates, esophagi, tongues, etc., one can simply achieve the ideal oral shape for breathing by saying the word "WHOA." Pay particular note of the shape of the back of the mouth when you say this word. In one step, you have achieved the ideal oral shape. Simple, right? Let's continue...

Eee to Ohh:

Another great exercise for achieving the proper mouth shape is to start with a bad oral shape and progress to a good one. Breath in and out, as if you are panting with your mouth shaped as if you were saying the word "EEE." Slowly progress your oral shape from the "EEE" to the word "OHH." Start quickly and decelerate into the "OHH" shape. This should feel like tension progressing to release or relaxation. Sometimes understanding what bad oral shape is will help you identify the proper form.

5-6-7-8-9-10:

With perfect oral shape, take in air while raising your arms above your head from the sides of your body. Set your metronome on 84 beats per minute. Raise your arms while breathing in and lower your arms while breathing out starting with 5 counts, then 6, then 7, etc. Use all the counts to get completely full and completely empty. Stay relaxed and monitor the halfway point as well as the full and empty points.

Breathing (cont.)

Suck and Pop:

The next exercise is a therapy exercise in order to get us to understand how full of air we can actually get. Breathe half of your air in over 4 counts. Over the next four counts seal off your airway with the back of your hand while still trying to inhale. This “sucking” should be done fairly aggressively. After those 4 counts of “sucking,” immediately withdraw the hand from your mouth while continuing to inhale. This will create a “POP” and cause air to quickly fill your lungs to capacity. Identify that “full” feeling and endeavor to approach that level of intake on every breath. A variation on this is **Leak and Pop**. Allow a small amount of air to leak in around the sides of your hand while “sucking.” An obnoxious noise will ensue but monitor the consistency of that sound for the absence of crescendo or decrescendo. A consistent “brick” of sound should be produced before the characteristic, lung-filling “POP.”

8&8, 6&6, 4&4, 2&2, 1&1:

This exercise teaches us flow and helps us overtrain the breathing apparatus. Breathe air in for 8 counts and out for 8 counts. Monitor the intake making sure that it is consistent and full as well as monitor the exhalation for complete emptying of the lungs. Do this a few times. On the exhalation blow on the palm of your hand and check to make sure that the air has the same pressure for the entire amount of counts. Then progress to 6 in and 6 out, then 4 in and 4 out, then 2 in and 2 out. Finally, progress to 1 count in and 1 count out. You might start feeling dizzy. At this point, concentrate on getting ALL of the air out of your body. You are basically hyperventilating and getting too much oxygen. If you are still feeling dizzy, don't try to be a hero, sit or kneel down and breathe into your hands until the “graying out” sensation passes. This extreme breathing exercise is an overtraining exercise so, once you have done 1&1's for a while, progress back through the 2's, 4's, and 8's, concentrating on proper breathing form. At this point take in a deep breath and sigh while bending over at the waist. Allow your arms to dangle and take a few deep breaths to relax.

“Without music to decorate it, time is just a bunch of boring production deadlines or dates by which bills must be paid.”

Frank Zappa

The Warm - up

Mouthpiece Buzzers:

These two exercises are, simply, for getting the lips activated and vibrating. Play them on the mouthpiece only with a full “noisy buzz” and connect all of the notes as if you are performing a *glissando* between the pitches. Grip the mouthpiece with two fingers at the end of the shank. Monitor that you don't have an inordinate amount of mouthpiece pressure as this can impede the vibration of the lips.

Robustos:

Robustos are simple exercises designed to allow you to develop the full tonal color of the horn. Strive for a large, relaxed tone that is vibrant and full. When larger intervals are approached, try to even out the sound by supporting the tone with full, robust air. As you use the tongue to initiate the sound, make sure the tongue stroke is very quick and light. Do not let the sound get vague or “foggy.” In this register we want to achieve a sense of brilliance and vibrancy.

Soft Touch:

This exercise is a study that deals with process more than product. These notes should be approached with breath attacks or a light tongue. We want to find the softest point of the initiation of sound. Perform these notes at the softest dynamic level. If the note sounds, back off the air until the note does not intone. If the note does not sound, simply add more air until it does. We are trying to find a kinesthetic or physical memory of the fine line of tone initiation. This will help note accuracy and also identify when our chops will vibrate on any given day. Remember, this exercise is about you discovering the point of vibration so stay focused and concentrate.

Shwarma:

The horn will have the best tone if we can find the absolute center of the instrument. This exercise is, basically, a tension and release exercise. In the second measure of the exercise you will bend the pitch down. This will feel awful and it should. When you play the last whole note of the series you want to find the most relaxed, centered pitch that feels satisfying as opposed to the tense bent pitch. Enjoy and celebrate your sound on the last note.

The Warm - up (cont.)

Beautiful Sound:

These simple phrases are used to create a full tone while connecting across larger intervals. At all times strive for beauty of line, tone, and phrase. See if you can create stunning phrases despite the inherent physical challenges. These will only be fueled by superb breathing form and efficient connection of notes. Did I mention, above all else, play BEAUTIFULLY!!!!

Slippery Slurs:

We have all done lip slurs many times, but often I feel these are approached with laziness and disinterest. The goal of these exercises is to help warm-up our flexibility. Too often, students approach these exercises with a muscled, forced approach. These Slippery Slurs should be the easiest things we do. We need to approach these exercises less vertically and think about the horizontal line of the air. This will empower these notes to ride on a slippery column of air. Try not to use too much mouthpiece pressure but feel as if the notes are skating across a sheet of ice. One should endeavor, at first, to employ the proper airstream and not “huff” the notes into place. Remember the process here is more important than the product at the initial outset. Stay relaxed and don't get frustrated if all the notes don't sound immediately, they will as your embouchure is developed.

Low Tones:

These exercises are to develop the low register. Strive for a full, brilliant sound. Experiment with opening the oral shape and moving the jaw down and/or forward. Very often we tend to play flat in the low register, so perform the *glissandi* reaching down to the top of the lower partials. The 4th exercise is a great warmup to work on minimizing mouthpiece movement when articulating in the lower register.

The Warm - up (cont.)

High Tones:

Dealing with the high register can be an extremely frustrating endeavor. But, with careful study and understanding is easily achievable. High range is nothing more than blowing fast air through a smaller aperture causing the lips to buzz at a higher frequency. What happens to most young players, is that they haven't developed the tiny muscles around the aperture to hold the aperture shape while sending copious amounts of air through it. Jamming the mouthpiece into the lips is the common mistake as the student will use the rim of the mouthpiece to hold the aperture shape. This can be damaging to both the tone and the physical embouchure. Start softly on these exercises and allow the notes to simply stop vibrating if the airspeed is fast enough but the lips are yet to respond. Through gradual and consistent work you will train the chops to hold its shape as you send faster air through them. Don't force these exercises, remember, it's about process not product.

Tongue Accelerators:

These exercises will develop fast tongue speed and get the articulation method solidified on a daily basis. Always approach these with a legato tongue and start the metronome at a slow speed. Strive for relaxation and a long, motivated air stream on which to "bounce" the tongue. Have a critical ear when performing the multiple tongue warm-ups. Make sure the double or triple tongue technique sounds exactly like the single tongue method. Record yourself for confirmation of this.

Trillers:

Trills are a common technique in horn playing. They can be maddening at first until you understand that trills are not controlled, they are "allowed." These exercises should be approached with the same fluid airstream and light mouthpiece touch as the Slippery Slur series. Try to identify the "break" between two notes and, rather than shy away from it, motivate the air directly on that place. With diligent study, trills will start to occur as simple "spasms" that will occasionally happen or "kick in." This experience will occur more often until the student, ultimately obtains control of this technique.

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Mpc. Buzzers #1 ♩ = 60

Musical notation for Mpc. Buzzers #1, bass clef, common time. The piece consists of a series of eighth-note pairs beamed together, with a slur over each pair and a comma after each pair. The dynamics are marked *mp*. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Perform in many other keys.

Mpc. Buzzers #2 ♩ = 72 - 96

Musical notation for Mpc. Buzzers #2, treble clef, common time. The piece consists of eighth-note pairs beamed together, with a slur over each pair. The dynamics are marked *mp*. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Etc.

Robustos #1 ♩ = 52 - 84

Musical notation for Robustos #1, treble clef, common time. The piece consists of quarter notes, with a slur over each note. The dynamics are marked *mf*. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Etc.

Robustos #2 ♩ = 52 - 84

Musical notation for Robustos #2, treble clef, common time. The piece consists of quarter notes, with a slur over each note. The dynamics are marked *mf*, *f*, and *sim.*. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Etc.

Robustos #3 ♩ = 52 - 84

Musical notation for Robustos #3, treble clef, common time. The piece consists of eighth-note pairs beamed together, with a slur over each pair. The dynamics are marked *mf*. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Etc.

Robustos #4 ♩ = 52 - 84

Musical notation for Robustos #4, bass clef, common time. The piece consists of quarter notes, with a slur over each note. The dynamics are marked *mf*. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Etc.

Soft Touch #1 ♩ = 72

Pick 3 scales per day:
medium - low - high

pp

Soft Touch #2 ♩ = 72

pp Etc.

Soft Touch #3 ♩ = 72

pp Etc.

Soft Touch #4 ♩ = 72

Continue pattern
around circle of 4ths.

pp

Shwarma #1 ♩ = 72 - 100

Continue down
in half-steps.

fingering *bend*

Shwarma #2 ♩ = 72 - 180

Continue down
in half-steps.

fingering *bend*

Beautiful Sound #1 ♩ = 72 - 100

mf Etc.

Beautiful Sound #2 ♩ = 72 - 100

mf Continue pattern around circle of 5ths.

Beautiful Sound #3 ♩ = 72 - 100

mp Continue until 4th note is low C

Beautiful Sound #4 ♩ = 72 - 100

mp Continue until 4th note is middle C

Slippery Slurs #1 ♩ = 60 - 180

F horn: 0 2 1 1 2 2 3

Continue back up to open fingering

Slippery Slurs #2 ♩ = 52 - 120

F horn: 0 2 1

Continue down fingering pattern.

Slippery Slurs #3 ♩ = 84 - 200

3x 3x 3x 3x

Continue down in half-steps.

Slippery Slurs #4 ♩ = 84 - 200

Musical notation for Slippery Slurs #4. The piece is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 84-200. It consists of three slurred eighth-note patterns, each repeated three times (3x). The first pattern is in C major, the second in D major, and the third in E major. The notes are: C4-E4-G4-A4, D4-F4-A4-B4, and E4-G4-B4-D5.

Continue down in half-steps.

Slippery Slurs #5 ♩ = 84 - 200

Musical notation for Slippery Slurs #5. The piece is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 84-200. It consists of three slurred eighth-note patterns, each repeated twice (2). The first pattern is in C major, the second in D major, and the third in E major. The notes are: C4-E4-G4-A4, D4-F4-A4-B4, and E4-G4-B4-D5.

Continue down fingering pattern.

Slippery Slurs #6 ♩ = 84 - 200

Musical notation for Slippery Slurs #6. The piece is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 84-200. It consists of three slurred eighth-note patterns, each repeated twice (2). The first pattern is in C major, the second in D major, and the third in E major. The notes are: C4-E4-G4-A4, D4-F4-A4-B4, and E4-G4-B4-D5.

Continue down fingering pattern.

Slippery Slurs #7 ♩ = 84 - 200

Musical notation for Slippery Slurs #7. The piece is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 84-200. It consists of three slurred eighth-note patterns, each repeated twice (2). The first pattern is in C major, the second in D major, and the third in E major. The notes are: C4-E4-G4-A4, D4-F4-A4-B4, and E4-G4-B4-D5.

Continue down fingering pattern.

Slippery Slurs #8 ♩ = 84 - 200

Musical notation for Slippery Slurs #8. The piece is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 84-200. It consists of three slurred eighth-note patterns, each repeated twice (2). The first pattern is in C major, the second in D major, and the third in E major. The notes are: C4-E4-G4-A4, D4-F4-A4-B4, and E4-G4-B4-D5.

Continue down fingering pattern.

Slippery Slurs #9 ♩ = 84 - 200

Musical notation for Slippery Slurs #9. The piece is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 84-200. It consists of three slurred eighth-note patterns, each repeated twice (2). The first pattern is in C major, the second in D major, and the third in E major. The notes are: C4-E4-G4-A4, D4-F4-A4-B4, and E4-G4-B4-D5.

Continue down fingering pattern.

Slippery Slurs #10 ♩ = 84 - 200

Musical notation for Slippery Slurs #10. The piece is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 84-200. It consists of three slurred eighth-note patterns, each repeated twice (2). The first pattern is in C major, the second in D major, and the third in E major. The notes are: C4-E4-G4-A4, D4-F4-A4-B4, and E4-G4-B4-D5.

Continue down fingering pattern.

Low Tones #1 ♩ = 54 - 96

Bend

F horn: 0

2

1

Etc.

Low Tones #2 ♩ = 54 - 96

Bend

F horn: 0

2

1

Etc.

Low Tones #3 ♩ = 54 - 96

Half-valve

F horn: 0

2

1

Etc.

Low Tones #4 ♩ = 54 - 96

Perform in many other keys.

fff 3x - slur first, then legato, then accented

High Tones #1 ♩ = 54 - 96

pp

Perform in many other keys.

High Tones #2 ♩ = 60

Breath attack, minimize mouthpiece pressure.

pp

Perform in many other keys.

High Tones #3 ♩ = 84 - 100

Continue pattern up to open fingering.

F horn: 1&2

1

Tongue Accelerators #1 ♩ = 72 - 120

Etc.

Musical notation for Tongue Accelerators #1, featuring a treble clef, common time signature, and a melody of eighth notes with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

Tongue Accelerators #2 ♩ = 72 - 144

Continue pattern around circle of 4ths.

Musical notation for Tongue Accelerators #2, featuring a treble clef, common time signature, and a melody of eighth notes with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking is *mp*.

Tongue Accelerators #3 ♩ = 96 - 144

Continue pattern around circle of 5ths.

Musical notation for Tongue Accelerators #3, featuring a treble clef, common time signature, and a melody of eighth notes with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking is *sfz*.

Tongue Accelerators #4 ♩ = 72 - 144

Continue pattern around circle of 5ths.

Musical notation for Tongue Accelerators #4, featuring a treble clef, common time signature, and a melody of eighth notes with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking is *mp*.

Tongue Accelerators #5 ♩ = 72 - 180

Continue pattern around circle of 5ths.

Musical notation for Tongue Accelerators #5, featuring a treble clef, common time signature, and a melody of eighth notes with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking is *mp*.


Tongue Accelerators #6 ♩ = 60 - 156

Continue pattern around circle of 4ths.

Musical notation for Tongue Accelerators #6, featuring a treble clef, 6/8 time signature, and a melody of eighth notes with slurs and accents. The dynamic marking is *mp*.

Trillers #1 ♩ = 60

faster *faster* *faster* *faster* Continue down fingering pattern.



F horn: 0

Detailed description: This musical exercise is written on a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). It begins with a series of eighth-note trills on a single pitch, marked with a slur and the tempo instruction 'faster'. The exercise then moves through a chromatic scale of eighth-note trills, with the tempo instruction 'faster' repeated four times. The final measure shows a trill on a higher pitch, with the instruction 'Continue down fingering pattern.' written above it.

Trillers #2 ♩ = 100 - 180

fingered lip trill fingered lip trill fingered lip trill fingered lip trill Continue down fingering pattern.



Detailed description: This exercise is on a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature. It consists of eight measures of eighth-note trills. The first four measures are marked 'fingered' and the last four are marked 'lip trill', alternating every two measures. The tempo is marked as '100 - 180'. The exercise concludes with the instruction 'Continue down fingering pattern.'

Trillers #3 ♩ = 96 - 132

Continue pattern around circle of 5ths.



Detailed description: This exercise is on a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature. It features eighth-note trills that move chromatically across the staff. The tempo is marked as '96 - 132'. The exercise includes dynamic markings such as accents and hairpins. It concludes with the instruction 'Continue pattern around circle of 5ths.'