

**Clinician Name:**

Francisco J. Rosario-Vega

**Clinic Title:**

Pedagogical Tips for Trombone Performance Excellence

**Clinic Synopsis:**

I will share pedagogical approaches regarding trombone performance. Areas to be covered include, but are not limited to:

Tone production

Slide technique

Range development

Double and triple tonguing

Lip slurs

Also, specific age appropriate repertoire/literature for classroom use and musicianship growth.

**What is the target audience for this clinic?**

Band and Orchestra Directors of all levels, jazz band, and latin music jazz teachers also.

**What will the audience take away from this clinic?**

In depth musical and technical approach for trombone performance and, study suitable for all grade levels of development. The audience will hear a technical approach seldom heard by teachers on the technical capabilities of the instrument.

**What is included in the handout?**

In the handout is included information on the performance of exercises for trombone or other instruments. An introduction on how to work and develop those exercises for all types of students and comments on how to relate technical aspects help grow into the artistic and technical approach of trombone musical performance.

**Is there anything else you would like attendees to know about this clinic?**

Its benefits go across all styles of performance.

**Biographical Information:**

Francisco Rosario-Vega is currently principal solo trombone of the Royal Seville Symphony Orchestra in Spain. He has performed under some of the world's most renown conductors

such as Yuri Temirkanov, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir Georg Solti, Leonard Bernstein, Neeme Jarvi, and Yoel Levi among others. He has been a recipient of the New York Philharmonic's Music Assistance Fund and has presented clinics and master classes throughout Europe. He is a graduate of the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music where he earned a B.M. in Trombone Performance and an Artist Diploma. He has presented recitals in the United States, Puerto Rico, Spain, Portugal, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic and toured around the world with the Royal Seville Symphony Orchestra. He is a member of the jazz trombone quintet Bone-Idol.

### **Introduction**

Although I will be focusing on the development of technical and artistic abilities in trombonists of all levels, most of the material discussed applies also to areas of performance discipline that can be applied to other instruments. If by any means they find this information and focus helpful, I will be happily satisfied beyond my purpose.

The ideas and pedagogical approaches that I propose are the result of years of experience in trombone performance teaching. I have been in close contact with the pedagogical ideas common to conventional musical teaching. The ideas brought forth form part of a dynamic musical training imparted to trombonists that aims to integrate technical and performance development at all levels of study simultaneously. The main goal targets not only musical excellence but also personal artistic achievement.

Among these tips are included and developed ideas and concepts learned from all teachers I have encountered.

### **Discovering and developing musical intuition in individuals**

Modern conventional pedagogical approaches can determine a person's musical talent. In order to join a musical academy or music school it is necessary that individuals demonstrate certain musical aptitudes. To detect those aptitudes there are tests developed to show the individual's aptitude to retain mentally simple melodies, retain mentally a simple rhythm, to tune up a series of notes or a melody, etc. The capacity to succeed in those tests determine the ability that individual has for music and its foremost education.

Modern pedagogy and recent scientific studies demonstrate that the brain, as a machine of information processing, is capable of learning and adapting all through a lifetime. It just needs the correct stimuli. The possibility of giving the brain the capacity to understand the process of learning and execute is what makes this development to happen. It must be stimulated to make it work. Passing the test only shows that individual/Brain has been specifically stimulated in fields that help in passing the test. Does that determine natural talent?

These themes become a debate within themselves. First the idea is to stimulate and develop the brain of the individuals whether they will become professional musicians or not. Second is to create in students the structures to activate the necessary curiosity to develop creative fantasy. In the non music student the idea is to create the capacity of understanding simple

musical structures. In all cases, it is to understand music as a language and a way of communicating from the performers and from the listener's point of view.

### **The Child**

We know that at the most tender early age the child establishes his capacity of growing and integration through sensorial stimuli. The capacity of organization and unification of those elements determine its development. The early brain is a book full of empty pages waiting to be written on by stimuli.

In a child with more visual stimuli the result will be more development in spatial development and movement.

In a child with more sound stimuli the result will be more development in listening and attention.

### **The Youth**

In the individual's development there is more integration of capacities of stimuli and interaction with society.

As the individual gets further and further away from childhood his capacity to learn seems to decrease, but his capacity of putting to practice the learned formulas take over to its maximum. The more capacity to create creative strategies to overcome obstacles, the better prepared the individual will be to face and overcome life's complexity.

But, why is it so important to have these ideas in mind to prepare individuals for music education?

Correct brain stimuli will help us as educators and also as therapists of our students. According to a person's age, education will adjust to his development. Education will cover and develop the lack of in the individual educational stimuli. It is important to remember that it doesn't mean that as we grow we will not be able to evolve. Recent studies show that as long as in our early age we have been able to create the structures of learning and becoming conscious of ourselves, we will be able to develop and evolve in later ages.

Specifically in trombone early education, we try to integrate as many senses as possible, to mention a few:

1. Sight
  - through the music part, visual stimuli
  - through the memorization of the distance between the slide from the face
  
2. Sight-ear
  - Through the relation among the sounds seen on the music part
  - Through the relationship among the sounds themselves (intonation, highness, etc.)
  - Through the relationship of the sounds that we can relate to the distance from our face to the slide

3. Ear
  - Through the sounds produced
  - Through the sounds that are yet to be produced
4. Touch
  - Through the vibration of the instrument
  - Through the vibration of the lip
  - Through the feeling and memorization of the distance of the slide from the face

The integral study proposed and the tips incorporate activities that stimulate most areas of performing. For beginners it is important to start learning the reflexes of reading a music part. Learning how to read a music part is to develop the skill of detecting all the information inside it.

### **Reading a music part and music styles**

Reading a music part correctly and interpreting what is in it is a musician's life. On the one hand we must be respectful to the musical text and on the other hand we must make that text ours, in order to interpret it. Stylistic rigor is important. How to be respectful and creative at the same time? How to read and understand the musical text? This is one of the musician's biggest debates. There are many tendencies and beliefs. But, who is right?

1. What is on the music part?

Performing a written piece of music is like an artist working on a sculpture with a rock. Each note over a five line staff represents a sounding idea. In language, a written word means a communication idea, a feeling. For example, let's take the word Love. We all know, or believe to know what's love. We can say, I love my wife, I love my son, I love my dog. But is it the same feeling of love that you have for your wife than the love that you have for your son, or your dog? The word love means a feeling that can vary in many different ways. In music the notes give us information on the sounds that are to be produced. It doesn't mean anything on its own. Many notes combined together start to have some meaning of ideas. Being able to comprehend this basic and primitive way of expression will help us enormously to find meaning in music and interpret musical ideas in the future.

From the beginning it is necessary to create healthy stimuli on the individual. Even though beginner's music parts are simpler than professional music parts, it is necessary to create that good habit of reading the part. I will mention a few details of music reading that at first seem very simple:

1. Length of sounds (length).
2. Correct measure of rhythm (of the notes, of the speed of the piece of music, of the melody, of the accompaniment).
3. Visual-sonorous-physical coordination (kinetic).
4. Visual-aural coordination of sounds.

5. Physical coordination and relationship between the vibration of the lips and the produced sound.

Lack of formation on these basic skills could bring frustrating consequences to student development and impair the evolution of their playing and their desires of improvement. It is always good to stimulate the student with questions like:

-How does this sound to you? Does it sound sad? Does it sound happy? Is it optimistic?

This helps the student to relate mentally the sounds produced, as musical adjectives and file them mentally through sonorous figures.

As the level of the individual improves it is also healthy for them to understand to challenge the musical text interpreted. We must challenge the individual to find the reason of existence behind a melodic line. This is to make the performer adjust and get close each time to a composer's idea. To do this the performer must learn the concept of musical phrasing. We must enforce always starting from a basic point of understanding. Unfolding the musical structure of the piece and finding meaning in it. Once we find these concepts in the piece to be performed we must ask ourselves, why does it work?

#### **To question our knowledge**

Knowledge generates understanding. In music the knowledge of the structure helps to understand the flow of music, opening up new possibilities of listening.

At first it may not seem important to know a composer's life or experiences to perform certain technical aspects of their works. The knowledge of particulars in relation to the repertory (author, the general story of the society to which it was written, the composer's state of mind at the time of writing, etc.) will help us get a better global idea of the piece. This will not only help our interpretation, but will also help one to come to know better our cultural vision and general culture.

Other aspects that help us reach the musical performance that is in our mind is the study and knowledge of the technical aspects and particularities of our instrument. The idea is to teach how to learn more than teaching how to do things, to teach how to study, decipher and prepare technically the student to develop the necessary strategies to learn how to learn from his study at each moment. The goal is to prepare the student to auto analyze to improve and prepare to evolve in the process.

#### **From the development of technique to the music (or from the music to the technique)**

There are many recommendations on methods of study. My recommendation on the development of basic technical skills is Arban. The most important approach is to study note by note, measure by measure. This stimulates healthily the coordination of all physiological aspects of performance. The slow repetition of technical exercises and the conscious exploration of the physical feeling during repetitions help develop healthy study habits that at the same time coordinate all these elements. All elements of study must be done keeping this

in mind. Once all these elements are coordinated we can proceed to develop the speed by doing exercises faster and faster.

### **Posture**

Correct posture is essential. With the right and left elbows pointing at 8:20. Following are some of the most common unhealthy habits found in trombonists:

1. Head tilted
2. Neck is moved forward
3. Neck is moved backward
4. Neck is tilted
5. Elbows are too close to torax
6. Elbows are too far from torax
7. Waist curved forward
8. Waist curved backwards
9. Unbalanced leg position
10. Tension in right hand manifested through fingers (floating pinky finger, displacement of the weight of the instrument on the fingers, etc.)
11. Closed palm or too open
12. Puffing of the cheeks
13. Air balls inside the embouchure (at all times or just in some registers)
14. Not effectively holding weight on left hand

It is possible that the individual may seem to be developing properly even with some of the points mentioned before, but for more healthy development and future evolution of the player it is better to fix those habits with constant work with a natural attitude.

Many of these habits are formed right at the beginning of the individual's formation, that's why it is extremely important to pay a lot of attention at the beginning of their education and be absolutely disciplined about it. For a little kid a trombone can be heavy. When the slide is extended the center of gravity of the instrument suffers a small displacement. Careful observation on the maintenance of the body posture by the individual is crucial for developing a proper posture. Sometimes this is more important than getting the student to advance technically, at any cost.

Regarding the embouchure, a developing student should be aware of the resistance the instrument has on the airflow. This will help create consciousness of the embouchure and avoid the formation of air bags on certain parts of the muscle mass of the embouchure to compensate for resistance. It is important to observe the embouchure and make sure that this does not take place and that the embouchure is firm, not rigid.

Flexibility is important to keep individuals from allowing this. It will help the sensitivity of the lips to allow them to move freely inside the mouthpiece and effectively.

### **Breathing**

Any exercise to help improve the vital capacity is always welcome. The concepts are, but not limited to, understand the concept of airflow (air speed, air volume) hot air blowing or yawning feeling, air as fuel of sound, lips as vocal strings, etc. Breathing devices are very useful to become acquainted with the breathing feeling. They help to tone the breathing apparatus allowing understanding by experimenting. Some of the breathing devices that can be useful are:

1. Inspirix/incentive spirometer-Also used inverted and with the mouthpiece to help feel the lip's vibration. By varying the level of resistance to air the individual can experiment with the feeling of air going across the lips.
2. The six liter air bag-Helps to understand and conceptualize the volume and quality of air expelled, as to measure the air breathed.
3. The Voldyne helps to measure the vital air capacity through the controlled expulsion of air.
4. The Jacobs compound variable resistance gauge helps with the acquaintance of the breathing apparatus by visual stimuli of the air movement.
5. Power lung-Helps to strengthen, tone and improve vital capacity by varying the resistance to air inhaled and exhaled.
6. Breathbuilder-helps to control breathing by allowing a continuous flow of air inhalation-exhalation, and also to overcome tension on the throat muscles.

The important concepts to develop and always work on are:

1. Always keep the air moving (air=music).
2. Be efficient in breathing the most amount of air possible without creating stress.
3. Avoid air retention before articulation.
4. Stimulate the production of sound by blowing and making the lips vibrate with air flow.

### **Study methodology**

Create a routine of study in coordination with the individual main professor that includes as many different technical aspects as possible. Simultaneous study of different technique help healthy development. It is necessary to do a daily check of as many techniques of the instrument as possible and monitor with real tables of approximate development. It is necessary to explain to the individuals that exercises addressed to improve a certain technique help in the development of other techniques, by the creation of the necessary parameters of strength, resistance, flexibility, sensibility, etc.

The student must understand that to evolve, old habits have to be replaced by new habits. Negative feedback is always to be avoided since the natural state of all development is to evolve. Evolution will come from experimentation. In order to evolve from level to level is necessary to accumulate exposure to experimentation. Errors are a necessary part of improvement.

### **Imitation and motivation**

The creation of a positive imitation/motivation system based on correct models is also recommended. Imitation/Motivation systems don't have to be based necessarily on trombone examples or brass examples for that matter. Some examples can be:

1. Listening to musicians who play other instruments, or other musical disciplines.
2. Assisting in performances.
3. Imitating artists from other disciplines can help the interpretation of nuances not common to our instrumental discipline.
4. Do chamber music with friends.
5. Find analogies in other artistic fields.

### **Feeling and experimenting**

As educators, we can create in the student the curiosity to experiment and the ability to view the study of their instrument as a method of investigation. Experimenting through physical stimuli may help us find solutions to musical problems that we may face through our careers and development as artists. The important use of correct grammatical words and images help in the creation of positive feedback. Evolution overcomes changes. Development overcomes improvement.

Evolution is the term that works better with the necessary attitude towards study. Evolution implies test and development. When we start studying a musical instrument we are in constant evolution. From the early beginning of study we evolve through stimuli and development of more or less successful study strategies. As artists, we must take that stimuli beyond our fields incorporating analogical cultural structures to better understand and comprehend the art form of making music. This will not only lead to better prepared musicians, but to also better prepared individuals, academically, and culturally in society.

The following pedagogical creative techniques are valid for performance stimuli in students:

1. Experimentation
2. Exaggeration
3. Imagination
4. Creativity
5. Contrast
6. Inspiration
7. Recognition of performance excellence
8. Recognize aesthetic beauty
9. Experimentation of what is compelling
10. Understanding of the concept of transcendental artistry

### **Practical class with high school level students**

The class will be given to Valparaiso High School trombone students. The ideas explained in this handout will be worked.

### **Tips on how to prepare an audition**



1. The key to preparing an audition is to work as much in advance as possible.
2. As soon as you get to know the date of the audition, find out immediately the repertoire and level demanded, and decide whether you are at the expected level.
3. As soon as you decide to audition, prepare a training map (as athletes). The following elements should be included in that map:
  - a. Your daily routine
  - b. The repertoire of the audition
  - c. A work routine technically similar to the audition repertoire
4. This work map should include an improvement chart that includes a period of improvement and a period of repetition previous to the audition. This means:
  - a. The period of improvement should finish early enough before the audition date to allow you to repeat the repertoire and not get tired psychologically of it.
  - b. The period of repetition is right after the period of improvement. You should interpret the repertory in conditions as similar as those you will find in the audition.
  - c. Be faithful to the map.
  - d. Incorporate into your practice sessions moments of relaxation and non musical activities that not only prepare you, but will also distract you.
  - e. Read as much material as you can to help you understand the repertory studied.
  - f. Sports, generally, will help one find a point of mental focus that can help in moments of stress.
5. The day of the audition be normal, after all, it is a day you have prepared for very well in advance.
6. Keep your concentration in your warm up routine and take things step by step. Don't worry about excerpts you have not even been asked to play yet.
7. Don't listen to anybody warming up that day or spend too much time greeting friends, peers or audition colleagues.
8. Adversity can happen (snow, delayed flights, hotel reservations disappeared, etc.). Know this, and keep in mind that these may have been unavoidable. Keep your concentration steady on yourself.
9. Keep your concentration steady on yourself performing.
10. When playing, let go, don't think of anything else other than that for which you have been preparing.
11. Use breathing as your ally. Between excerpts breathe slowly in and out to reduce the speed of a nervous heartbeat.
12. After the audition no matter your appraisal of the situation, make sure you review the system and learn from it what was positive and what can be improved for the future.
13. You have a moral right to ask the jury for their opinion on your performance, to get feedback in order to contrast your experience and judgment with theirs.

Remember, in absence of a better system to know or evaluate performers, audition procedures are still the most common way of presenting yourself as a performer. It is really a chance you get to be able to present yourself and your previously developed performance

abilities. It is unfair and unnatural to make that situation the center of your life since the experience of living is what makes you happy and centered as a human being to perform. Do not put your life on hold for an audition or a performance, for that matter. No matter how important you think it may be, there is life after it. Life will go on whether it was good or improvable. Since the beginning of the whole audition process make sure you plan it to be a growing and enlightening experience. That is what you will keep in you after all is over.

### **Preparation of Ensemble work ((Symphony Orchestra, Jazz Ensemble, Wind Band, etc.**

Most trombone students aspire to work in diverse kinds of music ensembles. Ensemble playing makes up most of our performing time. Being a member of an ensemble offers performers opportunities to be prepared for a wide variety of performance situations (solo, section solo, section accompaniment, improvisation, etc). To be able to know correctly each environment of performance you should be exposed to those at one point or another during your educational years. The ability to demonstrate flexibility in an ensemble situation will determine your performance intelligence. Some situations may be:

- a. Joining a group for a last minute gig.
- b. Adjusting to a section.
- c. Adjusting to an ensemble.
- d. Forming an ensemble.
- e. For an audition final round.

You may have your own ideas as an artist, but showing the necessary flexibility in being able to adjust will make you better prepared and capable as an artist. A musician should be technically prepared and psychologically able to change his artistic vision to the demands of singular ensembles or conductor's ideas. Auditions may be even designed to discern between able candidates.

Performers should always be on the look out to learn new ways from more experienced performers. Education, preparation and exposure are three of the main factors that will help at all levels.

### **Playing in ensembles**

In ensemble playing it is of the utmost importance to be able to express your musical personality while simultaneously sharing it with everybody surrounding you. The idea is to contribute musical ideas, while accepting your role within the ensemble. It will be difficult to attain a convincing musical performance if, ensemble's artistry is not of a second nature reflex. The capacity to quickly adjust to varying performance situations will determine the group's ability to be convincing musically in their performance. Polyphonic performance requires the utmost sophistication in a musician. These elements should be constantly thought of. An accomplished musician should be able to react to them as a reflex.

- a. Intonation
- b. Timbre
- c. Articulation
- d. Nuances

- e. Dynamics
- f. Tempo
- g. Balance

Always go through constant criticism and positive feedback. Have clear positive ideas as to where your performance is at and where you want it to be in the future. Take time to think of adding these elements to your practice every day:

- a. Careful study
- b. Wise planning
- c. Conscious and unconscious inspiration
- d. Listening integrity

The nature of excellence lies at the bottom line of a lot of conscious work.