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WHY YOU SHOULD TAKE PRIVATE LESSONS

BY DOUGLAS WILSON

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WHY YOU SHOULD TAKE PRIVATE LESSONS

BY DOUGLAS WILSON

I have served the ITG in several positions, most recently as moderator of the “Ask the Teacher” forum and previously as editor of *itg journal, jr.* Like many of my colleagues in the ITG, I have been playing and teaching trumpet for many years. Each of my students was and is unique, but their problems are not! No matter what their experience level, I routinely received questions from students, young and old, and their parents concerning “everyday” trumpet problems. The single greatest question asked was basically, “How can I quickly fix my problem?” Usually the short answer was and continues to be, “You can’t—but don’t worry... you *can* get there!”

One of the great things about playing the trumpet is the ability to begin making music fairly quickly. Many of us began in elementary or middle school and were performing a concert within a few short weeks. As an elementary band teacher, I believe it is very important for both students and parents to see results quickly. However, while it is important to observe rapid results, it is also important to make sure that you learn conceptually, and that takes time. Joseph DeMaistre, a French Diplomat and philosopher said, “To know how to wait is the great secret of success.”

Another great saying widely used that applies to this area is simply this, “If it is worth doing, it is worth doing right!” Additionally, I would add that success takes time and patience. It may take beginners years of consistent and dedicated work to become accomplished players on the trumpet. This is why it is advisable to seek supplementary help from a professional trumpet teacher. From my perspective, it is well worth the time and effort to take lessons from an experienced teacher on a regular basis, regardless of whether or not a student has aspirations of later becoming a professional musician.

I regularly perform in both professional (paid) and community (non-paid) ensembles where I live, and all of these opportunities to play are very enjoyable. But, they would not have been possible without a plan for learning when I was younger. Central to that plan was, and still is, obtaining coaching sessions from some of the best performers and teachers around. Even though my educational and performance background is

now more extensive, I have continued to acquire a substantial amount of “trumpet knowledge” through interactions with other professionals. I realize there is considerably more that I still do not know, so I routinely solicit help from my colleagues. They help me stay on track and understand musical issues in new ways.

If you want to play the trumpet well and develop as a musician, you must have a private teacher. Teachers hear things you don’t, see things you don’t, and likely *know* many things you don’t about trumpet playing. It is difficult to learn to play the trumpet well on your own. After thirty years of playing and teaching trumpet, I now understand that *patience* on the part of student and *guidance* by a caring and knowledgeable teacher are two ingredients that can help you reach your musical goals.

If you have the opportunity to attend an ITG Conference, you will likely hear great trumpeters who will tell you how much of their development resulted in studying with a master teacher. This is especially true for young developing trumpet players. A high-quality private teacher can make all the difference in your playing, whether you’re a beginner or a player with a few years of experience.

Find a good teacher and stick with lessons. A good private instructor will have your best interest at heart and will help you to enjoy making music on the trumpet.

About the author: Douglas Wilson is widely known as a trumpet soloist, clinician, and music educator. Currently, he is a freelance musician and music educator in the Washington D.C. area. He serves ITG as the Moderator of “Ask the Teacher” for the ITG youth web site and previously served as editor of *itg journal, jr.* His performing affiliations have included principal trumpet with the Washington Concert Opera, the National Cathedral Orchestra, and the Tulsa Ballet Theatre Orchestras, as well as positions with the Fairfax Symphony, the New Haven Symphony, and Solisti New York. His principal teachers include Jacob Larson, Robert Nagel, Steven Hendrickson, and Barry Bauguess.

