Teaching Trombone Legato

Stewart L. Ross

One of the most difficult and frustrating techniques for the trombonist to master is the art of legato playing — manipulating a trombone slide often proves more troublesome than pressing the valves of a trumpet. While the trombone is the only wind instrument capable of producing 1/4 tones and glissandi, these idiomatic devices, that are so helpful in some situations, do make legato playing more difficult to achieve. The student’s problems are further complicated when he does not receive proper instruction.

Legato playing is not a special style to be taught only to advanced musicians who have mastered the fundamentals of good trombone playing. Because a large percentage of band music contains legato passages for the trombonist, slurring is a basic skill even for the beginner. Unnecessary delay in presenting legato playing not only deprives the student of a necessary skill but also deprives his performing group of a well-rounded player.

Legato playing should be introduced when the student has a basic understanding of the seven positions, and can find them, physically and aurally, with relative ease. Instructors should know that the beginning players will inevitably smear notes together. Watch for students who think that they are slurring but are actually using a portamento or a tongued style.

The following exercises and comments may be helpful in teaching legato playing.

Exercise 1 will help the student develop a controlled glissando, which is the first step towards achieving a legato style. After the initial attack, the slide should be in continuous motion until the final C is reached. There should be no break in tone or sudden change in dynamics. When the student becomes accustomed to the continuous connection he is ready to work on Exercise 2.

---

BRASS JAZZ!

TYING THE KNOT by Jim Buffington
for Brass Quintet (2 Bb Tpts, F Hn, Tbn, Tba)
Medium-tempo 40's & 50's style swing infects this derivation of Mendelssohn's Wedding March.
No. C8 Score & Parts $2.50

SAINTS ALIVE! by John Glase
for Brass Quintet (2 Bb Tpts, F Hn, Tbn, Bb Tbn or Tba) or Brass Sextet (3 Bb Tpts, 2 Tbn, Bb Tbn or Tba)
With optional Bass and Drum parts
Variations on "When the Saints Go Marching In" in Spiritual, March, Dixie, Swing, Bebop, and Rock styles
No. C9 Score & Parts $7.50
at your dealer or by direct mail (add 50¢ for packing & postage)

CHAMBER MUSIC LIBRARY 168 Serpentine Rd., Tenafly, N.J. 07670

---

The F

BRASS has been official INTERI and is 1

Annual Subscri

name

city state

Box OA

THE INSTRUMENTALIST FEBRUARY 1976
Brass Clinic
Maurice Taftner, Contributing Editor

Exercise 1
\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \\
(\text{mf}) \text{ glissando}
\end{array}
\]

Exercise 2
\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
(\text{mf}) \text{ } & \text{T} & \text{T} & \text{T} & \text{etc.}
\end{array}
\]

Exercise 3
\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\
(\text{mf}) \text{ } & \text{T} & \text{T} & \text{T} & \text{etc.}
\end{array}
\]

Exercise 4
\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 \\
(\text{mf}) \text{ } & \text{T} & \text{Du} & \text{T} & \text{Du} & \text{Du} & \text{etc.}
\end{array}
\]

Exercise 5
\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \\
(\text{mf}) \text{ } & \text{T} & \text{Du} & \text{T} & \text{Du} & \text{T} & \text{Du}
\end{array}
\]

Here the slide must be moved more quickly than when practicing the glissando, and the tongue must be used only when initiating the slur. Exercise 2 guarantees the student eventual success. Since he will be playing only "over the break" (alternating from one overtone series to another), the slur will start to lose its glissando quality and begin to resemble legato playing.

Now students should begin to learn how to slur notes within the same overtone series (the final goal). Exercise 3, more difficult than Exercise 2, will help to introduce the proper feeling; it will also prove helpful in developing the embouchure muscles.

Thus far, the tongue has been used only when initiating the slur. In order to perform a clean slur within an overtone series, the tongue must be used as part of the slur itself. In Exercise 4, the tongue should produce a light "du" articulation as the slide is moved to the slurred note. Aim at producing the same sound made when slurring notes in Exercises 2 and 3.

Larger intervals can be introduced as the slurring process is mastered. Care must now be taken to move the slide very quickly while still producing a smooth sound.

Should the student revert back to a "glissando" style of playing, have him repeat Exercise 3 and compare it to the sound of Exercise 1. Stress the need for a light "du" between the two slurred notes to do away with an otherwise "soupy" sound. All students seem to learn quickly by imitating the correct sound. If you are not able to demonstrate the legato technique yourself, enlist the aid of an advanced student, a clinician, or a quality recording. Be wary of providing lengthy explanations concerning tongue and teeth placement, embouchure shape, wrist action, etc. — they often cause more new problems to the trombonist than they alleviate.

Remember, legato playing is considerably more complex for the trombonist than it is for any other instrumentalist. But it is a necessary skill that can be learned by simplifying the process and breaking it up into varying stages of difficulty. Through diligent practice by the student, and intelligent guidance by the teacher, refined legato playing can become a reality.

---

The First International Brass Congress
Montreux, Switzerland, June 13-19, 1976

BRASS BULLETIN
has been designated as the official publication of the INTERNATIONAL BRASS CONGRESS and is producing three special issues dedicated to the Congress.

Subscribe for 1976 NOW!

Annual subscription, 3 issues: $13.00
I enclose: check $ _______ (personal check O.K.) or — bill me — send more information

Name
Address
City
State
Zip

Send to: BRASS BULLETIN
(1) (air-mail) Box 12
CH-1516 MOUDON Switzerland

hosted by
THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED MUSICAL STUDIES (I.H.E.M.)
in cooperation with:
INTERNATIONAL HORN SOCIETY (I.H.S.)
INTERNATIONAL TRUMPET GUILD (I.T.G.)
INTERNATIONAL TROMBONE ASSOCIATION (I.T.A.)
TUBISTS UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD ASSOCIATION (T.U.B.A.)

The I.H.E.M. is privileged to host the First International Brass Congress. The host city is Montreux, Switzerland, located in the heart of Europe at the east end of Lac Leman, the entrance to the great Rhone Valley where the Swiss, French and Italian Alps meet. The people of Montreux, their Mayor and Office of Tourism, extend a welcome hand to all world brass musicians. In Switzerland, truly East meets West. We are certain that a musical, educational and esthetic experience awaits each participant who takes advantage of this "once in a lifetime" opportunity.

For information regarding registration, charter flights and housing, write:
FIRST INTERNATIONAL BRASS CONGRESS
Case Postale 141
CH - 1820 Montreux, Switzerland

FEBRUARY 1976, THE INSTRUMENTALIST 57