# ETUDES FOR THE TENOR TROMBONE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE LEGATO TECHNIQUE THROUGH THE USE OF ALTERNATE POSITIONS 

> by

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## A MASTERS REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Music

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

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## INTRODUCTION

The full potential of the trombone is not realized until the student is exposed to the advantages offered to the legato style by the use of alternate positions.

The concepts of the possibilities of the slide trombone have been extended through the virtuosity exhibited by improvisationoriented performers. ${ }^{1}$ The possession of improvisatory ability implies technical agility, control of the legato style, and a thorough knowledge of the alternate positions. The alternate positions are an indispensible part of the development of an advanced tecinique on the slide trombone.

## The Problem

The writer's concern as an educator and performer prompted a survey of available information about alternate positions. The apparent lack of systematized information on the subject was the factor which led to a compilation of slide movement possibilities for selected interval combinations. To illustrate the information gained from the study, etudes in the legato style were constructed. ${ }^{2}$
$l_{\text {Eric }}$ Blom, Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, V. VIII p. 558.

2Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music, p. 249, defines Etude as "A piece designed to aid the student of an instrument in the development of his mechanical and technical ability..... usually devoted entirely to one of the special problems of instrumental technique....".

## Related Material

A survey of trombone methods and etudes revealed the treatment of alternate positions to be fragmentary. With few exceptions, the approach was found to be limited to non-slurred passages or to exercises using notes within a single overtone series.

One of the exceptions, a method book, contained a section on alternate positions and intonation. ${ }^{l}$ The exercises illustrating the points of the discussion were not constructed in the legato style, however. A classification of trombone optional slide position movements and their application to excerpts from the symphonic repertoire was found, but again, was not specifically concerned with the legato style. ${ }^{2}$

Recently published has been an extensive treatment of trombone slide position placement for the pitch variations of the partials of the overtone series. 3 Although all of the regular and altemate positions were included, no material exclusively concerned with alternate position usage was presented by the authors.
$\mathrm{l}_{\text {Simone Mantia, The Trombone Virtuoso, }}$ pp. 5-24.
2 Harry Ralph Lenhoff, A Study of the Use of Optional Positions in Trombone Slide Technique, 36 pp . Unpublished Master's Report, Kansas State College, 1950.
$3_{\text {Mark R. McDunn and Clifford P. Barnes, Trombone Artistry, }}$ pp. 1-3.
A. Standard Slide Positions. The standard slide positions which fom the basis of the technique of the trombone are shown to the left of the dividing line on Plate I. ${ }^{1}$
B. Altemate Slide Positions. The notes to the right of the dividing iine on Plate I are called alternate positions and provide additional opportunities for the production of notes in the trombone range.
C. Variance of Slide Placement. The placement of the slide for the notes of the seven overtone series on the trombone varies from partial to partial. For example, the fifth partial, ordinarily too low in pitch, must be raised by shortening the slide slightly or by tightening the embouchure while the sixth partial, usually too high, must be lowered by lengthening the slide slightly or by relaxing the embouchure. ${ }^{2}$ These alterations and others, although slight, are sometimes indicated by special markings. ${ }^{3}$ For the purposes of this paper, however, the only variance from the seven positions to be acknowledged by special marking is for the seventh, eleventh, and fourteenth partials. These partials are flat to the extent that the adjustment for them amounts to placing the slide between normal positions. Therefore, the slide positions for the seventh, eleventh, and

[^0]The Seven Positions of the Tenor Trombone, Showing All Available Notes from the Fundamental to the Sixteenth Partial

The notes for partials one to twelve to the left of the dividing line are standard slide positions; those to the right are alternate positions. ${ }^{1}$

For all practical purposes, two of the alternate position notes (circled) are used as standard positions. However, they are treated as alternate positions in this paper.

The fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth partials, although not in the practical range of the tenor trombone, are included because of their use in the appendixes.

The thirteenth partial is not included on Plate I because of unfavorable blowing characteristics.

The fundamental tones for slide positions five, six, and seven (enclosed in brackets) are seldom used because they lack sonority and are difficult to produce. ${ }^{2}$

[^1]
## PLATE I

The Notes Available in the Seven Slide Positions of the Tenor Trombone

fourteenth partials will be marked in a manner similar to that used for altered tones in figured bass, i.e., with a slash through the numeral indicating a shortening of the slide, thus: $\not \subset, ~ b, ~ H, ~ b, ~ \&, ~ a n d ~ 7 . ~ T h e ~ s e v e n t h, ~ e l e v e n t h, ~ a n d ~ f o u r t e e n t h ~$ partials in first position are not used.
D. Natural Slur. An uninterrupted movement of the tone from one overtone partial to another is a natural slur. The same result occurs whether the slide is stationary or moving.


Fig. 1. Examples of natural slurs.
E. Against-the-slide Slur. A natural slur occurring as the pitch is raised while the slide is being lengthened, and conversely, a lowering of the pitch while the slide is shortened is called an against-the slide slur.


Fig. 2. Examples of against-the-slide slurs.
F. With-the-slide Slur. Raising the pitch while shortening the slide or lowering the pitch while lengthening the slide creates a technical problem for the trombone if the tone remains in the same partial. If the same partial is retained, some manner of articulation is required to prevent a portamento effect.


Fig. 3. Examples of with-the-slide slurs.
G. Paraliel Position Patterns. The transposition of a slide movement sequence for a given group of notes to a lower or higher pitch while retaining the same sequence of partials and intervals results in parallel position patterns. For example, the pitches d-e-fy-g, played in slide positions $1-2-\mathcal{F}-4$ are parallel to the pitches $c-d-e-f$, positions $3-4-\neq 6$, as shown in Fig. 4. Both interval patterns employ the sequence of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth partials.


Fig. 4. Examples of parallel position patterns.

The Mechanics of Slides and Valves Related to the Legato Style

An advantage of the slide trombone over valved instruments is its potential for perfect pitch placement. The offsetting disadvantage is the problem of disguising the period of time required to move the slide from one position to another.

The three basic procedures for moving from one note to another on the trombone are: 1) complete interruption of the tone between notes, 2) no interruption of the tone between notes, and 3) an incomplete interruption of the tone between notes called the legato attack.

First Procedure. The separation of notes by complete interruption of the tone creates a period of time during which the slide can be moved without unwanted effects. For this reason, the first procedure has been excluded from consideration in this paper.


Fig. 5. First procedure: complete interruption

Second Procedure. Moving from note to note with no interruption of the tone is a major obstacle to attaining a smooth technique. There are four types of note to note movement without interruption of the tone. These are illustrated as follows:

Second Procedure, Type One. With the slide, no change of partial. This procedure requires that the performer employ some means of separating the two tones in order to avoid the producelion of a portamento.


Fig. 6. Second procedure: type one.

Second Procedure, Type Two. With the slide, change of partial. In the execution of the second type, the tone is automatically separated in a natural slur.


Fig. 7. Second procedure: type two.

Second Procedure, Type Three. Slide stationary, change of partial. Again, as the tone changes from one partial to another without interruption, the notes are separated by a natural slur.


Fig. 8. Second procedure: type three.

Second Procedure, Type Four. Against the slide, change of partial. As in types two and three, type four results in a natural slur.


Fig. 9. Second procedure; type four.

Third Procedure. The final method of note to note movement is facilitated by an incomplete interruption of the tone known as the legato attack. This semi-interruption of the tone is caused by articulation with syllables beginning with "D" or "L" and helps disguise the period of time needed to move the slide from position to position. While the legato attack is applicable to all three procedures of note to note movement for purposes of style, it has been advocated specifically as a means of achieving uniformity in the second and third procedures of note to note movement. ${ }^{1}$
$l_{\text {James }}$ Graham, "The Legato Style of the Trombone," The Instrumentalist, p. 80.

## Differences Between the Slide and Valve Techniques

Basically, the three-valved baritone horn and the slide trombone operate on the same principle. The seven chromatic tones necessary for the production of a chromatic scale are produced by the addition of six lengths of tubing, each length being proportioned to add one semi-tone to the note above it. Figure 10 shows the seven trombone slide positions with corresponding baritone valve combinations.


Fig. 10. Trombone slicie positions and equivalent baritone valve combinations.

Although the means by which tubing is added to both the slide trombone and the three-valve baritone are similar in principle, they differ in operation. Certain valve combination

[^2]sequences (e.g., rapid alternation of the first valve with the second and third valves together, etc.) are more awkward than others, but the change of length of the instrument is immediate and the interruption of the tone automatic.

On the trombone the change of length is gradual as the slide is moved from position to position, and there are several procedures by which notes are connected. For these reasons, the trombonist must take advantage of every opportunity to reduce slide movement, choose slide movements which make use of natural slurs, and develop the legato attack.

The two principle solutions to the problem of note to note movement on the slide trombone are to use shortcuts (alternate positions) and to disguise the time required for slide motion (legato attack).

## PROCEDURE

Selection of the Interval Combinations

A systematic organization of slide movement possibilities for selected interval combinations was undertaken. Intervals included were minor seconds, major seconds, minor thirds, major thirds, and perfect fourths. These were grouped into six categories according to the number and order of intervals in each combination of tones.

The interval combinations which were selected for use are illustrated as follows:
I. Three note combinations of minor seconds and major seconds (four possibilities).
A. $\mathrm{m}^{2}-\mathrm{m} 2:$
B. m2 - M2 :

C. $\mathrm{M} 2-\mathrm{m} 2$ :

D. M2 - M2 :

II. Four note combinations of minor seconds and major seconds (eight possibilities).
A. $m 2-m 2-m 2$ :

B. m2 - m2 - M2 :
C. $\mathrm{m} 2-\mathrm{M} 2-\mathrm{m} 2$ :
D. $\mathrm{m} 2-\mathrm{M} 2-\mathrm{M} 2$ :

E. M2 - mL - ma :

F. M2 - ma - M2 :

G. M2 - M2 - ma :

H. ML - ML - ML :

III. Three note combinations of minor thirds and major thirds (root position triads - four possibilities).
A. M3-m3:
(major triad)

B. $\mathrm{m} 3-\mathrm{M} 3$ :
(minor triad)
C. m3-m3:
(diminished triad)
D. M3-M3 :
(augmented triad)

IV. Four note combinations of minor thirds and major thirds (root position seventh chords - eight possibilities, of which four were selected for use).
A. M3-m3-M3 :
(major-major seventh chord)
B. M3-m3-m3:
(major-minor seventh chord)
C. $m 3-M 3-m 3$ :
(minor-minor seventh chord)
D. $m 3-m 3-m 3:$
(diminished seventh chord)

V. Three note combinations of minor thirds, major thirds, and perfect fourths (first and second inversions of major and minor triads - four possibilities).
A. $\mathrm{m}^{3}-\mathrm{P}_{4}$ : (major triad, first inversion)
B. $\mathrm{M}_{3}-\mathrm{P}_{4}$ :
(minor triad, first inversion)
c. P4-M3 : (rajojor triad, second inversion)
D. $P 4-m 3$ : (minor triad, second inversion)

VI. Four note combination of major seconds, minor thirds, and major thirds (first, second, and third inversions of the major-minor seventh chord - three possibilities).

$$
\begin{aligned}
& \text { A. } m 3-m 3-\mathrm{M} 2: \quad \begin{array}{r}
6 \\
(5 \\
3
\end{array} \text { inversion) } \\
& \text { B. } m 3-M 2-M 3: \quad \underset{3}{4} \text { inversion) } \\
& \text { C. M2-M3-m3: } \quad \frac{6}{4} \text { inversion) }
\end{aligned}
$$



Compilation of Slide Position Patterns for the Interval Combinations

A constant factor in the choice of slide positions for the interval combinations was that a change of at least one partial upward was necessary between the two tones of every interval.

The maintenance of a difference of at least one partial between the tones of the intervals guaranteed a natural slur.

Organization of the Slide Position Patterns
Into Appendixes
The information compiled in the slide position patterninterval combination study was assembled into appendixes as follows:

Appendix A--Slide position patterns for three note interval combinations of minor seconds and major seconds.

Appendix B--Slide position patterns for four note interval combinations of minor seconds and major seconds.

Appendix C--Slide position patterns for three note interval combinations of minor thirds and major thirds (root position triads).

Appendix D--Slide position patterns for four note interval combinations of minor thirds and major thirds (root position seventh chords).

Appendix E--Slide position patterns for three note interval combinations of minor thirds, major thirds, and perfect fourths (first and second inversions of triads).
Appendix F--Slide position patterns for four note interval combinations of major seconds, minor thirds, and major thirds (first, second, and third inversions of the major-minor seventh chord).

## THE ETUDES

## Purpose

The etudes were constructed to illustrate the application of the alternate position study to the legato style. The legato style, to be effectively performed on the slide trombone, demands a combination of efficient slide handling and control of the legato attack. ${ }^{1}$

## Construction

Three sources used in the construction of the etudes were:

1. Selected passages from trombone literature which were developed and expanded.
2. Scale and chord sequences, e.g., a harmonic sequence based upon the circle of fifths.
3. Original material based upon the parallel position patterns contained in the appendixes.

Presentation

Each etude is accompanied by a descriptive paragraph which explains its purpose, illustrates points of technique, and identifies source material.

Because of the chromatic nature of the etudes, all notes are considered to be natural in successive measures unless
$1_{\text {Ape, op. }}$ cit., p. 396, defines legato as performance "without any perceptible interruption between the notes."
altered by an accidental.
All alternate slide positions have been marked with a circle around the numeral. Notes without position markings are to be played in the regular positions. Some regular positions have been marked where doing so serves to clarify the slide position relationships or to show the use of parallel position patterns. Repetition of a slide position for successive notes is indicated by a horizontal line following the slide position numeral.

## EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

Eitude No. 1 uses as a motive two four-note parallel position patterns based on an interval combination taken from Appendix B (indicated by brackets a and b).

## PLATE II

Etude No. 1


## EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

In Etude No. 2, the same interval combination (a major tetrachord taken from Appendix B) is retained throughout, alternating between two parallel slide position patterns. The slide position patterns $a, a^{l}, a^{2}$, etc., are parallel, as are $b, b^{l}, b^{2}$, etc.

PLATE III
Etude No. 2

$\qquad$
$\qquad$
$\qquad$

## EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

Etude No. 3 is constructed of a series of ornamental figures which retain the same interval combination, plus arpeggios. The harmonic construction of the etude is based upon the descending circle of fifths.

## PLATE IV

Etude No. 3

(3) (3) (3): (3) (3) (3) (3)
(4) (3)(4)


## EXPLANATION OF PLATE V

The fourth etude is a chromatic treatment of second inversion triads. The material is taken from Appendix E.

PLATE V
Etude No. 4

$\qquad$

## EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI

The fifth etude is based upon the inversions of the major-minor seventh chord. Constructed in two measure segments, the pitches and slide positions of each chord are first presented in quarter notes to establish the pitches, then in triplets for facility.

## PLATE VI

Etude No. 5


## PLATE VI (Continued)

Etude NO. 5


## EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII

Etude No. 6 is a sequential treatment of a selected passage of the trombone solo "Morceau Symphonique" by Guilmant.

## PLATE VII

Etude No. 6


EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIII

Etude No. 7 is original, with emphasis upon legato style, phrasing, and intonation.

## PLATE VIII






## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The slide position patterns for the interval combinations, organized into appendixes, provide a manual of alternate position possibilities for the tenor trombone. In addition to providing information for the construction of etudes as a part of this study, the assembled data serves as a source for additional original studies, as reference for existing literature, and as a catalogue of reference for performers, composers, and arrangers.

If the etudes were suacessfully constructed, practice of them should lead to increased knowledge of the location of the alternate and regular positions, more efficient slide movements in combining regular and alternate positions, better control of the legato style, and more accurate intonation through the use of parallel position patterns.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer expresses his appreciation to Professor Thomas B. Steunenberg, director of graduate studies in music, and to Professors Clyde F. Jussila and Paul E. Shull for their helpful criticism during the preparation of this paper.

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## APPENDIX A

SLIDE POSITION PATTERNS FOR THREE NOTE INTERVAL COMBINATIONS OF MINOR SECONDS AND MAJOR SECONDS
(N):










## APPENDIX B

SLIDE POSITION PATTERNS FOR FOUR NOTE INTERVAL COMBINATIONS OF MLNOR SECONDS AND MAJOR SECONDS


[^3]

N NONE = II


$b_{0} 5$ a






$3 \rightarrow+4$


cbsbe








cbsct
4-5-6-7




## 




돠서를




4-6-6-1
$b \in c \in$ 으 5-6-x-1

$\frac{b s t a}{2-3-4-4}$

## APPENDIX C

# SLIDE POSITION PATTERNS FOR THREE NOTE INTERVAL COMBINATIONS OF MINOR THIRDS AND MAJOR THIRDS (ROOT POSITION TRIADS) 















## APPENDIX D

SLIDE POSITION PATTERNS FOR FOUR NOTE INTERVAL COMBINATIONS OF MINOR THIRDS AND MAJOR THIRDS (ROOT POSITION SEVENTH CHORDS)



[^4]












## APPENDIX E

SIIDE POSITION PATTERNS FOR THREE NOTE INTERVAL COMBINATIONS OF MINOR THIRDS, MAJOR THIRDS, AND PERFECT FOURTHS (FIRST AND SECOND INVERSIONS OF TRIADS)













$5-a=2$
$2 x-3-3-2$
$b x-1-2$
$d=$






## APPENDIX F

SLIDE POSITION PATTERNS FOR FOUR NOTE INTERVAL COMBINATIONS OF MAJOR SECONDS, MINOR THIRDS, AND MAJOR THIRDS (FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD INVERSIONS OF THE MAJOR-MINOR SEVENTH CHORD)








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## AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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MASTRR OF SCIENCE

Department of Music

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The full potential of the slide trombone is not realized until the student is exposed to the advantages offered to the legato style by the use of alternate positions.

The concepts of the possibilities of the slide trombone have been extended through the virtuosity exhibited by improvisationoriented performers. The possession of improvisatory ability implies technical agility, control of the legato style, and a thorough knowledge of the alternate positions.

In a survey of trombone methods and etudes, the treatment of alternate positions was found to be fragmentary. With few exceptions, the approach was limited to non-slurred passages or to exercises using notes within a single overtone series. The apparent lack of systematically organized information about alternate positions, an indispensible aspect of the trombone technique, was the factor which prompted this study.

An organization of slide movement possibilities for selected combinations of intervals was undertaken in order to provide a body of systematically arranged information about alternate positions.

The interval combinations selected were minor seconds, major seconds, minor thirds, major thirds and perfect fourths. These were grouped into six categories according to the number and order of intervals in each combination. The categories were as follows:

1. Three note combinations of minor seconds and major seconds.
2. Four note combinations of minor seconds and major
seconds.
3. Three note combinations of minor thirds and major thirds (root position triads).
4. Four note combinations of minor thirds and major thirds (root position seventh chords).
5. Three note combinations of minor thirds, major thirds, and perfect fourths (first and second inversions of major and minor triads).
6. Four note combinations of major seconds, minor thirds, and major thirds (first, second, and third inversions of the major-minor seventh chord).

The slide movement possibilities for the six categories of interval combinations were assembled into appendixes which serve as a source of material for the construction of etudes, as reference for existing literature, and as a catalogue of possibilities for performers, composers, and arrangers.

Etudes were constructed to illustrate the application to the legato style of the information acquired in the slide movement study.

If the etudes were successfully constructed, practice of them should lead to increased knowledge of the location of alternate and regular positions, more efficient slide movements in combining the regular and alternate positions, increased control of the legato style, and more accurate intonation through the use of parallel position patterns.


[^0]:    $1_{\text {Eric }}$ Blom, op. cit., p. 553.
    2 Hugh E. McMillen, Trombone and Baritone LectureDemonstration, p. 3 .
    $3_{\text {McDunn }}$ and Barmes, on. cit., pp. 2-3.

[^1]:    $l_{\text {Blow, }}$ log. cit.
    ${ }^{2}$ Lac. cit.

[^2]:    $l_{\text {The normal range of the three-valve baritone horn is the }}$ same as that of the tenor trombone.

[^3]:    
    

[^4]:    N. Non

