

All-State Solos – bass trombone

Overall Advice:

Establish a good daily warm-up and routine, if you don't already have one. If you need one, I have a warm-up packet that I'll send to you. Email me at: mwilkinson@mozart.sc.edu, let me know your name and what school you attend, and ask for it. Every trombonist has a slightly different way of going about their routine, but most routines have these commonalities: long tones, lip slurs, and tonguing. I've addressed each a little bit, below.

Long tones: play relaxed and non-metered long tones every day. Focus on *your sound*. Have a sound in mind that you want to emulate (from your teacher, a recording, a trombone performance you attended, etc...), and chase that sound, every day. I like to think of long tones as the most relaxing thing I do, all day, and I believe that *your sound* is the most important thing about you, as a musician. Without a beautiful core sound, it is difficult to do much else. I like to play my Remington series with a floated first note (only air to start the note, no tongue), and a relaxed glissando to the next note (then, breathe before the next two notes). I also play slow scales, using as little tongue as possible, while playing legato or glissed.

Lip slurs: play these to develop flexibility on your instrument, learning to navigate the harmonic series, without using your tongue. Start with easy slurs (4th-line F down to low Bb, and then back up), and work your way up to adding more partials and playing faster (while staying relaxed). Always play these slowly to start. A relaxed accuracy is key in the beginning, but even after you feel you have more control, still keep things as tension-free as possible. Whether you have a single-trigger, independent, or dependent bass trombone, try playing these also down through your trigger positions, as low as possible.

Tonguing: after you have gotten some air moving through the instrument while playing long tones and lip slurs, *then* work on tonguing, while keeping the *same sound* that you've been producing, previously. Don't allow the notes in this part of your routine to not sound as good as everything else. Practice tonguing repeated notes (static, or non-moving slide), and also practice tonguing moving notes (dynamic, or moving slide). Make sure to move your slide quickly between notes, avoiding any unnecessary glissandos/portamento (while at the same time making sure that your slide arm stays as relaxed as possible). Scales are a great thing to practice here, varying your articulations - specifically, practice the scale that relates to the key of the etude that you're working on.

Finally, when learning these etudes, take the time to practice *slowly* and *accurately*. Make sure that you are being attentive to *every detail* in the music, first. Use a music dictionary to make sure that you know and fully understand each musical term contained in these solos (I like the Wotton Dictionary of Music app).

Clinic Bass Trombone: Audition Solo 2B, Allegretto

-Practice the dynamic and articulation contrasts - the composer is very specific about these things. Practice with a metronome, and be as exact in your performance details as possible, staying within the "Allegretto" and "*brillante*" markings.

-Practice your F major scale, as the etude is centered around that key and scale (with obvious accidentals that aren't in the key of F). In m.9-14, these are just arpeggios built on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th scale degrees of the F major scale. In m.21 & 23, these are "skippy" scale patterns (also, mostly in F). Elsewhere, you'll find melodic lines that follow a straight scalar line (like m.1, 3, 25-28, 29, 31, and 37). In other words, if you know your F major scale, you've already "learned" a large portion of this solo.

-Style: make your dotted 8th/16th note rhythms snappy...ie: don't let them sound like triplets. Make the contrast in articulation and style evident everywhere you see it marked. In m.1-4, *forte* and *brillante*, followed by m.5-8, *piano* and *dolce*. In m.9-12, follow the "quarter-note, two staccato eighths, quarter note" markings carefully, and don't forget to crescendo up to the *forte* in m.13. If you play the staccato notes as "space between the notes" instead of thinking of the eighths as "short notes", you'll play a cleaner phrase.

-Style and Slide Technique: for the slurred *dolce* passage (m.5-8) and the phrases in m.17-20 and 25-28 (as well as m. 32-33, 35, 38-39, and 39-40), focus on blowing all of the way through each slurred phrase, connecting one note to the next. Don't move your slide *too early* or *too late* - move it right in time with your legato articulation. For the *brillante* and other louder/fuller passages, make sure that you play with *good tone* first, accent and louder dynamics *second*.

-It would be easy to let your tempo lag, as the style, articulations, etc...change between passages. Be diligent, practice with a metronome, along with a friend, for your band teacher, and focus on keeping your tempo constant.

-a. ending: don't let the *forte* or *fortissimo* passages get out of control – only play as loud as you can play with a completely controlled and still full sound, but being especially careful on the low and accented E in m.34. If you focus on making that note a little bit accented and also tenuto, it'll be easier to not let it get out of control or blatty (which you definitely don't want, right at the end of your performance!). The tricky part here is quickly "turning the volume down" to *mezzo-piano* and playing a little more delicately, for the last two measures.

-b. ending: same comments about not letting dynamics get out of control, and contrast in the last two measures. Note carefully where to slur and where not to slur. In the last two measures, be as delicate as possible with your low G and F. Play with a full sound, but don't allow any "bass trombone bark" into your sound, here.

*Extra – if you are playing on an independent bass trombone, take some time to decide where to use your F trigger vs. where to use your Gb trigger. A little bit of advance planning can lead to smoother phrases and a cleaner performance.

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Senior Bass Trombone: Audition Solo 3C, Andante cantabile / Allegro agitato / Andante cantabile

-Practice the dynamic, articulation, and rhythmic contrasts - the composer is very specific about these things. Practice with a metronome, and be as exact in your performance details as possible, staying within the Andante cantabile marking at the beginning (and for both of the endings) and Allegro agitato for the middle section. Learn to make a smooth transition between these two tempos, eventually without the metronome.

-Practice your G major scale, as most of the Andante cantabile (beginning and endings) sections are diatonic to G major. Meaning: if you know your G major scale really well, you “already know” how to play most of this solo. Knowing your related minor scale (E minor) will help to learn the middle Allegro agitato section. However, the composer alternates between using at least two different forms of minor, so make sure to differentiate between C and C# in that minor scale (practice natural, melodic, and harmonic to be thorough).

-Style and Slide Technique: for all of the slurred *sempre dolce* passages in the Andante cantabile sections, focus on playing smooth scalar runs (like in m.4, 5, 6, 7, etc...) and also smooth arpeggiated runs, or phrases with larger leaps (like m.1-2, 3, 8, etc...). Focus on blowing all of the way through each slurred phrase, connecting one note to the next. Don't move your slide *too early* or *too late* - move it right in time with your legato articulation.

-For the louder/fuller passages in the Allegro agitato section, make sure that you play with *good tone* first, accent and louder dynamics *second*. Practice this section slower to clean up the 16th note passages, and don't underestimate the speed of the triplets (it is easy to drag when playing them).

-Triplets in m.15-17: this is simply one long diminished arpeggio. If you practice playing the notes in a F# diminished arpeggio independent from the solo, you'll be farther along (just like knowing your G major scale, as mentioned above). If you haven't worked on this concept before, a diminished arpeggio is just stacked minor thirds (here: F#, A, C, D#). Side note: no matter which of those four notes you start on (when practicing it), it is still the same arpeggio, since the intervals are all the same, or symmetrical.

-The low B: assuming you have a double-trigger bass trombone (whether independent or dependent), first make sure that you “find” exactly where to play this note on the slide, and then work to get a clean and accented low note, but one that's played with great and full tone (not blatty). If you have a single-trigger bass, you have 3 options: 1. Play it waaaaay out in 7th position and lip it waaaaay down, 2. Pull your F tuning slide almost all the way out, still lip the note down (waaaay out in 7th), and then adjust by one position where all of the rest of your trigger notes are played (side note: you'll no longer have a C in first position with the trigger), and/or 3. Learn to play a “false” low B in trigger 4. This is a concept that most professional players can show and teach you how to do; however, playing it accented and centered as a false note is rather difficult, and using the F-attachment and/or taking it up an octave if you don't have a second trigger is probably a better option.

*Extra – if you are playing on an independent bass trombone, take some time to decide where to use your F trigger vs. where to use your Gb trigger. A little bit of advance planning can lead to smoother phrases and a cleaner performance.