A Guide to Using the Asper Pickett Visualizer

This guide will help you get the most benefit from your Asper Pickett Visualizer (APV). Also known as a mouthpiece visualizer, the APV allows a player to see their lips inside the mouthpiece rim. Using the APV as part of your daily warm up will reduce fatigue by reducing the weight of the trumpet on your face. It will also quickly get you on the trumpet to complete your warm up and shorten the time you spend warming up in total. In addition, the APV can act as a diagnostic tool, helping you identify issues you may be having with your embouchure or mouthpiece placement.

Because the APV is always used in front of a mirror, you can visually assess your aperture and take note of any problems with the "buzz". For teachers, it can be an instructional tool as well. Through the use of a visualizer, you can determine whether the size of the mouthpiece is proper for the player – even if that player is <u>you.</u> You can see the buzz inside the APV without having to ask the student to tell you what they are doing.

In order to perform these functions, the APV must be the same rim size as your mouthpiece. Your visualizer experiences should be the same as your mouthpiece, or what you learn during work with the visualizer will not transfer when you move from the visualizer to mouthpiece buzzing or long tones on the trumpet.

Many players are called upon to play in a variety of styles, from symphonic or solo work where a wide warm sound is needed to jazz or pop, where a brighter more compact sound is expected. Some players even have multiple trumpets for different playing requirements. *But the size of the mouthpiece <u>rim</u> should remain the same because your lips and underlying muscles remain the same.*

Using the APV, you will be able to see buzz inside the APV and determine whether you are playing on the correct size rim. Your facial structure is one of the first things to consider. Everyone has different shaped lips and varying amounts of muscle supporting the embouchure. Are your lips large and fleshy or thinner? Do you have extra flesh on your upper lip that resembles a "teardrop"? Whatever size your lips, they need to have enough room inside the rim of the APV to vibrate efficiently. Using a mirror, look and listen for these four things:

- Aperture width – the width of the aperture should extend across the inside of the rim while buzzing (aperture is the opening between the lips when the embouchure is formed).
- Amount of upper lip inside the rim – the percentage of upper lip to the lower lip should be at least 50-50. 55% upper lip to 45% lower lip would be better.
- The buzz sound –
  The buzz should be loud. Use lots of air to produce a wide, open sound. This will change based upon the register. The sound will be less wide as you ascend.
- Buzzing through a specified range –
  Start on piano second line G and move down stepwise to the F below piano middle C. Then start on piano second line G and continue up stepwise to fifth line F on the top of the treble clef staff.

After using the visualizer as a diagnostic tool, it is used each day as a warm up and practice tool to maintain an efficient buzz and embouchure.

Buzz pitch is an important concept. Buzz pitch is the actual pitch made by the buzz, or lip vibration, inside the visualizer rim. This pitch controls the quality of the sound made on the trumpet. The key to remember is that *breadth and depth of the trumpet sound is directly related to the pitch of the buzz inside the mouthpiece cup or visualizer rim – the lower the buzz pitch, the wider the sound. Of course, this will vary based upon the register of the note.*

The buzz pitch is controlled by contracting and relaxing the lips as they vibrate inside the visualizer rim. Using this technique when practicing the buzzing routine will allow you to control the width of the buzz and learn the point at which the width makes the pitch out of tune. This control comes with practice. Through proper practice, the buzz pitch can be controlled and a more relaxed buzz can be achieved. You will also learn how little pressure is needed to start the buzz and you will be able to reduce the weight of the trumpet on your embouchure. Using the APV as part of your daily warm up will allow you to see if the "openness" of your aperture is properly allowing your lips to vibrate.

START

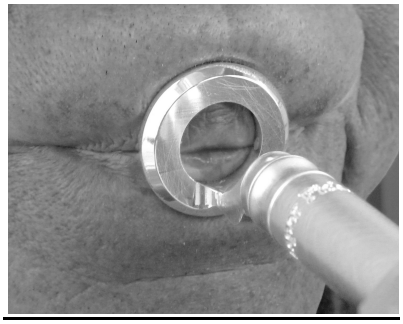
When first using the APV, do not tongue; use a breath attack instead. Just blow air.

1. Stand in front of a mirror.
2. Hold the APV as shown in the following photo, using the thumb and index finger of your *non-dominant hand*.
3. Form your embouchure, keeping corners firm.
4. Place the APV on your bottom lip where you usually place your mouthpiece.
5. Take a ***big*** breath and blow as you tip the APV onto the top lip.
   When you hear a sound, stop tipping the APV. This is your starting sound. What you see and hear is called the "buzz".

LOOK

Use the mirror to look closely at your buzz while you're making a sound.

1. The buzz should extend all the way across the inside of the rim.
2. There should be an equal amount of upper and lower lip. Slightly more upper lip is OK.



LISTEN

When you can produce a sound that has a consistent pitch, listen carefully.

1. Your buzz should be loud, relaxed, and sound as low a pitch as possible.
2. What pitch is your buzz? Lowering your buzz pitch to a piano middle C is a goal for the starting buzz pitch on the APV.
3. A lower buzz pitch helps create a wider, more vibrant sound.

PRACTICE

5-MINUTE BUZZ ROUTINE

- Use a mirror.
- Start the "Whole Step Slur" exercise below on a piano middle C if possible. If not, start on first space F and gradually move lower each day.
- Look at your lips to see that they are as open and relaxed as possible. The buzz should be even from one side of the rim to the other.
- Rest between each two-measure exercise that you play.

- Extend your range up and down each day.
- Your goal is a big sound and an embouchure that is as relaxed as possible given the register of the note you're playing. Move that air!
- After you're successful with the "Whole Step Slur" exercise, then try the "Extended Whole Step Slur" exercise below. Try to extend your APV range each day until you can play all of the exercises.

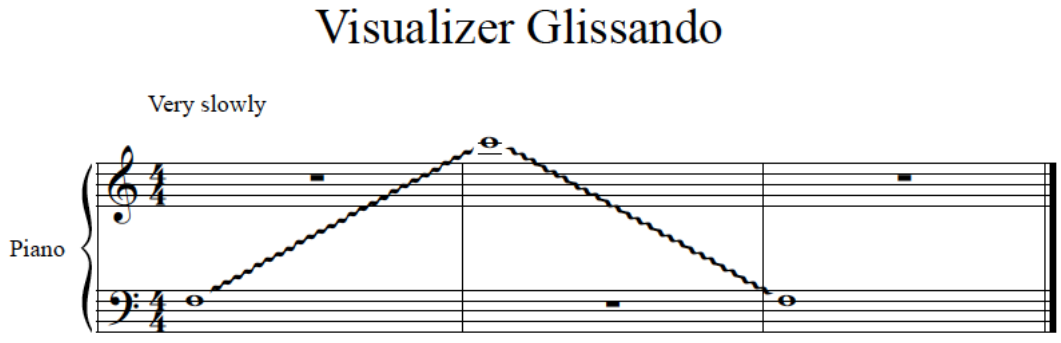
IN THE TRUMPET

Another advantage of the APV is that it can be placed in the trumpet. Many players use too much pressure on the embouchure all of the time, especially when playing in the middle and lower registers.

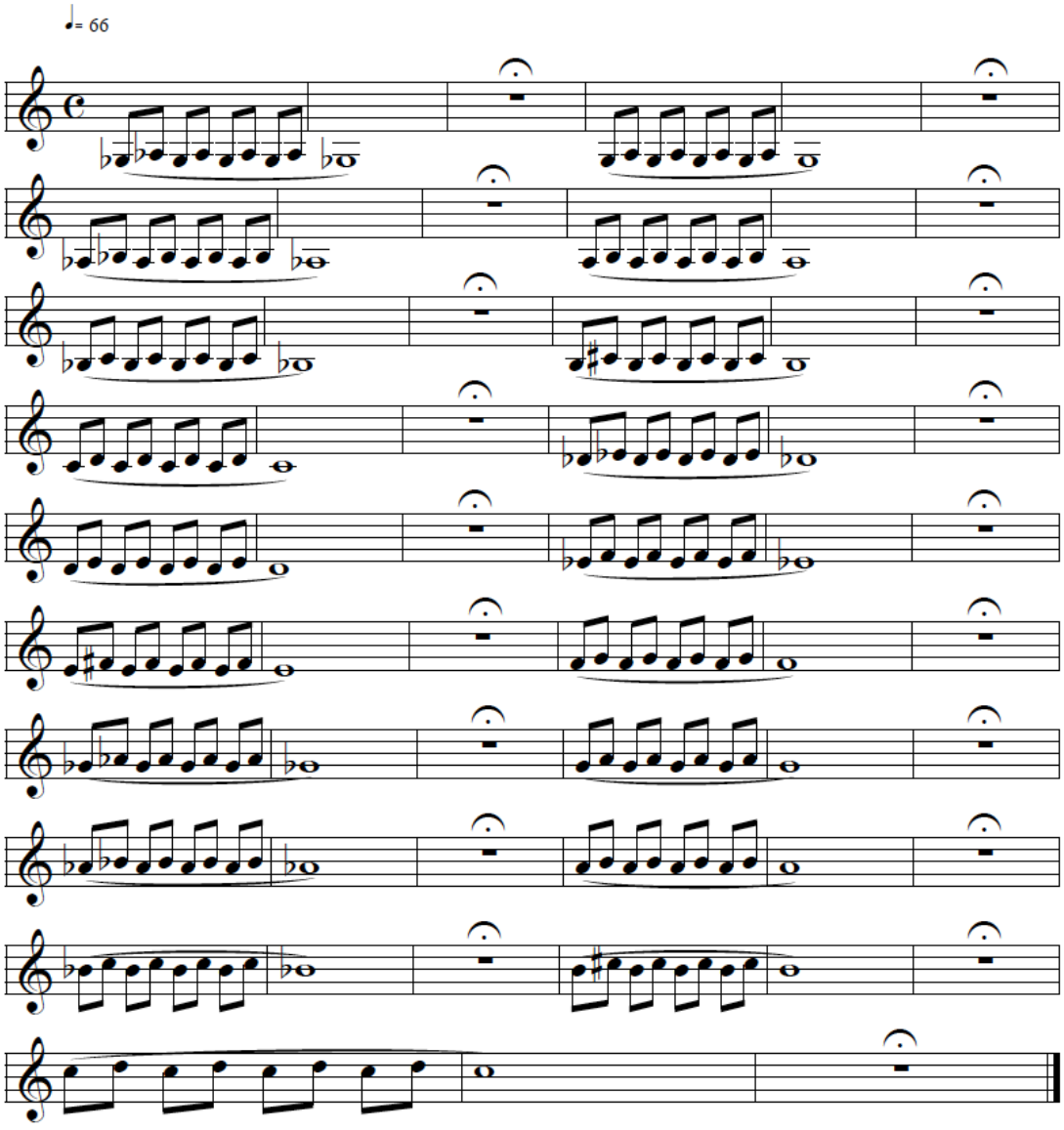
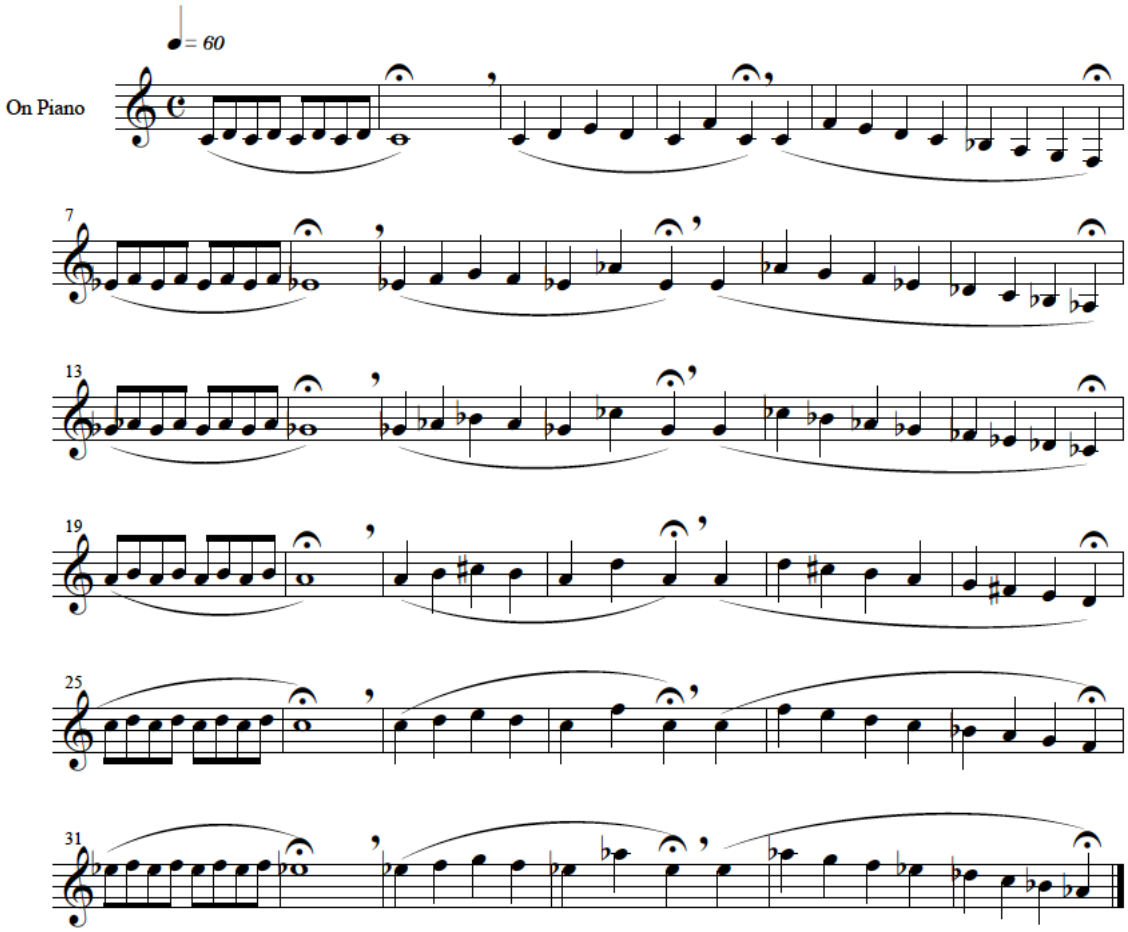
- Every third or fourth day place the APV in your trumpet.
- Play (buzz) the "Whole Step Slur" exercise below for two to three minutes.
- Now play the "Extended Whole Step Slur" exercise for two to three minutes.
- During the playing of these two exercises, consciously pull the trumpet away from you keeping just enough horn weight on your embouchure to create a good seal on the rim of the APV.
- Experiment with horn weight across the entire register of the instrument.
- When you feel confident (this will take time), play the Clark Technical Studies with the APV in the trumpet.

THE GLISSANDO

As a 'how am I doing' test, try playing a VERY SLOW glissando across the complete register of the trumpet. The goal here is to have NO BREAKS in the glissando. If you hear a break, find out where this break occurs in the trumpet register. Massage across the break by repeating the "Whole Step Slur" exercise that covers that range. Try the glissando again. If there is a break in your glissando, the notes around that break will not speak with your trumpet mouthpiece in.



Whole Step Slur



Extended Whole Step Slur