Graduate Recital

Thomas Gordon Nelson
Utah State University

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GRADUATE RECITAL

by

Thomas Gordon Nelson

A report of a recital performed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Music Education

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah
1965
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Also the writer is grateful to the Student Union Building staff, under the direction of Evan Stevenson, for their efforts to provide pleasant surroundings in which to perform a recital.

The author is especially grateful to Betty Beecher, who so willingly gave of her time and talents. Her efforts provided an artistic accompaniment for the solos performed on the recital.
Recital Program

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC presents

THOMAS G. NELSON in a
Graduate Brass Recital
Betty Beecher, Accompanist

UNION BUILDING AUDITORIUM
Sunday, April 25, 1965 — 3:00 p.m

— PROGRAM —

Romanza Appassionata . . . . . . . . C. M. Von Weber
Thomas G. Nelson
Arranged by P. X. Laube

Etude De Concours . . . . . . . . . . . Alexandre S. Petit
Thomas G. Nelson

Festival March . . . . . . . . . . . . . F. H. McKay
Trombone Quartet
Scott Larsen
Glenn Winget
Larry Janes
Martin Peterson

Concertino d’ Hiver . . . . . . . . . . Darius Milhaud
Thomas G. Nelson
Accompanied by Sky View High School String Orchestra

Fantasia on Greensleeves . . adapted by R. Vaughn Williams
String Orchestra

Andante et Allegro . . . . . . . . . . . . J. Ed. Barat
Thomas G. Nelson
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INTRODUCTION

The prospect of presenting a recital was very exciting to the author for two reasons. First, in spite of the fact that he has been associated with music as a performer and teacher-conductor for twenty years, this writer has participated in only one formal solo recital situation. This was a performance of Morceau Symphonique, to complete the requirements of a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Brigham Young University, and was prepared with little formal supervision. The second, which is directly related to the first, was the desire of the author to attempt to prove that he had gained at least a modicum of competence on the instrument he has been "holding" for the past twenty years. In relation to this second point, Earl Swenson states in his Graduate Recital Report that,

There are a number of reasons why a person should be an excellent performer. In the first place, he can justly claim himself to be a practicing musician, a member of the ranks of capable players. He can justifiably feel a certain prestige and admiration. Through the excellence of his performance he can inspire his students to harder work and higher standards. The attainment of a high degree of performing ability indicates through (sic) study over a period of time; it reveals that most or all technical problems of singing or playing have been mastered or understood. (5, p. 3)

Because the author had practiced in only a sporadic manner for the past ten or twelve years, it was expedient that the lip be conditioned carefully and rapidly through careful practice. The first lesson from Professor Alvin Wardle was spent in the presentation of
a set of warmup exercises, some of which the author had already used. These were to be used each day as exercises, not only to warm up the lip, but also as an aid in gaining the proper concept of a characteristic tone; proper methods of actually blowing the instrument; and, to me, the most important, that of the placement and focusing of the tone. These exercises are in mimeographed form and are available from the Utah State University Music Department. However, it is the feeling of this writer that any set of "warm-ups" can accomplish the ends desired and therefore, are not particularly valuable as a teaching aid except in the hands of a competent teacher who has an excellent concept of what he is attempting to gain through the use of the exercises.

During this first lesson, work was actually begun on the numbers which were going to be used on the recital. The instruction centered around two main problems. The first, which was the actual learning of the numbers, consumed most of the time of each lesson.

The method by which the instructor proceeded to accomplish the task of preparing this student for a recital was interesting to note. He, of course, was well acquainted with the solos and thus was able to choose the most difficult ones to begin working on. The general procedure was to choose two solos and make them the project of that week's practice by giving them most of the attention in the lesson and practically all of the practice time during the week. The next week two different solos were chosen and they were given most of the time, except during this week one was required to keep the other two solos up to the level of the first week.
ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE PERFORMED  
(trombone)

The solo which consumed most of the lesson time during the first few lessons was the *Andante et Allegro* by Ed. J. Barat. This solo, which is conceived in the style of many of the beautiful solos from the Paris Conservatory "school" of solo composition, is a genuine *Tour de force* on the trombone. It was by far the most difficult of the solos to learn, and by far the most rewarding to practice.

The sixteenth-note triplets, which occur in the second and fourth measures and recur in the same form throughout the *Andante* section, presented little technical difficulty because of the extremely *Lent 55* tempo. They did, however, introduce the age old problem with which trombone players must constantly struggle—slide placement. The incorrect placement of the slide is the cause of most of the faulty intonation for which trombone players have been known to be guilty.

The second note of this solo proved very definitely that E-flat above the staff must be played in a much "lower" third position than either the C, which is a minor third below, or the A-flat, a perfect fifth below. Another problem occurs as one plays the F-sharp above the staff and the adjacent G-sharp. The F-sharp must be played using a "sharp" third position, and the G-sharp is played on "normal" third position. Contemplate, if you will, the problem of slide placement that is presented as a player performs a passage which contains the above mentioned notes in any sequence. A trombonist can learn to play, in his own
practice sessions, or with a piano, consistently well in tune all of the notes possible on the trombone, only to find that when he is called upon to perform as a member of an ensemble of any type, he will be forced to play entirely different positions. Thus, it would appear that trombonists should be gifted with an ability to discriminate pitch which would be comparable to that required of a successful string player.

The transition from *lent* 55 to *piu vivo* 72 created considerable difficulty for the author. The method used by the instructor to overcome the uncertainty in tempo and pitch, which occurred at the beginning of the *piu vivo* passages, can be divided into two steps. First, he demonstrated a musical "trick", which was the key to the establishment of the new tempo. He simply showed that if one were to begin counting the subdivisions of the beat during the first long note of the new tempo, or during the rest which preceded the tempo change, it is a simple thing to change the tempo in a definite and artistic manner.

The instructor demonstrated that the problem of pitch as it is related to the transition from slow to fast passages is related to a factor other than where the slide is placed. This factor is the speed with which the slide is moved to the new position. The author discovered that this concept is being taught also by such prominent trombone teachers as Edward Kleinhammer, who states that:

Inaccuracy of slide placement causes faulty intonation . . . A slow or lazy movement of the slide from one tone to another might inject minute glissandos on the beginning and end of the tone, producing an unclean technique. (3, p. 58)

Some further advice on the slide technique to be used in the
playing of the slow passages was found in the BRASS section of an Instrumentalist magazine:

"... actually many unclear attacks in slow passages are made because the slide is still in motion when the attack is made. Let it suffice here to remind you that the slide must never move slowly... regardless of how slowly the music is moving... If this move-as-soon-and-as-fast-as-you-can technique will be consistently developed at slow speeds... the 'muddy' sound that most trombone sections get when playing very fast passages will gradually disappear, for even when playing very fast passages the slide can stop for that very short length of time required to tongue each note. (4, pp. 42-43)

Although this concept of the speed with which the slide should be moved between positions was never discussed formally during any of the lessons, the author recalls that the instructor admonished him many times to get the slide "there" and take hold of the note.

Through the application of the two techniques previously described, the author was able to establish the new tempo in a definite manner and at the same time have the new passage sound clean and well in tune.

Another problem which occurred consistently throughout the preparation of this solo was rushing the scale runs. This caused the runs to be ineffective from a musical standpoint and usually created the problem of completely missing the last note or two. It was demonstrated by the instructor that the problem of rushing rapid scale passages is created when the instrumentalist fails to give the proper emphasis to certain key notes within the run. He pointed out, for example, that in a scale run which was composed of an eighth-note followed by six-sixteenth notes ascending in a diatonic fashion and ending on a long note an octave higher, that one must emphasize only certain notes and practically de-emphasize other notes. The first note,
of course, needs to be played solidly to establish the tonality of the run. The next two notes, which fall on the unaccented portion of the first beat, are not nearly as important as the first and can be played lightly. By playing these two notes lightly the performer can then be ready to play a solid note on the first sixteenth note of the second beat. This is the fourth note of the passage. If care is taken to accent the fourth note of the passage as advised, the player will automatically play it on the beat even though he has rushed the preceding sixteenths. The next two sixteenth notes are touched lightly, with the final sixteenth note of the run, which is usually the leading tone of the scale, accented. Through the means of this accent the tonality of the scale is firmly established and the act of emphasizing this note can be used as a means to slow down, if necessary, thus allowing the long note to fall precisely upon the intended beat. In fact, the runs become much more impressive if the final three notes are played tenuto, unless the dynamic marking indicates otherwise.

In order to show in a more lucid manner the notes which the instructor emphasized as he played scales, the author will write one scale using capital letters to represent the accented notes and small case letters to represent the notes that should be treated lightly in the run. The scale then assumes this shape: CdeFgaBC. If care is taken to move the slide rapidly to the proper position, particularly on the "big" notes, the run will not be rushed and the overall effect will be one of rapid technique and good musicianship.

In the Allegro section of the Barat number, there is a passage which is intended to represent the sound of "big" trumpet playing the
type of a call which is associated with the trumpeting heraldry used
to announce the royalty of former times. This passage, which includes
triplet figures composed of skips, which are wide yet adjacent to
each other in the overtone series intermingled with some notes re-
quiring slide changes, presented the problem of playing a *Forte*
passage rapidly. Again the technique of emphasizing certain notes
and touching other notes lightly was utilized. The instructor demon-
strated that, although the entire passage was marked *Forte*, only the
longer tones needed to be played that loudly. It was shown that it
was possible to play the triplets *mezzo piano* and in the dotted eighth-
sixteenth note figure one could practically omit the sixteenth note
and still achieve an overall effect of *Forte* throughout the entire
passage by playing at full volume. By using this technique the pas-
sage sounded noble as intended, yet it retained a spirit of lightness
and gained the illusion of motion throughout its entire length.
Concertino d' Hiver by Darius Milhaud is composed in the modern idiom. It is not atonal nor does the composer utilize the twelve tone row system. He achieves this modern effect through the skillful manner in which he spaces the notes of simple major chords so wide that they give the impression of being dissonances. Also, he takes a simple rhythmic figure and moves through various positions in a series of consecutive measures using unexpected harmonic progressions and skips to give the effect he desires. Yet, if one analyzes these progressions closely, he finds few chords containing more than four notes; no chords which are conceived with intervals other than thirds as the basic unit of the chord; some, but apparently not an excessive number of chord inversions. It was the use of wide uncommon skips with the harmonically strong notes falling on the unaccented or weak points in the measure that made this solo take on the character of a modern musical joke. These wide skips are also a major problem of the solo.

The widest skip in the solo occurred between F below the staff to the high B-flat two octaves plus a fourth above. This skip was not nearly so difficult to play as was the skip from C-sharp in the staff to the A above the staff. Both of these skips require extremely long, rapid slide movements. The problem of simply moving the slide so far and arriving at the desired position before time for the second note to sound is great within itself. Then if one considers that the adjustment in the embouchure is comparatively as great as on the slide, and that if the instrument happens to be moved slightly during the change, the second note will be sure to be missed, he realizes that special
techniques will be necessary to play these and other skips in this solo.
TROMBONE PROBLEMS

As one studies the acoustical properties of the trombone, he gains an insight into some reasons for the difficulty of skipping from the low to the high range with any degree of rapidity.

"The trombone in the higher positions is a whole-tube instrument with a pedal tone. In the lower positions it is a half-tube instrument without a pedal tone. The statement is shocking. Here is an instrument which changes acoustical characteristic according to the location of the slide. The facts are well known. The tenor trombone has the following playable pedal tones: BBflat, AA Aflat, in the first, second, and third positions respectively: some good trombonists can play GG of the fourth position without much trouble, but below that the pedals refuse to 'speak'. Therefore, what is the trombone; a whole or half-tube instrument? The correct answer is both. So here we are confronted with a case where one and the same instrument changes its specific acoustical characteristic." (2, p. 138)

From a pragmatic standpoint this means that the notes, which are played on first, second, or third position, have a different feel than those further out on the slide. Any trombonist can tell that his instrument is different when he plays F first position that when he plays the same F using sixth position.

As one plays wide ascending intervals, he will note that he must excercise great care that "There be no sympathetic motion in the area of the throat or neck." (3, p. 18) This might indicate that the point of resistance is being formed in the throat or by the large muscles at the back of the tongue. This produces a sound which may be described as a squeezed sound.

Excessive squeeze results in a thick, stuffy sound that lacks brilliance and the moving 'big trumpet'
sound of the player who blows his horn... playing is less flexible because the body is more tense in the region called the solar plexus, and the throat and tongue. Even the lips become inflexible, in sympathetic reaction to the general tension. Because of the wrong use of the throat in squeezing the air, the tones of the upper register become air starved, sometimes to the point of not speaking... The lips, which are the sole critical point and focus of pitch, become more or less 'muscle bound'... and falsely dependent on the tensions of the diaphragm, tongue, and throat." (4, p. 15)

It is the belief of this writer that much of the problem that occurs as the average player begins to play in the high range is caused by the tension that arises in the throat and tongue muscles, not by the lack of strength and ability in the embouchure. The high notes are missed when one allows too much tension to build up in the wrong places. The point at which the tension must occur is in the embouchure, and one must be certain that this is the main point of resistance into the air-stream. It is the change of tension at the point of resistance created by the embouchure, along with a slight arching of the tongue to increase the speed of the air which reaches the lips, that create the proper conditions for playing in the extreme high register.

Yet, there seems to be another problem involved, especially as one attempts to skip as far as has been mentioned. This problem is created by the long movement of the slide, and is not solved when one has learned to move the slide rapidly and smoothly to the new position.

The English formerly called the trombone a Sackbutt, which has been translated to mean pump. If the slide is extended and filled with water, then quickly returned to first position, the water will be
propelled with considerable force for about fifteen feet. If one holds the trombone mouthpiece approximately one-half inch from the face and moves the slide quickly from seventh to first position, he can feel a small puff of air leave the mouthpiece. In other words, as the slide is closed rapidly there would appear to be a slight compression of the air against the lip; as the slide is extended, the lip would be, to a very small degree, sucked into the mouthpiece. This drastic (though seemingly insignificant) difference in the resistance at the only point of resistance in the instrument, coupled with the fact that the trombone is a half-tube instrument on fourth, fifth, and sixth, and seventh positions and changes to a whole-tube instrument from third position up, creates an embouchure problem that is distinctive to the instrument.

A simple B-flat concert scale requires a definite breath and embouchure compensation for the decreased air pressure which occurs inside the mouthpiece as the slide is extended quickly from first to sixth position to play the first two notes of the scale. Professor Wardle demonstrated that the best method one could use to play this scale was to use the B-flat as a pick-up note to the C, then proceed with the scale. This method seemed to actually make a small sound on the first note while in reality having the lip and the air-stream prepared to meet the lack of resistance and the different "feel" which is present when the slide is extended to play the second note in the scale.

This slide movement, in reverse, is used when one plays from F below the staff to high B-flat above the staff, and the problem is compounded by the extreme range involved; however, the author con-
cluded the problem was not so much a problem of the strength and flexibility of the lip as it was one of learning to adjust to the change in the feel of playing the low note on one type of an instrument and the high note on another. This, coupled with the force of the air being expelled by the slide against the lip, would appear to be a problem that needs further research because of the extreme amount of "trial and error" type practice that a trombonist must now undergo to be able to perform with any degree of artistry and technique on the instrument.
THE BARITONE

The remaining two solos were performed on the baritone horn, which is defined as:

"A valved instrument equal to the euphonium in pitch and similar in appearance, but possessing a narrower bore and consequently a less obtrusive tone... As a melodic instrument it seldom competes with the more sonorous and impressive euphonium, normally remaining content with passages of secondary importance."

(5, p. 437)

In modern band usage the terms euphonium and baritone seem to have become practically synonymous, with the only distinction being that the euphonium part is written in the bass clef and the baritone in the treble clef.

The author found that the baritone was physically much easier to practice than the trombone. One reason for this is that it is easier to hold because it is held closer to the body and never works the arms at a mechanical disadvantage the way the trombone does. One really does not feel the fatigue from an hour's practice on the baritone that is present after the same amount of practice on the trombone. Again, the shape of the instrument, which dictates the position in which the instrument is held, is the controlling factor.

There are times, however, when the physical condition of the player seems to effect the pitch on the baritone much more than on the trombone. The author noted that when he was very tired, the tendency was always to play sharp. In fact, there was never a time that the high notes in the end section of the solo, Romanza Appan-
sonata, were not sharp. One might be left with the impression that all trombonists would play sharp in the high range of the baritone if they found it necessary to double.

The author found that the baritone was very easy to tongue in all registers. It does not seem to be conducive to sloppy tonguing in the manner that the trumpet is, but it was easy to use too much or too hard of a tongue, thus making the attacks sound heavy.

It seemed that the baritone was very easy to play in the high register; so easy, in fact, that it always went sharp. The tone quality definitely influences the pitch in the high register. If the tone was played very brilliantly, the pitch in the high register invariably was too high. On the other hand, if one played with a "dark" sound in the extreme low register, the pitch was always too low. Thus, the author was required to listen in a very intense manner to every note and make careful adjustments in all registers.

From the standpoint of pitch, it was surprising to learn which notes are very bad on the baritone. The most consistent pitch problem that occurred was the sharpness on most of the notes which are played with first and second fingers. Because of the tendency of the low notes to be played flat, there was no problem with the low G concert. The D concert, which is the next note in the overtone series, is definitely sharp and requires use of the tuning compensator to play it down to the proper pitch. The next note, which is the fourth in the overtone series, is accurate, as is the B concert a minor third above. The next note which utilizes the first and second valves in most situations is the high G concert, which is always sharp. In fact,
in some situations the author discovered that it was better to play
this note with the second valve because the tuning compensator was
not needed, as one could adjust the pitch with the lip.

There were three methods by which the pitch was adjusted on
the notes that needed help. One was to use the tuning compensator,
which is available on most top grade baritones. The second was, of
course, to compensate with the lip for small pitch discrepancies.
Finally, the first valve slide was pulled approximately one-half
inch. This corrected the problems that existed on comparable notes
which used only the third valve, and aided materially with the notes
mentioned above.
ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE PERFORMED

Romanza Appassionata by Carl Maria von Weber is, of course, a transcription or an adaptation from an original work by the composer. The author was unable to discover the original source, but there is a definite feeling that the adaptation was from a cello solo of some sort.

From the standpoint of range or technical problems, there were no really difficult passages in this solo. But, from the standpoint of playing the instrument in "tune" with a piano, there were many problems. For example, pitch problems as related to the fatigue of the player, as described previously, were numerous throughout.

The author felt that this solo enabled Professor Wardle to give more instruction concerning some of the concepts of phrasing, which should be part of the general musicianship background of all performers and instructors, than did any of the other solos. It is difficult to describe the concepts which were gained through this instruction, but the author did acquire some insight into the methods used to teach a performer to play musically. Among the aspects of phrasing which were discussed were: rubato and its use to aid in the emphasis of the important notes in the phrase and within certain important measures; the artistic use of dynamics and tempo to give variety to the phrases was also the subject of discussion; the use of the air and lip tension to give the feeling of motion to the soft, slow, and sometimes low pitched passages and prevent them from
"dying" was an aspect of the instruction concerning phrasing, which will be an invaluable teaching aid to the author.

Etude De Concours by Alexandre S. Petit was the least difficult of the solos to learn. It had no sustained high passages, no wide skips, and no difficult rhythmic passages. It was in a light mood, and had sufficient piano interludes to enable the lip to remain fresh throughout the entire solo. There was some fast work in the Polonaise section, but it was composed in such a manner that the fingers fell into the patterns with no difficulty. This solo required by far less time to prepare than any other solo performed and was, in the opinion of the author, played more effectively than any of the other solos on the recital.
CONCLUSION

The preparation and performance of these solos in a formal recital situation was probably the best educational experience in which the author has ever participated. The personal growth, development, pleasure, and sense of accomplishment that were received through this experience are of inestimable value. For the first time in the life of the writer, the value of solo preparation and participation has become a reality. It is the conclusion of the author that the knowledge, experience, and attitudes gained through this effort will prove to be invaluable in the future.
LITERATURE CITED


(5) Swenson, Earl, Graduate Recital, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 1960.