

T.M.E.A. ALL-STATE TRYOUT MUSIC

1. Hello. My name is Richard Meek, professor of bassoon at Texas Tech University. On this CD I have recorded the 2016-2017 T.M.E.A. All-state tryout music for bassoon. I also offer some comments for each etude, which, I hope, will help you prepare for your upcoming auditions. I wish you the very best of luck and hope to see you as a member of either the All-state band or orchestra at the T.M.E.A. convention in February 2017.

The tryout music this year is from Practical Method for the Bassoon by Julius Weissenborn, published by Ambrosio. Selection number one is etude No. 38 in E Major. The tempo is a metronome marking of 142-152 to the quarter note. Play the entire etude as written with repeats the first time and NO repeats on the Da capo al Fine.

2. For this etude practice should be directed to developing constancy and clarity of articulation and evenness of shaping. Both are enhanced by focusing your attention on a good free and fast air stream. Spend the majority of practice time on slurring all the notes of each phrase to develop shaping and continuity, and then lightly separate the notes with the tongue. In slurring you will find use of the left thumb octave keys and the short resonance fingering for the c-sharp above the bass staff (XXX c-sharp/OXXF) quite helpful to maintain clarity. For the most part, breaths may be taken quickly after a downbeat so the succeeding eighths sound as though they are moving towards the next downbeat. Notice that the phrasing tends to progress in two or four bar groups, and that the second section does change key.

3. (Selection number one at a performance tempo)

4. Selection number two, is etude No 35 in f-sharp minor. The tempo is a metronome marking of 68-74 to the quarter note. Play from m.32 (beat 4) to end.

5. The essence of this etude is contrast; contrast of dynamics, nuances, and articulation. There is found immediately contrast between staccato of the first three notes and the legato of the next two. The slight crescendo marking which is almost more of a nuance (direction) more than a real crescendo as the goal of *forte* is not realized until almost eight bars later. Then is found a *portato* (two notes with dots under a slur) which is a slightly longer uplifted, connected type of articulation, which when repeated in measure 40 is louder and with breath accent instead. Notice phrasing moves by two measure groupings, most often forming four bar phrases. Often I like to practice this also all slurred to become familiar with which fingerings are best for slurring and to develop muscle memory for use of the left thumb with register keys.

[Etudes one and two are performed on Heckel bassoon, number 4802, made approximately 1909.]

6. Selection number three is etude No. 29 in E-Flat Major. The tempo is a metronome marking of 80-100 to the quarter note. Play from beginning to end.

7. The major problem to overcome with this etude is the constant staccato articulation, and the proper execution of the dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth. Again I begin by practicing all slurred then add the tongue for articulation once I can play the entire etude without the embouchure tiring or seizing up—thrusting up with the lower lip. I add the tongue in the lightest manner slightly off center from the reed. Remember that the tongue function is to gently stop the

reed, not to start it.....so the breath must remain focused and constant. You will notice when the air speed begins to slow and become less focused because your embouchure and jaw will begin to move.

The dotted eighth sixteenth figure will tend to sound more like a triplet if one is not observant. One might follow Leopold Mozart's admonition to play the sixteenth shorter rather than longer. Even better think of the sixteenth as a grace note to the next dotted eighth, and hold the dotted eighths almost full value so they sound connected as part of the ascending scalar line. If you find yourself rushing the metronome in your practice you might try playing it in the old Viennese fashion, thinking of placing the sixteenth on the beat before each dotted eighth. [This etude is performed in Hemmle Recital Hall on Heckel bassoon, number 12188, made 1978.]

8. Here is selection number three at a practice tempo.

9. This is selection number three at a performance tempo.

10. The selection for contrabassoon is etude number 35 in f-sharp minor, marked *Andante maestoso*. The tempo is a metronome marking of 68-74 to the quarter note. Play from m.32 (beat 4) to end.

11. Much of your work on this etude may be done easily on your regular bassoon. Then, when the contra is available, concentrate on clarity of tone for the contra making sure to hold the octave keys down for the upper register notes. Some experimenting is usually required to find that relaxed embouchure setting and lightness of tongue so notes are not constantly cracking. Much experimenting may also be required to find comfortable fingerings for the high register for best pitch, response and evenness of tone. Each contrabassoon has its own idiosyncrasies regarding the upper register. Follow the comments for selection number two regarding phrasing and dynamics. Above all, allow the reed to vibrate freely to get that depth of sound so characteristic of the contrabassoon. [This is a first recording with a recently restored Heckel contrabassoon, number 423, made in 1929.]

12. I hope you enjoy exploring these etudes. During this fall football season be sure to do daily spade work always with metronome. "Spade" work is that daily slow repetition to develop muscle memory in the fingers which will carry you accurately through those nervous moments in competition. Record yourself and listen to see if you are making the music sound interesting. Don't let it become *just* another etude. If you have any questions, please feel welcome to contact me at Texas Tech University at r.meek@ttu.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.