

Bill Watrous - Alan Raph TROMBONISMS

AN EXTENSION OF STANDARD
TROMBONE TECHNIQUES
AND AN INTRODUCTION TO SOME NEW ONES

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There are a number of sounds peculiar to the trombone. Some of them are unique, and others humorous. The innate good judgment of the trombonist will undoubtedly prevail against producing such sounds excessively or at the wrong moment.

1. "Rink" (Ex. 171A) R

This sound was used on an old Spike Jones record called *Der Fuhrer's Face*. It is a humorous sound that works best in the low register. The sound is squeezed into the mouthpiece with the pronunciation of the word "weer" or "tweer" while a definite pitch is played on the trombone. Low Bb down to low F is a good register to start with in developing this sound.

2. "Computer-speak" (Ex. 171B) R

Pronounce words into the trombone while playing a low register note which takes on the function of vocal chords. Practice vowels and various syllables while sustaining a tone. Different vocal inflections are also made possible by using various pitches (low to middle register) with suitable up and down glides.

3. Throat sound

While playing normal middle register tones, hum or grunt along with the notes being played. This produces a distinctive kind of gutty sound that has been used effectively in some rather "earthy" improvisations. The hum works well when it is pitched lower than the played note.

4. Trombone-megaphone

Talk or sing through the trombone as through a megaphone. It will amplify the voice in a similar manner. A little practice may be required in order to form words into the limited space of the mouthpiece. Interestingly enough, if the overtone series is sung through the trombone, there will be a very pronounced "click" with each note change.

5. Flutter tongue

Roll the tongue (like the Spanish "r") while playing normally.

6. Growl

Growl in the back of the throat, activate the uvula (like the French "r") while playing normally.

7. Low F in all positions

Start with a low F in 6th position. Play the same pitch in 5th position (by keeping the mouth more open than necessary). This works in much the same way as "half overtones" or faked trigger notes (see page 32). Continue producing the low F pitch as the slide is brought into 4th position and upward to 1st position.

There are notes that can be produced on the trombone with the outer slide removed, or on the slide with the bell removed. There are also "rips", "doits", "fall-offs" etc. Although the various sounds that can be made on the trombone are interesting and perhaps humorous, they often wear thin with over-repetition. Used within the proper context and at an appropriate time, they can be quite remarkable.

36 Playing more than one note

There are several harmonic-pattern possibilities that you can use to develop daily exercise routines.

Ex. 134R

Ex. 135

Ex. 136

Two-note harmonic patterns are relatively easy to play and make a good addition to a player's technique.

Ex. 137R

This can also be expanded to include resultant notes.

Ex. 138

Composers and instrumentalists have experimented with other possibilities, often very effectively. There are non-chordal effects that make use of vibration and turbulence. As two notes move toward each other, the vibrations between them become more noticeable and an increasing turbulence develops. This intensifies as the interval between the notes diminishes, and then suddenly disappears when the tones resolve into a unison.

Ex. 139R Sing slow glissando downward

Ex. 140 The opposite effect has also been used Sing rapid gliss. upwards

Of course, there are also some "parlor tricks" such as this treatment of the trombone chorale from the 4th movement of Brahms' *Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68*.

Ex. 141

35 Playing more than one note

To produce more than one note at a time you must play one note while singing another. The played note is generally the lower note and is most often the root of the chord. This technique is referred to as "playing chords," or "multiphonics." It is also possible to play and sing two independent lines simultaneously. As with the other techniques discussed, there is a certain feel to be acquired that will take some practice.

It is best to start with the played and sung notes at least a third apart. A fifth or tenth is often the best interval to begin with. Sometimes it's easier to play a note first then join it with the sung note. Using the following example, try to play and sing some of these intervals.

Ex. 128R *Fifths*

Musical notation for Ex. 128R. It consists of two staves. The first staff shows intervals of a fifth: the played note (bottom) is G2, the sung note (top) is D3. The second staff shows intervals of a tenth: the played note (bottom) is G2, the sung note (top) is G3. Labels 'sing' and 'play' are placed above and below the notes respectively.

If in the following example, the two notes are in tune with each other, a third note will sound as a result of the harmonic relationship between the played and sung note. Listen for it.

Ex. 129

Musical notation for Ex. 129. It shows a single staff with two lines. The bottom line is labeled 'play' and the top line is labeled 'sing'. The notes are in tune, and a third note (the resulting note) is shown above the sung note, indicated by a diamond symbol and the label 'resulting note'.

Ex. 130

Musical notation for Ex. 130. It shows a single staff with two lines. The bottom line is labeled 'play' and the top line is labeled 'sing'. The notes are in tune, and a third note (the resulting note) is shown above the sung note, indicated by a diamond symbol and the label 'resulting note'.

Ex. 131

Musical notation for Ex. 131. It shows a single staff with two lines. The bottom line is labeled 'play' and the top line is labeled 'sing'. The notes are in tune, and a third note (the resulting note) is shown above the sung note, indicated by a diamond symbol and the label 'resulting note'.

Ex. 131 shows that the bottom note need not always be the root of the chord. The harmonic relationship of the three notes in each example above is constant; each chord contains a root, a major third, and a fifth.

Ex. 132

Musical notation for Ex. 132. It shows three examples of chords. Each example has a 'play' note on the bottom line and a 'sing' note on the top line. The first example is labeled 'Bb chord' and shows a played note of Bb2 and a sung note of D3. The second example is labeled 'Bb chord' and shows a played note of Bb2 and a sung note of F3. The third example is labeled 'Eb chord' and shows a played note of Eb2 and a sung note of G3. Labels 'sing', 'play', and 'resulting note' are used throughout.

By using the root, major third and fifth relationship, other chords may be constructed, although it will be more difficult to achieve the correct intonation between the played and the sung note.

Ex. 133

Musical notation for Ex. 133. It shows three examples of chords. Each example has a 'play' note on the bottom line and a 'sing' note on the top line. The first example is labeled 'Db chord' and shows a played note of Db2 and a sung note of F3. The second example is labeled 'Db chord' and shows a played note of Db2 and a sung note of Ab3. The third example is labeled 'Db chord' and shows a played note of Db2 and a sung note of Cb4. Labels 'sing', 'play', and 'resulting note' are used throughout.