

2024 All-State Solos – bass trombone

Overall Advice:

Establish a good daily warm-up and routine, if you don't already have one. If you need one, I have a warm-up packet that I'll send to you. Email me at: mwilkinson@mozart.sc.edu, let me know your name and what school you attend, and ask for it. Every trombonist has a slightly different way of going about their routine, but most routines have these commonalities: long tones, lip slurs, and tonguing. I've addressed each a little bit, below.

Long tones: play relaxed and non-metered long tones every day. Focus on *your sound*. Have a sound in mind that you want to emulate (from your teacher, a recording, a trombone performance you attended, etc...), and chase that sound, every day. I like to think of long tones as the most relaxing thing I do, all day, and I believe that *your sound* is the most important thing about you, as a musician. Without a beautiful core sound, it is difficult to do much else. I like to play my Remington series with a floated first note (only air to start the note, no tongue), and a relaxed glissando to the next note (then, breathe before the next two notes). I also play slow scales, using as little tongue as possible, while playing legato or glissed.

Lip slurs: play these to develop flexibility on your instrument, learning to navigate the harmonic series, without using your tongue. Start with easy slurs (4th-line F down to low Bb, and then back up), and work your way up to adding more partials and playing faster (while staying relaxed). Always play these slowly to start. A relaxed accuracy is key in the beginning, but even after you feel you have more control, still keep things as tension-free as possible. Whether you have a single-trigger, independent, or dependent bass trombone, try playing these also down through your trigger positions, as low as possible.

Tonguing: after you have gotten some air moving through the instrument while playing long tones and lip slurs, **then** work on tonguing, while keeping the *same sound* that you've been producing, previously. Don't allow the notes in this part of your routine to not sound as good as everything else. Practice tonguing repeated notes (static, or non-moving slide), and also practice tonguing moving notes (dynamic, or moving slide). Make sure to move your slide quickly between notes, avoiding any unnecessary glissandos/portamento (while at the same time making sure that your slide arm stays as relaxed as possible). Scales are a great thing to practice here, varying your articulations.

Finally, when learning these etudes, take the time to practice *slowly* and *accurately*. Make sure that you are being attentive to *every detail* in the music, first. Use a music dictionary to make sure that you know and fully understand each musical term contained in these solos (I like the Wotton Dictionary of Music app).

Clinic Bass Trombone: Audition Solo 2C, Allegretto energico

-Practice the dynamic, articulation, and rhythmic contrasts - the composer is very specific about these things. Practice with a metronome, and be as exact in your performance details as possible, staying within the "Allegretto energico" marking. Be careful that the two places marked *forte* don't get too loud, overbearing, or edgy. Play with a loud and full tone in those places, but work to keep that sound round, robust, and as non-edgy as possible. Make sure that your dynamics provide *contrast* in your performance, and always strive for a beautiful and full bass trombone sound.

-If you are playing on an independent double-trigger bass trombone, it is important for you to figure out and note where to use the F valve and where to use the Gb valve. I found that there was merit to each, and used both valves in different spots. You may find that using the Gb trigger for low B's and C's will make for more fluid slide movement.

-No matter the kind of valve configuration on your bass trombone, practice your A Natural Minor scale as a cross-training exercise, and get comfortable with using those valves in the scale patterns written in this solo; however, stay on your toes and don't miss the G#'s (and D#'s)! If you have an independent bass trombone, try your scale patterns using one valve, then again, using the other valve. Figure out which valve or valve combination works the smoothest for you.

-For the notes marked *staccato*: if you think of *staccato* as meaning "space between the notes", rather than "short notes", you may find more musical success here, especially with the lower notes (the lower you play on the trombone or bass trombone, the less you can get away with playing really short notes).

-Practice/focus on the difference between the duple rhythms and the triplet rhythms, and don't rush in m.11 and 15 right after the tied half-note.

-Recognize the sequence in m.17-20, and don't overdo the crescendo. Much of this solo is written in a softer *dynamic*. Demonstrate to the listener that you get that, and give them some good contrast, the few times the music calls for louder playing.

-endings: be careful to not overdo the *forte* marking and the low E's in both endings (have a big and full sound, but don't be edgy and gross). Last, I think that the 16th note passages at the end, on C-B-A, will define many people's performance. Work to make this clean, precise, and coordinated (slide, tongue, and trigger).

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Senior Bass Trombone: Audition Solo 3D, Andantino arioso / Allegro con fuoco

-Practice the dynamic, articulation, and rhythmic contrasts - the composer is very specific about these things. However, remember that dynamics are *relative*, and you don't have to be *too loud* or *too soft* anywhere in this solo - just make sure that your dynamics provide *contrast* in your performance, and always strive for a beautiful and full bass trombone sound. Having said that, when you get to the *ff* in m.25, you want to have a very full and robust sound (while still remaining in control).

-If you are playing on an independent double-trigger bass trombone, it is important for you to figure out and note where to use the F valve, where to use the Gb valve, and where to use both. I found that there was merit to each, and used both valves in different spots. You may find that using the Gb trigger for low Db, B, and C (m. 1-2), as well as low E and F (m.3-4) will make for more fluid slide movement and smoother phrasing (and in all other similar situations).

-No matter the kind of valve configuration on your bass trombone, practice the different forms of the F Minor scale as a cross-training exercise, and get comfortable with using those valves in the scale patterns written in this solo. If you have an independent horn, try your scale patterns using one valve, then again, using the other valve. Figure out which valve or valve combination works the smoothest for you.

-For the opening slow section, practice playing the low notes at beginnings of phrases softly and delicately. The ability to play a low C (and a pedal Ab!) without any edge will be key to a successful performance and audition. Don't be sharp on the high F (6th partial) in m.5 (and of course, also in m.13), and focus on the rhythmic variations, especially in m.5-6.

-For the 8th notes in the quicker 6/8 section, be aware of your articulation and note-length. Be careful to not let these notes get "pecky", but rather think of having a little bit of "space between the notes", especially with the lower notes (the lower you play on the trombone or bass trombone, the less you can get away with playing really short notes). Draw out the accented notes without being over-the-top in your articulation.

-Practice the descending arpeggios in m.18, 20, and 22, focusing and landing squarely on a full note, with good tone (and not a "splat!").

-As mentioned before, m.25-31 should be big and mighty, but not gross. Practice playing with a big and tuba-like sound here, while basking in the full splendor of the brilliant sound of the bass trombone. Back off into the low C, and let the intensity of the previous phrase evaporate in m.32.

-Both endings are full of arpeggios, and descend from the middle register into the low (or even lower) registers. Practice playing with an even tone, all the way through the bottom end of your instrument. Don't overdo the accents, but let it be known that they are there. In the a ending, be careful not to be too loud and edgy in the crescendo to the end. In the b ending, be full and brilliant on the pedal Ab to Bb, solid and sure (and in tune!) on the low Db and C. Make a big contrast between the *forte* in m.45 and the *piano* in m. 47, and practice playing soft, beautiful, and quickly articulated low C's and B's.