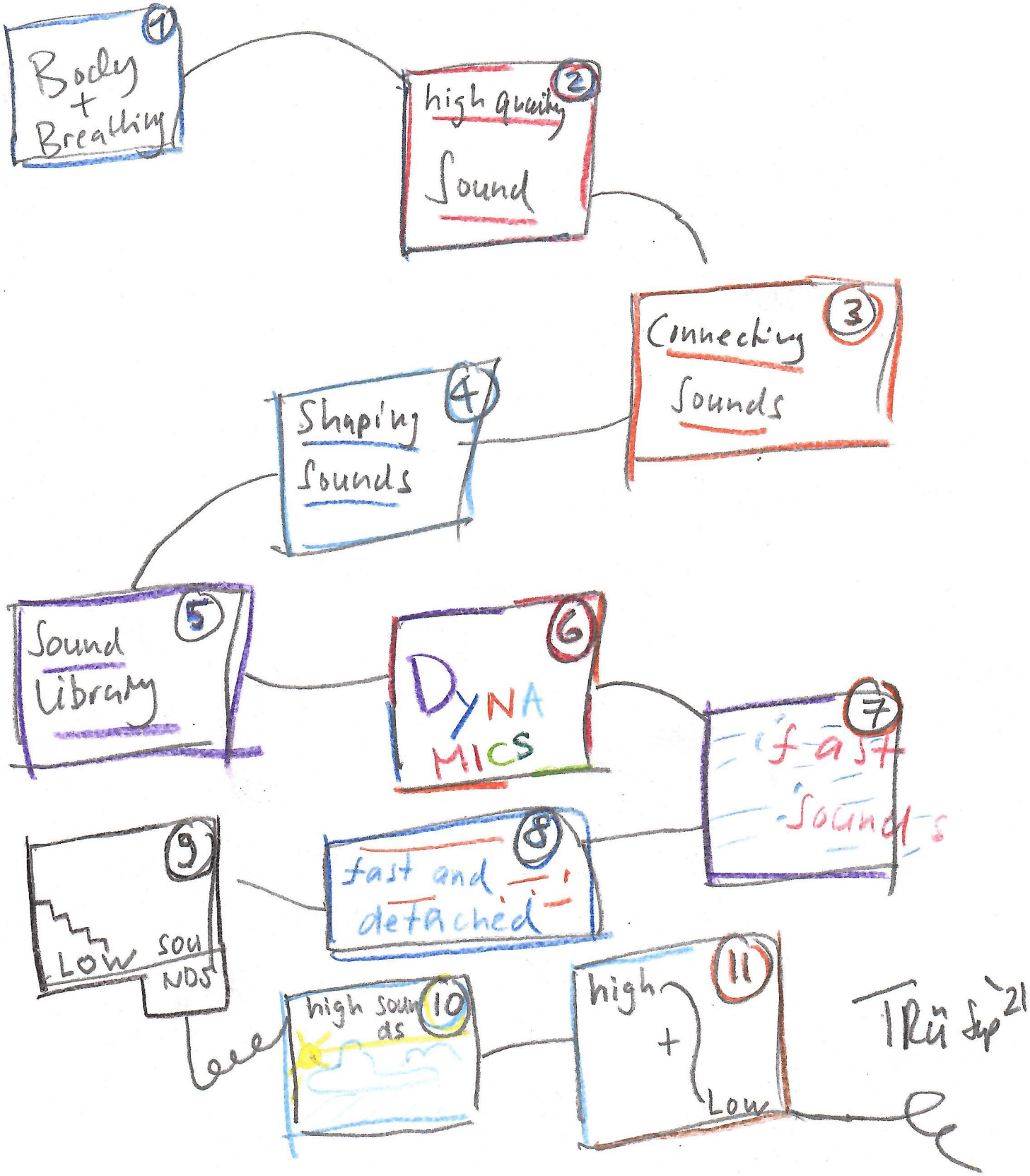
1 instrumental skills

Your personal Fitness Center



Introduction	**Welcome to the Fitness Room!** There is a Spartan Warrior proverb that goes "The one who sweats more in training, bleeds less in battle" Genious is less about genetics – it's more about your **daily habits**. Research is telling us, that it takes around 66 days to install a new (practice-) habit. It will be hard at first - practicing new habits always is! What you find hard today, will become your new normal. Do it. This following training plan and the exercises is going to provide you with everything you will ever need to become a technically advanced player. This, and a lot of self-discipline! Again, research is telling us that becoming a master at anything takes an average practice time of 2h40Min per day, during 10 years! -We better get started then ;-)		
work stages:	**goals:**	**awareness check:**	**samples:**
stage 1	**Getting warmed-up and start gaining focus** Diving straight into your training exercises on a "cold lip" can be problematic. Take a moment to warm up! This is not only for your body, but also lets you "arrive" mentally at your training session and provides you with a fantastic focus for extraordinary results. Start by playing some tunes or melodic patterns. I personally love playing melodic patterns where I just keep transposing freely, like an improvisation. Keep it nice and gentle, keeping the dynamic level at relaxed mf level. Already focus on producing your best quality sound, whilst keeping your upper body totally relaxed. Take deep, full breaths. Use a little bit of vibrato – this will additionally help warming up your lip muscles. Brain tattoo: the energy always follows your attention	Is my focus on playing my instrument? Am I using my "singing" tone to play? Is my upper body totally relaxed, even weak? Am I finding a nice flow of airstream?	Learn focusing your mind by meditation. Practice your awareness
stage 2	**Producing a sound of the highest quality:** A high-quality sound has a clear, resonating core and is rich in color. The core of the sound enables a whole range of overtones to resonate, thus making the sound rich in color. This can be observed when listening to bells sounding. A hq sound requires a perfect mix of air: the relation between airspeed and mass (warmth) of air. The lips are vibrating freely, producing a rich and strong sound signal. The diaphragm supports that steady airstream, like the flame of a gas fire. You can practice the support of your airflow by blowing air through your lips, as shown in the video. I use the tiniest vibrato when playing long notes. This is not for stylistic reasons. Playing straight (dead) long sounds is *very* tiring on the mind and the lips. Keep your sound alive! Also, a small, gentle vibrato, and thus the slight movement of your lips, will help keeping your embouchure nice and relaxed. Brain tattoo: I want to use my best breathing to produce my best sound	**awareness check:** Do I know the features of a high- quality sound? Can I identify it in other players? Can I hear this sound with my inner voice? How does my sound change, in relevance to the change of airspeed and/or mass? Is my airstream supported by the diaphragm?	**samples:** Bells: Voices: Cello: Tuba: Trombone Trumpet: Piano:

	goals:		
stage 3	**Connecting Sounds:** We now practice connecting sounds from tone center to tone center – two notes become one. Connecting the sounds has to be smooth but accurate, avoiding any sound gaps, nor glissando-like 'falling' into the next note. It helps thinking to change the sound as late as possible. (I suggest that you are subdividing the notes for better accuracy) Also observe your airflow and tongue position (inner embouchure) by practicing the air-whistling exercises as shown in the video. As a final exercise, I'm playing the Prelude from the cello suite Nr1 by J.S. Bach. My focus is only on connecting the notes, not the historically correct interpretation – this will be a topic for "Room N°3" where we have the focus on learning about the interpretation. A slight jaw movement when playing large intervals is quite natural – focus on the beauty of the sound and how you are connecting it. Learn this all-important brain tattoo: The Air Guides the Embouchure	**awareness check:** Am I connecting the sounds? Am I really moving from center to center, without leaving a gap, break of sound or glissando? (changing the note as late as possible) How does this particular sound feature sound like when observing the greatest performers? Can I capture (hear and safe) this sound and store it on my "hard disk" (brain) Am I letting the air guide the embouchure?	**samples:** 
stage 4	**Shaping the sound by different note-lengths** I'm a big supporter of the teaching method of the celebrated Oboist and Master **Marcel Tabuteau** and his teaching, using numbers to illustrate tension in the phrasing and note-grouping. The number-system can also be applied to note length: I'm allotting my shortest sound I can possibly play (staccatissimo) a number 1, and my longest sound, which is in fact a continuous sound not using any tongue articulation at all (legatissimo) a number 20. Starting on a Nr 20 articulation (no tongue), I'm playing the following musical samples and scale patterns. Brain tattoo: the quality of my sound remains, playing long or shorter notes	Can I apply numbers to my note lengths? Do I hear the length of the note? Can I play with the same qualits sound when playing lower number note lengths? Am I keeping the same dynamic level when I play lower number note lengths?	https://marceltabuteau.com
stage 5	**Building your sound library** The written music language is using a variety of articulation signs to show us what kind of sound should be applied on the note or a passage. We can of course practice all the different articulation forms, such as *marcato, tenuto, staccato* and so forth. In my view, it is much more inspirational to apply such signs to actual sounds from the real life. For instance, a *marcato* accent (>) becomes a church bell sound! A "heavy" *martellato* accent (^) becomes the sound of an anvil used by a blacksmith. A *staccato* is like the sound of a ping-pong ball being dropped on a table tennis table – or raindrops falling on a tabletop etc. Use your imagination to connect articulation signs to your personal sound library! Here are some sound exercises: Brain tattoo: I'm connecting written music symbols to real-life sounds	Listen to sound all the time! Go "Sound Walking" taking in any sound you hear – how exactly does that bird sound sitting in the tree? What rhythm pattern does it sing? Can I identify the notes? What kind of sound does the bus make when it passes you? Can you really focus on the exact sound? Become a sound addict.	Birdsound: https://youtu.be/Q4REEz5wars Church bells: https://youtu.be/iVNxnElSF2M Ping-pong ball: https://youtu.be/fsD_vmqEys0 anvil sound: https://youtu.be/YPCKbVatgRs

stage 6	**goals:** **Expanding your dynamic range** The Tabuteau number system introduced at stage 4 can also be used to show dynamic intensity more specifically. Give your softest sound possible a number 1 and your biggest, loudest sound a number 20 and you will end up with a dynamic range of 20 different dynamic levels! Apply these numbers to the next exercises. Brain tattoo: I want to explore and exaggerate the dynamic impact in my performance	**awareness check:** Is my sound quality still excellent, when playing the higher, or lower numbers of dynamic intensity? The smaller sound numbers 5-1 must not be weak, just soft (far away). The higher numbers of intensity not forced or brutal, just brilliant and shining.	**samples:** Loud brass section: https://youtu.be/dGaQBlt5jfU

stage 7	**Playing fast sounds slurred** Playing fast sounds is baring the challenge to keep your sound quality at the highest level – just like we aspired for during the whole training session so far. Really work your fingers as precisely and determined as possible! Clarity and accuracy always comes before speed. Brain tattoo: I give my fast sounds the same musical consideration as I do to my slow sounds	Is my wrist relaxed when I play fast sounds? Am I keeping my fingers positioned on the valves? (avoid letting your fingers "flying" around) Am I supporting the airflow when playing fast?	Rafael Mendez: https://youtu.be/gUij8FCg0z8 Wynton Marsalis: https://youtu.be/pAfge_kArq0
stage 8	**Playing fast sounds detached** Playing fast sounds detached requires a good synchronization between your tongue- and finger action. Practice speaking the passage first whilst working the valves. Brain tattoo: I give my fast sounds the same musical consideration as I do to my slow sounds	Can I speak the passage clearly and evenly? Is my finger action synchronized with my tongue?	Sergei Nakariakov: https://youtu.be/RhfP_AXL_GM
stage 9	**Playing low sounds** Your lips can be seen as a flexible set of strings, like the strings on a piano, violin, or guitar. Now, you are going to play on your lowest pitched "strings". The lips will have to vibrate at low frequency. Your airflow will be much slower and you will be using more mass of warm air. This airflow will guide your embouchure. As always, make sure you have a clear idea of a best sounding low range. When connecting low sounds, remember to move from tone center to tone center with great accuracy. Don't just follow the metronome – fight against it!	Is your embouchure guided by the airflow? Are you letting your lips vibrate freely? Are you actively driving the tempo?	find sound samples of amazing baritone singers, low string players, tuba players...

stage 10	**Goals:** **Playing high sounds** You are now going to play on your highest pitched "strings". This means, your lips will have to vibrate at a much higher frequency. You will meet greater resistance due to the combination of a number of factors: • higher airspeed • the oral cavity becomes smaller as your tongue is more arched • the lips aperture (opening) gets smaller • the airstream is smaller Unless the air support is also increased when moving into the high range, the sound will get thinner or even cease. An increase in mouthpiece pressure on the lips is normal when playing in the upper range. Keep the pressure on your mouthpiece rim even, so there is a good seal and connection between lips and mouthpiece. Keep the corners of your lips firm. Playing high sounds at this stage of the training may feel strenuous. Give yourself a little break – drink some water – gently massage your lips. What feels hard today, will become your new normal. There is a fine balance between physically overdoing it and avoiding strong, focused training all together. It's now all about having a clear idea of a most brilliant high sound to focus on – don't just work hard without having that clear idea of the sound you want! Brain tattoo: **the energy always follows your attention**	**awareness check:** Remember, it's metal against flesh. Giving the best air support is key when playing high. Can you really hear a most brilliant high sound in your inner singing voice? Do you know what a brilliant high brass sound really sounds like? Are you supporting your air as you are moving into the high range?	**samples:** Maurice André https://youtu.be/ufGl19HiAC0 Ian Bousfield https://youtu.be/-1vr3JMt_tc
stage 11	**Connecting high- and low sounds** At this last stage, we are going to connect our high and low sounds. You will be starting to feel the fatigue – the more reason to keep playing with your best breathing and strongest idea of a beautiful singing sound! Brain tattoo: **Always play with your best breath and best sound** **Well done!** **Now take a moment to move your body (go jogging) and hydrate your body – get some fresh air!**	Can I still imagine my most beautiful sound? Am I making the large interval leaps sound easy? Am I still playing with my best breathing? Will I take a moment to move and hydrate my body and taking in some fresh air?	
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