

# **THE TRUMPET SECTION OF A JAZZ ENSEMBLE**

**Compiled by Vince Corozine**

## **Lead Trumpet**

- Play the correct style and select the best interpretation, based upon your listening experience.
- Once interpretation is decided upon, play it the same way every time. Consistency is essential.
- Knowledge of style, taste, and concept to fit the particular style of music. Discuss problems with the director as well as leaders of each section.
- Technical and musical mastery over your instrument, and must have range, volume, flexibility, and endurance to play all styles of music.
- Develop sight-reading.
- Listen and copy different styles of lead playing from recordings and live performance.
- Do not let your sound “stick out” of the ensemble. “Cover” the ensemble with a broad sound. (Listen to lead playing by Harry James, Billy Chase, Maynard Ferguson, and Conrad Gazzo).
- Lead trumpet players tend to play at a loud volume most of the time. Playing loud makes one believe that they are playing flat (under the pitch), so lead trumpet players will often tune their horns a bit sharp.

## **Section Trumpet**

- Most important aspect is to be able to follow the lead player, interpret lengths of notes, volume changes, and other ornamentation, as the lead player is the “boss” of the section. “Lock” in with the lead sound.
- Must avoid covering up the lead player by playing too loudly, and don’t attempt to lead the section from a lower part.
- Tone quality of lower chairs should be full and dark, and allow the lead player to have more edge in his/her tone than the rest of the section.
- You should know (be able to sing) the lead part by memory.

## Jazz Soloists

- Must be a fine section player as well as having the ability to improvise in the style of the music performed.
- Must read chord symbols, and be able to improvise in different styles of jazz.
- Soloist should enhance what the rest of the band is doing.

## General Principles

- Seating for trumpets and trombones: 2 1 3 4  
The second player is usually the jazz soloist and should be seated near the rhythm section. The 4<sup>th</sup> or bass trombone should be seated behind the baritone sax, as their parts often are duplicated.
- The lead player is in the center, so he can hear the other trumpets. The section trumpets point their bells toward the lead player.
- Section players need extra air to blow up to the lead player.
- Legato tonguing must be emphasized in all ensemble passages.
- Crescendos can be a problem, because the highest notes are allocated to the strongest player (with the best chops). These top notes usually project too much in a crescendo. Apply this pattern within each section to achieve a “dark” “mahogany” texture.

Lead increase volume 25%

2<sup>nd</sup> player increase volume 50%

3<sup>rd</sup> player increase volume 75%

4<sup>th</sup> player increase volume 100% (He is the most important one in a crescendo)

- All long notes should be given a slight crescendo to add life and verve to the sound.
- Releases (ends of notes) must come off together. The director or section leader should decide on which beat the note will end. It is imperative that all players take a breath in the same spot...mark the music.
- Fall offs (drops) must come off together. Decide on which part of the beat the fall off will end.
- The length of quarter and eighth notes must be predetermined before rehearsing a chart. The particular style of music will often dictate this. (1930s and 40s hotel music uses a short third beat).
- Subdivide on all quarter notes in slow tempos to avoid rushing. Ex. “Lil Darlin” recorded by Count Basie.

- 8th note triplets and 16<sup>th</sup> notes are usually slurred at fast tempos.
- The final note of most phrases, in up tempo swing tunes, is accented.