

Learning Outside the Box: Other Brasses

Horn players have a wealth of quality literature and pedagogical material, but there is no reason to let those riches stop us from looking further afield and discovering new sources of educational materials. The lowest hanging fruit on this tree of new knowledge, just waiting to be picked, would be the other brass instruments. We can't go over it all, but we can take a cursory look at some of the best they have to offer us.

Trumpet

The horn is all about sound – we don't have to learn anything about that from any other instrument. But we can enrich our playing by learning from the specialties of almost every other instrument. From the trumpet we might discover ways of acquiring some of the dazzling technique and range for which the instrument is famous. There is no shortage of books and methods for the trumpet from which to choose. Let's have a look.

The granddaddy of all brass technique books is Arban's *Complete Conservatory Method for the Cornet*, which has been a mainstay in the training of brass players for well over a century. If you don't have a copy, run – don't walk – to the nearest music store and stock up. Jean Baptiste Arban was born in Lyon, France in 1825. There were no methods for the cornet (which was in its infancy) at the time, so Arban put together his own, a compendium of the techniques that he had mastered as one of the most brilliant cornet soloists of his day (he is reputed to have been the first to have taken the technique of triple tonguing from the flute and applied it to the cornet).

Arban's method was first published in 1864; the most widely used current edition is that edited by Edwin Franko Goldman and Walter M. Smith, with annotations by Claude Gordon, published by Carl Fischer. Most method books today run to several dozen pages. The Arban is around 350. There is almost too much to even list; but here is a basic outline: I. First Studies (intervals, keys, basic patterns, syncopation studies, dotted rhythms, 6/8), II. Slurring/Legato (intervals, tremolo, mixed staccato and legato), III. Scales (major, minor [his treatment of minor is a bit odd: after pages of major scales, minors are treated on one page; he also uses melodic minor ascending and harmonic minor descending, and omits minor scales in Eb, Ab, and Bb] and chromatic), IV. Ornaments (turns, mordents, trills, etc), V. Advanced Studies (Intervals [something like those bouncy Kopprasch 'popcorn' etudes], triplets, arpeggios (major, minor, dominant 7th, diminished), VI. Triple and double tonguing. This brings us as far as p. 191 and "The Art of Phrasing" – 150 airs, excerpts and duets. The last part is devoted to "14 Characteristic Studies" and 1"2 Fantasies and Variations." No. 11 is the celebrated Carnival of Venice.

Right after Arban comes Herbert L. Clarke (1867 – 1945; virtuoso cornetist with the Sousa band) and his *Technical Studies for Cornet*. As the saying goes, if Arban is the ‘bible’, then Clarke is the ‘new testament.’ Clarke’s chromatic and diatonic patterns, scales, and arpeggios are progressively and intelligently arranged, and every valve instrument player would benefit by adding some Clarke to her daily study.

Another well-known method is *Daily Drills and Technical Studies* by Max Schlossberg, who was born in Russia and studied at the Moscow Conservatory before moving to the United States in 1910 to be principal trumpet of the New York Philharmonic for twenty-six years. Schlossberg’s book has 8 sections: I. Long Note Drills, II. Intervals (there is much interval work in section I as well), III. Octave Drills (he apparently loved wide interval work), IV. Lip Drills (tremolo slurs and arpeggios), V. Chord Studies (arpeggios), VI. Scales (major only [!]), VII. Chromatic Scales (almost always beginning on C), and Etudes (heavy on intervals and arpeggios; some scales and decoration).

Clifford Lillya taught trumpet at the University of Michigan 1947-1980. Balquhider Music has (re-)published some of his works, including his *Trumpet Technic*, which is a concentrated compendium of the basic areas of interest for trumpet in four parts, the first two of which could interest us as horn players: I. Basic Skills (lip slurs, single-double-triple tonguing, intervals, trills and embellishments, rhythms), II. Applied Music Theory (major and minor scales [natural, harmonic, and melodic minor], dominant 7th chords [=arpeggios], diminished 7th chord, 5th and other intervals, and modal, pentatonic, diminished and other scales). III: Band and orchestra excerpts (horns could really use a band literature excerpt book!) IV. Recital and Chamber Music excerpts.

Theoretically horn players might learn something about high range playing from trumpet players, though it is clear that they are aided by the size and shape of the instrument and the mouthpiece. Claude Gordon has a *Systematic Approach to Daily Practice*, a “52 week course designed to develop a register from low C to C above high C, along with power and endurance...” I believe someone said in one of the online discussions that Gordon’s exercises (which contain a great deal of half notes and go up to double high C) really do work; the catch being that you have to followed his detailed instructions to the letter. Decide for yourself. Aside from the highly questionable goal of a quest for a double high C on the horn, I’m afraid I would run screaming from the room long I finished even one exercise as stupefyingly boring as these appear. Back to Arban and Clarke...

I have a stack of trumpet titles, but not much more space. I will have to wind up this discussion with a few more names, and then leave it to you to accost trumpet players near you to rifle through their stash of music to see what they have that might be of interest to you. Quick and dirty: I wish someone would do a horn version of Gordon Mathie’s *Trumpet Teacher’s Guide* (PP Music), which consists for the most part of detailed listings of playing issues (e.g. arpeggios, articulation, atonality, breathing, etc.)

giving material available that deals with them, including discussion and examples (text) and etudes and duets, ranked from easy to difficult.

Need a break from Kopprasch and his ilk, or perhaps some sight reading? Try the following works for trumpet: Wurm: *40 Studies*, Balasanian: *25 Easy Etudes* (range: a to g^{''}), Walter M. Smith: *30 Modern Etudes* (fair amount of high range), Bousquet: *36 Celebrated Studies* (not as high as Smith, more technical than Balasanian), Hering: *32 Etudes* (slightly shorter and less technical than the Bousquet). Scott Belck's *Modern Flexibilities for Brass* are challenging and useful overtone studies that hornists should try. Another book besides the Arban that is good for tonguing practice is Allen Vizzutti's *Trumpet Method Book 1*. We also like Bai Lin's *Flexibilities* and Anthony Plog's *Method for Trumpet, Vol. 5: Flexibility Exercises* for the same reason. All of the above are resolutely tonal and are heavy on scales and arpeggios. A good introduction to the challenges of atonal playing is to be found in Charles Decker's *Serial Studies* for trumpet, which are fairly short etudes that each feature a tone row based on a different interval.

Trombone

It is true that trombones and especially tubas have long been borrowers of horn music (solos, etudes) to flesh out their less richly endowed musical legacies, but we should not be so smug or tunnel-visioned to think that there is nothing that we could learn from them. There is, in fact, a lot of interesting material used by other instruments from which horn players could benefit.

The most obvious offering from the kingdom of the low brass is music in the bass clef. We have a few favorites (e.g. the Rochut/Bordogni studies) that are nice, but we do them to death - how strange that it occurs to us so seldom to walk across the hall and ask the 'bone player if we may look through his music to discover supplements to Rochut. It goes without saying (but you know me, I'll say it anyway) that not all trombone, tuba, or euphonium music is suited for horn playing - it may go too low, be idiomatic for slide movement, be in tenor clef, etc. - but a little hunting will turn up plenty of music to enliven low horn studies.

The Blazhevich etudes for trombone (ed. Reginald Fink, Accura Music. Full title: *School for Trombone in Clefs*) - vaguely Kopprasch-esque in style and language - have long been low brass staples. Mr. Fink, the editor of this edition, has - unlike any horn edition of Kopprasch that I've ever seen - thoughtfully supplied a list of "Procedures for the Mastery of the Vladislav Blazhevich Etudes," plus additional comments on "Spot Practice." Each etude also contains instructions by Fink on special points to work on. There are 112 etudes here, the first being a brief series of whole and half notes and gradually progressing in difficulty and length to the end of the book. Caveats: make sure you get this particular edition. Blazhevich intended these as clef studies for

trombone and this is the only edition that uses bass clef throughout; also: Ex. 1-34 were intended as position studies and may be less useful than the rest.

Composer Elliot Del Borgo's *Contemporary Rhythm and Meter Studies* (Meredith Music Publications, 1996) consists of 28 etudes that "use... metric and rhythmic devices commonly found in works of the 20th century." The treble clef version has been available for some time and is very usable for horn, but there is no reason not to work on the same topics in the bass clef version as well. The pieces seem to be written less as etudes and more as unaccompanied recital pieces.

Buddy Baker was a long-time trombone teacher at the University of Northern Colorado and was equally at home in jazz as in classical music. The *Buddy Baker Tenor Trombone Handbook* (International Trombone Association Manuscript Press, 2001) is the product of a lifetime of college teaching and is a model of pedagogical organization. It is a book that every brass player would do well to have, and certainly no college brass teacher should be without. The sheer breadth of Baker's material supplies a model for an approach to studying any instrument. There are 160 pages, and every one contains valuable ideas and information. It is impossible to include more than a sampling of the contents here, but I will rely on synecdoche to give you a taste of the whole with a few of the parts: a chart of trombone literature listing the century with suggestions for solos for jr. high/easy high school, high school/easy college, freshman, soph/junior, advanced college senior/grads/professionals, most difficult/grads/professional (including his subjective opinion of the piece A to B-); ditto etude materials; discussions of equipment; "Daily Routine Circle Chart," "Daily Practice Record" [chart], sight reading, "Things You Will Need to Bring to Each Lesson," discussions and exercises on breathing, embouchure, tonguing, and more; preparation [of music] timetable; trills; ornaments; "Dealing with Fear in Performance," preparing orchestral excerpts; degree requirements, program planning ideas, books on meditation, lesson assignment form, jazz listening guide, "20 Standards You Should Know" - the list goes on and on. You get the idea. Now get the book. Postscript: Marta Hofacre's *Teaching Collegiate Trombone* is another text in the same vein as the Baker handbook.

The horn world is blessed with some very good web sites (the IHS website, hornmatters.com, and others), but trombone world also has one of the best brass web sites around - that of Doug Yeo (bass trombone of the Boston Symphony). Find it at www.yeodoug.com. It is gorgeous graphically, very well organized and is loaded with useful information for trombonists specifically and brass players in general. A sampling: "The Difference Between Playing and Practicing," "Pros and Cons to a Career as an Orchestral Musician," "Me, Myself and I: Are Orchestral Players Losing the Concept of Being Team Players?", Orchestral Audition Repertoire, Symphony Auditions. Although there is much content here that is trombone-specific, what Yeo does and how he does it are eminently worthy of emulation.

Another terrific trombone website is Will Kimball's (kimballtrombone.com). OK, most of his offerings are trombone-specific, but there is material here for all brasses (breathing!). Mostly, it is so beautifully done (gorgeous iconography) that every brass player should at least have a look at what is a splendid (and useful) work of website art.

Tuba + Euphonium

Literature for the tuba in general is less suitable for the horn because of the range, and because a fair amount of tuba music is taken from other instruments (e.g. Arban studies). The likeliest candidates of original tuba music that could be used by horn players can be found among works written for the F tuba, including books by Paul Bernard (*Méthode Complète*), Harold Brasch, Otto Maenz, and Hans Lachman. A more like candidate to steal, ah, learn from would be the euphonium, whose range more closely matches ours. Check out www.euphonium.net, the web site of one of the world's greatest euphonium players, Steven Mead. Mead's attractive site has a few articles of general interest, for example, "Getting the Simple Things Right," "Stamina and Nerves". Perhaps the biggest lesson we could take from both these instruments is to have an open mind to using good music whatever the source. Tuba players have been known to steal from oboe music (the Debouche "Etudes Melodiques," for example, which give big brass a chance to play a lot of notes throughout the whole range, learn style and melodic interpretation and have a good time in general.) The Bartok Cello duets are another favorite - they are simple for cellos, but challenging for brass. In short, there is a lot of music out there that could provide the horn player with attractive alternative sources of bass clef music beyond Rochut. Use the above listings as a starter, and start bugging your buddies in the low brass section to peruse their music to make new discoveries.