International Trumpet Guild Journal

to promote communications among trumpet players around the world and to improve the artistic level of performance, teaching, and literature associated with the trumpet

itg journal, jr. MARTIN SAUNDERS, COLUMN EDITOR

THE TRUMPET MOUTHPIECE: WHAT'S RIGHT FOR ME?

BY MARTIN SAUNDERS

January 2011 • Page 62

The International Trumpet Guild (ITG) is the copyright owner of all data contained in this file. **ITG** gives the individual end-user the right to:

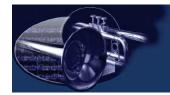
- Download and retain an electronic copy of this file on a single workstation that you own
- Transmit an unaltered copy of this file to any single individual end-user, so long as no fee, whether direct or indirect is charged
- Print a single copy of pages of this file
- Quote fair use passages of this file in not-for-profit research papers as long as the ITGJ, date, and page number are cited as the source.

The International Trumpet Guild prohibits the following without prior written permission:

- Duplication or distribution of this file, the data contained herein, or printed copies made from this file for profit or for a charge, whether direct or indirect
- Transmission of this file or the data contained herein to more than one individual end-user
- Distribution of this file or the data contained herein in any form to more than one end user (as in the form of a chain letter)
- Printing or distribution of more than a single copy of the pages of this file
- Alteration of this file or the data contained herein
- Placement of this file on any web site, server, or any other database or device that allows for the accessing or copying of this file or the data contained herein by any third party, including such a device intended to be used wholly within an institution.

http://www.trumpetguild.org

Please retain this cover sheet with printed document.



itg journal, jr.

MARTIN SAUNDERS, COLUMN EDITOR

ITG is committed to all levels of trumpet playing. To better serve our membership, journal jr. is a column published to benefit young students, comeback players, and music educators. ITG wants you to share this column with anyone who may benefit from its subject matter, so this page can be freely copied and distributed to anyone you wish. If you have ideas or would like to write a future column, please contact Martin Saunders via Email (junior@trumpetguild.org).

THE TRUMPET MOUTHPIECE: WHAT'S RIGHT FOR ME?

BY MARTIN SAUNDERS

or many young trumpeters, the trumpet mouthpiece being used is the one that came with the instrument when it was purchased. As long as the player is achieving a good tone and has no problems with endurance or facility, this choice of mouthpiece is probably just as good as any and a change is not necessary. However, there are times when a change is necessary and when it comes to trumpet mouthpieces, *one size does not fit all!*

There are many variables that affect what the mouthpiece will do for the player, and the marriage of the mouthpiece to the trumpet can be a delicate balancing act at best. Each part of the mouthpiece has a different function that will allow the player to achieve the best results from the instrument. Rim size, cup size, the bore, and the backbore of a mouthpiece can all affect the playing characteristics of the trumpet in different ways. For those who do not know what each component does, here is a brief description: The rim of the mouthpiece varies greatly in size, and so does the contour of the rim. What we "feel" when we play is the inner diameter of the rim. This ranges from narrow to wider rims, and from very steep, sharp contours to more rounded edges. The cup of the mouthpiece has many different configurations from deep to shallow, and from more of a bowl shape to what's considered a more "V" shape. Cup design can greatly affect the overall tone of the trumpet. The bore, or throat, controls the amount of air pressure and the air resistance. Typically, this factor does not need to be tampered with—the standard #27 bore is common and works well for most players. The backbores in trumpet mouthpieces have various designs, shapes, and sizes. In general, the "tighter" backbore will produce a brighter sound but with greater resistance, and a more "open" backbore will produce a larger volume of sound but will require more breath since there is less resistance.

So, how do you choose which mouthpiece is right for you with so many possibilities and combinations? Some say that if you play two different mouthpiece models and good results are achieved with both, the larger size might be best if you want to produce more sound. Others, especially many modern performers, say the exact opposite, stating that there is greater efficiency and less strain using the smaller mouthpiece. In my opinion, the player must consider a few key things when choosing a trumpet mouthpiece: What kind of tone are you

trying to achieve? What demands do you have when playing the trumpet? What styles and articulations will you be playing? What feels comfortable to you?

All of these questions address factors that are integral to your success. If you're playing in a concert band or as a soloist, a nice round tone is probably desired and precise articulations are a must. Chances are that you'll want to choose a more "stock" mouthpiece (one that is a standard model by a standard mouthpiece maker) that allows for that type of tone, allows you to play throughout the registers easily (upper, middle, and lower registers), and will be comfortable over the long haul of playing a concert or recital. However, if you're playing in a jazz ensemble or marching band, you're probably after a brighter tone and greater efficiency. A recommendation is to choose a mouthpiece that perhaps has a shallower cup and tighter backbore, and/or perhaps (but not always) a smoother inner diameter of the rim for greater comfort. If orchestral playing is your goal, you many need something that will allow for a darker tone and more volume. In this case, you might try a mouthpiece with a larger cup and backbore size. Many players believe that you need a larger rim size as well, but in my opinion the rim width has more to do with lip contour and shape that necessarily achieving a "bigger" sound.

Since trumpet mouthpieces vary greatly, the best thing you can do is go to a music store and try some. Try several models and brands and see what you like and dislike, and find one that seems to fit your concept of sound and the way you approach playing the trumpet. Remember that sound concept (the sound in your mind) is most greatly responsible for what you sound like and that you're trying to find equipment that complements that concept; don't rely totally on your choice of trumpet mouthpiece to make you sound a certain way. Finally, getting a local professional trumpeter's qualified opinion is a great idea. Since we play from the mouthpiece end of the trumpet, we cannot always accurately assess what's coming out of the bell!

About the author: Martin Saunders is associate professor of trumpet and jazz studies at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. Prior to teaching at Marshall, Martin spent seven years in the Air Force Band program at Offutt AFB in Omaha, Nebraska.