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FOREWORD

**by Paul Read, Professor of Music - Director of Jazz Studies,
University of Toronto**

I am not entirely objective about Don Johnson. After all, when he was Director of Music at Humber College from the mid 1970's to the early 1980's he hired me at a time when I desperately wanted to change jobs. It was almost an act of salvation. And it was at Humber where I was to meet some of my closest friends, and eventually Trish, my second wife. That hiring was a life changer and for that I will always be grateful. Apparently he saw something in me then, even though I was still quite damp behind the ears.

Don is a great observer and student, not only of trumpet and brass playing, but also of human behaviour. In my first few years as a relatively young musician teacher at Humber, his friendship and wise counsel were a source of instruction, comfort and frequently, great amusement. I learned a great deal by watching his interaction with other members of the faculty and, of course, his students. I noticed how he demanded very high standards and would not settle for anything but the best possible effort. But while he was demanding, he always had a way of showing respect and affection for those he taught. I noticed how he knew how to build esprit de corps among the brass students whom he often referred to as "The Guild." And he is an absolute master of the affectionate insult. He could call students "goats" and somehow they would love it. I also remember him referring at one time to a group of young students as "dusters." When I asked him about the term, he explained that he called them that because when they attempted to play the trumpet, all that came out of the bell was dust! Students who were not giving their best efforts were labelled "hobbyists." Later, he developed an even lower category, reserved for the hopelessly lazy. He called them "spectators," and to be called one was to receive the ultimate Johnson criticism. But through all of this playful (but serious) banter came the message: Don't ever stop giving your best effort. The hundreds of trumpet players who studied with Don over the years can attest to his motivational skills and remember the unique vocabulary he used in the process.

For many years at Humber I directed large and small ensembles and, as a result, had a wonderful vantage point from which to view the fruits of Don's labours. I witnessed trumpet players undergoing transformations in a matter of a few months. Tone would become more resonant and there would be significant improvement in technique, range, flexibility, endurance and strength. This speaks to Don's abilities to diagnose difficulties, and to motivate and educate his students in a reliable and proven method of brass playing. This text will allow you to study his approach. Use it. Believe in it. It works!

It is wonderful to see this material finally published and now available to a whole host of brass players who will likely not have the opportunity to experience Don's teaching in person. If only it was possible to somehow package Don, himself, into each book! To know Don is to come face to face with dedication and commitment. Whether it has been teaching, trumpet playing, golf, bowling, bird watching, or any of his other passions, Don has pursued his goals with obsessive diligence. He exemplifies the adage, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well."

One experience has always struck me as a quintessential descriptive story about Don. It speaks of his dedication and relentless pursuit of knowledge and skill. About 15 years ago, I was working at a summer music camp in Sudbury, Ontario. It was at the beginning of a week-long schedule and as is usual at music camps we awoke in the early hours to prepare for the day. Looking out the window of my fourth floor residence, I saw a cool gray fog and a trace of orange in the dawning of a new day. A glance at my watch. 6:45 a.m. The air was damp and chilled. Then suddenly I became aware of a single sound. It was like suddenly becoming aware that an air conditioning fan has been on all night -- I wasn't sure when it had started or if it had always been there. It seemed to emanate from far in the distance. Then as I gradually became further awake, I realized it was a single muted trumpet flawlessly and patiently slurring through the overtone series. Where was it coming from, and who the blazes.... Then I was aware that the sound was coming from a car in the parking lot not too far from the front door. At first, I considered opening the window and firing a shoe. Then a light bulb went on. It was Don, getting in his routine before the day began and practicing in the car to avoid disturbing the rest of us. He did this every day we were there.

What's so unusual about this? After all, accomplished musicians are no strangers to diligent practice -- at all hours. What is remarkable to me about this is that Don was, at that time, essentially retired from professional performing and was having tremendous problems with his teeth. (I'm sure there is a good chance that he personally put his dentist's kids through university.) To top it off, later in the day he was speaking enthusiastically

about a new insight gained that morning while going through his routine and he showed me the notes he had made after his practice session charting his progress. Don has simply never stopped learning.

Earlier, I said that Don had indirectly introduced me to many of my closest friends. It doesn't stop there. He also introduced me to the superior martini, *The Inner Game of Tennis*¹, and to the joyful twists of maxims -- many of which are found throughout this book. And he can tell a story as well as anyone I know. Through his often hilarious accounts of life as a musician, I discovered much of the rich past of the music scene in Toronto and elsewhere.

Don on behalf of your colleagues, friends and students (past and future), thank you for your friendship, guidance, wisdom and humour, and for finally publishing this book.

P. Read

¹ Gallwey, H. Timothy. (1979). *The Inner Game of Tennis*. Bantam Books, Toronto, ON

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Don Johnson is a graduate of some of the finest music institutions in North America, including Boston Tanglewood School, The Royal Conservatory of Music and the Oscar Peterson School of Music. During his education, Don travelled across North America to study with some of the world's most renowned symphony musicians.

Upon his return to Toronto, he began an extensive career as one of its busiest trumpet players. Between 1950 and 1975, Don's trumpet was heard on every major radio and television show in the province. During that period, he also conducted and performed with the Beverly Hills Night Club Orchestra.

While playing in the Toronto Symphony, the Toronto Philharmonic and the Canadian Opera Company, Don became sought after as one of the most highly skilled diagnosticians in North America for brass problems. This led him to open the Don Johnson Brass Studio in Toronto, where he had students from across North America come to him for private instruction.

From 1973 until he retired in 1995, Don was Professor of Trumpet and also Head of Music at Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology.



Tanglewood Summer School, Lennox Massachusetts (1949)
Georges Mager, First Trumpet, Boston Symphony
with his students (Don Johnson, second from left)

LIP FLEX #1

1. $\text{♩} = 84$
mf 13 23

2. $\text{♩} = 89$
mf 13 Same as above

3. $\text{♩} = 58$
mf 13 23 Same

4. $\text{♩} = 58$
mf 13 23 Etc.

5. $\text{♩} = 58$
mf 13 23 Etc.

6. $\text{♩} = 89$
mf 2 0 12 1 2 0

7. $\text{♩} = 58$
mf 2 0 Etc.

8. $\text{♩} = 58$
mf 2 3 3 3 3 0 3 3 3 3 Etc.

9. $\text{♩} = 58$
mf 2 0 Etc.

The image displays a musical score for 'LIP FLEX #1' consisting of nine numbered exercises. Each exercise is written on a single staff in treble clef with a common time signature. Exercise 1 is marked with a tempo of quarter note = 84 and a dynamic of mezzo-forte (mf). Exercises 2 through 9 include tempo markings (89 or 58) and dynamic markings (mf). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 0 (representing the thumb) below the notes. Some exercises include slurs and accents. Exercises 2, 3, 7, and 8 include the instruction 'Same as above' or 'Same'. Exercises 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 end with 'Etc.' to indicate continuation. A large, faint watermark is visible in the background of the page.