Sample pages from ...Brad Edwards

Bass Trombone Craft

A musical approach to building tone and technique

Bass Trombone

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About This Book:

Why write another technique book? I've seen many books of technical studies but have yet to encounter one that builds technique in a way that is both methodical and musically satisfying. Technique only has value in serving a musical goal. Another concern with many of the existing technical studies, such as the revered Arban's Method, is that they were originally written for other instruments and don't always address the specifics of our instrument, such as alternate positions or optimal tessitura. A number of tenor trombone books have been adapted for bass trombone with varying degrees of success.

My goal:

Create musically satisfying material specifically designed to build bass trombone technique.

Bass Trombone Craft is designed as a progressive method targeted to high school or college trombone students but can also be useful for professionals as well.

Bass Trombone Craft represents the conclusion of a 'trilogy' of sorts:

- 1. Lip Slurs
- 2. Simply Singing for Winds
- 3. Trombone Craft

These books are meant to complement each other in helping bass trombonists build a solid, well-rounded technical and musical foundation.

How to Use this Book:

Here are some general guidelines:

- 1. <u>Technique serves the musical goal</u>. With any of these studies, make a *musical* statement. Be a performer, not a machine.
- 2. <u>Tension is the enemy</u>. Don't just play fast and tense; be very aware of your tension level. Seek to play effortlessly.
- 3. <u>Be Patient</u>. Start slowly and build up. Don't choose a tempo that leads to a sloppy outcome. It takes as long as it takes.

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#1.9 Tech Builder: Preparing for C and G

Centering the B

The B natural tends to be a problem with centering and pitch. Much of this trouble arises from incorrect slide placement. Although the different valve versions will be used most often, don't give up on the B in 7th position. Too many young bass trombonists start to think that, because they have all those valves, they no longer need to bother with the longer positions. This is a mistake.



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#1.10 Two Pieces in C major



See also: Fink Studies in Legato for Bass Trombone, #6; Blume/Fink 36 Studies for Trb. with F Attachment, #1; Aharoni New Method, #105; Bordogni/Ostrander Melodious Etudes for Bass Trb. #22; Gillis 70 Progressive Studies, #20, #60; Tyrell 40 Advanced Studies (for tuba), #10 (Scales)

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#1.15 Rhythm Builder: The Dotted Eighth-Sixteenth Rhythm

Few rhythms are performed incorrectly as often as the dotted-eighth sixteenth. The most common error is a "one-size-fits-all" sixteenth note which ends up being too fast in slow tempos and too slow in fast tempos

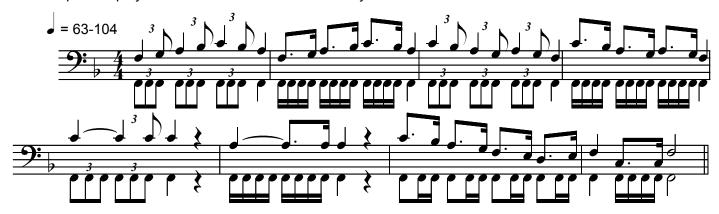
Basic rhythm exercise

Try this at a variety of tempos. Make sure the sixteenth note is accurate.



Accuracy Duet

Have a partner play the bottom line to ensure accuracy.



Etude

It is often harder to maintain accuracy on longer strings of dotted rhythms.



#1.17a Memorize This: Flowing Major Scales (edited)

It seems there are two schools of thought with double valve usage:

- 1. Make the most of the natural valve slurs ("You've got two valves, use them")
- 2. Avoid extensive valve changes; legato tongue more, ("Keep things simple")

It is possible to find excellent players following either approach. For that reason, I have also provided an unedited version of these scales (#1.17b).

For some of the scales below, you will find two versions of the same scale: (a) and (b). One has greater valve changes and one has fewer. Try both, consult a good teacher, and make your best choice based on your instrument and your teacher's recommendations.



#2.1 Two Pieces in D Major



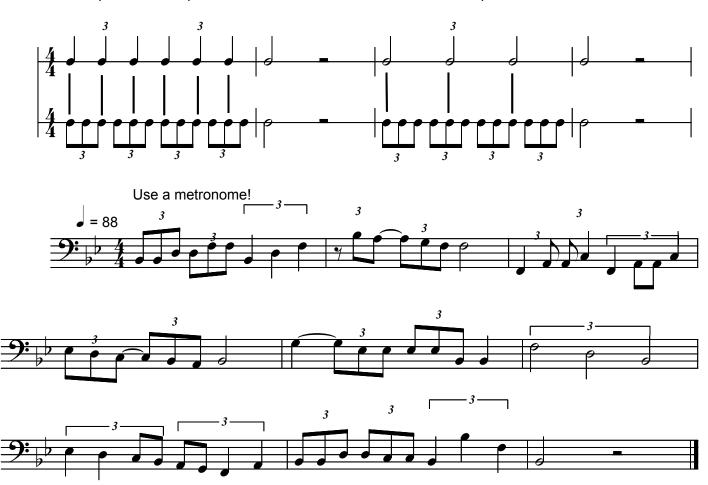
See also: Fink Studies in Legato for Bass Trb., #23, #25; Gillis 70 Progressive Studies, #13, #33

#2.7 Rhythm Builder: 6/8 Syncopations, Quarter Note Triplets, Half Note Triplets Basic Rhythm Exercise



Developing the Quarter Note and Half Note Triplets

The trick to placing the second and third notes of these longer triplets is simply to know where each note falls in relation to the beat. Some fall as triplet pick-ups to a downbeat ("ba-oom") and others fall as the triplet after the downbeat ("oom-ba"). Notice in the Basic Rhythm Exercise above that letter "a" is the same as a quarter note triplet and letter "b" is the same as a half note triplet.



#2.11 Tech Builder: Accuracy with Leaps

Simple rule: <u>if you miss a note, you must slow down</u>. Make sure those bottom "money" notes are rock solid.



For additional practice, look at the exercises in Appendix #5, "Interval Accuracy."

#2.15 "Two-Line" Tunes: Melodic Minor



#2.21 "Two-Line" Tunes: Two Octave Scales

Slide positions are not indicated. Look these through and mark some in. For additional scale practice, see Appendix #4: Scale Pattern-Building.



#2.23 One-Line Tunes: Dominant Seventh Chords with Syncopation

These lend themselves well to swung eighth notes and semi-legato tonguing. You can also substitute key signatures for extra practice (for example, line 2 in E instead of E-flat)



#3.1 Two Pieces in C Major



See also: Aharoni New Method, #93, #105; Blume/Fink 36 Studies for Trb. with F Attachment, #13, #14, #29; Bordogni/Ostrander Melodious Etudes for Bass Trb. #22; Gillis 70 Progressive Studies, #6, #20, #15, #60; Tyrell 40 Advanced Studies (for tuba), #6, #10, #13 Free sample pages - Bass Trombone Craft



#3.12 Rhythm Builder: Metric Challenges

Newer compositions often use unusual and/or changing time signatures. The assumption with shifting meters is a constant subdivision throughout, such as steady eighth or sixteenth notes.



For some reason, composers often notate in a manner that is impressive to the eye but hard on the brain. Here is the exact same rhythm notated differently. It looks more sophisticated but won't sound different.



Compound time signatures are a conveniant shorthand to make the page less crowded. "A" and "B" sound the same.



Etude

If you're confused, write in vertical lines for groups of two and triangles for groups of three. Professionals do this, why not you?



#3.15 "Two-Line" Tunes: Broken Arpeggios

You can practice these fast and sloppy or slow and accurate. Which do you think yields more benefit? Irish $\text{Jig}\left(\bullet : = \text{c.80} \right)$



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#3.19 Two-Line Tunes: Improving the Lower Pedals

Some passages are marked in octaves. This is mostly done for ease of reading. It may also help to play those upper octaves to clarify the pitches for your ear. These pieces roughly parallel the tenor trombone version of Trombone Craft #2.13.



#3.22 Tech Builder: Dissonant Leaps

The main challenge is being able to hear the arrival note in your ear before you play it. Look for connections between that "target note" and some previous note. Both examples have intervallically identical pairs of lines (1st and 3rd, 2nd and 4th). Also, each line has a clear "tonic" note in mind, following an ascending sequence. If you are struggling with some of the leaps, try octave transposition to bring the notes closer together.

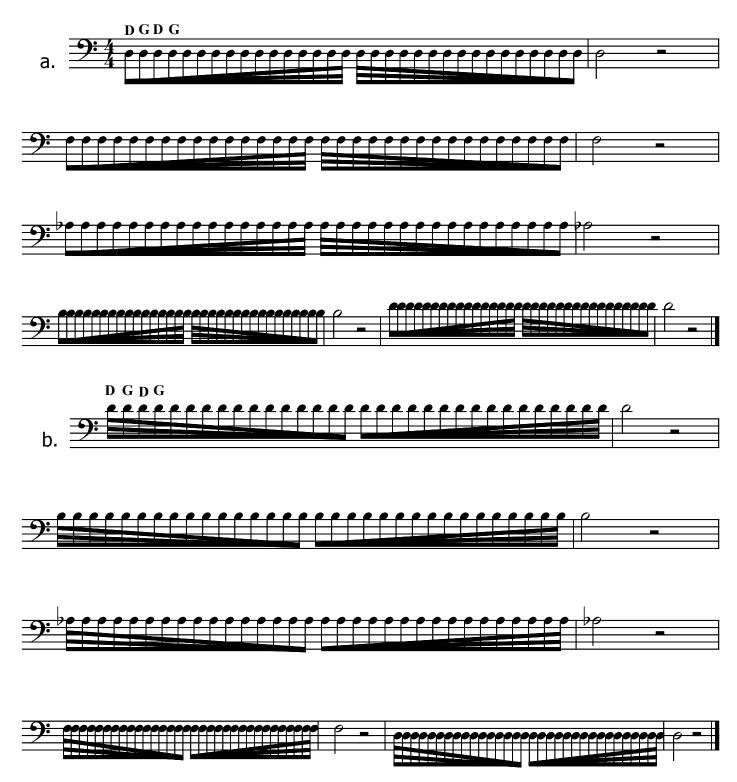


Yes, I know these are a pain. Learn them patiently and you will be a stronger player. Watch out for tension!

Appendix #2: Double Tonguing

App 2.5: Speeding Up and Slowing Down

The slowest notes should be <u>slower</u> than your fastest single tongue. The exact number of notes isn't important. The main thing is to achieve a smooth change of tempo. Slowing down is trickier than speeding up. Keep the speed change smooth.



Appendix #3: Triple Tonguing App 3.1: Developing the TripleTongue

Put the "kah" on the third note of the triplet, not the second. This makes the downbeat stronger.



Appendix 4: Scale Pattern-Building App 4.1a: Vade Mecum (edited)

"Vade mecum" means "go with me" in Latin. These exercises will help you improve valve techninque. Two versions are presented, one edited and one unedited. Many bass trombonists risk injury to their left arms because of the weight of the instrument combined with the double valves. To do these correctly, you must rest frequently. At each fermata marked "RELAX," let your left arm hang limp at your side for a few seconds. Shake it out gently before resuming. I know you want to play the 16th notes really fast. If you find yourself stopping and starting, you're simply trying to go too fast. Slow it down, keep it clean and easy. Be patient: the speed will come in time. The suggested valve combinations show a preference for "simple" over "fancy." The next section offers an unedited version of these.



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Appendix 4: Scale Pattern-Building
App 4.2: Major Scales - stepwise sequence



Appendix 4: Pattern Building App 4.5: Varied Scale Patterns



Remember that the lower notes thrive on warmer, less forceful air.

Appendix 4: Pattern Building, App 4.5: Varied Scale Patterns

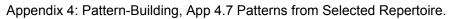
These can be especially useful for building slide technique. Make them sound smooth and effortless.

"Low Triplets"



Appendix 4: Pattern Building App 4.6: Varied Arpeggio Patterns







Continued on the next page...



Appendix 7: Tone and Tuning App 7.3: Working with a Drone

As you detune, you will hear "beats." Faster beats mean you are farther out of tune. Gliss slowly enough that you can really hear the beats change. Listen for that moment when the two notes lock into place.



Appendix #7: Tone and Tuning

App 7.6: Tonic-Dominant Patterns in Different Musical Contexts

Each example presents a simple tuning exercise followed by a musical passage stressing the same structural notes. Be expressive <u>and</u> mindful of solid intonation. These can also be done over a tuning drone.



Appendix 7: Tone and Tuning

App 7.9: Drone Melodies

These lyrical melodies provide good intonation practice when played along with a tuning drone. Each melody is intended to go over a Perfect 5th drone but can also work over a unison or octave drone. It is possible to create tuning drones electronically or along with a (very) patient partner. As of 2012, my website, BoneZone.org, has a set of tuning drones that work will with these etudes.



Appendix 7: Tone and Tuning App 7.11: Two-Voice Chorale, "Nun danket alle Gott"

This page is also identical to the tenor version of Trombone Craft. Play these slowly enough to really hear the intonation!



Appendix 7: Tone and Tuning App 7.12:Two-Voice Bordogni Reductions

These duets have a variety of applications. They can stand alone as simple duets to provide intonation practice or the bass line can work as an accompaniment to the corresponding "Rochut" etude. If you wish to play along with the existing "Rochut" etude, you will find references to line numbers: L1, L2, etc. As of 2012, Carl Fischer has released a newer version of these vocalises. The new edition sometimes places the music on different lines. In the line number references below, the small italic numbers (L1) refer to the older edition. The larger, bold numbers (L1) refer to the newer edition. This new edition sometimes includes additional measures rest or even doubles certain measures. Those changes are marked with an asterisk.



Appendix 8: Tenor and Alto Clef App 8.2: Reading Bass as Tenor Clef Down an Octave

Many trombonists like to read bass clef etudes as if they were in tenor clef and then transpose them down an octave. Thus the music is transposed down a perfect fourth (up a fifth then down an octave). This places these etudes into a comfortable middle to low range. This transposition has been especially popular with the Bordogni vocalises (also known as the Rochut etudes).

Therefore, a passage written like this ...

....becomes this if you pretend it's in tenor clef:

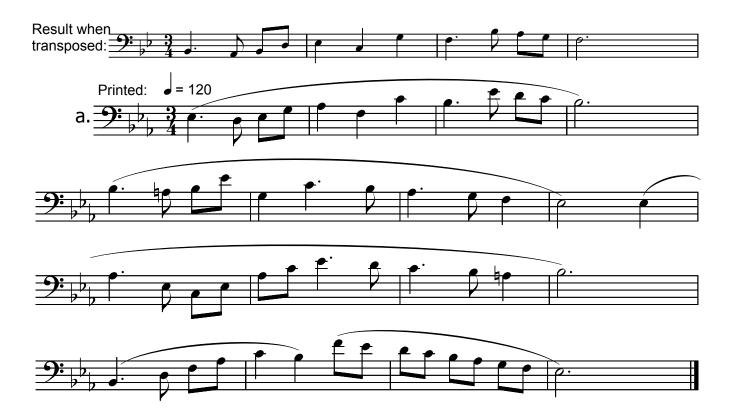


Because the notes are transposed up a perfect fifth by the clef change, the key signature must also change. You have to **TAKE AWAY ONE FLAT (OR ADD ONE SHARP)** to obtain the correct key signature. Once this passage is transposed down an octave, it falls into a very nice bass trombone register...



With only two exceptions, all the accidentals can be read as they appear. The exceptions: a B-natural in bass clef becomes an F-sharp when transposed. A B-flat in bass clef will transpose to an F-natural...





Appendix 9: Flow Exercises (sing, buzz, play)

The essential thing when you play any instrument is to keep your "singing mind" awake. As Arnold Jacobs put it, be a great singer in your mind and let your instrument reflect this. Pick any tune and sing or buzz it before playing it on your instrument. Don't worry if it doesn't feel the same as when you play; that's not the important thing. Instead, focus on how you want it to sound. By going back and forth between your instrument and singing/buzzing, you can develop a more natural singing approach without focusing too much on mechanics.

When buzzing, take a deep relaxed breath and buzz with an easy sound. Don't force. A good buzz is a happy balance between the extremes of tight/constricted and loose/airy. In legato, keep a nice steady stream of air flowing. You can get feedback by holding tissue paper or a pinwheel in front of the mouthpiece (an incentive spirometer is also useful for this). I prefer not to tongue when buzzing legato.

Here is a useful trick: as you are taking the mouthpiece out or putting it back into the trombone, use that 'transition time' to sing a few notes. This is very good for the ear.

Below each sing/buzz/play line you will see chord changes which can be played on the piano. If you have a keyboard available, play the chords while singing or even while buzzing. Hearing those chords provides an excellent reference to train your ear.

The patterns presented are relatively simple. However you can be creative and make up your own patterns. A wonderful exercise is to simply play a chord on the piano and then make up melodies that fit within that harmony.

At times, these patterns may not fit within your vocal range. For female voices, simply sing up an octave as needed. However, continue to buzz/play in the printed octave. For male voices, learn to use your falsetto or "head voice" to extend your range higher without straining.

These kinds of patterns can also be useful in a warm-up or warm-down routine.

I have written another book, <u>Simply Singing for Winds</u>, which is a large collection of simple tunes, most of which are ideally suited to this "sing, buzz, play" approach.

Appendix 9: Flow Exercises (sing, buzz, play) App 9.3: An Octave Neighbor Tone Pattern

Make use of natural slurs whenever possible. Any glissandi should be quick and unobtrusive. Although this is notated in 6/8, it should not be played too quickly.



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Books by Brad Edwards

The Intermediate Trombonist (132 pages)

Building blocks for Tone and Technique

Simply Singing for Winds (114 pages)

A wellspring of simple melodies to sing, buzz, play.

Trombone Craft (169 pages) / Bass Trombone Craft (185 pages)

A musical approach to building tone and technique.

Lip Slurs (84 pages)

In three sections: slow slurs, fast slurs and lip slur melodies.

Lip Slur Melodies (132 pages)

Lyrical melodies and duets, using just natural slurs.

Patterns and Snippets (180 pages)

A musical approach to scales and arpeggios.

Tuning Drone Melodies (134 pages)

Music to be played over tuning drones; for one or more instruments.

Introductory Studies in Tenor and Alto Clef (56 pages)

A good first clef book to precede the Blazhevich Clef Studies.



New!

24 Concert Pieces by Brad Edwards

- A collection of solos starting at the intermediate level and progressing in difficulty.
- Currently available for tenor trombone, bass trombone, tuba and horn (and maybe even trumpet someday)
- Each piece has a reasonable piano part.
- Each piece presents a variety of musical styles.
- Useful for solo and ensemble festivals.
- Free samples available on the TromboneZone.org and HornbonePress.com websites.

Volume One

[approximate timings shown in brackets]

- #1 Andante con moto [3:30]
- #2 Allegretto Andante Allegro giocoso [3:40]
- #3 Noble Lyrical [4:00]
- #4 March [3:20]
- #5 Alla Tango [3:40]
- #6 Singing Driving Dancing [4:10]
- #7 Scherzando Tranquillo [3:30]
- #8 Mysterioso Giocoso [3:40]
- #9 Piacevole Vigoroso [3:40]
- #10 With Confidence With Yearning [4:20]
- #11 Expansive Carefree [3:40]
- #12 Wistful Playful Joyful [3:30]

Volume Two

- #13 Scherzando Cantabile [3:30]
- #14 Espressivo Dramatico [4:10]
- #15 Floating Dancing [4:15]
- #16 Relentless Wistful Impish [4:30]
- #17 Impetuoso Serioso [3:50]
- #18 Grooving Haunting [4:00]
- #19 Pesante Scherzando Waltz [4:00]
- #20 Dream Scene Chase Scene [4:15]
- #21 Spirited gallop Woeful lament (Ironic Waltz) [5:10]
- #22 Insistently Tenderly [4:45]
- #23 Funebre Imponente [4:45]
- #24 Driving Dreaming [5:15]

Keep an eye out for recordings and videos of these pieces (including the piano part alone). On Youtube, search for Hornbone Press.