TROMBONE/BARITONE

Performance Notes for 2012-2013 All-State Band Auditions
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There are a variety of dynamic changes to be negotiated in this etude. Some changes are sudden while others occur over several measures. Think carefully about what the composer had in mind as he wrote this etude. Can you hear it in your mind as you look over the music? When a crescendo or diminuendo takes place over a few measures, be sure to pace yourself - start changing dynamic right away but don't change so quickly that you arrive at the new dynamic too early. Notice the ritard at the end of line (measure 8) is without a diminuendo. Keep your sound full right through the ritard. Notice that the diminuendo at the beginning of the fourth line (measures 15 - 16) is without a ritard. Don't slow down as you get softer.

The indication "cantabile" implies to me a relatively smooth style. This is more a song than a march so really sustain the notes and don't tongue them too hard. Think the syllable "dah" instead of "tah" to begin the notes.

Where to take a breath? There aren't always obvious places to break the music for a breath. In general, I believe it is best to breathe right before the pick-up note(s) to something new. For instance, in measure 3, I like to breathe right before the last eighth note in the measure. Likewise, I breathe before similar eighth-note pick-ups in measures: 5-7, 11 and 13. As with anything you play, always take a deep, dark breath when you play. Try buzzing the notes of the etude on your mouthpiece and check your pitch with a piano or keyboard if you have one handy. Most importantly, make this SING. Make the notes sound as if they are going somewhere. Play with direction.

CLINIC BAND:  Melodious Etudes for Trombone / Rochut / Fischer // p. 8, #7, beginning through 2nd measure of line 7; dotted quarter note = 80 (transpose for treble clef baritone).

It seems odd to me that there are almost no dynamic changes in this etude. I recommend that, while you keep an overall sense of piano, don't be afraid to play expressively. In other words, it is important to play piano but it is more important to play musically.

The grace notes may be new to you. They should be played lightly, quickly and without interrupting the flow of the music. Try practicing first without grace notes and then insert them. Be sure to keep your tempo steady. One tricky grace note occurs near the beginning
of the second line (measure 7). While this can be played well by snapping your slide out to third position, if you have an F-attachment trigger on your instrument, you might try playing that note in first position with the trigger. Personally, I don’t prefer using the trigger for all the grace note Cs. Try playing it both ways for your band director and ask which sounds better.

Another challenging grace note pops up on the fifth line (measure 26). There are three possible ways to do this (and perhaps a fourth). If you play the A in second position, move your slide quickly to fourth and use the syllables "tah-dah" to cover any glissando. If you play the A in sixth position, you can lip slur back into fourth. Do this only if you are comfortable with lip slurs and be sure to extend your slide out far enough. If you have an F-attachment trigger, you can find that A around fifth position. Since you are already in fifth for the F-sharp, quickly press and release the trigger and, with practice, the A should pop out.

Remember that E-flat and F above B-flat tend to be sharp, so shade your slide out a bit to get better intonation on these notes. You might try using the alternate position of lowered fourth position for some of the Ds when they appear in the middle of runs. A good example for this appears at the end of the fifth line (measures 29-30).

Overall, remember that a good legato requires three elements: light tongue, quick slide and smooth air. To improve slide speed and improve embouchure accuracy, try PRACTICING the etude without the tongue. Keep your slide movements so quick that the glissandi are hard to hear. When you play it again with the tongue, tongue very lightly, saying "dah," so the music remains liquid smooth.

SENIOR BAND: Melodious Etudes for Trombone / Rochut / Fischer // p. 78, #55, stop at 1st measure of line 6 (including the fermata); quarter note = 92 (transpose for treble clef baritone).

Quick … What key is this in? If you said, “E-flat major” you’re wrong. Yes, the key signature has three flats, but look at all those accidentals. In truth, it starts in E-flat minor and then moves to the relative key of G-flat major. Why is this important? Because, in those keys, I predict that most trombonists auditioning this year are going to play this etude badly out of tune.

Say hello to your new friend: 5th position. It lives out there somewhere in the swamps beyond your bell. Your first job is to figure out exactly where it is. I suggest that trombone players should play a slow glissando out from 1st position to 5th. Use your ear and a tuner and figure out where to place your slide. Can you hear when it is out of tune? As you slide down, listen carefully to your sound quality. Keep it full and centered.

Playing all those G-flats in 5th will present some interesting slide position choices. When playing legato, it is often a good idea to keep half steps in the same partial of the overtone series. For example, in m. 3, it makes a lot more sense to play the D-naturals in 4th than in 1st. However, G-flat is trickier. I will often choose to play the F in 6th position to make the legato smoother. However, you may have trouble reaching 6th position. By “trouble” I mean
not playing that position consistently in tune. Most young players don’t really where 6th position is! They often play it very sharp.

So, you have a choice: play F’s in 6th for good legato (but intonation might be worse) or play them in 1st for good intonation (but legato might be worse). Ultimately I can’t tell you what to do but I do suggest this:

(1) For longer notes (like the half note F in m.2), bring the slide into 1st
(2) For quick passing tones (like the 16th note F in m. 14), go out to 6th position.

Whatever you choose, MARK IN THOSE SLIDE POSITIONS.

This etude has only two dynamic marks. That has always been one of my frustrations when the Bordogni/Rochut book is used for auditions. Should you add your own dynamics? Well, that really depends on the judge and, of course, you can’t ask him/her in advance. I think it is always better to play musically, so I suggest that you do add some dynamics. Try this out…

m. 15 crescendo
m. 16 and 17 start mezzo forte and crescendo to forte
m. 18 forte (not fortissimo)

m. 19 maybe a little diminuendo
m. 20 mezzo forte with a diminuendo on the fermata.

A few last comments:
1. Play the long notes with direction. Don’t just let them sit there.
2. If you have been working on your lip slurs, you don’t have to tongue everything (esp. in mm. 9 and 13).
3. Be careful with your rhythm in leaving long notes. Be particularly careful not to start the runs too early in mm. 16 and 17. I caught myself doing this when I was recording this etude.
4. Remember that, on most trombones, the 6th partial of the overtone series is sharp and the 7th partial is flat. You’ll need to move your slide just a little to fix these problems. For example, the high E-flat in m.3 needs to be played in lowered third position. The high G-flat (eg. in m. 9 and especially m. 19) will naturally be low. Play these notes in a raised third position.