

**STANDARD ORCHESTRA EXCERPTS FOR FRENCH HORN: A DISCUSSION OF PRACTICE
AND PEDAGOGY**

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ABSTRACT

This study will explain the preparation process needed by an aspiring orchestral French horn player to be sufficiently ready for an orchestral audition in both Canada and the United States. Through a survey of the most prestigious orchestras in both Canada and the United States, this study determines the common excerpts used for French horn auditions. Furthermore, the physical and mental aspects of preparation are discussed. This study seeks to provide both the necessary tools and the insight needed to enable a player to take a given excerpt and learn not only the notes and rhythms, but also discern many other subtleties inherent in the music, resulting in a full understanding and mastery of the music. The most common excerpts are musically analyzed in order to understand why the excerpts are commonly chosen and how a French horn player can use pre-established pedagogical techniques and exercises in their individual practicing. This study will provide advice for future French horn players auditioning for the top orchestras in Canada and the United States.

DEDICATION

To the three most important men in my life: my loving husband Julian, my valuable father Michael, and my generous grandfather Guido. You have been my support throughout my entire master's program. Thank you for walking with me on this journey and carrying me when I thought I could not finish.

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I would also like to acknowledge Professor Al Henderson at York University as the second reader of this thesis, and I am gratefully indebted to him for his unbelievably valuable comments on this thesis.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Chapter Two discusses the physical preparations needed in order to prepare for an audition. The chapter includes physical warm-ups, suggested practice regimens and a warm-up routine. Chapter Three provides insight into a proper French horn warm-up using techniques from well-established horn teachers in the horn community.

Chapter Four examines the mental preparation for an audition. The chapter includes various professional opinions on how to combat nerves before and during an audition. Chapter Five debates the link between performance anxiety and other types of anxiety. It also provides solutions for players to cope with performance anxiety.

Chapter Six discusses the expectations of horn players in preparation for and during the audition. Chapter Seven discusses the expectations of the audition committee and its impact on preparation of the music and the audition itself. Chapter Eight discusses the various excerpt books published and the discrepancies within the different editions. Chapter Nine provides the reader with the most frequently requested, not as frequently requested and not very frequently requested excerpt lists.

Chapter Ten is a discussion of the most frequently requested orchestra excerpts as well as provides the reader with French horn methodologies and techniques to use in order to help them prepare.

1.2 Personal Experience

When I started graduate school, I had every intention of doing my thesis on music education with young children. While submitting my music education proposal, I had the opportunity to work with the French horn players in York University's Symphony Orchestra. Though I had played in my previous university's Wind Symphony and Ensemble, I never had the opportunity to take on a leadership role. While working with the undergraduate horns at York University, I began to help them prepare auditions for symphonies within the Toronto community. As an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, I was given the chance to be a teaching assistant in my private professor's French Horn for Music Education Majors class and gained valuable knowledge about teaching a beginner horn student. Having worked with the undergraduate horn students, I realized that my passion was for horn and guiding students in horn performance. Having never helped students at the University level with their horn playing, I had to not only perfect my own sound but also learn the music the students needed to learn. Learning excerpts was never a focus of my private lessons with my horn professor and I wanted to make sure that the undergraduates' excerpts were properly prepared. Teaching the excerpts to the undergraduate horns allowed me to explore not only how to teach the excerpts but how to play the excerpts.

After completing my undergraduate degree, I did not continue my horn lessons but continued to play and perform in various musical settings. I often found myself turning to excerpt books, journal articles, and the internet when in doubt about a musical excerpt or phrase. I often found myself listening to YouTube recordings but never found the answer to my very technical or specific questions.

There are many different excerpt books that are edited and compiled by many different experts. The fundamental principle behind an excerpt book is to provide the most common solo passages for the given instrument and compile them into one resource. Some books are general music excerpt books, while others have specific focuses, such as opera excerpts. Regardless, each book is written with a specific instrument in mind. One of the main motivations for this study is to clarify and contextualize the excerpts found in these books. Too often these books take a passage out of context and provide little or no evidence of what the rest of the orchestra is playing. For an undergraduate student candidate auditioning for the first time, the lack of comprehensiveness could be confusing and discouraging. In order to successfully play an excerpt, the candidate must be able to add the correct articulation markings, incorporate dynamic markings, understand where to breathe in a phrase and understand what else is happening musically in the rest of the orchestra.

While completing my undergraduate degree I found myself in rehearsals and lessons for at least six to seven hours a day. During that time, I would be sitting on a chair holding my French horn. Like most musicians, I would rehearse and rehearse and rehearse to become the best musician possible. The repetitiveness of practice and absence of other activities eventually took its toll on my body. After three years of unrelenting dedication to practice I unfortunately, developed arthritis in three fingers on my left hand and began to experience back pain which was diagnosed as a compressed disc. I was forced to reduce my practice time at a time when I was nearing my third-year recital and jury. This damaged my mental health and caused a temporary downward spiral, mentally. While healing from the injury I made it my goal to not only better my horn playing but to better my overall physical and mental health by exercising, stretching,

and meditating on a daily basis. Since my recovery, it has been my personal goal to make sure that other musicians, mostly horn players, do not go through the same experience that I did.

1.3 Methodology

The main target group of the research will be young players, students graduating from their undergraduate degrees, or young performers who are just starting out their careers in the world of professional orchestra playing. In addition to the young performers there are semi-professional or amateur players who are trained in another field and play music for their own enjoyment.

An important part of this study has been the compilation of a list of excerpts from the orchestral repertoire that occurred most frequently in the surveyed orchestras. In order to acquire this data, e-mails were sent out to the administrations of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Symphony Nova Scotia, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Victoria Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company, the National Ballet of Canada, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Philadelphia Orchestra in an effort to obtain excerpts that would be needed to audition for the principal French horn position in the mentioned orchestras. Excerpts found through the International Horn Society are also represented in this study. After polling and collecting the data, excerpts were sorted into three groups: the most frequently requested, occasionally requested and rarely requested. Books and articles regarding stylistic choices, articulations variances, length of notes are also included within this research study. In addition to the expert opinions, I have also included my own personal experience to aid in evaluating the excerpts.

CHAPTER II: PHYSICAL PREPARATION FOR AUDITIONS

2.1 Basic Physical Health and Stretching

Before preparing for a horn audition, it is recommended the candidate must be in good physical health. Eating nutritiously is imperative but so is taking proper care of one's body physically. Auditions are very strenuous on both the mind and the body, and the candidate must train to play their best during these times of high anxiety. In *Auditions - The Mind Game*, Larry Snider states that exercise is a crucial part of the physical preparation needed in order to perform well at an audition.¹ During an audition, the heart rate may increase by fifteen to twenty percent. Under such stress, it is imperative that a candidate's body become accustomed to an elevated heart rate. By doing so, the candidate will be able to produce better results. According to Howard LeWine at the Harvard Medical School, by maintaining a moderate exercise routine, an individual's resting heart rate will drop incrementally, and so too the elevated heart rate as the benefits of physical conditioning and cardio-activity are experienced in all activities throughout the day.² The calmer one stays, the more successful one will be able exercise control over fine motor skills. This is crucial during a horn audition where one needs to be able to use one's fine and gross skills in order to successfully play their instrument. A lack of muscle control or coordination will be mitigated by a healthier and lower heart rate.

Warming up the muscles in the body is just as important as warming up the muscles in the face. Before a runner goes to run a race, the runner will warm up not only the leg muscles, but all of the corresponding muscles for optimum performance. A runner would never just start running a marathon race and hope that no injuries happen because of the tight muscles. The same

¹Snider. *Auditions- the mind game*. 49.

² "Stretches that every Musician Should Do Before They Play, "<https://internationalmusician.org/stretch-es-that-every-musician-should-do-before-playing/>, (January 4, 2019)

would apply to a musician warming up their body. For the candidate to play at quick speeds, the muscles themselves need to be stretched. The human body was born to move. Being motionless (like while holding an instrument) is strenuous on the body. Muscles can often tighten, and blood flow is impaired. Static positions make the muscles in the body become tired faster, leading to injury.³ The following exercises are taken from the *International Journal of the American Federation of Musicians*, though not specifically for horn, the following exercises can be used to help a candidate specifically preparing for a horn audition, prevent injury.⁴

2.2 Specific Exercises

The exercises that have been selected are for the neck, the shoulder, the arms, and the back/ spine. Each set of exercises, when used regularly, will reduce the probability of injury and aid in performance. Stretching the neck is critical as most horn players must keep their necks still during a performance. To reduce neck strains and headaches the following exercises are recommended. Sitting with a straight spine and an erect head, tuck in the chin gently while keeping the shoulders relaxed. Take turns rotating the head from the left to the centre to the right. Repeat as many times as needed. To stretch the shoulders, take a deep breath while bringing the shoulders to the ears. Do one big shoulder circle. Bring the shoulders forward, then up toward the ears and then back, opening the chest, and then relax bringing the shoulders to a normal position. Repeat, reversing the direction of the circle. While keeping your shoulders down, squeeze the shoulder blades together. For the arms, place the arms uncurled and elevated by the sides of the body. While keeping elbows straight, turn the palms outwards, slowly turn the palms inwards, as if flipping a pancake. Repeat as many times as needed. For back/spine stretching,

³ “Stretches that every Musician Should Do Before They Play,” <https://internationalmusician.org/stretches-that-every-musician-should-do-before-playing/>, (January 4, 2019)

⁴ “Stretches that every Musician Should Do Before They Play,” <https://internationalmusician.org/stretches-that-every-musician-should-do-before-playing/>, (January 4, 2019)

take a deep breath in and exhale while contracting the abdomen. While releasing the abdomen, roll the pelvis forward and back. Press the lumbar spine backward and then into natural position. Rock the glutes from side to side. Repeat as many times as needed. It is important to stretch all the muscles that are needed in order to hold up and properly play the horn. Regular application of these exercises will prevent injuries that could emerge during practice, especially during strenuous practice prior to an audition.

CHAPTER III: WARM-UP EXERCISES AND PROCEDURES

“The foundation of a performer’s musicianship and technical proficiency is practice Upon the quality and quantity of this practice depends his entire success” - Philip Farkas⁵

3.1 Practice Warm-up Strategies

The Art of Playing French Horn, by Philip Farkas explores the critical role of the warm up process prior to playing etudes, solos and excerpts.⁶ Farkas states that the purpose of warming up is to loosen and limber up the lip muscles that become stiff. He claims that a daily warm-up has a six-fold purpose: to awaken the embouchure so that it remains strong, to review fundamental playing techniques, to emphasize lip technique, to develop deep breathing, to achieve and maintain a beautiful “F Horn” sound and finally, to maintain a player’s proficiency. Farkas also recommends that the warmup should happen at the same time every day, should be as early in the day as possible and should last twenty to thirty minutes. He further explains that every warmup should have a pre-warm up to exercise the lips, followed by a legato section then a staccato section. The legato section must be finished before moving on to the staccato section.

Similarly, John Ericson and Bruce Hembd articulate a very similar warm up strategy.

⁷*Horn Matters* is the leading online resource on the French horn and was co-founded by John Ericson and Bruce Hembd. This website provides both students, audition candidates, teachers and professors with an all-inclusive resource to scholarly horn information. Ericson and Hembd provide the reader with a list of various technical exercises and warm-ups that an aspiring horn player should include in their day-to-day playing. Similar to Farkas, Ericson and Hembd suggest a preliminary warm- up to the warm-up. After the pre-warm up, Ericson and Hembd move on to

⁵ “Stretches that every Musician Should Do Before They Play, ”<https://internationalmusician.org/stretches-that-every-musician-should-do-before-playing/>, (January 4, 2019)

⁶ Farkas, *The Art of French Horn Playing*. 10-50.

⁷ John Ericson and Bruce Hembd, “Warm-Up Exercises for French Horn” <http://hornmatters.com/>(January 4, 2019).

a legato warm-up and then staccato warm-up, with an emphasize on warming up the tongue before warming up the fingers. All three men agree that the warm-up should last twenty to thirty minutes.

Some teachers and professionals advocate buzzing on the mouthpiece before even playing the instrument. This is a good technique for beginner players or players who prefer this type of pre-warm up. Generally, players who warm up on the mouthpiece use it as a pre-warm up and dismiss other pre-warm up exercises. Mouthpiece buzzing is good for creating resistance without having to hold up the entire instrument – this pre-warm up helps a player focus on hitting the correct pitches without the help of the valves.

As previously mentioned, there is no one warm-up that suits every horn player. Horn players will often map specific warm up exercises to meet specific and often, changing needs. With that in mind, delineated below is an all-encompassing French horn warm up with different warm up options for the pre-warm up, the legato warm up and the staccato warm up. The following exercises are taken from Farkas, Ericson, Hembd and other notable French horn performers and players. The purpose of the French horn warm up routine is to provide a candidate with a warm-up that aids in a successful audition.

3.2 Pre-Warm-up Exercises

The first pre-warm up is taken from *The Art of French Horn Playing*⁸. Even though the example below demonstrates three octaves, this pattern should be used up until the horn reaches high C on the F horn. After each group of notes is played, the mouthpiece is lifted off the lips. The objective of this exercise is absolute accuracy of attacks and focused tone. It is critical when

⁸ Farkas, The Art of French Horn Playing. 10-50.

prepping for a horn audition that every note is practiced and performed accurately and in the center of the note to show clarity and control over the instrument.



Figure 1: Farkas' Pre-Warm-up Exercise⁹

The second exercise is taken from Ericson's warm up routine found on *Horn Matters*.⁹ The purpose of the second exercise is to act as a long tone exercise to get the lungs warmed up. The tuning must be accurate and breadth support is imperative.



Figure 2: Ericson's Low Note Warm-up Exercise 1¹⁰

⁹ Ericson "Warm-Up Exercises for French Horn" <http://hornmatters.com/>

¹⁰ *ibid.*

The third exercise is taken from Ericson's warm up routine found on *Horn Matters*.¹⁰ The purpose of this third exercise, unlike the first two, is to find the center of the pitch. Many horn players have problem areas in the range between middle and low C. Weak notes can be a significant problem to the smooth execution of a phrase in this particular range. The objective of the exercise is to strengthen tone quality in the lower range.

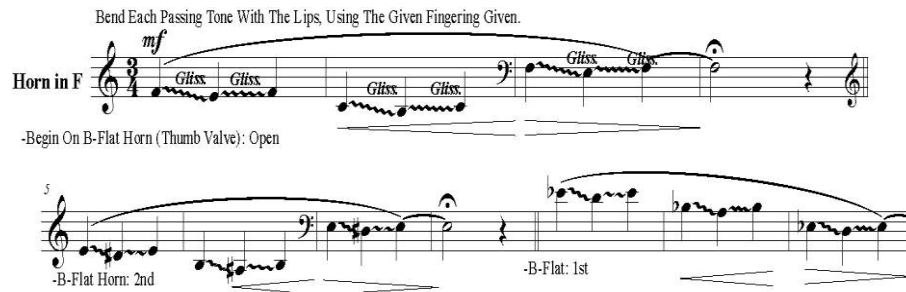


Figure 3: Ericson's Low Note Warm-up Exercise 2¹¹

3.4 Legato Exercises

The first legato warm up is taken from Louis Stout, a former horn professor from the University of Michigan School of Music. The exercise is named "Beefers".¹² The objective of *Beefers* is for a horn player to hear the notes in the harmonic series and to make sure that they are starting on the correct note. Often when a horn player becomes nervous, they will play an incorrect overtone. The goal of "Beefers" is to avoid an incorrect overtone from being played.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

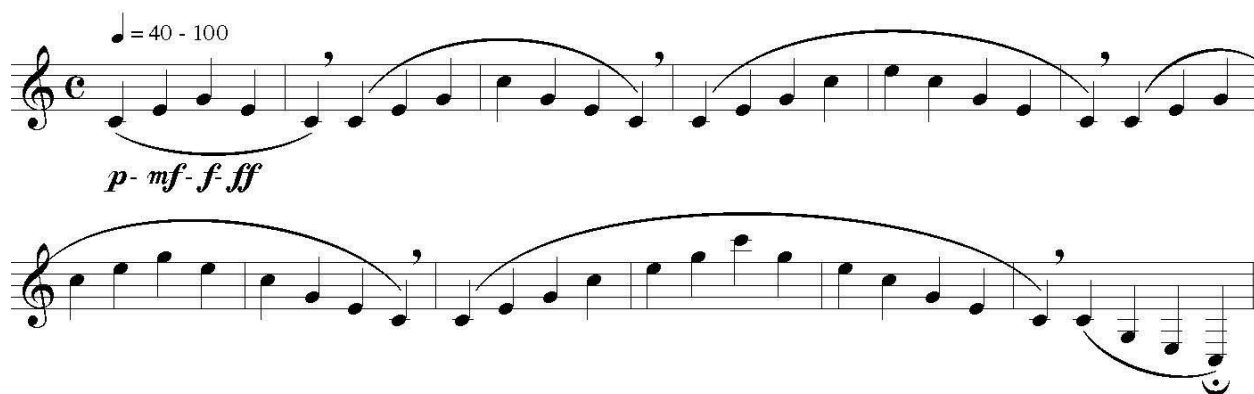


Figure 4: Stout's "Beefers" Legato warm-up¹³

The second legato warm up is taken from *The Art of French Horn Playing*.¹³ The objective of the warm up is to create smoothness in an unforced tone, while maintaining the same volume through all three octaves. This warm up can be done on the F horn with the combinations of open, 1st valve, 2nd valve, 1st and 2nd valves, and 2nd and 3rd valves. The ability to play at an even volume through three octaves is necessary in all French horn audition excerpts.

♩ = 76 - 176 As Skill Allows. Resist Exaggerating The Last Note. Let The Notes Rise & Fall Into Place - Resist A Forced Lip Slur.

Horn in F

- Start on B-Flat Horn: Open (w/Thumb) - 2nd Valve (w/Thumb)

- 1st Valve - 1+2 Valve Combo

- 2+3 Valve Combo - Switch to Open F Horn

Figure 5: Farkas' Legato Warm-up Exercise¹⁴

¹³Farkas, *The Art of French Horn Playing*. 10-50.

¹⁴Farkas, *The Art of French Horn Playing*. 10-50.

3.5 Staccato Exercises

The final exercise is the staccato warm-up. Taken from *The Art of French Horn Playing*, the objective is to obtain a clean staccato note with lightness, rhythm and evenness of volume for all three octaves.¹⁵ By the time a horn player is auditioning for orchestras, it is expected that the candidate is able to achieve a clean staccato sound. However, daily practice can help perfect this technique.

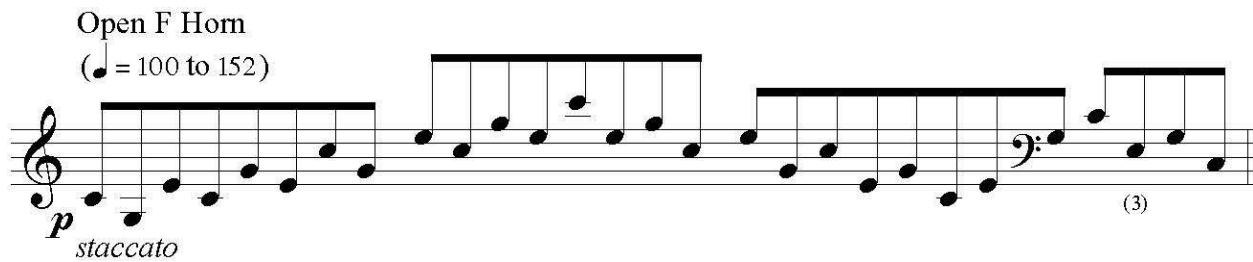


Figure 6: Farkas' Staccato Warm-up Exercise¹⁶

3.6 Summary

All the exercises serve as guidelines for a candidate to physically prepare for an audition. The warm-up routines can be adapted to suit the needs of the candidate auditioning. Different French horn warm-ups can be substituted for any of the warm-ups in the pre-legato and staccato warm up. Additionally, mouthpiece buzzing can be added if the candidate so wishes. It is important to note that warm up routines should be integrated into every player's practice, from the novice to the professional. The earlier warm-ups are integrated into a player's practice the more quickly the player will realize the benefits, especially during a high stress, performance on demand, audition.

¹⁵Farkas, *The Art of French Horn Playing*. 10-50.

¹⁶ Farkas, *The Art of French Horn Playing*. 10-50.

CHAPTER IV: MENTAL PREPARATION

“We are born fearless; we learn to fear” - Jeff Nelson

In the music world, mental preparation is an aspect of performance that is often overlooked. Too often teachers profess to students that there is no need to worry and that their anxiety and fear is all in their heads. This assumption implies that students simply need to stop thinking about the source of their anxiety, and by doing so, their anxiety will magically evaporate. Such a strategy is flawed and ineffective. Failure to teach an effective “tool bag” of destressing strategies to ease anxiety quite often leads to struggles with anxiety and fear far beyond the undergraduate years. Too often, this “scared feeling” can lead to performance stress and anxiety for orchestra audition candidates, with very few or no coping strategies. Occasionally, the “scared feeling” can be so severe that it can be classified as performance anxiety.

Jeff Nelson, a professor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, has developed a concept known in the horn community as “Fearless Performance”.¹⁷ The concept “Fearless Performance” was developed by Nelson in order to help students at Indiana University succeed in performance situations. “Fearless Performance” is broken down into five key concepts. The first concept is “born fearless, learn to fear”. Nelson believes that when performing the performer should make what they are doing the only thing that matters. The performer should not care about their surroundings or what is going on with the other performers or candidates. The second concept is “Fear is a choice in Performance”. Nelson believes that the performer has the ability to control their perception of the performance. Awareness of the audience makes the performer nervous. During a presentation, Nelson asked his audience, if they would feel nervous playing in

¹⁷ Nelson, "Fearless Performance by Jeff Nelson."

front of a three-year-old child. The audience responds, “No”. He then further tells a story about himself practicing alone in his living room. He played for about half an hour and then he heard a sneeze. He realized someone was sitting in his practice room watching him, and then he started to get nervous. But the person had been listening to him play for the past half hour. In both cases, the audience itself does not make the performer nervous but rather it is the performer’s awareness and, by extension, their worry about their critical listening.

The third concept is “You can’t control perception, you can only control presentation”. Nelson is aware that a performer has no control over whether an audience likes what the performer is playing, but the performer has control over how he/she can perform the music. If a performer stays calm and maintains proper playing abilities, the performer will be much happier with what is produced.

The fourth concept is “Be creative, find ways to fool yourself”. In order to be a successful performer, Nelson recommends employing a solutions-based approach as well as performing often, instead of festering on the fear of performing. The last concept is “Share your stuff”. If a performer can focus on a reason as to why they are performing rather than on the fact that they are performing, the performer might feel a bit more at ease. Nelson highlights that by believing one is sharing the music he/she is playing with an audience the performer can feel more confident and comfortable during the performance. This is a strategy he employs with great success – in fact, he credits it, in part, for his musical success.

In contrast to Nelson’s approach, John Ericson in *Fearless Optimism-Orchestra 101* states that there are two different types of French horn players at French horn auditions.¹⁸ The first type of horn player is what he calls the confident horn player. With the confident horn

¹⁸ Ericson, John. *Orchestra 101: Audition Preparation and an Introduction to Professional Orchestral Performance*.

player, failure does not phase them. They just keep on going. He identifies this performer as the “fearless”. Ericson believes that a “fearless” approach is applicable to both horn playing and to life, and typically these individuals are confident in both. The second type of horn player is the persistently optimistic player. In spite of low odds, this horn player sticks with their music, and their failure and problems are often forgotten. Ericson firmly states that there is no way to package and market optimism, and it is harder to teach than the horn itself. Ericson goes as far as to say that confidence can be learned, but a performer almost needs to be born with internal optimism. Fearlessness, in Ericson’s opinion, is fake, manufactured and the opposite of pessimism. Optimism and encouragement should remain the centre of a horn players’ focus, regardless of negatives. Ericson also believes a very big part of mental preparation for horn playing is simply doing one’s best. He tells his students not to live by the rankings but to do their best regardless of circumstance and ability.

Malina Finch Kleucker takes an approach that is sharply different [than] Nelsons’ and Ericson’s. In her article *The W-I-N-N-E-R Approach to Auditioning*,¹⁹ Kleucker articulates a concept to help a performer prepare mentally for an audition:

Warm-up thoroughly before the audition

Intense concentration is key, do not let anything distract you

Notice all aspects of Music- tempo, dynamics, rhythm, articulation

Negativism leads inevitably to defeat

Extra energy can be created from nervousness, be prepared

Relax all your muscles and take a few deep breaths before you start to play

¹⁹ Kleucker, “Approach to Auditions.”

The W-I-N-N-E-R approach provides a solid audition preparation guide for horn players. Warming up thoroughly before an audition is good for both the lips and the mind. After the warm-up, the mind is often calmer because of the deep breathes needed for long tones and slow air flow warm-ups. Intense concentration before and during an audition is critical. Often times, if a candidate is busy talking or focusing on another candidate's warm-ups before the audition, they lose a sense of direction and their mind can wander to negative thoughts about their own playing. During an audition it is important to stay focused in order to achieve an optimal sound. The first N in W-I-N-N-E-R does not directly apply to mental preparedness and, consequently, and will be discussed later in the thesis. The second N, though, is very important. Negative self-talk will lead to defeat! If a candidate tells themselves that they cannot do it, they WILL not be able to do it. The candidate must believe in his/herself in order for the audition committee to believe. Nervousness creates extra energy, this extra energy can be used for good, like keeping the performer on their toes, or for bad, like taking a tempo too quickly. Relaxing before entering the audition room is key. Deep breaths and positive thoughts will help a candidate remain calm.

Furthermore, Kleucker states that visualization and practicing getting nervous and distracted are the two keys to defeating nervousness. Athletes who strive for optimal performance use the technique of visualization before and during games. Kleucker explains visualization by asking the reader to think of a place when they felt calm and happy. Anytime a feeling of nervousness occurs, the performer is supposed to visualize this calm and happy place. This idea of visualization is meant to relax the body and build up self-esteem. In order to recreate the performance experience, Kleucker suggests practicing in front of other people and getting accustomed to the physical sensations of being nervous. If a candidate is mentally and physically aware of what being nervous feels like, they will be better prepared to handle the

surge of adrenaline. She recommends simulating an audition and getting use to the distractions of the audition itself. She also recommends practicing both indoors and outdoors in order achieve visualizing for every performance situation.

Like Kleucker, William VerMeulen in *Audition Success* proposes an approach to mental preparedness upon which visualization is a prominent component.²⁰ VerMeulen believes that every performer should begin their practice sessions, auditions and performances by telling themselves “I feel strong, I feel confident, I feel relaxed.” As a professor, VerMeulen often has undergraduate and graduate students envision attending their favourite classical music concert. Then he has the student visualize that they are one of the musicians performing at the concert. Then he has the student go back to be an audience member and so on. He finds that this technique can help ease a nervous mind leading up to a performance or an audition. VerMeulen also places a strong emphasis on affirmation cards. By his definition, affirmation cards are index or rolodex cards that have positive sayings on them. Whenever a student feels nervous, the student can take out a card and read it aloud to him/herself. VerMeulen’s example of a good positive message to write on the card would be: “I am relaxed and confident in performance.... and an audition is performance.”

Though not a horn professor, tuba player, Gene Pokorny provides orchestral playing advice in his article *Gene Pokorny: Audition Advice*.²¹ Though much of his insight is focused on tuba technique, he makes a great point when it comes to becoming a successful musician and performer. Pokorny believes that in order to be successful, musicians must nurture their lives both physically and mentally. He describes a musician as a human who also happens to be a musician, not a musician who happens to be a human. If a musician does not take care of their

²⁰ VerMeulen. “Audition Success: A Pedagogical Approach.”

²¹ Ibid.

“human” needs, both physically and mentally, the musician will not be able to play and perform with confidence, fulfillment and, ultimately, with a high degree of success.

CHAPTER V: PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Thus far, emphasis has been placed on examining a range of theories and strategies that can be employed by a horn instructor and a horn performer to aid in the preparation of horn auditions and performances. A critically important dimension of mental preparation that has not been explored relates to a psychological state of being that most musicians at one time or another will experience – the frightening and paralyzing condition known as performance anxiety.²² The primary reason performance anxiety has not been mentioned is because it is not included in any of the above research. Performance anxiety is not a curse and it is not permanent. Performance anxiety can be treated with the help of an instructor who is understanding and willing to help the student. However, in most cases it is up to the student to understand the anxiety and to focus on dealing with the psychological, emotional and physical impacts it can have prior to a performance.

In the article, *Music Performance Anxiety in Classical Musicians – What We Know about What Works*, Raluca Metei and Jane Ginsborg explore how music performance anxiety can impact the classical musician.²³ Music performance anxiety (MPA) is a complex phenomenon caused by the interaction of many factors, including genetics, environmental stimuli and the individual's experiences, emotions, cognition and behaviours. It manifests via three elements, independent to varying extents: cognitions, autonomic arousal and behaviors. According to the American Psychiatric Association, MPA is connected to Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD).²⁴ SAD is a persistence fear, anxiety or avoidance of an activity for at least six months. SAD impairs social,

²² Ibid.

²³ Matei, Raluca, and Ginsborg. "Music Performance Anxiety in Classical Musicians - What We Know about What Works."

²⁴ *ibid.*

occupational and general functioning. Although there are correlations between MPA and certain aspects of SAD, such as the fear of negative evaluations and the perceived exaggerated consequences of such evaluations, particularly in solo performance, their interactions remain unclear²⁵.

The Yerkes–Dodson law is an empirical relationship between arousal and performance, originally developed by psychologists Robert M. Yerkes and John Dillingham Dodson in 1908.²⁶ According to the law, there are three sources of stress that interact differently in individuals: trait anxiety (a personality characteristic), situational stress (in public performance, auditions, etc.) and task mastery (in the context of both undemanding, rehearsed material and complex, largely unknown works). According to this law, MPA is likely to decrease as a musician becomes more familiar with the work they are performing.

MPA has been shown to effect memory in musicians. The term “choking” is often used to explain a performers inability to recall the notes of the music they are performing. Scientifically speaking, “choking” is “performance impairment caused by excessive psychological pressure: distraction and explicit monitoring.”²⁷ Distraction does not allow “attentional resources” to work efficiently as working memory is preoccupied by worries rather than on the task at hand, namely performing. There is a difference, however, between underperforming and “choking”. Unfortunately, the difference between the two is not explored by the author.

There are many coping strategies for MPA that are similar to the strategies listed in the previous chapter. The strategies include deep breathing, positive self-talk, mock performances

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Fishbein M., Middlestadt S. E., Ottati V., et al. (1988) Medical problems among ICSOM musicians., 1–8

and visualization. The coping method that has not been mentioned is the use of medication, including drugs and alcohol. The main medication used for the treatment of MPA is propranolol or other beta-blockers. The next common method is alcohol, followed by anxiolytics and anti-depressants.²⁸ Research shows that unproductive coping strategies are a direct link to performance anxiety. For a performer to be successful in overcoming performance anxiety, the performer must be in control of their mind. Psychological skill training has been used in sports for over five decades but is rarely used with musicians. Such training could help musicians mentally prepare themselves for an audition.²⁹

²⁸ Thomas and Nettelbeck, *Performance anxiety in adolescent musicians*. 624–634.

²⁹ I would like to conclude this chapter with a personal anecdote regarding performance anxiety. Like too many other performers, I too am a victim of performance anxiety. It first manifested itself when I was a beginner performer. My performance anxiety would present itself in this way. My Fitbit would often serve as my early warning system. My Fitbit is set to go off if my heart rate exceeds 110 in non-exercise mode. When preparing to perform in the green room, my Fitbit would suddenly start beeping loudly alarming everyone in the room, including myself. I would then start to shake uncontrollably. I would feel freezing cold and my hands would become clammy. I would not be able to hold up my horn nor be able to play a coherent melody. This would typically happen about half an hour before an audition, performance or a lesson with a new teacher. I tried to repeat a mantra, “You are not panicking, and you are not experiencing performance anxiety.” All this did was make things worse. I used many strategies noted earlier such as deep breaths and visualization. All I ended up doing was hyperventilating and visualizing myself throwing up all over the stage. I would also try positive self-talk. All that did was convince me I could not succeed. I would eventually start to seriously doubt myself and then start questioning myself: “Maybe I was not cut out to be a performer? Maybe it was time for me to give up and go back to school to be a nurse? Why are you such a loser?”

My anxiety issues only increased as an undergraduate student. It was at this time that I sought guidance from my horn professor. He did not take my anxiety seriously. He believed that practicing visualization once or twice would resolve my anxiety issues, and that is exactly what we did. When completed he felt I was good to go. Boy was he wrong! I was not ready to go; I was nowhere near ready to go!

It was not until I began taking piano lessons with Jelena Cingara, a DMA graduate from the University of Utah, that I really began to practice mentally preparing for my auditions and recitals. Yes, they were piano lessons, however, mental practice is mental practice. I consistently practiced my mental preparation and it paid off during my next horn audition. I walked into the room, I took deep breaths, I visualized myself walking down the aisle on my wedding day, I told myself not only could I do it, but I believed I could.

My personal experience with performance anxiety is a testament to the fact that it can be overcome, and that the strategies noted above can be effective in helping deflate the hold anxiety has on a musician prior to a performance or audition. Or perhaps the coping strategies presented earlier on in this chapter need to be practiced as part of the practice routine in order to avoid a situation where I could not contain my anxiety.

CHAPTER VI: CANDIDATE EXPECTATIONS

In order to be successful in the audition preparation process and the audition itself, it is critical that the candidates understand what is expected of them. From sending a résumé to the orchestra that is hiring to the audition itself and every step in between, candidates must be meticulous, purposeful and professional. Candidates must recognize the critical importance of providing a good résumé as well as letters of recommendation, providing the audition committee with a quality video or audio recording of the candidate playing, understanding what is expected during each round of the audition process, preparing solo repertoire and preparing the audition excerpts.

6.1 Resume

Often the importance of providing a resume and a letter of recommendations to an orchestra is not seen as an important part of the audition process. All scholarly articles written on horn auditions strongly recommend sending in the resume as soon as the audition postings go up in order to secure a spot on the audition roster. Kleucker advises a horn player lacking professional orchestra experience to include a couple of letters of recommendation along with the resume.³⁰ Both Kleucker and Pokorny suggests that the audition process actually begins with the resume, as it is often the first impression that an audition committee will have of the performer.³¹ The resume must be typed, organized, truthful and professionally written and presented – this includes being error free. The resume should include professional orchestra experience, the names of important or notable instructors, competition experience, education and, if applicable prizes and awards.

³⁰ Kleucker, "Approach to Auditions," *The Horn call*, 23, no.1 (1992): 80-84

³¹ Gene Pokorny, "Gene Pokorny Audition Advice", www.tubaeuph.com, under tuba articles, <http://www.dwerden.com/tu-articles-pokorny-audition.cfm> (

6.2 Screening Process

If an audition committee finds that a candidate's resume is appealing and reveals skill, knowledge and ability that maps to the position advertised, the committee will contact the candidate. At this point, the candidate needs to prepare and submit an audio or audio-visual recording to aid in the committee's screening process. This step will not be required for every single orchestra but for most of the it is a must.³² The screening of audio or visual tapes by an audition committee expedites the screening process and aids in time management. The next step for the candidate would be to find out what material is needed for the audition (scores, excerpts and possibly performing with the ensemble). Studying the scores and listening to recordings of various orchestras playing the audition pieces is useful and informative. If the candidate can find an audio recording of the orchestra playing required, it can help the candidate understand and perfect the desired sound. When listening to the recordings, the candidate should pay attention to the dynamics used as well acquire a general understanding of the tempos. Some research concludes that the candidate should try to imitate the sound of the horn players in the orchestra for which they are auditioning.³³

However, based on my experience teaching French horn to University level students, the more the student tried to sound like a horn player they heard online, the more unnatural the student's sound became. I would modestly suggest that a horn player should audition using their natural sound, that way, if they get the position, they will not have to alter their sound too dramatically.

³² Agrell and Pugh, "Horns Auditions: United States Orchestras,"

³³ Agrell and Pugh, "Horns Auditions: United States Orchestras,"

6.3 Audition Materials

When looking for the sheet music of the excerpts, Thompson recommends finding the orchestral repertoire from the original score.³⁴ Although Thompson is absolutely right, it must be noted that excerpt books are notorious for inaccuracies, omitting important passages as well as omitting standard excerpts that are often used.⁵ Thompson notes that in works from the early classical and baroque eras articulations and dynamic markings are primarily those of the editors and not those of the original composer. Furthermore, Stravinsky revised his most popular works which makes it vitally important for the candidate to locate the correct score and the correct excerpt to maximize audition success.

6.4 Performance Expectations

Learning the music is the most important expectation of the candidate. The music must be completely learned at least a week before the audition. The days leading up to the audition are dedicated to fine tuning the music. The music needs to be played flawlessly the first time it is performed at an audition. The flawless performance is achieved through attention to detail and repetition. Thompson and Pizka both recommend memorizing the excerpts for an audition.³⁵ Other scholarly resources are more ambiguous regarding memorization and leave it up to the discretion of the horn player.

The tone quality and the distinct sound of the horn from various periods is important for a candidate to show during an audition. For instance, when playing a work by Ravel, the sound should be light versus the dramatic sounded needed when playing the bass aria from Bach's Mass in B minor. The sound should differ between performances of a Brahms symphony and one

³⁴Thompson. The Orchestral Audition Repertoire for Horn.

³⁵ Thompson. The Orchestral Audition Repertoire for Horn.

by Beethoven.³⁶ The player's ability to demonstrate the fluidity of tone and technique in an audition informs the audition committee that the candidate will be able to play a diverse program.

6.5 Audition Format

Once a candidate arrives for an audition for a North American orchestra, they will likely perform from behind a screen in the first and second rounds.³⁷ Blind auditions are used to minimize audition committee prejudice or discrimination. The use of multiple rounds helps the committee better determine which candidates have the best sound for the position. The first round of an audition is frequently the solo portion. As part of the audition requirements, the candidate is asked to prepare and perform a solo from the list provided by the orchestra. The two solo works that are quite common on orchestra lists are a W. A. Mozart or Richard Strauss concerto.³⁸ After the committee hears all of the solos, typically half to two thirds of the candidates are eliminated. Like the first round, the second round of the audition usually happens from behind the screen. A piece is given to the horn players allowing the candidates to show their abilities and interpretation of a piece. The committee will typically eliminate another half of the remaining candidates, leaving the remaining candidates to participate in the semi-finals. The audition candidates will come out from behind the screen for the semi-finals, and the majority of the orchestra repertoire and excerpts will be heard. It is important for the candidate to understand the specific horn chair for which they are auditioning, as the requirements and audition excerpts are very different for each of the four horn seats.³⁹

³⁶ Pizka, "Auditions—Or Maximum Stress?" *The Horn Call*, 30, no.3 (2000):37

³⁷ Manfredi, Guglielmo. (2011). "Perspectives on Auditioning: An Examination of Professional Horn Players on Auditioning" Phd Dissertation. University of Miami. Open Access Dissertations. 635.

³⁸ Ericson, John. *Orchestra 101: Audition Preparation and an Introduction to Professional Orchestral Performance*.

³⁹ *ibid*.

6.6 Horn Chairs

The principal horn is the leader of the four horns and should capture the essence of the horn section. The qualities that an excellent principle horn would have are smoothness of sound, especially in the middle and high range of the instrument, good leadership qualities, a broad range of dynamics and the ability to play very technically demanding pieces on the instrument. The most important role the first horn plays, beyond being the most accomplished player, is to play all solo material and to inspire the horn section both musically and emotionally. Although this thesis provides examples of specific principal horn excerpts, many of the issues discussed in the thesis can be applied to the second, third, fourth and utility horn

CHAPTER VII: AUDITION COMMITTEE EXPECTATIONS

*“We should all strive to be musicians who play the horn, rather than horn players who happen to play music”*⁴⁰

7.1 Committee Make-up

Before discussing the expectations of the audition committee, it is useful understand the role of the audition committee, how it came to be and why it is important in modern day orchestra settings.

Decades ago, the maestro was given more control than today over determining who he/she believed was the right fit for the orchestra. Though there were positives to the total control, such as the maestro finding a musician who could be totally dedicated to the part or a very talented musician, audition committees were introduced in order to help orchestra auditions achieve fairness and equal opportunity to all members of the music community. The main goals of the audition committees are to eliminate discrimination, protect managers from lawsuits, and nonmusical considerations such as favoritism or sexism.⁴¹

For a french horn audition, the committee typically consists of the entire french horn section, other brass principals, concertmaster and assistant concertmaster, principal woodwinds, members of the string section, the conductor, assistant conductors, and sometimes even pianists.⁴² The committee is made up of a variety of different members of the orchestra in order help find the horn player most suited for the job.

⁴⁰ Manfredi, Guglielmo. (2011). "Perspectives on Auditioning: An Examination of Professional Horn Players on Auditioning" Phd Dissertation. University of Miami. Open Access Dissertations. 635.

⁴¹ Cerminaro, John. Spotlight on Auditions” The Audition System in America”.

⁴² Cerminaro, John. Spotlight on Auditions” The Audition System in America”.

7.2 Committee Expectations

Every source regarding the expectations of the audition committee agreed that rhythmic accuracy is the most critical aspect of preparing the horn excerpts. Often times, people in the committee might be conducting the excerpts or counting to make sure the candidate is holding the long notes correctly and counting through the rests accurately.⁴³ In his book *Orchestra 101*, John Ericson states that rhythm is the most important aspect in a horn audition and is often the biggest stumbling block. Committees can often forgive small flubs in earlier rounds but will not give a second chance for poor rhythms. He says, “a rhythmic problem is seen as being a problem that the candidate is probably not aware of and cannot fix.”⁴⁴ Similarly in Guglielmo Manfredi *Perspectives on Auditioning: An Examination of Professional Horn Players on Auditioning*,⁴⁵ Manfredi shares his own personal knowledge on audition committees. He believes that rhythmic accuracy is at the top of the list of importance for an audition, and all other aspects are secondary.

In *Views From the Other Side of the Screen*, Wall believes that rhythmic accuracy is just as important as tone and intonation, and that weakness in any of these areas can be grounds for dismissal.⁴⁶ Accuracy is a given, and is not mentioned at all in this article because it is implied that a horn candidate would have excellent accuracy in order to audition in the first place. Unlike Ericson, he believes that cracking or splitting notes is the worst mistake that a candidate could do

⁴³Gardner, Krehbiel, Wall, Williams. “Spotlight on Auditions: View from the other side of the Screen”

⁴⁴Ericson, John. *Orchestra 101: Audition Preparation and an Introduction to Professional Orchestral Performance*.

⁴⁵Manfredi, Guglielmo. (2011). "Perspectives on Auditioning: An Examination of Professional Horn Players on Auditioning" Phd Dissertation. University of Miami. Open Access Dissertations. 635.

⁴⁶Wall, Howard. “Views From the Other Side of the Screen,” *The Horn Call* 30, no.3 (2000):41

at an audition. While horn players on a committee might have a bit of empathy, other musicians do not have empathy or sympathy for the cracking or splitting of notes.

In contrast, in Shannon L. Armer's *The most common orchestral excerpts for the horn: a discussion of performance practice*, Armer uses her own life experience to help depict the expectations from a horn audition committee.⁴⁷ As part of various audition committees for horn auditions, Armer states that the most important aspect of french horn auditions is that of the player's ability to convince the committee that the player is completely in control of the instrument at all times. She believes that the quality of the sound, the uniformity of the player's sound, the utilization of the entire dynamic range, articulations and the ability to phrase correctly are what the audition committee are looking for in their ideal candidate.

Lastly, John Dressler, a well-known American horn professor, conducted a survey in which he observed what is required of a candidate at an audition.⁴⁸ Dressler surveyed 75 American and Canadian orchestras between the years of 1976 and 1979. He handed out surveys asking them questions concerning their audition procedures, excerpt lists and the solo repertoire they required. The orchestras which participated in the survey were: the Baltimore Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony. Dressler reports that these ensembles "described similar musical requirements including accuracy of pitch, intonation, relevancy and consistency of style, accuracy and steadiness of rhythm, and correct breathing

⁴⁷ Almer, Shannon. L. (2006) "The most common orchestral excerpts for the horn: a discussion of performance practice" Phd Dissertation. University of Pretoria, 2006, French Horn.

spots”⁴⁹. Furthermore, Dressler’s research found that in terms of technical issues, too many split notes, bad intonation and lack of rhythm were the most common issues. The research also found that often the horn candidates who put in extra time to understand more than just the correct notes, rhythms and counting of the pieces were the candidates who were successful.^{50 51}

⁴⁹ Almer, Shannon. L. (2006) “The most common orchestral excerpts for the horn: a discussion of performance practice” Phd Dissertation. University of Pretoria, 2006, French Horn.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ I have not had the pleasure of serving on any audition committees, however I have played for over ten auditions in my professional career and have helped various university students prepare for auditions in various orchestras. I have compiled a list of tips for a horn player auditioning for a professional orchestra based on my own personal observations of both my students and other candidates during auditions I was doing. The first tip is to empty the condensation *before* entering the audition room. Making a committee wait for a candidate to empty slides when they first sit down does not make a good impression. The second tip is that if the committee gives the candidate the option to repeat the excerpt, if the candidate chooses to repeat it they *must* play it better the second time! If the candidate performs it the same or worse, it will leave a bad impression on the committee. This next piece of advice is for people of all genders, but especially those who wear high heels. I recommend wearing comfortable clothing and flat soled shoes. Often, I find if my pants are too tight I cannot take in enough air, or if I wear a short skirt, I am uncomfortable sitting properly because I am worried about improper dress edict. Flat-soled shoes are important because high heels can be heard from behind the screen. Lastly, the audition committee is looking to see how a candidate can deal with the pressure of an audition. Try to maintain a relaxed posture and facial expressions both behind and in front of the screen.

CHAPTER VIII: ORCHESTRA EXCERPT BOOKS

“Virtually the entire orchestra audition repertoire for both high and low horn, reprinted from the original orchestra parts [which] have not been excerpted, cut, edited or otherwise adulterated.”

The Orchestral Audition Repertoire for Horn: Comprehensive and unabridged (1995).⁵²

7.1 Issues with Excerpt Books

Selections from orchestra excerpt books are a crucial part of a musician’s repertoire. As important as the books are to the preparation process, it is important that the musician builds upon the knowledge and information in the excerpts. They only show the musician part of what they need to know to completely play the excerpt. As mentioned in previous chapters, a candidate should not solely depend on just the excerpt books alone. Since every excerpt book is created at the discretion of the compiler and the editor, each excerpt book has different variations of excerpts and compositions. The passages within the excerpt books allow the candidate to explore their own musical options given their knowledge related to different performance practices. The compiler and editor of the excerpt books are aware that no excerpt will be played the same way twice and that the candidate should stay as close to the traditional way that the passage is typically played.

A problem that was encountered while researching this thesis was that the excerpts were inconsistent when comparing editions. Some of the books were shorter and left out various excerpts and pieces, including passages that are on the list of commonly requested excerpts from different orchestras. Some books provided excerpts for horn one through four, while others just included what the editor deemed to be the most important passages. Often, the horn four part was neglected in its entirety. It is crucial as a candidate to play or at least consult the complete

⁵² The Orchestral Audition Repertoire for Horn: Comprehensive and unabridged. 2005.

orchestra parts. Moreover, excerpt books don't consider that the horn is not always playing solo lines. The horn might be taking on the role of the accompanist, but the excerpts often do not take that into account.

Arthur Labar's *Horn Player: Audition Handbook* is one of the only compilations to include all four horn parts including all movements of the compositions in the excerpt book. The book includes forty-seven excerpts for horn. This is a very useful resource; however, it is very hard to read and play from. The book itself was hard to track down and was a bit more expensive than the other books available. It is published in a lightweight book, making it very convenient and portable while getting ready for an audition or to bring to a lesson. The fact that all of the forty-seven excerpts are in the same place is very convenient to a candidate.

In Daren Robbin's *Orchestral Horn Excerpts*, Robbins presents a selection of forty-six of the most common orchestral excerpts for horn. With the purchase of this book, the candidate is allowed access to recordings of the excerpts as performed by various orchestras. Robbins has also created a website (<http://www.hornexcerpts.org>) from which it is possible to download these pages and the accompanying recordings. The recordings are not complete, but the resource is still a solid excerpt passage book.

The last book that was used was a compilation of three editions of *The Horn Matters's PDF Excerpt E-Book* edited by John Ericsson. This was probably the most confusing of the three books, however, it highlighted the important parts of the excerpts. This excerpt book does not provide complete passages and it is often hard to determine the time signature and key signature of any given passage.

8.2 Articulation Variances throughout the Books

It is important for the player to understand and familiarize themselves with the length of notes and types of articulations necessary in a passage. Different articulations are often notated by different compilers and editors. Ultimately, it is up to the candidate to understand what articulation should be interpreted based on the stages of development of the horn and the time period that the piece was composed. It is important that the candidate shows a good understanding of the differences between staccato, slurred, portato, marcato, etc. The different accents must also be observed. The time period of the piece again helps the candidate understand the type of accent that should be used. For example, according to Almer, “the wedge-shaped accent (^) can be used in some works to denote added stress on a note, whereas a composer from a later time period may use this same marking to indicate that a note should be played very short. The more common accent mark (>) and the tenuto marking (-) must also be differentiated between”.⁵³

A good orchestra horn player will also use the score to help determine the dynamic markings that should be used in a passage. Often, if a horn passage is marked forte and is played in a softer sounding piece, the sound needs to be softer than indicated. This is the same for a piano dynamic in a heavier sounding section. A note played in tune will sound louder and fuller than an out of tune note.

When searching for a certain excerpt, the candidate must make sure that she/he is preparing the correct excerpt on the audition list. The most common orchestra works that get

⁵³ Almer, Shannon. L. (2006) “The most common orchestral excerpts for the horn: a discussion of performance practice” Phd Dissertation. University of Pretoria, 2006, French Horn.

confused are the symphonies of Dvořák.⁵⁴ If an orchestra asks to hear passages from the Fifth Symphony by The Orchestral Audition Repertoire for Horn: Comprehensive and unabridged, it would be a good idea for the candidate to confirm whether it is the Fifth Symphony as we know it today or whether it is the “New World Symphony” the Ninth Symphony – which they want to hear. In order for a player to make sure they are getting the correct sheet music; they must check the opus number. The opus number will always confirm which excerpt is needed for an audition.

⁵⁴ The symphonies of Dvořák were not published in their chronological order, rather renamed in a chronological way.

8.3 The Tuning of The Orchestra

It is important to make note of the fact that different orchestras tune to different frequency pitches. Even though A 440 is the most common tuning frequency, this is not the case with every orchestra.

Both the Philadelphia and Victoria Symphony Orchestras do not indicate a tuning frequency, so it is presumed that the orchestra is tuning to A=440. Knowing the tuning preference of the orchestra is important to know prior to the audition. Playing in an unfamiliar frequency is an important element of preparation. When under the pressure of an audition, the candidate might fall back into the old habits of their tuning. The chart below dictates the tuning in each of the major orchestras surveyed.

Orchestra	Tuning
Boston Symphony Orchestra	A=441
Chicago Symphony Orchestra	A=441
Cleveland Symphony Orchestra	A=440
Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra	A=442
Montreal Symphony Orchestra	A=442
New York Philharmonic Orchestra	A=442
Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra	UNKNOWN
San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	A=441
Toronto Symphony Orchestra	A=440
Victoria Symphony Orchestra	UNKNOWN

Figure 7: Orchestra Tuning chart

CHAPTER IX: DIFFERENT EXCERPT LISTS

9.1 Selection of Excerpts

The list of horn excerpts most commonly asked for at auditions was compiled by surveying the top major orchestras in Canada and the United States. E-mails were sent to the administration of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Symphony Nova Scotia, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Victoria Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company, the National Ballet of Canada, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Philadelphia Orchestra to request the excerpts that would be needed to audition for principal French horn. The orchestra submission included in this research were from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Victoria Symphony Orchestra.

For the purpose of this thesis, only the principal horn excerpts have been selected. Due to the nature, the historical development and the literature of the instrument, a slightly different approach and type of player is required for each of the four orchestral horn positions. As previously discussed, the principal horn acts as the leader of the horn section and is typically the strongest player both technically and musically in the high register. Even though the third position is the leader of the second pair of horns and is known for being another high horn, the third horn audition repertoire list is slightly different from the principal horn repertoire audition list. Both the second and forth horn concentrate on low horn with the second horn being the most

flexible horn in the whole section. The excerpt list for low horns are vastly different than the principal list and are therefore not included in the research.

9.2 Most frequently requested excerpts

Provided below is the list of the most common principal horn orchestra excerpt list. The order is alphabetical, not based on the frequency:

Symphony No.6- Beethoven (Entire symphony)

Symphony No.7- Beethoven (Entire symphony)

Symphony No.8- Beethoven (Entire symphony)

Symphony No. 2- Brahms (First and Second movement)

Symphony No.5 - Shostakovich (Entire symphony)

Ein Heldenleben- Strauss (Entire piece)

Till Eulenspiegel- Strauss (Entire piece)

Symphony No.5- Tchaikovsky (Entire symphony)

9.3 Less frequently requested excerpts.

The next list comprises the passages that were less popular but also asked for regularly. They are put in order based on their frequency in the principal horn repertoire audition list. The excerpts below would be important for a candidate to learn in addition to the most frequent excerpts in case one of these excerpts should appear on an orchestra audition list:

Pavane for a dead Princess- Ravel (Entire piece)

Piano Concerto in G Major - Ravel (Entire piece)

Brandenburg Concerto. No 1- Bach (Trio)

A Midsummer Night's Dream- Mendelsson (Second Movement)

Symphony No. 2 - Beethoven (Lent Movement)

Siegfried's Long Call- Wagner (Entire piece)

Symphony No.1- Brahms (Entire symphony)

Symphony No.4- Bruckner (Entire symphony)

Symphony No. 5- Mahler (Entire symphony)

Symphony No.9- Mahler (Entire symphony)

9.4 Least frequently requested excerpts.

This last list consists of other excerpts that have been found on audition lists but have been requested with much less frequency than those on the first two lists. There are excerpts on this list that were only on one excerpt list. The list provided below is a good resource for a university student learning excerpt lists or a professional player preparing multiple excerpts in practice for preparing for an audition. The order of the list is alphabetical:

Symphony no.9- Beethoven (Entire symphony)

Symphony no.3- Beethoven (Entire symphony)

Piano Concerto No.5- Beethoven (Entire piece)

Fidelio Overture- Beethoven (Entire piece)

Symphony no. 4- Mahler (Entire symphony)

Bolero- Ravel (Entire piece)

Daphis and Chole- Ravel (Entire piece)

Concerto pour Violoncelle no.1- Shostachovik (Entire piece)

Don Juan- Strauss (Entire piece)

CHAPTER X: DISCUSSION OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY REQUESTED EXCERPTS

For each of the more frequently requested excerpts, I have chosen sections which I find to be the most challenging, either technically, musically or both. Due to space limitation, I will focus on the following excerpts. All excerpts are written for horn in F unless otherwise stated.

10.1 Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5 Op. 47*

Symphony No.5 by Shostakovich is not played as often as the symphonies of Beethoven or Tchaikovsky, however the excerpt came up very frequently during the polling process. Symphony No. 5 was composed between April and July 1937.⁵⁵ In the first movement of the piece, there is a low passage that occurs in all four horn parts, including the principal horn. The passage is quite difficult for the whole horn section, but especially for the principal horn typically plays high horn.



Figure 8: Shostakovich Symphony No. 1 Excerpt 1⁵⁶

⁵⁵ "Shostakovich - Symphony No. 5 - IHS Online." <https://www.hornsociety.org/shostakovich/shosty5>.

⁵⁶ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

10.1.1 Discussion of the Excerpt

The passage above is written is what is known in the horn world as “old notation”. Old notation is indicated by the bass clef sign. Once the sign returns to the treble clef, the horn is in regular notation. For a candidate to play correctly in old notation, one must understand that the music is written an octave lower than it sounds. When looking at the low G in the first measure, the horn player would only be playing the G with two leger lines and a space in the treble clef below the staff.

In this excerpt, the candidate must provide a uniform sound throughout the transition from the low register up through the middle register to the high register. Though the dynamic that is called for at the beginning of the excerpt is a *forte*, the *forte* is quite unstable in the lower register, especially for a horn who has been focusing on high horn. In the fourth measure of the excerpt, a low c is written. Playing the low pedal tone C six measures after seventeen incorrectly is problematic, seeing as it is a minor third away from the Eb which occurred previous to it. Since all of the notes are written *forte* the tuning has the potential to run sharp, especially in the lower register.

In addition, three bars before rehearsal 19 marking, the horn begins an ascent towards the middle and higher registers. When playing low horn, a candidate is playing with a relaxed and looser embouchure. As the candidate is moving into the higher register, she/he must adjust their embouchure while keeping the flow and consistency of the music. This excerpt demands that a candidate has exceptionally good technical control, because the excerpt moves through four octaves in twenty-eight measures.

In the fourteenth measure, a *poco animando* (becoming livelier) is introduced. The phrasing and the breathing become critical at the *poco animando* to ensure that there are no

breaks in the sound and that the phrase comes across as one long line. The marking should be practiced prior to an audition to ensure proper intentions of the *poco animando*.

Figure 9: Shostakovich Symphony No. 1 Excerpt 2⁵⁷

It is important to note that the solo that begins three measures after 39 is a duet between solo flute and solo horn, and that it is extremely exposed in an orchestra setting. The candidate must play the notes legato, with clean slurs and no accents on the higher notes. The B half-note in the second measure of 40 and the following G-sharp tied through the first half of the fourth

⁵⁷ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

measure of 40 are traditionally played up the octave, not the octave below as the excerpt indicates.

When looking at proper breathing through the solo, I would advise against breathing before the high B, as it leaves too much room for error. However, as long as the notes have a clean attack and sound, breathing prior to the high B is acceptable.

10.1.2 Practice Suggestions

Mastering both excerpts from *Symphony No.5* is quite difficult, with the first excerpt being the most strenuous of the two. Most horn candidates struggle with the first excerpt, which is probably why it is included on most audition excerpt lists. According to Eli Epsetin, in order to properly prepare the excerpt, a candidate must have “new ways of thinking about articulation, air velocity, and the production of loud dynamics in a lower register.”⁵⁸

In order for a candidate to articulate properly in the lower register, it is recommended that the candidate says the word “thoh” (pronounced though). This is done by gently touching the tongue along the bottom edge of the two front teeth. When saying “thoh”, the candidates jaw will naturally drop and the oral cavity will open. This will allow the candidate to create a clear and warm note, while hitting the notes in the centre. The figure below is a good exercise to help a candidate practice the “thoh” articulation. Once this technique is mastered, the articulation can be applied to all of the low notes in the excerpt.

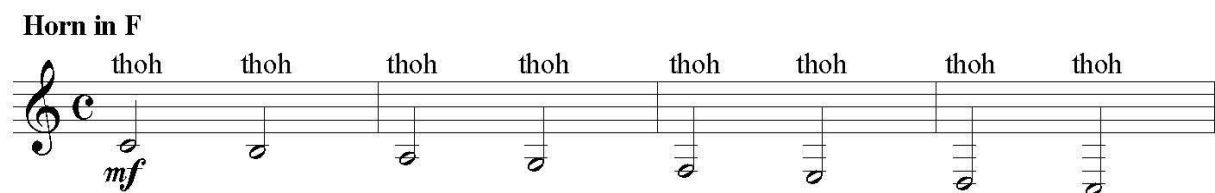


Figure 10: “Thoh” Articulation ⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Epsetin, Eli. "Tackling Shostakoch's Five." <https://www.hornsociety.org/publications>.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

Air velocity is the next component for low horn playing. In order to produce low notes on the horn, the air being blown by the horn player needs to be a lot slower. A good example that Epstein refers to is $A=440$. He says “is $A=440$ cycles per second, then the octave below would be $A=220$ cycles per second. The octave below is $A=110$ cycles per second.”⁶⁰ When playing two octaves down from $A=440$, the candidate needs to play with a much slower air velocity. Making this very small change requires a noticeable shift in air speed.

The final component is playing a loud dynamic in a low register. In order to achieve a full sound, a candidate should think of the louder dynamic as more intense, thicker air, instead of louder. A good visualization of this technique would be lava flowing slowly down a mountain side, slow moving, yet powerful.⁶¹ Below are two excerpts taken from Kopprasch *60 Etudes for Low Horn*. Etude No. 1 that might help the candidate to practice the “thoh” articulation while practicing phrasing, control over notes and breath control. Etude no. 32 can help the candidate transition from low to high horn while concentrating on setting the embouchure quickly from low to high.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*



Figure 11: Kopprasch 60 Etudes for Low Horn, no. 1: ⁶²

Nr. 1 Moderato. (Transposition in E♭) C. Kopprasch

Figure 12: Kopprasch 60 Etudes for Low Horn, no. 32 ⁶³

The practice suggestions from Epsetin coupled with the two Kopprasch 60 Etudes for Low Horn can help the candidate prepare for playing Symphony No.5 for an audition.

10.2 Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 5, Op. 64*

⁶² Kopprasch. *60 Etudes for Low Horn*.

⁶³ Kopprasch. *60 Etudes for Low Horn*.

Symphony No. 5 was composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky between May and August of 1888 and was first performed in St Petersburg at the Mariinsky Theatre on November 17 of that year with Tchaikovsky conducting.⁶⁴ The typical tempo for the excerpt is dotted quarter note=54. *Symphony No. 5* is considered to be one of the most difficult principle horn solos and one of the most popular orchestra works. One of the key factors in performing this excerpt is endurance. Regardless of the fact that the highest note is top line F#, the length of the excerpt is the biggest difficulty of the solo.

When learning the excerpt, it is important that the candidate has a good overall sense of the pulse and can really feel the subdivision of four dotted quarter notes throughout the excerpt. Counting through the long notes as well as the rests is important for proper playing of this excerpt. Counting is especially important when playing duples at the *sostenuto* and the six measures before then end. Generally, the duplets tend to be rushed and metronome practice is highly recommended. The principle horn must consider what the orchestra is playing under her/him to properly create the two against three effect that the music is trying to create.

Throughout the excerpt various terms are used in order to help the principle horn create sound scape for the clarinet and horn duet. The Italian terms must be translated by the candidate and used properly in the music. The whole excerpt must be played in a vocal style with some license, yet softly and sweetly with expression. Furthermore, the *animando* (in an animated style) followed by *sostenuto* (to play sustained) require a change of tempo every time these musical terms appear.

⁶⁴ San Francisco Symphony. "Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5."



Figure 13: Tchaikovsky Symphony No.5 Excerpt ⁶⁵

10.2.1 Discussion of the Excerpt

When observing the dynamic markings written on the score, it is easiest to look at the dynamics as two bar dynamic phrases with an ebb and flow effect. Much like the *animando* followed by *sostenuto*, the dynamics mimic the push and pull effect. This effect happens until *con moto* (with movement) is indicated eleven measures before the end. Six measures before the end the *animando* followed by *sostenuto* returns along with the ebb and flow effect of the dynamics.

The candidate must be observant of the different articulation markings in the excerpt. Every time the three eighth note figure appears, the articulation is two slurred and one tenuto, the last eighth note of the figure is played slightly louder than the two previous eighth notes. In

⁶⁵ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

the second *sostenuto* measure, the articulation should change after every set of three eighth notes, and the changes should be subtle, yet obvious.

10.2.2 Practice Suggestions

Preparing and playing *Symphony No. 5* can pose many challenges to even a skilled horn player. The endurance needed coupled with the tricky articulation and swelling dynamics can cause a few challenges to the player.

In order to increase one's endurance on the horn, Milan Yancich suggests that "...as good ways to acquire endurance on a brass instrument: 1) Playing long stretches of music without stopping. 2) Repeating a melody or an etude many times over without stopping. 3) Playing a page of a concerto, an etude, or a song at two, three, or four times slower than the proper tempo."⁶⁶ Similarly, Farkas recommends practicing frequently and staying relaxed. In David Bushouses' *Practical Hints on Playing the French Horn*, Bushouse suggests that the key to increase endurance is for the mouthpiece pressure to be evenly divided between the upper and lower lips. He believes that if the mouthpiece is placed too high on the upper lip, the bottom will not be able to resist as much pressure as required.⁶⁷

From personal experience I find that endurance is not something that can happen overnight. When I first started learning the horn, I remember practicing for ten minutes and I would see a small red round circle above my upper lip. By the time I graduated from my undergraduate degree, I could play for four hours before even seeing a hint of red above my upper lip however, a day of not playing causes three days of catching up. I found even if I was

⁶⁶ Ericson "On Endurance" <http://hornmatters.com/2012/07/hornmasters-on-endurance-part-i/>

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

too busy, or focusing on other aspects of my life, I would try to at least buzz on my mouthpiece for five to ten minutes a day in order to minimize the endurance loss.

In order to practice the articulation, playing various scales with the two slurred one tenuto marking in a triplet feel can help the candidate feel the articulations more confidently. When the candidate feels ready, she/he can add the dynamic swells into the scale, with a two-beat crescendo and a two beat decrescendo. In addition to scale practice, any of the Kopprasch 60 *Etudes for Low Horn* in 4/4 or 6/8 time with eighth notes can be used to help practice this articulation. In the etude below, the articulation can be changed from staccato to tenuto, virtually creating the same articulation as the solo excerpt from *Symphony No. 5*. The etude below also provides similar features of the crescendos and decrescendos that happen in the except. An etude similar to the one below can also be used and the same type of dynamics from *Symphony No. 5* can be added in at the discretion of the candidate.



Figure 14: Kopprasch 60 Etudes for Low Horn, no. 4 ⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Kopprasch. 60 *Etudes for Low Horn*.

The combined practice suggestions from Yancich, Farkas and Bushouse working together properly help a candidate prepare to audition on Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5, Op. 64*.

10.3 Brahms *Symphony No. 2* Op. 73

Symphony No. 2 presents many difficult passages for the principle horn player and the rest of the horn section. *Symphony No. 2* was composed by Brahms in the summer of 1877, during a visit to Pörschach am Wörthersee, a town in the Austrian province of Carinthia. Though the symphony itself presents difficulty at many different spots, there are two solo passages in particular worth discussing. The first solo begins eight bars after the rehearsal marking M. This solo is an example of Brahms notorious long legato lines and the candidate must be able to capture the legato feel.⁶⁹ At the beginning of the solo, there is a *dolce* marking, the candidate is expected to maintain a sweet sound through the accidental section. The crescendo that starts in the fifth measure begins from a piano dynamic and takes two bars to crescendo followed by a one bar decrescendo. A crescendo continues for the next ten bars while the tempo begins to gradually slow down. Both the *crescendo* and *ritard* must occur tastefully over the ten bars, otherwise the player will have peaked and not accurately have played the *crescendo* or *ritard*.

⁶⁹ Almer, Shannon. L. (2006) "The most common orchestral excerpts for the horn: a discussion of performance practice" Phd Dissertation. University of Pretoria, 2006, French Horn.

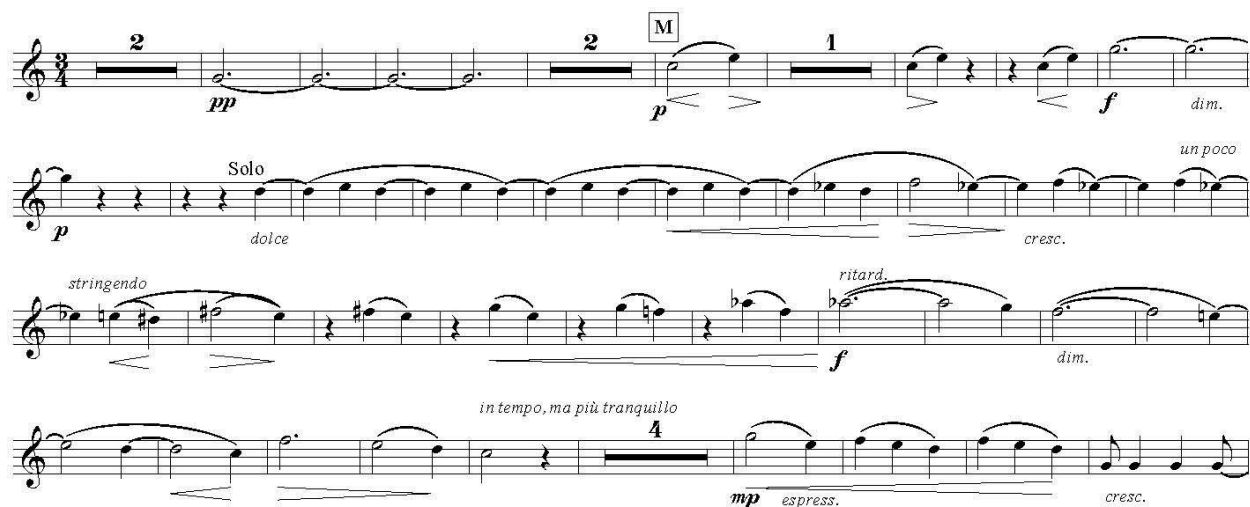


Figure 15: Brahms Symphony no.2 Excerpt 1 ⁷⁰

10.3.1 Discussion of the Excerpt

For a passage such as the one above, it is vital that the candidate begins each phrase with a big breath. The breath allows the candidate to create the smooth legato effect that is needed in the solo. If a shallow breath is taken, the candidate will not be able to sustain the crescendo while producing the long lines. Furthermore, two bars after the *stringendo* marking, there are quarter note rests in between the two note phrases. These rests must be observed, and they must further the tempo in the *stringendo*. and apply momentum by giving the rests proper pacing within the *stringendo*. Lastly, the first movement is written for horn in D. It is crucial that the candidate is able to transpose accurately.

The second movement poses some of the same challenges as the first movement, however the second movement is written for horn in H basso. Due to the nature of H basso, it is recommended that excerpt should be memorized for both an audition and for orchestral playing. No notes should be written on the staff as it becomes too cluttered to read in a difficult passage.

⁷⁰ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

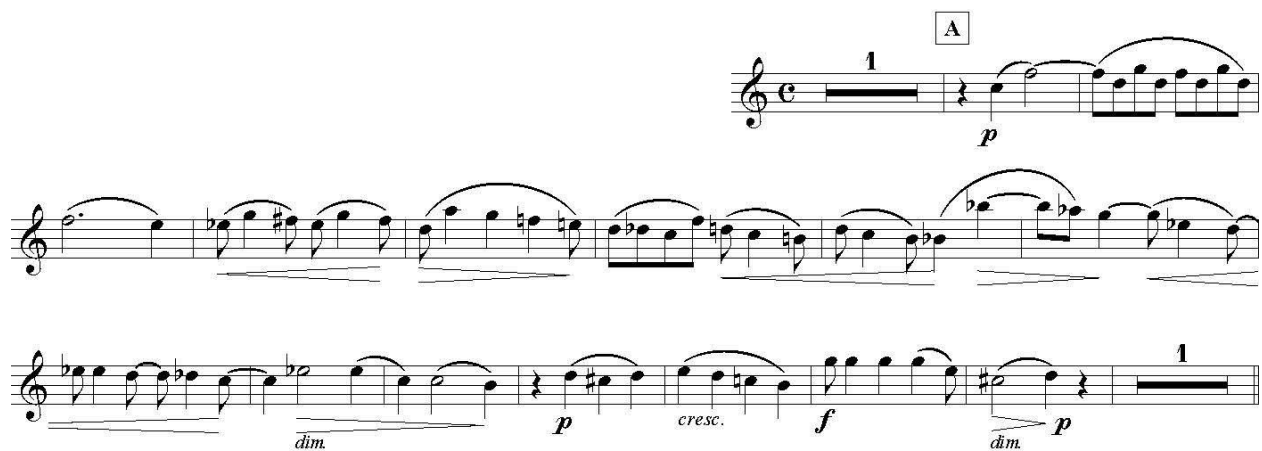


Figure 16: Brahms Symphony no.2 Excerpt 2 Horn in H tief* (basso) ⁷¹

Like the first excerpt, the second excerpt presents an issue with breathing. A candidate must observe the long legato phrases, while still taking a proper breath to achieve a good sound. Potential places to breath are in between the two Bbs eight measures after A and during the rest five bars from the end. No breath should be taken between the low and high Bbs eight measures after A.

10.3 2 Practice Suggestions


When preparing the excerpts for Brahms *Symphony No. 2*, the most important aspect to prepare is the transposition. If a candidate cannot transpose, the player cannot audition for an orchestra. Given that the first movement asks for horn in D and the second movement of the symphony asked horn for H basso, it is imperative that the candidate can transpose by sight. In the case of H basso, as previously discussed, the candidate should memorize the excerpt, however it would help if the candidate is familiar with the key.












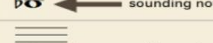
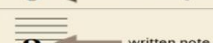
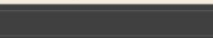
When transposing it is important to achieve the correct pitch. Figure 17 shows a horn transposing reference chart taken from the *Horn Matters* website to help the less experienced horn player. A good way to practice transposition is to start by taking easier etudes in horn in F

⁷¹ *ibid.*

and transpose them to horn in D and then horn in H basso. Once the candidate has mastered the transposition in the easier etudes, she/he can move into harder etudes. A good place to find easy etudes is from *Maxime-Alphonse Book One* for french horn (see Figure 18).

Horn Transposition Reference Chart



KEY	INTERVAL*	OCCURRENCE	EXAMPLE*
Horn in C (alto)	up P5	Rare	
Horn in B-flat (alto)	up P4	Less Common	
Horn in A (alto) <i>A - German; La - French, Italian</i>	up M3	Less Common	
Horn in G <i>G - German; Sol - French, Italian</i>	up M2	Less Common	
Horn in F-sharp <i>Fis - German; fa dièse - French; Fa diesis - Italian</i>	up m2	Extremely Rare	
Horn in E <i>E - German; Mi - French</i>	down m2	Common	
Horn in E-flat <i>Es - German; Mi bémol - French; Mi bemolle - Italian</i>	down M2	Common	
Horn in D <i>D - German; Re - French, Italian</i>	down m3	Common	
Horn in D-flat <i>Des - German; Re bémol - French; Re bemolle - Italian</i>	down M3	Very Rare (symphonic) Rare (operatic)	
Horn in C <i>C - German; Ut - French; Do - Italian</i>	down P4	Fairly Common	
Horn in B-natural <i>H - German; Si - French; Si basso - Italian</i>	down TT	Rare	
Horn in B-flat (basso) <i>B - German; Si bémol - French; Si bemolle - Italian</i>	down P5	Fairly Common	
Horn in A (basso) <i>A - German; La - French; La basso - Italian</i>	down m6	Very Rare (symphonic) Common (operatic)	
Horn in A-flat (basso) <i>As - German; La bémol - French; La bemolle basso - Italian</i>	down M6	Very Rare (symphonic) Common (operatic)	

* Based on a valved horn pitched in F.

Figure 17:
Horn Transposition Chart ⁷²

⁷² Ericson, "French Horn Transposition Chart" <http://hornmatters.com/2008/10/french-horn-transposition-chart/>.



Figure 18: Maxime- Alphonse Book 1, no.1 ⁷³

The biggest challenge with Brahms's *Symphony No. 2* is the transposition. The horn transposition chart along with practicing transposition through easier etudes can allow a candidate to be successful in their audition.

10.4 Strauss *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks op. 28*

Till Eulenspiegel is a tone poem written in 1894–95 by Richard Strauss. The piece follows the misadventures and pranks of the German folk hero Till Eulenspiegel. The character, Till Eulenspiegel, is represented by two contrasting themes. The first, theme is played by the principal horn, a lilting melody that reaches a peak, descends triadically and ends in three long, loud notes, each progressively lower. The second theme is for D clarinet, contrasting the Horn and representing Till Eulenspiegel's trickery.⁷⁴ The passage below (Figure 20) provides the candidate with a tricky rhythm that needs to be understood before adding in the accelerando indicated by the words *allmählich lebhafter* (gradually livelier).

⁷³ Alphonse," Alphonse, Maxime." https://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Alphonse,_Maxime.

⁷⁴ Baltimore Symphony Orchestra."Bsomusic.org Baltimore Symphony Orchestra at Meyerhoff and Strathmore. <http://www.bsomusic.org.htmlserialize.co/>

The opening five measures are traditionally played in a relatively free tempo. Typically, the principal horn player looks up for the initial measure and turns their attention to the music. It is important that the candidate has strong sense of when the down beat takes place because recordings of the excerpt do not sound the way the Strauss has written them.⁷⁵



Figure 19 Strauss *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks* Excerpt⁷⁶

10.4.1 Discussion of the Excerpt

When analyzing the main theme of the except, Amar uncovers that the motif (G,C,D, D# and E) is seven eighth notes in length. This unusual treatment of eight notes in 6/8 time causes concern by making the G of the motif to be displace an eighth note later each time. The first time the motif is introduced, the G is played on the second eighth note beat of the 6/8 bar. The second time it is played, it started on the third eighth note beat of the bar. The third time it is played it is on the four eighth note beat of the bar.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Recordings of *Till Eulenspiegel's*

⁷⁶ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

⁷⁷ Almer, Shannon. L. (2006) "The most common orchestral excerpts for the horn: a discussion of performance practice" Phd Dissertation. University of Pretoria, 2006, French Horn.



Figure 20: Main Theme Rhythm ⁷⁸

Three bars after the beginning of the solo, an *accelerando* is introduced. The *accelerando* takes place for two and a half measure after it begins. By the time the candidate reaches the dotted quarter notes six bars after the beginning of the solo, the tempo of the dotted quarter notes should be established. The theme indicates that the *crescendo* should start five measures after the beginning of the solo. However, various recordings of the piece have the *crescendo* started when the *allmählich lebhafter* is indicated.⁷⁹

This excerpt also requires a certain type of humour in the horn playing. The horn motif is suppose to depict the misadventures and pranks of the Till Eulenspiegel, thus calling for the candidate to have a lighter tone on the staccato and mark the accents, but in the same humour and style. A very heavy accent will take away from the humour of the excerpt and the entire piece. Lastly, two of the bars are in old notation, which has already been discussed.

10.4.2 Practice Suggestions

For a candidate to be successful while playing Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel's* during an audition, the candidate must make sure that she/he can properly move from the C - G- low C in old notation as well as be able to accelerate through a difficult section.

In order to prepare for the C-G- low C dotted quarter notes, a good technique would be to work through one of the exercises from the french horn chapter by Stout. Again, I will provide

⁷⁸ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

⁷⁹ Recordings of *Till Eulenspiegel's*

the ‘beefers’ exercise to help with the tonic- dominant- lower tonic technique. This exercise can be practiced both slurred, and then with the *marcato* articulation of the *Till Eulenspiegel* excerpt

♩ = 76 - 176 As Skill Allows. Resist Exaggerating The Last Note. Let The Notes Rise & Fall Into Place - Resist A Forced Lip Slur.

Horn in F

- Start on B-Flat Horn: Open (w/Thumb) - 2nd Valve (w/Thumb)

- 1st Valve - 1+2 Valve Combo

- 2+3 Valve Combo - Switch to Open F Horn

Figure 21: Stout’s “Beefers” Legato warm-up⁸⁰

The next task a candidate needs to master is completing a quick accelerando with eight notes. A candidate should practice an etude at a steady tempo until the etude is learned fully. Once the etude is mastered, the candidate can try to add quick accelerandos throughout various parts of the etude. The etude below is taken from Koprash’s *60 Etudes for High Horn*. The etude can be played with adding a two bar accelerando and then maintain a steady tempo for two bars.

⁸⁰ Ericson, “Warm-Up Exercises for French Horn” <http://hornmatters.com/>.

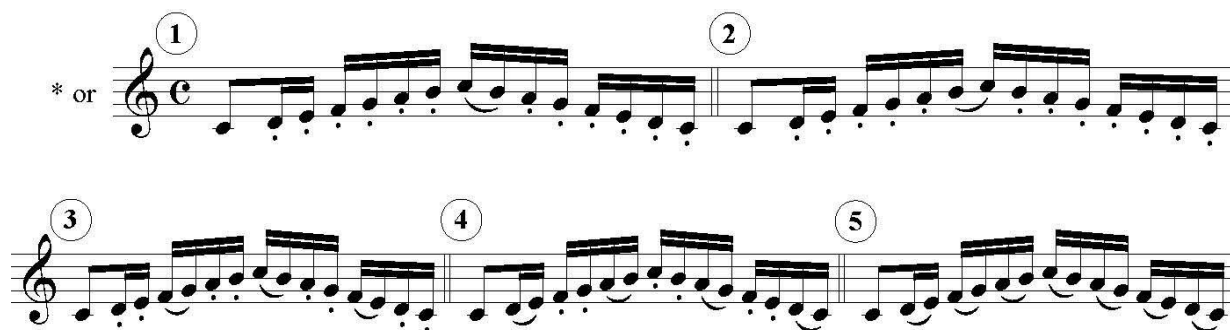


Figure 22: Kopprasch 60 Etudes for High Horn, no.4: ⁸¹

Practicing both the “beefers” as well as the accelerando technique can help a candidate properly prepare for playing Strauss’ *Till Eulenspiegel*’s at an audition.

10.5 Strauss *Ein Heldenleben* Op.40

Ein Heldenleben (A Hero's Life), Op. 40 is a tone poem by Richard Strauss. The work was completed in 1898. It was his eighth Symphonic Poem. *Ein Heldenleben* employs the technique of leitmotif, a technique that was typically used by Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt.⁸² There are six motifs throughout the piece with the horns playing the first motif. The first theme “the hero”, is played in unison by the horns and celli. Together they play E-flat major triads ascending through an almost three-octave range. The average tempo marking is quarter note = 112-116.

10.5.1 Discussion of the Excerpt

The passage below provides the candidate with an intricate rhythm and notes that need to be played in triplet slurs. Once again, Strauss makes use of the “old notation”, having the principal horn play from a low Bb to a top line F in a matter of two bars. This excerpt, much like

⁸¹Ericson. “Warm-Up Exercises for French Horn” <http://hornmatters.com/>

⁸² Jacksonville Symphony. “A Hero's Life Program Notes.”

Symphony No.5, demands that a candidate has very good technical control of their horn in order to play the vast register of notes required.

Ein Heldenleben is a test of the candidate's rhythmic security. The candidate must feel a steady beat in order to switch from triplet, dotted eighth sixteenth and sixteenth notes all within the same four bars. Counting through the first low Bb as well as the G in the second bar and the high F in the third bar is just as important as the triplets and sixteenth notes. Metronome practice is mandatory for proper rhythmic counting in their excerpt! The triplets six measures before the end are another rhythmic spot that needs careful counting and a steady understanding of the beat.

In terms of articulation and dynamics, in measures six and eight, the accent indicated by the < needs to be brought out by the candidate. Even though the whole excerpt is played at a *forte level*, if the accent is not brought out, the excerpt will lose some of the character. Similarly, the long legato lines need to be smooth in order to provide a proper contrast to the accents. Breathing points should be marked in prior to auditioning with the excerpt. This excerpt needs to be played at a *forte* volume, so the candidate must make sure that they don't over blow in the first few measures of the excerpt. Furthermore, volume as well as embouchure integrity must be saved for the *forzando piano* Bb four measures before the end of the excerpt.

Just as in *Till Eulenspiegel*, the horn is responsible for portraying a theme and a character while playing. In the case of *Ein Heldenleben*, the horns are portraying the theme of "the hero".

⁸³ According to Len Mullenger, "Strauss's Hero soon emerges as a complex character: alert, noble, aspiring, romantic, determined, focused and committed to good causes (i.e. crusading), yet

⁸³ Serotsky, *Richard Strauss - Symphonic Poem Ein Heldenleben Notes*

with a smile and whimsical twinkle in his eye.”⁸⁴ The character that Strauss has written needs to be portrayed through the horn playing.

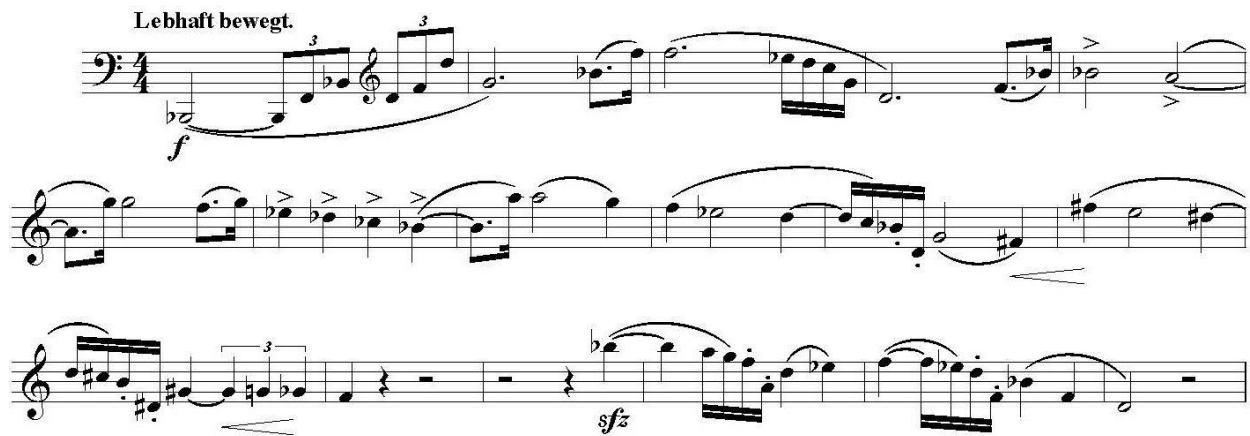


Figure 23:⁸⁵ Strauss *Ein Heldenleben*

10.5.2 Practice Suggestions

Learning *Ein Heldenleben* requires some of the same practicing that has previously been discussed. Unlike *Till Eulenspiegel* that needed an accelerando, or other excerpts that needed rubato, *Ein Heldenleben* requires that notes to be played exactly in time. The candidate must be able to play the rhythm properly throughout the entire passage. Also, in *Ein Heldenleben* the candidate is required to play at a *forte* volume for most of the excerpt. The candidate must be able to sustain that loud sound throughout the whole excerpt.

In order to play the excerpt at the proper volume, in this case *forte*, the key is being able to play a loud full sound in tune. According to Farkas, to play at a louder volume, the candidate should be using orchestral dynamics, not solo dynamics. He suggests visualizing that you are playing in a larger space and need to fill the space with sound. Farkas also suggests that playing

⁸⁴ Serotsky, *Richard Strauss - Symphonic Poem Ein Heldenleben Notes*

⁸⁵ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

loud involves not just air but letting the air pass through the lips freely.⁸⁶ Similarly to Farkas, Barry Tuckwell in *Horn* notes “A soloist must re-evaluate his conception of dynamics and must adopt a new musical approach, for now he is leading not only the conductor but the entire orchestra.”⁸⁷ Ree Wekre in *Thoughts on Playing the Horn Well* notes that in order to be successful at playing the *forte* dynamics, the candidate must practice playing *forte* every day, not just when an excerpt indicates *forte*. When notes are played in tune at the centre of their pitch, notes tend to sound louder than an out of tune note. Being able to play in tune with a lot of air support will help a candidate play a louder sound.

A candidate can practice playing various scales, arpeggios, warm-ups, etudes and small pieces in a loud dynamic. Proper breathing, as well as allowing the air to pass freely is critical to playing *forte* and should be practiced every day. If the candidate is struggling with playing at a louder dynamic, the candidate should practice the breathing and long tone exercises discussed previously.

Playing the correct rhythm is the most difficult challenge of the excerpts. Out of all the excerpt on the most frequently requested list, *Ein Heldenleben* is the most rhythmically challenging. Beginning with the first low Bb, the candidate should subdivide the low Bb into triplets, feeling the tied triplet on beat three of the measure. When the candidate finishes the triplet and lands on the G, she/he should be subdividing into eighth or sixteen notes. Personally, I would subdivide into eight notes for increased accuracy as well as preparing for the quarter note triplets six bars before the end of the excerpt. If the candidate is preparing while subdividing into sixteenth notes, the quarter note triplet will be more difficult to properly count. Another recommendation is for the candidate to practice the rhythm of the whole excerpt on one note.

⁸⁶ Ericson, *Horn Matters*. [http://hornmatters.com./](http://hornmatters.com/)

⁸⁷ Ericson, *Horn Matters*. <http://hornmatters.com./>

Once this technique is mastered, the candidate can try playing the rhythm with the notes of C major. C major is more familiar, and would cause less problems with pitch. When work with C major is mastered, the candidate should move into playing the rhythm with the notes as written.

In the etude book *The Grand Method for the French horn*, by Meifred, Gallay and Dauprat, etude number three provides the candidate with the opportunity to practice the triplet and dotted eighth note sixteenth figure. Practicing this etude will help the candidate further understand the relationship between the two rhythm and how they work together in *Ein Heldenleben*.

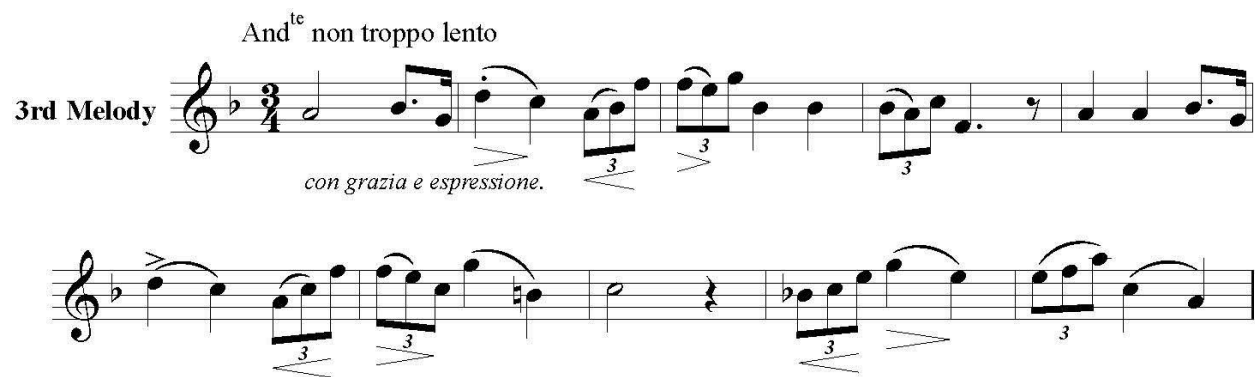


Figure 24: Meifred, Gallay, and Duprat “The Grand Method for the French Horn”⁸⁸

Speaking from experience, it is very hard to correct a wrong rhythm that has been practiced incorrectly for so long. It is significantly easier, and more effective in this case, to learn the rhythm before learning the excerpt.

The next three excerpts are from Beethoven’s sixth, seventh and eighth symphonies. The three symphonies are all on the list of the more commonly requested excerpts for a horn audition.

⁸⁸ Ericson, *Grand method for the French Horn* by Meifred, Gallay and Dauprat.

However, due to the nature of the horn, and the evolution of the horn, the horn could only play the notes of the harmonic series at the time these pieces were written.

10.6 Beethoven Symphony No.6 Op. 68

The Symphony No. 6, also known as the *Pastoral Symphony*, was composed by Beethoven in 1808.

The excerpt seems very simple and easy to play, compared to some of the other excerpts. However, looks can be deceiving. This passage requires very strong lip control and precision. The candidate must be able to go between the D, low G and high G with ease. Not only does a candidate need good lip control and precision, but she/he needs to be able to hear how the notes are going to sound to be able to properly hear the correct note.



Figure 25: Beethoven Symphony no. 6 Excerpt ⁸⁹

10.6.1 Discussion of the Excerpt

The dynamics are very important to play correctly in this passage. It must begin at a *piano* dynamic and the crescendo must start at bar three of the solo. The crescendo lasts until it reaches the *forzando* followed by a *subito-piano* in the last bar of the solo. Playing the dynamics correctly and accurately hitting the correct notes can be a challenge, even for an experienced horn player since it is very repetitive.

⁸⁹ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

As the candidate can tell from this small excerpt, Beethoven's horn often has numerous of rests before and after playing a passage. Showing the audition committee that she/he can properly count through rests is just as important as accurately playing all of the notes. For an excerpt like Beethoven's *Symphony No.6*, the audition committee may ask the candidate to begin at the beginning of the excerpt and not the solo itself.

10.6.2 Practice Suggestions

Learning *Symphony No.6* will not be the excerpt that takes the longest to learn, however since the works of Beethoven are played often in modern day symphony orchestras, it is important that the candidate be able to show the audition committee that they are able to perfectly play works that are common in the orchestra. If a candidate is not able to demonstrate to the committee that they can play a piece that is commonly performed, the committee will take that into considering when determining if they will make it to the next round or not.⁹⁰ The typical tempo marking for the excerpt is dotted half note = 108.

The biggest stumbling block of *Symphony No.6* is the being able to play the D- low G-high G figure without tripping up or fudging a note. On the modern day horn, fourth line D is playing the trigger at the back pressed down and valves one and two. When playing Beethoven, the candidate should familiarize themselves with the harmonic series. A good way for the candidates to practice this is to play it using each of the valves and combinations of valves. Below is a picture of the natural harmonic series of the horn without the trigger or the valves down. Once she/he is familiar with it, they can try these valves and combination of valves: 1st valve, 2nd valve, 1st and 2nd valves, and 2nd and 3rd valves. Once that is learned, the candidate can then play through: trigger, trigger 1st valve, trigger 2nd valve, trigger 1st and 2nd valves, and

⁹⁰ Hopkins. *The Nine Symphonies of Beethoven*.

The first staff of music is written on a grand staff, consisting of a bass clef on the left and a treble clef on the right. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody begins with a quarter note G2 in the bass, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3. The treble part begins with a quarter note D3, followed by quarter notes E3, F3, and G3. The piece concludes with a final chord consisting of G2, D3, and G3.

In a passage such as the one in question, it would be easier if the candidate sticks to one harmonic series to create a smoother effect. If the candidate uses just the trigger for the high D, trigger for high G and open for the low G, then she/he will be more successful than trying to move fingers one and two as well as the trigger. If the candidate finds that the alternate fingering is not working, they are welcome to switch back to the original D fingering.

10.7 Beethoven *Symphony No.7, Op.92.*

Due to the speed of the movement, every time the dotted rhythm figure comes up, the horn player must single tongue at a rapid speed or implement double tonguing when that rhythm occurs. When looking at other aspects of articulation, the candidate must make sure that the

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notes that are marked short are played staccato and that the notes that are marked slurred are played legato. Beethoven was known for writing various tonguing and slurring articulations for horn and they should be observed.

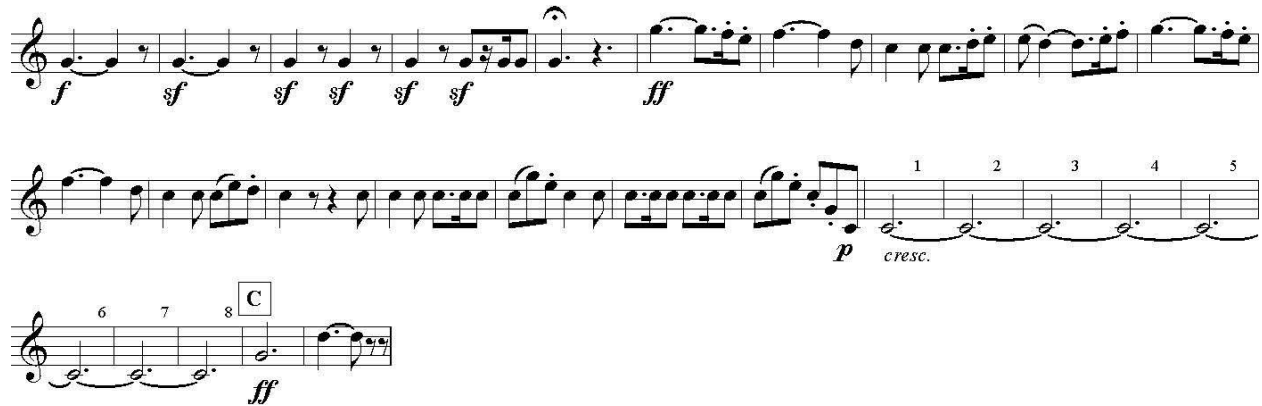


Figure 27: Beethoven Symphony no. 7 Excerpt. Horn in A ⁹²

10.7.1 Discussion of the Excerpt

Starting with the first *forte piano*, the candidate must hit the G accurately and quickly decrescendo while keeping the tempo. Eight measures before letter C, the horn is holding a long middle C note, while continuing to crescendo. The candidate must take a breath before the G and the C the bar before to ensure that they have enough breath to get through the note.

The counting throughout the whole excerpt must be accurate. The candidate must be able to accurately play the dotted quarter note tied to the dotted eighth note figure. Any incorrect rhythmic problems can be solved during the early stages of practicing through subdivision of the beat.

⁹² Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

10.7.2 Practice Suggestions

Symphony No. 7 poses three main challenges for the candidate. The first challenge is the double tonguing and the second challenge is accurate counting and the final challenge is the long C, eight measures before rehearsal C.

Double tonguing is a skill that most intermediate to early advanced horn players struggle with. In my experience, it took an entire year to properly learn how to double tongue. Gunther Schuller, in *Horn Technique*, recommends that “This is an ingenious method in which notes produced by means of the normal tongue movements of ‘tah’ and ‘dah’ alternate with notes produced by the syllable ‘kah’, thus giving us in combination ‘tah-kah tah-kah’.”⁹³ He also recommends that the ‘kah’ sound be very rough and there should be no contact between the tongue and teeth. When first practicing this tonguing, the attack produced by ‘kah’ will be very rough. This is because, in the syllable ‘kah’, there is no direct contact between the tongue and the teeth. Unlike Schuller, Farkas recommends the syllables “too-koo,” “tih-kih,” and “dih-gih”.⁹⁴

Figure 29 (below) demonstrates an easy note pattern that a candidate could use to help them grasp the concept of double tonguing. With most new techniques, it is advised to take it slow and then gradually speed it up. Double tonguing is the exception to this rule. Double tonguing needs to be practiced at a fairly quick tempo in order to really feel the technique. The candidate should also make sure that they are not single tonguing and should practice going from single to double tonguing.

⁹³ Ericson, “On Double and Triple Tonguing.” <http://hornmatters.com/2011/12/hornmasters-on-double-and-triple-tonguing-part-i-schuller-and-farkas/>

⁹⁴ Ericson, “On Double and Triple Tonguing.” <http://hornmatters.com/2011/12/hornmasters-on-double-and-triple-tonguing-part-i-schuller-and-farkas/>

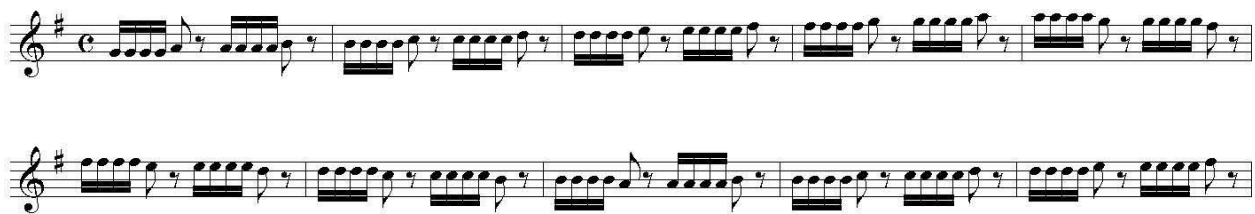


Figure 28: Double Tonguing Exercise ⁹⁵

Accurate counting throughout the entire excerpt is mandatory. In a case such as *Symphony No.7*, the best way to learn the counting would be to isolate the sections with the difficult counting. The figure 34 is enlarged is the tricky rhythm in the excerpt and should be played out of context in order to properly learn the counting. Personally, I would start with clapping the passage to make sure I understand where all six beats are in the measure. Then I move to my horn and play the measure on a single note. Once comfortable with that, I would use the rhythm as a motive throughout a scale. Having every beat represent a different note in the scale, but the rhythm stays just as written. Once comfortable with the rhythm outside of the excerpt, the passage from the excerpt should be played.



Figure 29: Rhythm out of Context ⁹⁶

The last challenge of *Symphony No.7* is the C that last for eight measures while sustaining a crescendo. In order for the candidate to hold the long C, the candidate needs to take a big breath. One way that the candidate can practice holding the long C during a crescendo is by practicing long tones. Ericson's warm-up from *Horn Matters* is the perfect exercise to use to help

⁹⁵ Ericson, "On Double and Triple Tonguing." <http://hornmasters.com/2011/12/hornmasters-on-double-and-triple-tonguing-part-i-schuller-and-farkas/>

⁹⁶ Ericson, *The Horn Matters PDF Excerpt Book*.

with this C. Once the candidate is comfortable with this exercise, she/he can remove the half note rest and allow the phrase to six measures while keeping the crescendo going.



Figure 30: Ericson's Long-tone Warm-up⁹⁷

If a candidate practices and conquers the challenges of the double tonguing, the counting and the final challenge is the long C eight measures before the letter C, the candidate will be properly ready to learn the excerpt.

10.6 Beethoven *Symphony No.8, Op.93*

Symphony No. 8 was composed by Beethoven in 1812. The excerpt below is taken from the third movement, minuet, and is typically performed with the tempo of quarter note = 126. It is important to note that the excerpt below is a duet between the principal and second horn. The clarinet joins the two horns with the statement of the theme. The principal horn is playing the main theme of the piece while the second horn is providing thirds and fifths as an accompaniment.

⁹⁷ Ericson, "Warm-Up Exercises for French Horn" <http://hornmatters.com/>

10.8.1 Discussion of the Excerpt

Since the principal horn is the first instrument to play the theme in the minuet, it is imperative that the horn plays the solo how it is written. The articulations should follow what Beethoven wrote in the score. The player must pay special attention to the *mezzo-staccato* notes in the first bar of the solo as well as every time it reappears. The sound that is produced from the horn must carefully match the sound of the other instruments that play the same figure. There should be a clear indication between the *mezzo-staccato*, the slurred and the detached notes of the excerpt.

The whole excerpt is under the term *dolce*, meaning sweetly. For the sweetness to get across, the horn player must consider her/his tuning and make sure that all of their note are in tune. Though the rhythm is not as tricky as some of the other rhythms presented in the other excerpts on the more frequently requested list, the candidate must still count accurately through the rests and the long notes.

This excerpt incorporates *crescendos* to *subito pianos*. This technique is done in order to fit the style of the symphony. For example, after the initial upbeat Beethoven places the dynamic indication *sforzando* on each of the next five beats. This makes the minuet stylistically close to the other movements of the symphony.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Hopkins *The Nine Symphonies of Beethoven*.

One of the best high horn exercises I have learned was taught to me by my very first horn teacher, Christine Passmore. The exercise was based on a Clarke etude for trumpet but was changed in order to fit the needs of an intermediate horn player. The warm- up begins with the horn student playing first space F#. The chromatic sequence that the horn player would play is F#-G-G#-A-A#-B-C-B-Bb-A-Ab-G-Gb. This sequence is then raised by a semi-tone until losing the desired clarity.

Another technique that can use is practicing scales in two octaves. Typically, two octave scales allow the candidate to play at least one octave in their comfort zone, but one octave outside of their comfort zone.

The last recommendation is that the candidate plays etudes that focus on the high range of the instrument such as Kopprasch's *60 Etudes for the High Horn*. By playing through the etudes from this book, the candidate will gradually become more comfortable with higher notes.

No. 1 - *Moderato*

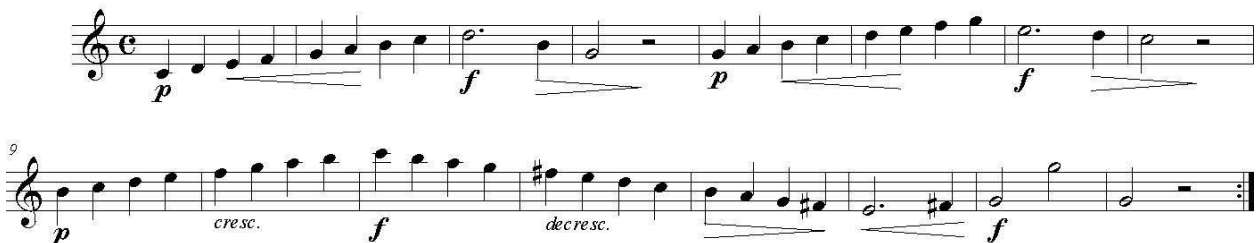


Figure 32: Kopprasch 60 Etudes for High Horn, no. 1 ¹⁰⁰

With daily practice of the Clarke-like etude, the two octave scales and Kopprasch etudes, a candidate should be able to hit the high A in *Symphony No. 8* consistently.

¹⁰⁰ Kopprasch, *60 Etudes for High Horn*.

CHAPTER XI: CONCLUSION

In this study, I have addressed how to prepare physically and mentally for an audition. The discussions in both of these chapters allow for a horn player to understand proper stretching technique, fundamental horn warm ups, proper mental coping strategies for performance as well as a discussion on performance anxiety. The two chapters on the expectations of the performer and the expectations of the audition committee illustrate what is expected from them and what they should expect from the committee. The discussion on the excerpt books allow readers to understand the process a horn candidate must go through to effectively prepare for an audition. The chapter on the excerpt list provides a horn player with a list of potential horn excerpts that are commonly requested. The discussion of the most frequently requested excerpts enables an aspiring horn player to learn their excerpts with confidence. The tools that have been given in the final chapter will help provide the groundwork an aspiring horn player to succeed.

I believe all the factors addressed are important and valuable to students graduating from their undergraduate degrees as well as to young performers who are just starting out on their careers in the world of professional orchestral playing. The factors addressed will also be an asset to semi-professional horn players or amateur players who are trained in another field and play music for enjoyment.

Due to the length restriction of the thesis, only the most frequently requested principal horn excerpts have been discussed. An exploration of all five horn positions, (the fifth being the utility horn) would make this thesis disproportionally long. A potential next step could be to explore the roles of the other four horn players and the most common excerpts for each individual horn.

The ideal candidate that walks into the audition room is a fully prepared candidate. Being prepared physically and mentally as well as being well rehearsed will help a player not only complete an audition but to contribute both creatively and musically to an orchestra.

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