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"a trumpet newsletter for the young and the young at heart"

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Kristin Mortenson, Editor

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So You Got Braces... Now What?

By Grant Manhart: Northern State University, Aberdeen, South Dakota; and
Thomas Dust: University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

My collaborating colleague Thomas Dust and I have spent many hours over the years discussing and researching the psychological and physical events surrounding a trumpeter acquiring braces. Tom is a professional trumpeter and the son of a dentist, in addition to being professor of secondary education, and I am a professional trumpeter and brother of a periodontist, in addition to being a professor of high brass.

My personal high school experience went as follows: There I was, a high school sophomore and I had it all, first chair in a leading Wisconsin large high school band program, when my mother said it was time to get top and bottom braces to correct "those two crooked front teeth from your father's side of the family." Suddenly I am sitting third chair, with thoughts of jazz ensemble and pep band lead trumpet and brassy exciting solos... gone.

I was devastated. I tried wax, pushing hard, not using any pressure at all, new and unusual embouchures, consulted with my band director and local teachers, but nothing seemed to help a bit! I did persevere, but not in a direction I would advise anyone reading this article to go. I bit a hard sticky caramel bar which pulled off the braces on my top front teeth. The situation became so frustrating for the orthodontist and my mother that they both gave up on my top teeth. My teeth eventually straightened on their own, and bottom teeth braces did not seem to bother my playing, and I became a professional trumpet artist, and now a university professor of trumpet.

My other more realistic options were: 1) to have quit, redefining my young teenage self in a different way, which seemed far too high a price to pay just for getting some dental work done, and 2) to search the world over for a method of playing trumpet with braces. In 1973, there was no literature, methods, or appliances available to a young player with braces, at least that I could find. The most learned advice I could find was "use soft wax," and "bad luck... get used to it."

Dr. Dust and I have been searching for and experimenting with appliances and methods of playing with which a young trumpeter enhanced with braces would experience:

- a minimal loss of range, technique, and sound,
- the benefits of the braces their parents are paying for, and
- a technique which would result in continued muscular and musical development on the trumpet, which transfers positive-

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ly without radical change to playing when the braces are removed.

We researched the Morgan Lip Bumper, the Jet-Tone Lip Protector, Brace Guard and Manhart's Brace Base (polysiloxane dental impression putty), Teflon pipe tape, and Infolab's "Brace Relief" kit.

For my contribution to braces research, I had a local dental lab make me a set of top braces, and I hit the practice room!

The Morgan Lip Bumper and the Jet-Tone Lip Protector are flexible thin plastic shields that fit snugly over the brackets and wire in a line. When playing with my braces, I found these smoothed out the sharp edges of the braces but slightly enlarged the "lump" that is the real problem of the braces on the top front teeth. I found I could play by transferring virtually all the pressure of the mouthpiece to my bottom lip... a very unnatural feel, but I eliminated the "goose call" missed notes from the piece of top lip constantly pivoting in the mouthpiece due to the lump under the mouthpiece.

Teflon pipe tape proved to be tricky to get in place and keep in place, and due to its very thin and light nature there is an elevated danger of possibly inhaling the tape. The thinness of the tape eased somewhat the edges of the brackets.

The quick-hardening polysiloxane dental impression putty mentioned above with the Brace Guard and Brace Base products allowed me to play almost as well as before I put on the braces and formed a smooth base for my embouchure. It seemed the harder I pushed the mouthpiece into the relaxed top lip with the smooth base under the lip, the more the lip relaxed and played with my pre-brace sound quality, volume, and range, though the strange feeling was disconcerting at first. Each brace protector I made was slightly different and I made five different styles before I got a "great" one (it convinced me to make a digital movie of my efforts and include it with the putty!).

"Going natural" and toughing it out was extremely painful, and the brackets and braces caused me to tense up the muscles in my top lip to fight the pain and control the flip flopping of the top lip in the mouthpiece below the wire. If a student actually gets calluses so he or she can push harder, the sound pattern will still be inconsistent due to the lump of the brackets and wire. My best success was experienced when I treated the embouchure as described above with the Morgan Lip Bumper and the Jet-Tone Lip Protector, by transferring the mouthpiece pressure to the bottom lip.

TOP TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU GET BRACES:

- 1) Do not panic! You are the same fine person and musician as you were the day before you received the dental appliance. You will

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Dutch Treat: Floris Onstwedder

By Emile Meuffels: Heiloo, The Netherlands

Twelve-year-old Floris Onstwedder received his first trumpet lessons at the age of five from his grandfather, Gerrit List. After not really playing the trumpet for a couple of years, Floris started playing seriously at the age of 8. He has been taught by Guus Dohmen at the Eindhoven music-school for about two and a half years.

In 2003, Floris played during a master class by Frits Damrow, principal trumpet of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and professor of trumpet at the Amsterdam Conservatory. Damrow was so enthusiastic about Floris that he gave him a number of private lessons before accepting him as a student in the "Young Talent" program of the Conservatory in January 2004.

Floris has already won several regional competitions for young musicians. In December 2004, he played in the finals of the "Stichting Jong Muziktalent Nederland" (Foundation for Young Musical Talent in the Netherlands), one of the most important competitions for young musicians in the Netherlands. He has performed the Goedicke *Concert Etude* on several occasions with both the Philips Windband and the Philips Symphony Orchestra in his native town of Eindhoven, but his preference is the piccolo trumpet. He has performed the 9-movement Clarke *Suite* and the Stradella *Sinfonia* with orchestra multiple times, and played the first trumpet part to Handel's *Messiah* in a concert in Vlissingen.



The highlight of Floris' career thus far has been his personal meeting with his trumpet-idol, Wynton Marsalis, at the North Sea Jazz Festival in June 2003. Marsalis said, "Floris, you can **play!**" But he has already met a lot of trumpet stars. Floris followed master classes by Andy Crowley and Martin Hurell of the London Brass, and Wolfgang Guggenberger, a famous German professor of trumpet, and in June 2004, Floris met Sergei Nakariakov after a concert in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

Recently, Floris was featured as a soloist at the "Prinsengrachtconcerten", the highlight of the "Grachtenfestival" in Amsterdam. These open-air concerts on a floating stage in the Amsterdam canals are visited by thousands of listeners on foot and in little boats. Floris played during the children's concert in the afternoon, where four of the most talented young musicians in the Netherlands played a piece with orchestra and a piece with their favorite pop-musician and orchestra. Floris was the only wind player who was selected

and he played the first movement of the Torelli *Concerto* and a ballad with Dutch pop-idol "Do." Floris was also featured at the evening-concert where he played the Clarke *Trumpet Voluntary* with piano as an opening piece. Both concerts were broadcast live on Dutch national television. We look forward to hearing more about this outstanding young Dutch trumpet talent!



Braces *Continued from Page 1*

- be remembered by how well you handled the adversity!
- 2) Keep blowing! It is the *wind* that activates the air in the trumpet and the lips that vibrate. There will be a great tendency to shrink or squeeze your blowing in response to the strange feelings.
 - 3) If you tense up your top lip *and* squeeze your air in response to the pain and strangeness, you will likely have a tense and spitty sound.
 - 4) Try a number of methods, and go with what works.
 - 5) If you have pain, sores, and bleeding, stop! Practice with more breaks and shorter phrases.
 - 6) Listen to the best trumpet playing you can find, and constantly imagine it is you.
 - 7) When you play, insist on the best sound and carry your articulations, music, and range through that sound.
 - 8) Do not go to extremes to find the range you had

yesterday. Your range today with braces will be different, at least for a while.

- 9) Accept that it is going to feel different!
- 10) Go slowly when the braces come off. You will have grown and changed musically since the braces were first put on, and instantly demanding your old range, sound, and endurance usually deforms an otherwise fine embouchure. You must relearn the trumpet for a bit!



Information on the following products can be found on the Internet at:
Morgan Lip Bumper: <http://www.morganbumper.com/details.htm>
Jet-Tone Lip Protector: Offered through Brasswind: <http://www.wbw.com>
Brace Guard: Offered through Music123: <http://www.music123.com>
Manhart's Brace Base with Video: <http://www.northern.edu/manhartg/>
Teflon pipe tape: Used to seal threaded plumbing joints—available at your local hardware store!
Brace Relief: <http://www.infalab.com/>

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