

David Krauss

Tone Production

Start with a Beautiful Sound



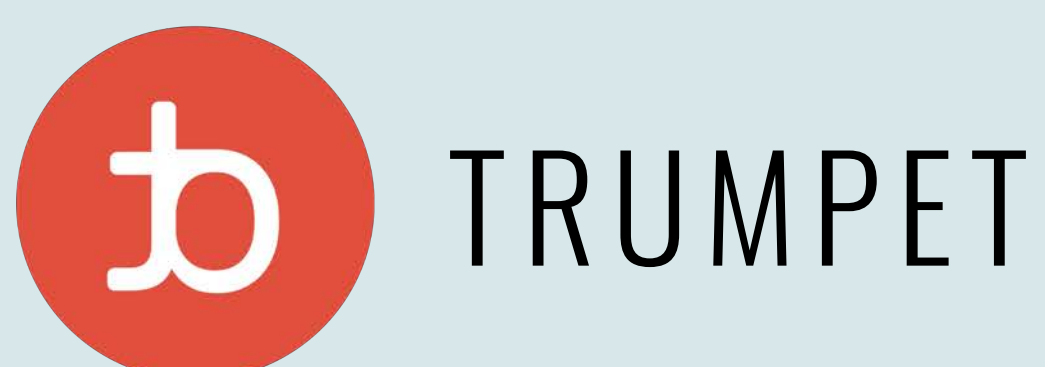
TRUMPET

About the Artist

David Krauss joined The Metropolitan Opera Orchestra as Principal Trumpet in 2001 and occupies the Beth W. and Gary A. Glynn endowed chair. He has performed with James Levine in the MET chamber series at Carnegie Hall and has appeared as guest principal trumpet with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and New York Philharmonic.

A native of Long Island, New York, he earned both Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School as a student of William Vacchiano and Chris Gekker. He also studied trumpet with James Pandolfi and Wynton Marsalis. Prior to joining the MET, he performed with a variety of ensembles in and around New York City, including Orchestra of St. Luke's, The New York Philharmonic, and several Broadway shows. David co-produced three recordings—Metropolitan Opera Brass, Waltzes, Songs & Festive Scenes and Sacrae Symphoniae, where he is praised by the American Record Guide both for his “singing tone which is luxurious and inviting” and “effortless handling of difficult runs, trills and soaring tessitura”.

He is currently trumpet professor at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and teaches in the pre-college division at The Juilliard School. In the summertime, he is the head brass coach and trumpet teacher at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. David lives in Manhattan with his wife, Kristen, a violinist and teacher, and their four children, Noah, Eli, Margot, and Ava.



Breathing

Sometimes, the reason we don't get a good sound on the trumpet is because we are told to "use more air." Air is good, but when we are told to "use more air," we blow harder, push harder, and the result *sounds* harder.

The biggest misconception about breathing is the idea of *blowing* versus *releasing*. If you are *pushing* air in and out of your lungs, it creates a strained and unrefined sound. You can produce a relaxed sound by releasing the air instead of blowing it out. Many people have different ideas on how to breathe when playing the trumpet; Krauss suggests breathing in a way that feels natural for you. For him, this means breathing in with the energy of the air going out. Krauss likes slow air on the intake, giving him time to fill his lungs, so he opts to breathe through his nose. It isn't helpful to artificially create good posture. When you take a good natural breath, your lungs will naturally expand, and you will "blow up."

When taking a breath, imagine you are filling up a balloon. Krauss thinks of this type of air as "potential energy." When your balloon is all filled up, you won't need to squeeze to get the air out. A balloon releases its air on its own, and the small opening creates resistance. We must figure out how to squeeze it just right to get the desired sound. Getting to the point where you are releasing instead of pushing is a big canyon to get over when you are a developing trumpet player. Krauss talks about two essential steps to work on with this:

Create Potential Energy

- Take in air, ensuring your lungs are full but not overfilled. You want to make sure the air coming in is not stagnant.

Find the Balance Point

- Find the point of resistance of the release of the air to get the sound you want.

The tongue is the only part of ourselves that we can move to shape the air as it leaves. Where the tongue lies inside our face changes our sound. It is our best tool to shape our sound and create the resistance we need when releasing the air.

Bending

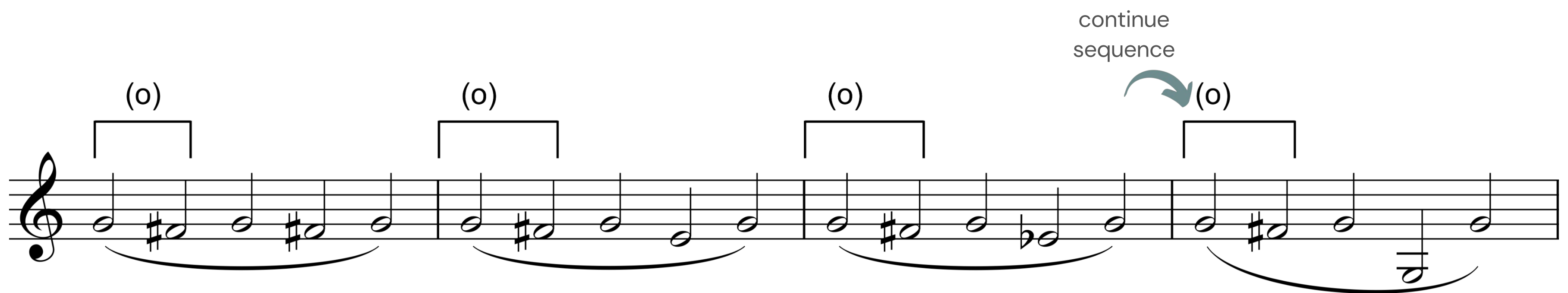
Bending notes on the trumpet is about finding balance in your playing. Rather than loosening, opening the jaw, slowing down, or blowing air, you should bend the note by bearing down on it. It mostly happens by bringing the aperture in, but it also involves the chops. Catching the bend between the notes is like being halfway between standing and sitting; you can feel all the muscles holding you up.

Bending on the trumpet is usually done in half steps, and you can even bend some notes by multiple half steps before it breaks. Every time you bend a note, the chops go in. Krauss likes to think of bending from both inside and outside. Like putting a new bit into a drill, those three-prong fingers come in to grab the bit. That is like the chops going in. From the outside, think about the circular muscle that goes around the chops. That muscle is like a drawstring; it all comes in when you pull it.

Check Out: Krauss recommends the book *Shape Up for Trumpet Players* by Frits Damrow for more on this topic.

In order to have a good tone, we need resistance. The best way to do this is using the tongue to create turbulence in the air. This is done by changing the vowel shape inside your mouth. As trumpet players, we can't use open vowels like trombone and tuba players, as there would not be enough resistance in our faces while we are playing. We need to squeeze tightly onto the air. "Squeeze" and "tight" may be bad words in the trumpet world, but we want to think of them as it relates to the vowel sounds we form in our mouths!

Action Item: Try this simple exercise for bending. Choose a note to start on, bend it, go back to the original note, go down a half step, and then go back up to the note. Do this all the way down the octave from the first note.



Every day, we carry around a lot of emotional tension. As a result, it tightens up our throat and our neck. It is the canal between the ocean and the river. This port is vital, and must be protected. We want to keep it as open as we possibly can. Keeping an eye out for any throat tension is important, and lip bends are a good way to observe it.

Playing the trumpet is hard because we have to skillfully apply tension in just the right places while avoiding tension in the wrong places. The neck is one place where we don't want any tension.

When we take a breath and place the front of the tongue in a position that makes “ssh” or “ehh,” the sides of the tongue are gently up against the inner molars of the upper teeth. This makes it very simple; it is either open or closed. This is the point where we squeeze the balloon. The steps for this are as follows:

- Take a big breath for every single note. Make sure you have a lot of potential energy.
- Unkink the hose, and keep everything as open as possible until the last moment, the “sshh” at the end.

As the intervals grow, the exercise becomes more challenging to play. The tongue is now responsible for shaping the air, like putting your thumb over the hose when watering a garden. We want to grab our airstream before it gets to our chops. In this case, we aren't talking about our chops; we are talking about everything behind them. What makes it complicated is that the tongue is huge, and it is up to each of us to experiment with tongue placement, because that is ultimately different for everyone.

Don't go for a dark or bright sound when trying to find your tone. Go for *your* sound: you want to sound like you. Spend time finding your sound and the center of your sound, not just the words bright or dark. Creating a centered sound involves the placement of the tongue and how it squeezes the air. When we are playing, don't think that going down to lower notes is easy, and going up to higher notes is hard. Any time we move from the middle G, there will be a different resistance, and we will want to find the center of that note. We must become aware of feeling the correct type of pressure on the front of our face.



If you have any corrections, comments, or critiques relating to this workbook, please send them to marek@tonebase.co. We strive to deliver the highest quality enrichment experience. Thank you!