

TMEA All-State Etudes, 2016-17

Etude 3: Is Number 25, found on Page 25
 The Style Marking is listed “Detached”
 The Quarter Note is marked in the Performance Guide as
 quarter note = 84-96
 The Key is A major
 Errata: None Listed

Measure No.	
General Comments	<p>The tempo for this piece in the performance guide is marked at quarter note = 84-96. I would suggest that quarter note = 90 is a good middle ground. The piece is marked “detached”, so avoid the use of legato. A “tah” or “toh” articulation should be used, as indicated in the performance guide. This piece is not particularly singable, due to the presence of so many seventh intervals. One way to prepare for this piece is to notice that is roughly every other note is played, that is to say only the low notes or only the higher notes, that they DO suggest fragments of singable melodies. A good practice technique here would be to work on each half of the piece to get the sound in your ear, and then to put them together after you have worked up each half to a reasonable tempo. Note that detached does not mean staccato. There can be a tendency to play each note too short in this piece, robbing the piece of a sense of fullness. There should be space between each note, but this does not necessarily mean playing each note as short as possible. The performance guide indicates that one should avoid accenting the lower eighth notes in, for example, measures 13-14 and 17-18. While I agree with this in general, do not go to the other extreme, such that the higher notes are overly emphasized. Use more air for the lower notes. They</p>

	<p>might, I think, have slightly more weight than the upper notes, as they fall on the beat. But rather than thinking of accent versus no accent, think more about the weight that you would like to give each note in these passages. How you approach the piece and how you think about it will make all the difference between this sounding like a piece of music or just an etude based on seventh intervals. The dynamics are well-marked and should be followed. It is interesting that some of the lower-note passages are marked “piano”. It is not always the case that as one goes lower on the horn one has to play louder. Practice breath control so that you can play your lowest notes “ppp” as well as “fff”. This will stand you in good stead with regard to dynamics over all of the registers of the horn. Think of the air in the quiet low notes as moving more slowly than in the louder passages. It isn’t necessarily a question of more air, but the speed at which the air is moving that differentiates loud and soft playing. Regarding the key: trombonists should be able to play comfortably in any key. If you find this piece particularly challenging because of the combination of sharps and skips, in preparation for working on the etude you might rewrite it in enharmonic notation. This may make the relationships between the notes a little clearer, and may help during your preparation as you become more comfortable with intervals.</p>
	<p>Here are some specific comments that may help with your preparation of this piece:</p>
	<p>1) You should try to breath, if possible at the end phrases. Here are some suggestions for breath marks: a quick breath after the upper C in measure 1 if and only if you need it, after the upper B at the end of measure 2, at the end of measure 4, a quick breath at the end of measure 6 if you need it, at the end of measure 8, at the end of measure 10, at the end of measure 12, a quick breath after the E in measure 14 if you need it, after the c natural dotted quarter in</p>

	<p>measure 15 if you need it, at the end of measure 16, at the end of measure 19, at the end of measure 22, at the end of measure 24 only if you need it, at the end of measure 25, at the end of measure 27 again only if you need it, at the end of measure 28, at the end of measure 29, at the end of measure 30, and a quick breath if you need it before the last two sixteenth notes of measure 31.</p>
1 - 4	<p>Note that the overall beginning dynamic is piano. This, plus the “detached” marking, should give an indication of the kind of emotion that you might want to portray. And you should think about that: should this piece be very metronomic, should it be rubato, should it be robot-like, should it be emotionless. You have to set the mood for this piece within the first four bars. I would suggest that measure 4 could be perhaps slightly louder, as it is the first time in the piece that two sixteenth notes start a measure. This could be followed by a return to “p” in measure 5.</p>
5 - 8	<p>Measure-5 again could start at a “p” dynamic. In order to add a little dynamic contrast to the piece, I would suggest a crescendo during the first two counts of measure 7 followed by a decrescendo so that the end of measure 7 is piano, leading to a dramatic crescendo to “f” by the end of the 8th bar. Listen carefully for intonation in bar 7. There is a tendency to want to play the D sharp, almost like a true D#, to set up the dominant key of E in the run. This should be avoided. It really is D natural all the way through bars 7 and 8. The pi valve markings in measure 8 are reasonable if you have independent triggers. You should experiment with different valve combinations to see what works for you. Personally, I find the last two notes easier to play with just the “F” valve.</p>
9-12	<p>The first question you have to answer in these bars is “what should the dynamic be?” You are coming off of a “f” in bar 8. I would suggest that there are two ways to interpret this. You could stay at a “f” for the next four bars, as bar 13 is</p>

	<p>definitely marked “p”. This makes less sense to me than to return to “p”, as the line is mostly moving downward to the melodic resolution in measure 12. Either option is justifiable. One of the question when preparing a piece of music where there is ambiguity is “what makes the most sense to me as a performer, and what would make the most sense for the listener to hear?” The best answer to these questions comes from living with a piece of music. Preparing for a piece of music is not like preparing for an exam. In some cases there are no right or wrong answers, there is simply what is best way to express what you would like to get across to the listener. The valve markings in measures 10, 11, and 12 are, again reasonable. Work hard to get a consistent sound and intonation no matter what valve combinations you are using. The listener shouldn’t know that you are moving between valves in terms of sound. This is especially important to do when using the “pi” or G-flat valve, as it tends to be less familiar and sometime stuffier.</p>
13-16	<p>We’ve already talked about not overly accenting either octave in these bars. There is a return to “p” dynamic here. Make sure that you take in plenty of air for the phrase, and slow the air down to keep the dynamic soft. Dropping your jaw will help with the production of the first pedal A. It is often more difficult to play lower note passages piano because of the air required to start the sound. The crescendo in measure 15 should be followed. You might even continue the crescendo through the end of measure 16 for added effect.</p>
17-19	<p>There is a return to an “mf” after the previously loud passage. Again, watch the relative accents or weights on the notes.</p>
20-22	<p>This is part of a measured three bar crescendo. Make sure that you are careful with regard to intonation, especially in bars 21 and 22, which are a half step apart. This increase by a half step helps to heighten the tension suggested by the</p>

	increasing dynamic. I would suggest that measure 22 is the peak of the piece dynamically.
23-25	We again return to a “p” dynamic. These three bars are interesting in that there are no sixteenth notes. These bars are meant to be transitional to the last four bar phrase in measures 26-29, before the listesso tempo.
26-29	If you look at the notes in measures 26 and 27 and compare them with measures 1 and 2, you will see that they are very similar, in that roughly the same notes are used, but the octaves are reversed to give a downward movement. I would suggest that playing the low D-C#-B combination in bars 27 and 28 using the double trigger for all of the notes will make this passage easier to play.
30-33	Practice this piece with a metronome, so that the triplets will be at the same tempo as the previous measure. “Listesso Tempo” means the same tempo, and it is an indication by the composer (who, by the way, was an amazing bass trombonist) that the tempo should not slow down. Listen carefully for the intervals in measure 31 and that the transition back to the eighth and sixteenth note figures is smooth. I would take a breath leading into measure 32 in order to be able to make the last leap from E to pedal A smooth.
Final Comment	This etude is very rich in its dynamics and musical transitions throughout. Try to think about what would convey a sense of the piece, and how you would express it. Music is about expressing emotion as well as playing the notes. There are many fine players who can play notes, but it is the masterful players who can make us feel something while they are playing. Listen to recordings of some of the masters of the bass trombone (Charles Vernon, James Markey, Douglas Yeo, Ben van Dijk, and Denson Paul Pollard are good examples) to get a sense of the variety of sounds that are possible. The more you listen to great bass trombonists, the more you will get a sense of the kinds of

	sound you can make. Then work to make your own unique, thrilling sounds on the horn.