I Want to Sound Like That!

          In my clinics, concerts, and adjudication around the world, I frequently find students who don’t have a good concept of what they should sound like.  It brought me back to 1971 when my band director, the recently deceased Tom Brown, told everyone in the band, “You will bring me $10 on Monday and I will give you a record.”  The following Monday we all lined up and handed over the money (no small sum in 1970, but no one would defy Tom Brown!) and were handed an LP (a large vinyl disc that contained recorded music in case you’ve never seen one!).  We were told to listen to it and each Monday we passed our record to the left so throughout the year we heard a wide variety of music.  When I first heard Tchaikovky’s “Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture” I couldn’t believe anything could be so beautiful! That was just one of many transformative listening experiences that year.

          Despite today’s ease of accessing recorded music through YouTube and other platforms, many young musicians have never heard a wonderful player on their instrument.  Therefore, they emulate the person they hear most, their stand partner.  The result is that middle school musicians imitate other middle schoolers!  With the help of wonderful performers at the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and The U.S. Army Field Band, I have compiled a list of musicians with sounds for us all to emulate.  The names are not in any order and are largely classical artists although many are stylistically versatile. I have leaned toward featuring more recent artists who have newer high-quality recordings available. For listeners, it’s easy to be distracted by the formidable technique of these artists. Try to focus on how they start and end their notes, how they shape them (vibrato, volume, timbre), and how you can imitate their wonderful sound.

If you visit [www.ThomasPalmatier.com](http://www.ThomasPalmatier.com) and click on “Sound Like This!” you will find this list with links to the artist’s website and to some of their free online recordings. This online list with links will keep growing as folks send me suggestions.

Many educators require students to maintain a practice log.  Consider adding a listening log.  Five minutes per day or 20 minutes each week will help your students develop a sound concept to strive for.

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Remember the records I mentioned that our high school band had to buy in 1971?  One of those records was of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band with Ruth Brown as vocalist.  I kept that record and practically played the grooves off of it.  Many years later, I was Associate Director of “Pershing’s Own” and Ruth Brown was singing with us at the National Christmas Tree Lighting.  I sheepishly came up to her (in full dress uniform) and said, “Miss Brown, will you sign my album?” The impressions these wonderful artists can leave on your students could unlock a lifetime of music for them as well. Imagine your beginning trombone players walking into their first class and hearing Joe Alessi!

Next month’s column will discuss ways to transform your concerts into an experience for performers and audiences alike. As always, I’d love to hear from you with your ideas for future columns.

Violin: Hilary Hahn, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Gil Shaham, Lara St. John

Viola: Tabea Zimmerman, Lawrence Power, Roberto Diaz

Cello: Steven Isserlis, Pablo Casals, Jaqueline Dupre

Double Bass: Bozo Paradzik, Rinat Ibramagov, Gary Karr, Uxia Martinez Botana, Lauren Pierce

Harp: Elizabeth Hainen, Jana Bouskova, Isabelle Moretti, Catrin Finch, Emmanuel Ceysson

Flute: Jasmine Choi, Amy Porter, William Bennett, Emmanuel Pahud, Jean-Pierre Rampal

Oboe: Alex Klein, John Mack, Diana Doherty, Elaine Douvas

Bassoon: Milan Turkovic, Klaus Thunemann, Arthur Weisberg, Julie Price

Clarinet: Martin Frost, David Schifrin, Ken Poplowski, Ricardo Morales, Sabine Meyer, Sharon Kam

​Saxophone: Tim McAllister, Kenneth Tse, Vincent David, PRISM Sax Quartet, Stephen Page, Colin Stetson, Amy Dickson

​Trumpet: Philip Smith, Alison Balsom, Ryan Anthony, Caleb Hudson

French Horn: Stefan Dohr, Sarah Willis, Barry Tuckwell​, Genghis Barbie (Quartet), Andrew Bain

Trombone: Joseph Alessi, Jr., Nick Hudson, James Markey (Bass Trombone), Carol Jarvis

Euphonium: David Thornton, Demondrae Thurman, Tormod Flaten, Ben Pierce, David Childs, Lauren Veronie Curran

Tuba: Carol Jantsch, Oysten Badsvik, Velvet Brown, Alan Bauer, Samantha Lake

Percussion: Nancy Zeltsman (Marimba), Rob Knopper (Snare Drum), Jonathan Singer (Xylophone), Timothy Adams, Keith Aleo, Matthew Strauss

Tympani: Shannon Wood, David Herbert