

RANGEBUILDING

on the Trombone

by

Tom Ervin

Tom Ervin is now happily retired after 36 years as Professor of Trombone at the University of Arizona and 28 years as Principal Trombonist in the Tucson Symphony Orchestra. He is a past president of the International Trombone Association, and was also very active as a jazz performer and clinician.

He is author of the widely-used books *Rangebuilding* on the Trombone and *Twenty Counterparts* which are duet accompaniments to the Bordogni-Rochut Melodious Etudes. He recently completed and published his new *Sixty Counterparts* to accompany the *Voxman Selected Studies for Trombone*.

Tom's books are being enjoyed by Trombonists, Euphonists and Tubists worldwide and are available on his website www.tom_ervin.com. Play the Counterparts books with a friend, with your teacher, and with your students.

Rangebuilding on the Trombone

by Tom Ervin

A comprehensive book to help players develop endurance, good intonation, finesse, accuracy, reliability and agility in the high range.

Read what the professionals have to say about Rangebuilding on the Trombone

... profound insights about the correct approach to the high range, as well as admonitions about common traps. The exercises and the technical suggestions are presented undogmatically, allowing considerable latitude and ingenuity from each player ... I am already recommending it to my students. ... Contains a number of ideas not previously in print.

**Milt Stevens, Principal Trombonist,
National Symphony Orchestra,
Washington D.C.**

... in today's music performance, development of playing skills in the high range is mandatory ... to my knowledge, no book anywhere covers as you have the development of playing skills in the upper register of the trombone ... could make all of the difference in building or rebuilding an embouchure. I would strongly recommend this concise book, with a most important Preface, to all trombonists from the slightly advanced level on through the professional stage. ...

**David Uber, Trombonist,
composer, teacher**

Don't leave home without it!!
Absolutely essential!!
All-comprehensive regarding the development of high range. I like it!

**Bill Watrous
jazz recording artist**

I found your approaches thoughtful and practical, developing physical responses and strength, ear sensitivity, intellectual awareness resulting in a more secure, expanded natural upper register ... exercises and dialogue are mixed — GOOD IDEA — students are more apt to read the stuff!!!
I'll use it!!

**Tom Everett, Director of Bands,
Harvard University; founder,
International Trombone Association**

... contains all the elements conducive to good results, and is compiled in a concise and easy-to-use manner ... a most valuable addition to the trombonist's study materials ... I know of no other book like it. Bravo!

**Byron Peebles, Principal Trombone,
Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra**

Preface

RANGEBUILDING FOR TROMBONE will assist trombonists in developing playing skills in the high range. The book's various chapters address skills far beyond merely "hitting the notes at all."

To begin, players must develop enough embouchure strength to produce the desired high pitches. That is a big project, **but there is much more!**

This book also attempts to help players develop the **ENDURANCE** to play high for some time (lead), the **INTONATION** to play pleasantly, the **FINESSE** to play high in a variety of styles, the **ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY** to play lead with confidence, and the **AGILITY** to play intricate passages.

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MUSCLE BUILDING

(or: “hitting the notes at all”)

Your lips actually vibrate at the frequency of the pitch you are playing, perhaps 50 to 1,000 vibrations per second. You are not really in control of these vibrations; instead you “set” your embouchure for a desired pitch, tune the instrument for the same pitch and buzz.

That “setting” of the embouchure is a matter of lip tightness and aperture size. For the high range you will make a smaller aperture (the opening between the lips, inside the mouthpiece). Please imagine flattening a drinking straw between the center of your lips, and then blowing through the smaller, flattened hole. When you really flatten the hole small, substantially more air pressure will be required to even part your lips. EXPECT THAT YOU WILL NEED TO BLOW QUITE HARD AT THE CEILING OF YOUR RANGE. This, of course, does not mean that all high range is loud.

First we get the notes; later we will refine them.

One of the best rangebuilding exercises is also one of the oldest; I learned it from Emory Remington. Mr. Remington distributed several versions of this exercise, and they are all good. Lip slur or tongue as desired, but do some of both.

EXAMPLE B: Security In The High Range (after Remington).

Slowly ♩ = 60-80

7 —————

6 —————

lip slur legato tongue

SCALES

Musicians practice scales because the scales are useful. Composers use scales in real music. Scales define tonality with a minimum of notes. Scale practice develops intonation and key security. Scales are here to stay.

Practice all your scales as high as you can play them (and as low). Do not stop at the tonic. Do not always begin on the tonic. To guard against early exhaustion and against developing a special highrange embouchure, I recommend scale (and arpeggio) practice that usually encompasses more than one octave.

EXAMPLE I: High Range Scale Format.

$\text{♩} = 60-120$

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is in G major (one sharp) and the bottom staff is in G minor (two flats). Both staves show an ascending and descending scale starting on G4 and ending on G5, with a fermata on the final G5. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 60-120.

Tom Ervin, Rangebuilding

Comfortably Restful Exercises. Slowly!

EXAMPLE K

The image shows two staves of musical notation in bass clef. Each staff contains three measures of music, separated by double bar lines with repeat dots (//). The first measure of each staff begins with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notes in the first measure are G2, F2, and E2. The second measure contains a slur over G2, F2, and E2, followed by a comma. The third measure contains a slur over G2, F2, and E2, followed by a comma and a double bar line with repeat dots. The second staff follows the same pattern but with a different sequence of notes: G2, F2, and E2 in the first measure; a slur over G2, F2, and E2, followed by a comma in the second measure; and a slur over G2, F2, and E2, followed by a comma and a double bar line with repeat dots in the third measure.

Tom Ervin, Rangebuilding

TUNES

Along with scales, arpeggios and patterns, I encourage students to play familiar tunes by ear. It is remarkable and very sad to see how many players of all instruments fail to develop this easy and pleasant skill of playing by ear.

Here is a short list of simple tunes, most of which will be familiar to American students. You can certainly add to the list, choosing melodies which are:

Known!

Diatonic (few accidentals)

Technically simple

List of Tunes

My Country, 'Tis Of Thee

America The Beatiful

Tom Ervin, Rangebuilding

FLEXIBILITIES IN THE HIGH RANGE

The word “flexibilities” as used here refers to those exercises which are usually played rapidly between different partials, usually untongued lip slurs and usually all in the same slide position. Most trombonists do these exercises quite a lot, more than any other instrumentalists as a group. They are excellent warmup material in the usual registers.

Those same familiar patterns can be performed up a harmonic or two, or even an octave higher.

EXAMPLE S: After Remington.

Twenty Counterparts

Duet Accompaniments to the Bordogni-Rochut Melodious Etudes #1-20

by Tom Ervin

Read what these famous trombonists have to say about this new contribution to the trombone literature

"...indisputably one of the most invaluable additions to appear in a very long time. Understanding lyricism is much easier when hearing this second voice."

Joseph Alessi, Principal Trombone,
New York Philharmonic

"...fantastic and beautiful. What a great idea! They will give the student a wonderful sense of music-making."

Henry Charles Smith, Arizona State University

"...absolutely ingenious...they capture the essential character of each piece and cleverly expand and enhance the original material. Can be 'stand alone' material in its own right. I have already used them successfully on trombone, euphonium and tuba."

Loren Marsteller, Los Angeles

"An enjoyable new way to play the old favorites. Perform them with friends; record one part and play the other; play them alone...a great idea."

Ralph Sauer, Principal Trombone,
Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra

"A great book and a great idea! Really valuable; I am using it in my teaching."

Jay Friedman, Principal Trombone,
Chicago Symphony Orchestra

"Excellent studies, challenging in all registers, rewarding to play."

Ned Meredith, formerly San Francisco
Symphony Orchestra

"A very insightful and fresh approach to the trombone's most important collection of etudes...destined to become a standard in the trombone literature. An absolute must!"

Michael Davis, jazz recording artist, New York City

"The unexpected harmonic progressions are a delight. They work great for euphoniums and for trombone and tuba."

R. Winston Morris, Tennessee Technological University

"...similar to the Rochut yet contains challenging rhythmic independence and contrast, increasing the value of ensemble experience. As an aid to duet performance, the measure, staff and page format is arranged the same as Rochut's Fischer edition."

Glenn P. Smith, Professor Emeritus,
University of Michigan

"A fine addition to the lyrical literature."

Charles Vernon, Bass Trombonist,
Chicago Symphony Orchestra

"They're not only enjoyable to play, but add some 'zip,' harmonically, melodically and rhythmically, to the original melodies."

Buddy Baker, University of Northern Colorado

"Compositionally, very interesting, not just a duet in thirds...stylistically appropriate...a great way to begin a lesson."

Vern Kagarice, University of North Texas

"An outstanding idea, very valuable"

Keith Brown, Indiana University

"I enjoy the book with my students and then also change parts"

Carsten Svanberg, Danish National
Symphony Orchestra

"Bravo! They serve a great purpose, very musical and playable. Will become a part of the standard trombone repertoire in a very short time...already part of mine."

Jiggs Whigham, Professor of Trombone and Jazz,
Cologne, Germany