



*The U.S. Army Band*  
*“Pershing’s Own”*

**The Lead Trombonist**

*Presented by Sgt. 1st Class Matthew F. Niess*

*accompanied by*

*The U.S. Army Blues Jazz Ensemble Brass & Rhythm Sections*



1:30 p.m., Thursday, December 18, 2003  
The 57th Annual Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic 2003  
The Williford Room, Chicago Hilton and Towers

## Opening Selection

It's Only a Paper Moon ----- Harold Arlen  
arr. Jim Roberts

### Style

It is easy to recognize certain jazz musicians from recordings because you know what they “sound” like. The lead player too is recognized by what he or she “sounds” like. To be more specific it is the “style” that you recognize. You can develop style by:

Listening  
Transcribing  
Practicing  
Performing Experience

### Listening

It is important to have a broad listening library. The more you listen, the more you learn. Following is a list of several players who have influenced me. Not all of them are lead players, but they have had a profound influence on my sound, lead style and jazz.

Dick Nash	Kai Winding	Charlie Loper	Slide Hampton
Dick Shearer	Frank Rosolino	J.J. Johnson	“Abe” Lincoln
Dave Steinmeyer	James Pankow	Lou Sino	The Asunto Brothers
Conrad Herwig	Carl Fontana		

There are many more.....

### Transcribing

Listen for the style traits and transcribe them.

### Equipment

Finding your lead sound is something that will occur over time. Most players have a sound in their head and they journey to achieve it. There are several things you can do to acquire that sound.

There is nothing wrong with playing a large horn on a lead book. The sound will be big and you will have plenty of presence, but it will probably not be bright. The lead player should have the brightest sound.

A small bore horn will give you a brighter sound. It will also cut more and be easier to play all night.

In addition to the small bore, the mouthpiece shape is very important when trying to achieve a certain sound. Most mouthpieces today are bowl shaped. I have found that the funnel shaped (like a french horn) not only produce a brighter sound but also will better fit the small bore horn. What I mean by that is that you will have more pockets for notes as you ascend. It is important that your mouthpiece fits your horn. A small bore horn with a large mouthpiece is a totally different sound. Also the “bumps” in the high range will peter out early and you will end up faking the extreme upper register. However, this may be the sound that you want and there is nothing wrong with that.

There is nothing wrong with playing a “pea shooter.” If you plan on being a commercial player then you need to have a commercial sound. You can achieve this with the right equipment.

Putting on your style!

TROMBONE 1

COMPOSER : COLE PORTER

ARRANGER : MARK TAYLOR

# NIGHT AND DAY

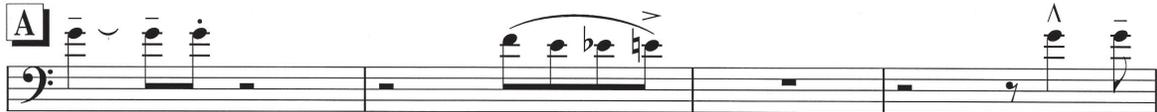
MED. SWING

DRUM SOLO

4



1-4



*mf*

5

6

7

8



9

10

11

12



13

14

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16



17

18

19-20

2



*f*

21

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## Upper Register

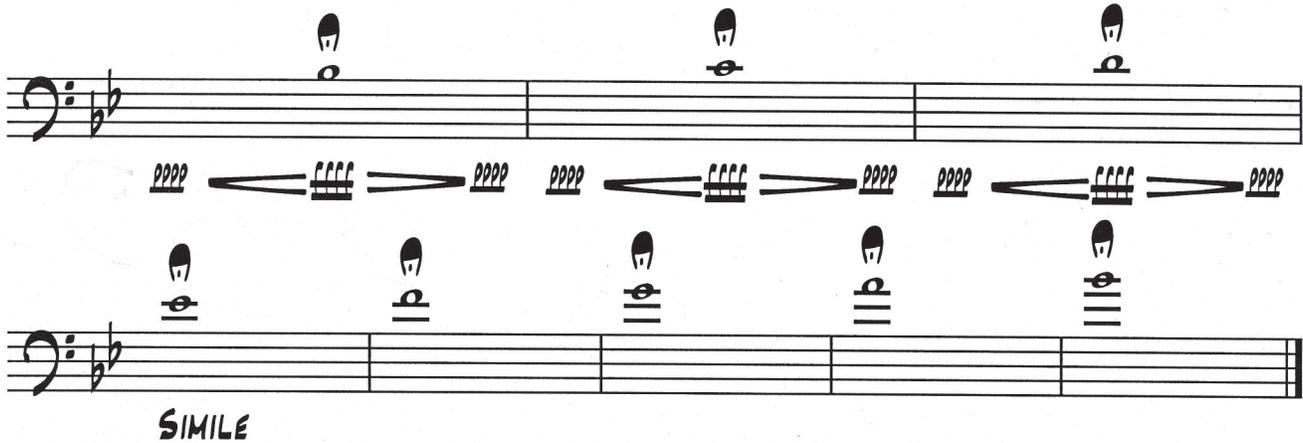
If you want a lead player's range you must start thinking in that range when you pick up the horn each day. The first note I play everyday is an "F" above the staff.



I consider this to be the middle of my range. The only way to play high is to play high. A good exercise is to play etudes 8va. You may do this with Rochut, tunes, scales, anything!

## Power

You must have command of the upper range, both with power and endurance. This exercise will build endurance as well as power. Practice it in all keys.

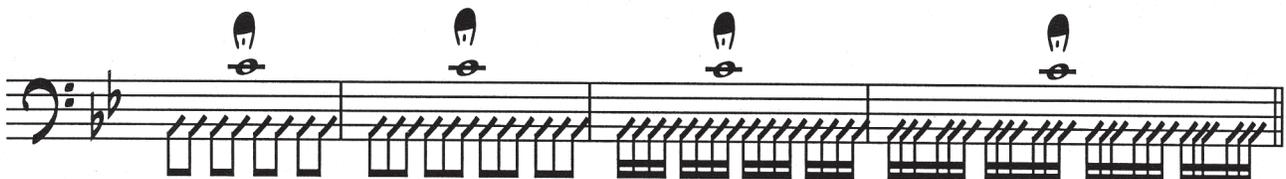


## Flexibility

It is important to have flexibility and one of the best ways to achieve this is to play lip slurs. There are many books published on this topic. Being flexible will make many of the techniques mentioned in this presentation almost effortless.

## Vibrato

Vibrato is probably one of the most difficult things to do well on a trombone, especially for young players. There are several ways to do vibrato. I prefer a wrist movement as opposed to the entire arm. Start off with a slow pulse and develop it from there.



# Section Vibrato vs. Lead Vibrato

Each situation is different and sometimes you will use both of these methods.

Here's That Rainy Day ----- Jimmy Van Heusen /Johnny Berke  
original arrangement by Dee Barton  
edited by Matt Niess

Forties example

## Mutes

Mutes are important and you should have them at every job. They are essential for the big band trombonist and studio work. Have a cup, straight, bucket, Solotone, pixie and plunger. Carry these and you will always be prepared. There are certain styles that require mutes. For example Count Basie's Al Grey and Ellington's trombonists used pixies (or a trumpet straight) with a plunger. Tommy Dorsey regularly used a Solotone mute for ballad playing.

## Knowing Musical Style

**The more you play the better you get!** The best musicians I know are able to play any style of music -- they are also people who listen to all styles. You too must expose yourself to every genre of music. When the phone rings, take the gig. If it is something you are not aware of do some research. Know the difference between the Basie Big Band, Glenn Miller, Ellington, Motown, Ska. etc...

## Material that you need to know

Here is a list of tunes or difficult lead parts that I encounter on big band gigs. There are many others, but this is an example of what I experience regularly in Washington, D.C.

I'm Getting Sentimental Over You (Tommy Dorsey-in D & Bb)  
Song of India (Dorsey)  
Under My Skin (Sinatra)  
Little Brown Jug (Glenn Miller solo)  
Shadow of Your Smile (Dave Wolpe)  
Malaguena (Kenton)  
Peanut Vendor (Kenton)  
Rainy Day (Kenton)  
A Little Minor Booze (Kenton)  
Secret Love  
Hello Young Lovers (Kim Richmond)  
The Volga Boatman (Miller)  
Tip Toe (Thad Jones)  
Night Train (Stock)  
I Can't Stop Loving You (Basie)  
Star Dust (Dave Wolpe)

## Leading the Section and Supporting the Lead Trumpet

When you sit down in the lead chair you undertake an awesome responsibility to musically lead the section. Everybody wants good leadership. Don't be afraid to make decisions. You need to listen to your section and correct any problems you hear. Your section will expect it from you and will work with you to achieve a good section. If someone is not listening to your lead style then you need to point it out immediately because it will only get worse.

Some players listen very carefully and blend in with the section...Some players don't listen to anything.

## Supporting the Lead Trumpet

You also are part of a big band. When the whole band is playing you become a section player. You need to listen to the lead trumpet as you expect your section to listen to you.

### **The U.S. Army Blues Jazz Ensemble Brass & Rhythm Sections**

~to be selected from the following~

All of Me ----- Seymour Simons  
arr. Billy Byers

Here's That Rainy Day ----- Jimmy Van Husen  
arr. Dee Barton

Making Whoopie ----- Walter Donaldson/Gus Kahn  
Basie Big Band

Shenandoah ----- Traditional  
arr. Tony Nalker

Malaguena ----- Ernesto Lecuona  
arr. Bill Holman

## Being Prepared

Always over-practice for a performanc. Practice things that are much more difficult than you have to perform. By doing so, you will decrease anxiety and will have more confidence. You may even find yourself “lost in the moment” or “in the zone.” That is a wonderful place to be.

## The Utility Trombonist

Unfortunately there is less big band work and more “small” big band work. The band will have one trombone and you are expected to do it all. You are a trombone section, a soloist, a section player and you need to know tunes. This is where you need to be able to blend with trumpets and saxes.

## Know Transposition

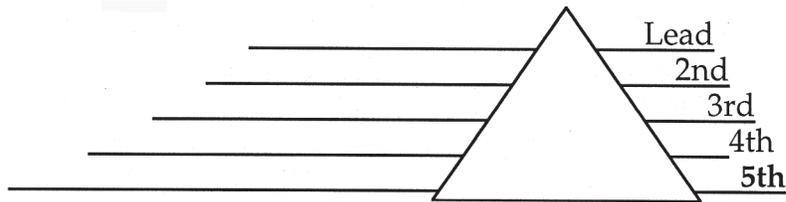
Sometimes you may find yourself on a gig where transposition may come in handy. Learn Bb and Eb transpositions as well as all other instruments.

## Sectionals

A Sectional is the best way to find out what is happening in your section. In addition to rehearsing your big band music, play quartets and have some fun.

## Pyramid of Sound

The inner parts need to come out. The third player is stuck with the “weird notes,” but these are the hip notes in the chord.



## Confidence

The moment you doubt yourself is when you will crack or miss a note. Always be confident and when you do miss, get right back on it like it never happened.

## What is really important

Read *Effortless Mastery* by Kenny Werner

Excerpt: “The most important thing is the next breath you take. Try holding your breath.....see what I mean!”

Don't get depressed on a bad performance. Your self worth is not based on how well or poorly you play the trombone on a particular concert. You do need to be a good player but understand that everyone has a bad night now and then. If it was easy everyone would be doing it.

## Jobs and Opportunities Playing Lead Trombone

### **American Military Big Bands**

**(Best jobs in the world!!)**

U.S. Army Blues Jazz Ensemble

U.S. Army Jazz Ambassadors

U.S. Navy Commodores

U.S. Air Force Airmen of Note

U.S. Army Jazz Nights

U.S. Air Force Falconaires

etc...

### **Theme Parks**

Disney

Busch Gardens

Paramount

Six Flags

etc.....

### **Ghost Bands of late Big Band leaders**

Miller

Dorsey

Herman

etc...

### **Regional Repertoire Jazz Bands**

**Territory Society Big Bands**

**Reading Big Bands**

**High School & College Big Bands**

etc...

**Matt Niess** is the lead trombonist and Senior Producer with The U.S. Army Blues Jazz Ensemble in Washington, D.C., where he is also the Jazz Coordinator and Co-chairman of the Eastern Trombone Workshop. He is a former high school band director, has taught on the jazz faculty of both Shenandoah and Towson Universities and currently serves as Director of Jazz Studies and Trombone at West Chester University. He is a graduate of West Chester and George Mason Universities. Niess is the founder and director of The Capitol Bones, a jazz trombone ensemble, which has received national recognition and has performed across the country.

He has appeared as a soloist, clinician and adjudicator at jazz festivals and universities to include North Texas, Tennessee, Texas at Arlington, Eastman, George Mason, West Chester, Shepherd, Towson, Las Vegas, Longwood, North Carolina, Gettysburg, Shenandoah, St. Mary's, James Madison, and others.

He has produced three CDs with The Capitol Bones and The Capitol Bones Big Band, and has recorded as a sideman on over 100 projects with The Washington Winds and The Studio A Big Band, Warner Brothers Publications, FJH Music, Carl Fischer Music, Belwin Publications, Hal Leonard Publications, FOX TV, HBO and independent projects.

He has studied trombone with Dr. Donald S. Reinhardt, Al Lube, H. Lee Southall, Dr. Paul Shultz, Dr. Milt Stevens and Dave Steinmeyer.



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