

MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL, WHO HAS THE MOST PERFECT EMBOUCHURE OF ALL?

Ever notice how trumpet players are always looking in the mirror when they practice? I have no idea what they are looking for, and I suspect they don't either. The problem with practicing in front of a mirror is that if you play something particularly well, and at the same time notice some little movement of the muscles, you may think that is what caused you to play as you did. From then on you will try to duplicate this movement.

Any movement of the muscles of the face does not cause you to play good or bad. This is only *sympathetic muscular motion*. (When one muscle moves, the surrounding muscles "give" a little: You can't play rigid.) It's what happens on the inside that counts, and any visible corresponding movement is no cause for concern or celebration.

Yet there is much discussion about how the face muscles should look. Whole books have been written on the perfect embouchure. Some say to draw the corners of your mouth down, some say up, and others say to keep the lips in a straight line. But right now I want you to think of any four great trumpet players, all of whom play equally well. Do they all look the same when they play? No!

NO TWO PLAYERS WILL LOOK EXACTLY ALIKE WHEN THEY PLAY, JUST AS NO TWO PLAYERS WILL LOOK EXACTLY ALIKE WHEN THEY DON'T PLAY.

So you can either forget about how you look when you play, or I can put you in touch with one "authority" who will analyze your embouchure over the phone. How ridiculous! To show you how close to tragedy I once came, years ago I had a teacher who suggested that I have surgery to correct my overbite. I did the obvious thing. I got a different teacher.

THE JAW WILL MOVE AS YOU PLAY.

Your jaw is built on a hinge. It is meant to move. When the tongue moves, the jaw moves with it. As the tongue lowers into the "AW" position, the jaw drops. As the tongue rises into the "EEE" position, the jaw rises with it. Never would the tongue and jaw move in

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