A Performance and Pedagogical Exploration of Quinze Etudes de Rythme pour Trombone by Marcel Bitsch

Jessica Ann Hawthorne
University of Miami, jessicahawthornetrombone@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations

Recommended Citation
https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations/2292

This Open access is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact repository.library@miami.edu.
A PERFORMANCE AND PEDAGOGICAL EXPLORATION OF QUINZE ÉTUDES DE RYTHME POUR TROMBONE BY MARCEL BITSCH

By

Jessica Ann Hawthorne

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2019
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

A PERFORMANCE AND PEDAGOGICAL EXPLORATION OF QUINZE ÉTUDES
DE RYTHME POUR TROMBONE BY MARCEL BITSCH

Jessica Ann Hawthorne

Approved:

________________         ________________
Aaron Tindall, D.M.A.      Gabriel Beavers, M.M.
Associate Professor Tuba and Euphonium  Associate Professor of Bassoon

________________                     _________________
Timothy Conner, B.M.              Guillermo Prado, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Practice  Dean of the Graduate School
Instrumental Performance, Trombone

________________
Nancy Zavac, M.M., M.S.
Associate Professor Emeritus, Librarian
Since the late 1800’s, trombonists worldwide have used various etude and method books as a way to craft and hone new skills on the instrument while expanding stylistic flexibility. Celebrated composer and Paris Conservatoire Professor Marcel Bitsch’s *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* has been one of the most trustworthy resources of its kind in the repertoire collection of collegiate trombonists, and there is currently no performance guide available for trombonists studying this work. Bitsch’s etudes for trombone demand not just rhythmic proficiency but other important skills, such as articulation, range, clef literacy, and musicality. This comprehensive study of five selected etudes by Bitsch is designed to serve both the trombone student and collegiate studio professor. As a result, the student can find solutions to common rhythmic, technical, and musical obstacles, while the teacher can use this practical method to engage all aspects of the student’s learning in a creative way within the context of the etudes.
It is of my core belief that no person is self-made. Rather, we are the sum of the hundreds of people who influence our lives every day. In regards to this essay, there are several individuals for whom I am grateful. Without their help, the creation of this work would not have been possible.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Professor Timothy Conner for his guidance, assistance, and dedication during not only the process of this paper, but over the course of my five years of study at the University of Miami. Next, to my doctoral committee: Dr. Aaron Tindall, Professor Gabriel Beavers, and Professor Nancy Zavac for offering their unique and valuable perspectives to this contribution to the trombone community. I would also like to thank my music engineers, Ron Keck at Subcat Studios and Bryan Kennard who helped record and edit supplemental recordings of the Bitsch etudes discussed in this paper. I would like to express deep gratitude to Carlos Mata-Alvarez, who has been an invaluable help to me during this process, as he has been not only my boyfriend, but my copyist, editor, producer, and expert provider of emotional support. Lastly, I would like to thank the unwavering support from my family, especially my parents: David and Marjorie Hawthorne, and my sister, Morgan. My family has always said they knew I would write a book someday, and as always, they were right.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF EXAMPLES ........................................................................................................ vi

1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 1
   Background ................................................................................................................ 1
   Marcel Bitsch: Biography ....................................................................................... 2
   Need for Study ........................................................................................................... 4
   Purpose ..................................................................................................................... 6
   Research Questions ................................................................................................. 6
   Delimitations ............................................................................................................. 6

2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ...................................................................... 8
   DMA Dissertations, Projects, and Essays ............................................................... 8
   Annotated Etude Books and Methods ...................................................................... 11
   Sound Recordings .................................................................................................... 12
   Biographical Texts .................................................................................................. 14
   Compositional Aids ............................................................................................... 15
   Reflections .............................................................................................................. 16

3 METHOD ..................................................................................................................... 18
   Overview .................................................................................................................. 18
   Selection of Etudes .................................................................................................. 18
   Analysis of Etudes ................................................................................................... 20
   Development of Creative Accompaniment ............................................................ 21
   Closing Remarks ..................................................................................................... 22

4 ETUDE NO. 1 ............................................................................................................ 23
   Performance Aspects ............................................................................................... 23
   Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions ......................................................... 30

5 ETUDE NO. 3 ............................................................................................................ 36
   Performance Aspects ............................................................................................... 36
   Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions ......................................................... 42

6 ETUDE NO. 4 ............................................................................................................ 49
   Performance Aspects ............................................................................................... 49
   Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions ......................................................... 54

7 ETUDE NO. 10 ......................................................................................................... 61
   Performance Aspects ............................................................................................... 61
   Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions ......................................................... 67

8 ETUDE NO. 14 ......................................................................................................... 74
   Performance Aspects ............................................................................................... 74
   Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions ......................................................... 80
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: RECORDINGS</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B: LEAD SHEETS</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF EXAMPLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 1-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 1-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 19-22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 19-22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 41-42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 19-27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 19-27, rewritten as tuning drones on the root of the chord...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 1-6, rewritten as an eighth-note subdivision on the tonic pitch...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 1-6, rewritten as a harmonic drone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10. Marcel Bitsch, <em>Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone</em>,</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Etude No. 1</em>, mm. 1-6, rewritten as a duet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.11. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 1*, mm. 39-42, rewritten with a new meter .......................... 35

5.1. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 1-2 ............................................................................. 37

5.2. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 7-8 ............................................................................. 38

5.3. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 15-19,
rewritten with additional suggested alternate positions ....................... 40

5.4. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 30-33 ............................................................................. 41

5.5. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 1-4, rewritten as subdivisions on the root of the chord .... 44

5.6. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 1-4,
rewritten with subdivisions of meter changes on the root of the chord ........ 45

5.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 1-4,
rewritten as a duet using subdivisions of alternate meter changes ............ 46

5.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 26-27,
rewritten to demonstrate rhythmic feel using the root of the chord .......... 46
5.9. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 30-33, rewritten as a duet using subdivisions……… 47

6.1. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 46-48………………………………………………………… 50

6.2. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 5-6………………………………………………………… 50

6.3. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 16-17………………………………………………………… 51

6.4. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 24-27………………………………………………………… 53

6.5. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 1-2, rewritten as a bass line using quarter notes……….. 56

6.6. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 1-2, rewritten as a bass line using eighth notes……….. 57

6.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 17-18,

rewritten as a sixteenth note subdivision using the root of the chord……….. 57

6.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 20-23,

rewritten as quarter notes on beats one and three using the root of the chord... 58
6.9. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 20-23, rewritten as a duet using a two measure pattern, with quarter notes on beats one and three, followed by the inclusion of eighth notes on beats two of the following measure…………………………… 59

7.1. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 1-5……………………………………………………………………… 62

7.2. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 14-17…………………………………………………………………. 63

7.3. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 25-28………………………………………………………………… 64

7.4. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 58-64………………………………………………………………… 65

7.5. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 23-26………………………………………………………………… 66

7.6. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 1-5, indicating possible metric groupings………………. 68

7.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 1-5, rewritten with roots of chords placed on offbeats …… 70

7.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 65-68, rewritten as a sixteenth note subdivision with a tenuto on each downbeat…… 71
7.9. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 23-26,

rewritten as the melody as an eighth note subdivision through each rest……… 72

8.1. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 40-43………………………………………………………… 76

8.2. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 7-8………………………………………………………… 77

8.3. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 1-4………………………………………………………… 78

8.4. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 53-57………………………………………………………… 80

8.5. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 1-4,

rewritten as an eighth note subdivision using the root of the chord…………… 82

8.6. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 1-4,

rewritten as a melodic bass line in variations of quarter notes………........... 83

8.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 13-14,

rewritten with sustained pitches on larger metric beats………………………. 84
8.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 30-31,

rewritten as a duet using chord tones and highlighting metric emphasis……… 85

8.9. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 1-4, rewritten with roots of chords placed on offbeats……… 86
Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

Background

The Paris Conservatoire holds a special place in trombone history and has been one of the largest influences in the development of skills any modern trombonist possesses. It was here where the trombone was gradually deemed a worthy solo instrument through the active advocacy and frequent collaboration between the trombone professors and local composers. Many applied music professors at the Conservatoire were highly regarded in the public eye and had the important duty of being the mentor for the next generation of musicians.\(^1\) Interested students were expected to display sound musical intuition and technique. Through their continued journey in musicianship, the Conservatoire emphasized the importance of individual growth and developing skills as a soloist in addition to focusing on orchestral repertoire.\(^2\)

Due to the amount of popularity and respect generated by its trombone professors, local composers, including those who taught at the Conservatoire, would look to applied instrument professors to learn how to best compose for the instrument. Most notably, composer Hector Berlioz was known to attend trombone classes during the pedagogical reign of Professor Antoine Dieppo between the years 1836 and 1871.\(^3\) One of the most important contributions during this time was the initiation of the *solos de concours* (contest solos) and *morceaux de concours* (contest pieces)\(^4\), where composers from the

\(^3\) Ibid.
Conservatoire, as well as other French composers, would often write brand new works for trombone students at the time. These concours would occur at the end of the year, and the new contest pieces became repertoire for which trombonists would compete for a prize. Many of those contest pieces have now become established solo works in the trombone repertoire. The legendary trombone professors who proposed these ideas to expand the repertoire are still well known today, including Henri Couillaud (1925-1948) and André Lafosse (1948-1960).5 Both Couillaud and Lafosse developed methods and etude books for trombone that are still in print and continue to be widely used resources.

Marcel Bitsch: Biography

Over the course of the twentieth century, composer and music theorist Marcel Bitsch developed an honorable reputation for his award-winning compositions, commitment to teaching at the prestigious Paris Conservatoire, and his frequent analysis of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bitsch was born to a musical family in 1921 in the city of Toulouse, located in southern France. His father was an avid musician, learning cello, piano, and bass. Besides his father, his aunt Alice was an award winning cellist, and his aunt Lucie privately taught him violin and piano lessons.6 Through his father’s urging, Bitsch attended the Scola Cantorum, Ecole Caesar Franke, and the Conservatoire at Sorbonne (1940-1945).7 During his time as a student at Sorbonne, he was awarded small prizes for composition at the Prix de Rome in 1943 and 1944, eventually securing a tie alongside Claude Pascal in 1945 for the Grand Prix de Rome.

---

7 Ibid.
Following his collegiate studies, Bitsch became the Professor of Musical Writing at his alma mater, the Ecole Caesar Franke, where he had discovered his passion for teaching was equal to that of composing. 1956 was a year of significant change for Bitsch, as in that year he took a professorship at the renowned Paris Conservatoire, where he taught solfege, counterpoint, and fugue. In this first year at the Conservatoire, he also had several publications, such as the *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* and the *Précis d'harmonie tonale*. About the latter publication, editor Denis Havard de la Montagne of the publication *Musica et Memoria* explains:

> “Always listening to the young budding musicians, he wrote for them an *Accuracy of Tonal Harmony (1956, Leduc)*, internationally known, not in the form of a treatise, but a practical handbook, an aid helping to study this science in the form of an abstract of theoretical and indispensable knowledge.”

In discussing his compositional style, his musical vocabulary has been self-described as “never touched by twelve-tone grace” and neo-classical. Bitsch was influenced by many composers, but the composer he most admired was J.S. Bach. Bitsch was especially fond of Bach, avidly analyzing and orchestrating his works, describing the music as “universal.” Among the other celebrated composers was Robert Schumann, for whom he most appreciated his romantic stylings and skilled counterpoint techniques. Throughout his career, Bitsch was known as a life-long learner who continued to study various musical works until his death. His life concluded in 2011 at the age of 90 in Paris’ fifth district.

---

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
Since the late 1800’s, trombonists across the world have used various etude and method books as a way to craft and hone new skills on the instrument while expanding stylistic flexibility. Many times, these individual methods of playing were created by university applied music professors as a way to set the standard for a unique sound and style in their studio. This is the case with professors Henri Couillaud and André Lafosse, whom, at the Paris Conservatoire, both published several etude and method books where much of the modern trombone repertoire originated. Some of these are still used today, such as Couillaud’s *Trente Études Modernes*\(^{12}\) and Lafosse’s *Méthode Complete de Trombone a Couilisse*.\(^{13}\) Eventually, books of etudes were adapted or written for the trombone with particular purposes in mind, with the hopes that focusing on single areas of technique could improve the quality of musicianship in the trombone community.

**Need for Study**

Over the course of several decades of pedagogical development, etude books continue to occupy a considerable portion of music a collegiate musician studies. Not only are they helpful in developing technique within a melodic context, but newer editions are commonly prepared in a way that helps a student grow on their own, with less guidance from a physical teacher. Marcel Bitsch’s *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* has been one of the most trustworthy resources of its kind in the repertoire collection of collegiate trombonists, and there is currently no performance guide available for trombonists.


Dozens of etude books are available and worthy of study. Many are designed to purely work on melodicism or technical skills, but very few are dedicated to the development of rhythmic proficiency, especially within the context of Bitsch’s complex harmonic vocabulary. While these rhythmic skills are crucial for any advanced trombonist to possess, Bitsch’s etudes for trombone demand the execution of other important skills, such as articulation, range, clef literacy, and musicality regardless of style or level of difficulty. Clearly a dedicated composer and teacher, Marcel Bitsch’s music asks the trombonist to comprehend complex rhythms, extended harmony, and to perform all lyrical and technical possibilities of the instrument. When encountering this music, it is a common reaction for the trombonist to feel intimidated by music that demands a higher understanding of not only music theory, but aural skills as well. Some of these necessary skills are range, intervals, and articulations that are not always demanded by the trombonist in other professional performance situations. In order to properly serve these compositions in the manner they deserve, the trombonist must comprehend both the music’s fundamental compositional aspects while being able to understand trombone technique. World renowned tuba performer and pedagogue Warren Deck urges musicians, “You must know exactly what you intend to produce—even if the skills are not yet fully developed.”¹⁴ When one is able to understand not only the demands of the composition, but the mechanical techniques involved in best exemplifying the music, a successful performance can be achieved. Not only is it crucial for the students to plan their practice effectively, but the teacher’s role in their study of

the Bitsch etudes could significantly help the student best prepare these challenging musical works as well.

**Purpose**

This comprehensive study is designed to serve both the trombone student and collegiate studio professor. As a result of the study, students can find solutions to common rhythmic, technical, and musical obstacles presented by the Bitsch etudes. It will also provide a practical method for any teacher to engage all aspects of the student’s learning in a creative way within the context of the etudes. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance the overall musical experience for both the aspiring trombonist and listener.

**Research Questions**

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the rhythmic, technical, and musical challenges a trombonist encounters in learning these selected Bitsch etudes?
2. How can the musician surpass these rhythmic, technical, and musical obstacles?
3. How can harmonic understanding help to inform a trombonist’s performance of the Bitsch etudes?

**Delimitations**

Although this study is a comprehensive performance and pedagogical analysis of Bitsch etudes, it will present itself as a performance guide for five selected etudes, each of which represent the variety of characters presented in all fifteen etudes. The method
provided and discussions that entail on these five etudes can then be applied to one’s continued individual study on the remaining ten etudes. Additionally, these etudes are composed without accompaniment. Variables such as underlying harmonies and rhythmic structures are only presented as suggestions. They are by no means the only theoretical or musical possibility for the aspiring trombonist.
Chapter Two

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter includes a review of many types of literature as it relates to the study of the Bitsch etudes. Several DMA dissertations, projects, and essays were consulted that discuss the contents of Bitsch etudes, the development of proper French brass technique and style, and other studies that aim to be a pedagogical and performance guide to studies of particular etudes. In order to create the best quality performance and pedagogical guide to the Bitsch etudes, other popular and influential annotated etude and method books were consulted. Sound recordings of works for brass instruments by Bitsch provided a framework for the trombonist developing French style by the same composer. Finally, other texts of biographical nature on the life of Bitsch were used in order to help place the trombone etudes in a context for which the musician can relate.

DMA Dissertations, Projects, and Essays

Ryan Thomas Moore from the University of Kentucky has contributed an extremely thorough study to the trombone and euphonium community, both in the discussion of the history of etude books and in the contexts of his analysis of each publication. “A Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Analysis of Preferred Collegiate Trombone and Euphonium Methods Books”\(^\text{15}\) analyzed 20 most commonly used etudes and method books categorized by type, such as clef studies, legato studies, and rhythmic studies. From there, he collected the statistics of features and characteristics found in

---

each study, such as page number, kinds of meters used, tonality, the amount of text instructions provided to the musician. In all eight of his categories for etude and method books, Bitsch’s *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* was the only publication listed in the “Rhythm Studies” section. According to his research from 2013, only ten in total are available for trombone and/or euphonium players, and several of those are not of the collegiate level. The section of Moore’s study describing the etude book is rather brief, but it praises the book’s ability to increase the trombonist’s level of musicianship using complex, mature music. The following quote provided by Moore describes several of the unlimited possibilities outside of purely rhythm in areas for a musician to improve through the use of Bitsch’s etudes. “While the title suggests an emphasis on complex rhythms it is widely used as a modern technical study method focusing on changing clefs, contemporary tonality, mixed meter and style.”

Trumpet player Brooke Stevens has a well executed DMA project from her time at the University of Indiana where she discusses her method for analyzing each composition from Bitsch’s *Vingt Études pour Trompette Ut ou Si-flat*. She goes into deep detail about types of compositional techniques Bitsch used, which can help a student make various connections in recognizing motives, form, and rhythm. At the end of the study are a few exercises for each etude, typically composed to focus on the isolation of rhythms or intervals that lead the musician back to the original notation in the etude. In

---

writing to serve all 20 etudes, the individual analysis of each etude is fairly strong, but lacks some concentration in other vital aspects of music making, such as melody, harmony, and trumpet technique. It is best served for a trumpet student who is playing on their own, does not look to collaborate with others, and who may also struggle with smaller details of rhythmic execution. While this could be a valuable resource for a trumpet player, there is nothing available for a trombone player who may need help with Bitsch’s etudes for trombone.

A unique study that should not be ignored in studying the performance practice of French music is an essay by trombonist Christine Mounger titled, “An Exploration of the Effects of Language on the Orchestral Trombone Sound in France, Germany, and the United States.” Mounger makes connections between speech and articulations, suggesting the quality of articulations and tone produced by a trombonist might be determined by the primary language of the speaker. While this study is focused on preparing orchestral musicians, the fundamental concepts of this study apply to any type of musician. Applying the concepts as stated in this study could help achieve a more traditional and authentic French style in music.

There is another dissertation that aims to educate brass players on the works of Bitsch. Evan Benjamin Duke of the University of Kentucky has previously presented a dissertation titled, “Language as a Performance Parameter: The Marcel Bitsch Vingt Etudes.” In this study, Duke explores brass articulation as it directly relates to Bitsch

---

etudes, finding that studying French pronunciation can help a musician play with a more authentic French style. Of the 20 etudes, Duke discusses seven selected etudes that are of acceptable quality, but extraordinarily brief in length and variety of examples. However, this study and analysis, no matter how brief, helps to prove the worth of Bitsch etudes to the brass community.

Annotated Etude Books and Methods

Jean Baptiste Arban’s Complete Method for Trombone and Euphonium, subsequently edited by trombonist Joseph Alessi and euphonium player Dr. Brian Bowman21 quickly became a favorite amongst the trombone community. This widely respected edition corrects errors that were found in the original 1936 publication. With some specific exercises, the editors contributed insight and performance guidance to help aid the musician. Since this edition is intended for both slide and valved instruments, the original suggested alternate positions and fingerings were omitted. Extra inclusions in this new publication are etudes and duets, providing more opportunities to involve the musical input and ideas of other musicians.

Just three years later, bass trombonist Alan Raph released another edition22 of the classic Arban’s method. His version includes the same corrections of errors as the Alessi/Bowman edition. Unlike their edition, Raph’s keeps the suggested alternate positions while utilizing alternates for instruments with an F-attachment, which could limit the book’s usefulness to only trombone players. New sections in slide drills and

---

multiple tonguing become increasingly helpful for modern players. Arguably the most helpful and impressive addition to this edition is the CD that includes accompaniments to Arban’s etudes.

Brad Edwards’ highly celebrated book, *Lip Slurs: Progressive Etudes for Building Tone and Technique*\(^{23}\) has justifiably become one of the most beloved methods of exercises in trombone repertoire. The book is extensively organized, progressive in difficulty, and can be utilized by players at all levels. The book is categorized in three sections: slow lip slurs, fast lip slurs, and lip slur melodies. Within these categories, each individual exercise is labeled for the musician to work on a specific area of their playing, such as range or alternate positions. Oftentimes, these exercises are meant for both the tenor and bass trombonist, with instructions provided to cater to extending the range lower for the bass instrument. The most revolutionary aspect of this book is the addition of lip slur melodies. This puts the exercises in a context closer to actual performance, with original music composed only with the lip-slurred technique. Throughout the book, Edwards gives instructional advice to trombonists. This book is well organized, comprehensive, and has understandably placed Edwards amongst the most influential of living trombone pedagogues.

**Sound Recordings**

The most extensive recording of the music of Bitsch played by any brass instrument is by American trumpet player David Baldwin. Baldwin is currently the

Professor of Trumpet at the University of Minnesota. It is clear that education and pedagogy are his main priorities. He has recorded the entire Charlier and Bitsch etudes in several volumes.\(^{24}\) This portion of his etude recording project was completed and published in 1993. The CD itself is available for digital download only, with the original program notes available online through the International Trumpet Guild’s website. Due to the lack of copies for physical distribution, there are less options for accessibility. Even though many students and other musicians are technologically savvy, there still remains a number of individuals who prefer hard copies of music. While it is clear that these recordings contain different musical material than the *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*, this recording could be of value to any trombonist looking to learn about the scope of Bitsch’s compositional style through the medium of a similar brass instrument.

Swiss trumpet player Olivier Anthony Theurillat has the most recent recording\(^{25}\) of Bitsch etudes for brass instruments. At 47 years of age, he is an accomplished performer with numerous awards. He was educated in several regions of France, including three years at the Paris Conservatoire. His recording of etudes is a large mixture of etudes and pieces by many composers. Only the first of the Bitsch etudes are included on the CD. Clearly, on this recording there is only so much a trombonist can learn from a single recording of a trumpet etude, but Theurillat is a musician with a beautiful sound and is a good representation of authentic French style.

No professional recordings of the *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* are currently in existence. There are a small number of recordings of select Bitsch etudes by


\[^{25}\text{Marcel Bitsch, “20 Etudes for Trumpet: No. 1,”* Olivier Anthony Theurillat: Early Recordings,* Olivier Anthony Theurillat (trumpet), Indésens B00GV5MNVC, 2013, CD.}\]
trombonists available on video-sharing social media sites such as YouTube, but often these are home recordings by amateurs or other students. With no reliable sound models, students are left with few options to improve aural recognition. Students could learn from a demonstration from their professors, but many of these full-time, working musicians may not feel comfortable performing a Bitsch etude on the spot for a student who is listening intently for accuracy of technique and expression. They could also choose to learn from their peers (who could be struggling with the complexity of the music themselves), or choose to learn on their own, exposing themselves to the possibility of less efficient practice habits and limited musical insight.

**Biographical Texts**

There is not a wealth of information available about Marcel Bitsch as there would be about certain other composers, but through comparison of a number of sources, we can grow a little closer to knowing more about the man who wrote such mature, intellectual music for the trombone community to study and learn. The first source for biographical information one might consult can be found within the musical publication\(^{26}\) itself. While the Alfonse Leduc publication does provide a biography of Bitsch, it is rather brief. Biographical sources from encyclopedic databases of his teachers Jean\(^{27}\) and Noël Gallon\(^{28}\) help to provide some understanding of his upbringing in education. Another


biographical source that was incredibly helpful was a French website, *Musica et Memoria*, dedicated to preserving the life of French composers.\(^{29}\) Information used from this source was translated by the author throughout the study.

### Compositional Aids

A portion of this study involved transcribing the etudes and composing a lead sheet with rhythmic exercises that could be used as a guide to the learning process. Gary Lindsay’s textbook, *Jazz Arranging Techniques: From Quartet to Big Band*,\(^{30}\) is a great resource for several useful techniques, such as creating bass lines and learning the best layouts for scores and parts. There is also a well-researched and helpful portion of the book dedicated to composing for the instrument.

In many genres of music, the bass line remains one of the single most important features of a composition. It is this crucial foundation that sets the tonal, harmonic backdrop of any piece. In a jazz setting, actively moving bass lines outline this harmony while providing a solid foundation for rhythm as well, as a bass player will often be heard playing quarter note lines that are mostly driven from arpeggiation.\(^{31}\) In the case of these etudes, the teacher may find it more accessible and applicable to highlight the bass line, stating the tonic harmony or root of each chord. Therefore, in the creation of these lead sheets, the harmony presented by chord symbols are sometimes simplified to either

---


stating a chord once per measure, twice per measure, or by identifying the use of a particular scale.

One of the most important aspects of creating these lead sheets was the formatting of each piece of music. Due to the addition of more information on each page (chord changes), there was much to consider for the musician reading this music. The aim for each etude was to make sure information was clearly organized for the musician so there would be no issues in readability. Each line was spaced to have only between three to eight measures.\textsuperscript{32} This often helps with the musician’s phrasing and recollection of specific moments in the music for practice purposes. Each individual staff was well spaced to provide room to read chord symbols with clarity, and expressive markings such as dynamics and articulations were aligned specifically to the note in which it belongs. Finally, the new notation was expanded to two pages so the music would not look crowded, and the final document was formatted with 8.5 by 11” paper in mind, then shrunk to fit the margins of the final publication.

**Reflections**

There is a very clear lack of informative sources on the both the life of Bitsch and on his etudes for trombone. Biographical information in particular is difficult to find, as there is very little information available in English. Even in sources such as *Grove Music Online*, one could find information on his former teachers and students, but not a single updated source on Bitsch himself. The most bountiful sources on Bitsch’s life are those that are in French. Regardless of this, his trombone etudes are utilized in trombone

studios across the United States. Bitsch is a celebrated pedagogue and composer, and his *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* are an undervalued educational resource for trombonists, as they teach the musician much more than the title suggests.
Chapter Three

METHOD

Overview

For centuries, musicians of all calibers have used etudes to improve one or more areas of technique on their instrument of choice. Although they are usually intended to be used by singular musicians in a practice, rather than concert setting, etudes have evolved to include works of substantial compositional and musical quality, rather than just being collections of exercises and technical patterns. This proves true for the *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*, as knowing the compositional and musical design for each etude can greatly influence not only the technical, but musical aspects of a player’s abilities on the trombone.

Through the harmonic, rhythmic, and motivic analysis of five selected etudes by Marcel Bitsch, the inclusion of suggested harmonies as proposed by lead sheet notation, and the creation of accompanimental patterns, students can find solutions to many obstacles presented by the Bitsch etudes. Additionally, the teacher will gain knowledge of a practical, yet creative and explorative method that will help to engage students through creativity within the context of the etudes.

Selection of Etudes

While all 15 etudes are worthy of study, this method was applied to five contrasting etudes. These selections were made to showcase the stylistic variety found in the Bitsch etudes.
The first etude is a wonderful introduction to the Bitsch etudes. The tempo is marked *Rapide* and contains directions to play the melody with a staccato and light style. The choice of meter is fascinating. Listed as 2/4 time, the steady stream of eighth notes contains small asymmetric groupings, with larger groupings beamed across bar lines. This choice of groupings implies an underlying rhythm that does not always fit into the standard 2/4 meter. Despite these rhythmic patterns, the melody itself is modal in nature and creates a playful character.

The third etude is rather slow and expressive, *Avec Soupleesse*, or with flexibility. Tonally, this piece is easier for developing ears to follow, but it is paired with the challenge of the meter alternating between 6/8 and 3/4 time. The rhythms itself are less difficult to comprehend, but present a challenge when melodic lines start on offbeats and in the opposite register than the line that came before.

Although the notation of rhythmic values presented in the fourth etude looks deceivingly challenging, it quickly becomes a favorite of many, as it is written with a percussion-inspired groove in an upbeat tempo. Thankfully, the musician can find stability in the predictable and constant 3/4 meter. Melodically, it is admittedly more difficult to find a tonal center amidst the rapid and frequent shifts in register, not to mention the utilization of less common intervallic leaps. Once the musician is comfortable settling into the groove, arrivals and their accompanying pitch centers become clearer.

The tenth etude is rather unique in style, as it utilizes more silence than many of the other etudes. The tempo is listed at a brisk eighth note equals 200 beats per minute, or *très rapide*. The meter is 5/8, but the groupings of eighth notes are not always clear.
While the frequency of rests could be to blame, the groupings of notes across the bar, as
in the first etude, could also obscure one’s judgment. Rhythmically, thoughts on these
groupings could be left to the performer’s interpretation of how the rhythm interacts with
the melody.

The fourteenth etude, described as *vif*, or bright, gives both an accurate
description of the tempo and character of the piece. The trombone melody is youthful and
playful, built from the joining of arpeggiations and diatonic scales. This character is also
reflected in dynamics, as the lines change suddenly from soft to loud. Throughout the
work, melodies are created through the combination of modes with traditional harmonic
progressions. In terms of rhythmic choices, the notated rhythms are more stabilized and
balanced with the continuous 3+2+2 feel in 7/8 time. The form is highlighted not by
melodicism, but the changing of rhythm in the melody from on-beats to off-beats.

**Analysis of Etudes**

The aspects of each of the five Bitsch etudes that were analyzed are rhythm,
harmony, and motivic development. The rhythmic analysis was determined at first by
meter, and then by comparing immediate preferred subdivisions and rhythmic groupings.
Bitsch tends to write specific instruction in regards to articulation as well, so at times, the
strength and weight of those articulations were used to imagine other underlying
rhythmic patterns that can stabilize the melody. Harmony was frequently addressed by
the usage of scales and how these scales inform the intervals and arpeggios found in the
music. Cadences and other points of arrival also helped to guide one’s harmonic
understanding. All harmonic decisions were determined using standard harmonic and
theoretical practices. Bitsch’s use of motives will also be discussed. This will occur from observing the main melodic idea and reducing it down to smaller fragments, at its core elements. Then, the author will explain how those ideas are expanded throughout the work. Finally, trombone performance-related advice is given in hopes it will aid the trombonist in overcoming the inherent technical and musical obstacles found in the Bitsch etudes. These comments are derived from the author’s personal experiences with performing the etudes, through trial and error and experimentation.

**Development of Creative Accompaniment**

Harmony in Bitsch etudes can sound less predictable when compared to other standard etude or method books. In order to help understand implied harmonies from which Bitsch’s melodies are written, a lead sheet for each of the five selected etudes are provided. With this tool, the teacher will be able to provide or demonstrate the harmony over the course of the etude as the student prepares each piece.

The creation of the lead sheets began with transcribing each etude from the original published edition. This has been completed using standard formatting through notation software, such as Sibelius 7.5.

Alongside the lead sheets, suggested rhythmic patterns are provided. These patterns are derived from fundamental rhythmic patterns found in the etude, determined by the rhythmic analysis. Rhythms used are complementary to those found in the solo line. These patterns can be used in numerous ways, such as clapping, tapping, or singing. When used alongside the lead sheet, the teacher will be able to create a duet to play with the student. The possibilities for collaboration and guided improvement are nearly
endless! Through the use of these resources, the goal for the musician is to be encouraged to feel rhythmically stabilized, while being able to perform in metronomic time (when needed) in order to produce a flowing, natural and easy feel in the performance of the etudes.

Closing Remarks

The Marcel Bitsch *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* are more than just small studies or exercises. They are complete musical works of their own. In the process of learning and performing the etudes, a trombonist can gain extraordinary skills far beyond what is necessary in other performance settings. It is the intention of this essay to provide insight and depth of understanding to the Bitsch etudes and to enable more trombonists to benefit from these daunting, yet highly valuable rhythmic studies.
Chapter Four

ETUDE NO. 1

Performance Aspects

While the Bitsch etudes are not organized by a progressive level of difficulty, *Etude No. 1* may be a reasonable place to begin. The tonality is quite accessible, and at a first glance, the rhythmic patterns used are almost exclusively assembled from variations of quarter notes and eighth notes. On a visual level, this piece appears to be simple and easier to comprehend than that of other etudes in the collection. A straight-forward visual presentation of notated music such as this will not often come across as intimidating to the performer. As a result, Bitsch’s first trombone etude will appear to be within the performer’s reach, and it is usually a welcome challenge.

Regardless of the visual aspect of *Etude No. 1*’s appearance, the trombonist will soon discover the first of several challenges this etude presents. At the top-left hand corner of the first page in the original publication there is additional text that states, “Articulations and Metronome Markings by Gabriel Masson,” (*Articulations et Mouvements Métromoniques de Gabriel Masson*). At the time, Masson was a reputable trombonist who held the position of Soloiste at the Théâtre National de l’Opéra et aux Concerts Colonne.33 At 160 beats per minute (bpm) to the quarter note, this etude is expected to be performed at a rapid tempo.

Fortunately, Masson suggests specific articulations for the trombonist to use, and these techniques can help to achieve this quick tempo. The words *léger* (lightly) and

---

staccato are suggested both at the beginning of the etude and halfway through the piece, at the same time the original theme is reinstated (Example 4.1)

Example 4.1. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*, *Etude No. 1*, mm. 1-6

Aside from articulations, the majority of dynamics remain at a level of piano with occasional outbursts of forte dynamics. These additions to the music come across as a welcome option to the musician, as maintaining lightness in articulation and dynamics can help to produce a beautiful quality of sound.

However, if the suggested tempo is too fast for the performer, they may decide to reduce the listed metronome marking of 160 bpm to a marking of 132-144 bpm. While these numbers seem to differ dramatically, the music is able to maintain the same character and style, while the trombonist will feel less fatigued as the music continues. As a result, the trombonist’s lightness of articulation may also limit the possibility of adding stress in other areas of the body. In music such as this, it is common for the trombone player to add tension in their arm motions or push air in an aggressive manner in an effort to maintain the tempo, and this could obstruct their sound. Achieving a performance tempo of 160 bpm is certainly admirable, but considering that it is unclear whether or not Bitsch had any say in the addition of these metronome markings, as well as giving adequate concern towards which techniques will influence the best quality of sound,
playing at exactly the marked tempo of 160 bpm may not be necessary when trying to achieve the desired musical effect.

Another consideration in trombone technique that can aid the performer in not only quality of sound but also when keeping time is effective breathing. This particular Bitsch etude can be challenging because the lengths of phrases vary in length from a moderately-paced six measures to 12 or more measures without a break. There are a few instances (such as in measure six), when there are clearly marked rests that allow the performer to breathe, but in many cases, there are phrases that are too long to play through in a comfortable manner.

In the case of quickly-paced Bitsch etudes, it is necessary for the trombonist to prepare the location and length of time for their breath to take place. These breaths should be marked in the music to help determine how much air is needed across the length of any phrase. In most cases, this will also help to determine what rhythmic duration is suitable for their breath. Taking these breaths in time will help maintain a consistently steady and brisk tempo.

One other consideration one may take when preparing this etude is the use of alternate positions. Especially in the case of fast-paced pieces of music that require a large amount of traveling with the slide in a short amount of time, using alternate positions can help the trombonist perform at a higher rate of efficiency. This can be a crucial strategy with this piece, especially considering the main tonal areas. Seeing as much of this etude lies outside of keys that utilize flats, this piece requires the trombonist to use most of the slide positions outside of first position. Specifically, the trombonist may find they are traveling the most between third and fourth positions, and playing
notes such as the fifth partial D in flat-fourth position would make the opening phrase easier to execute.

In *Etude No. 1*, Bitsch and Masson take a fascinating approach to communicating musicality to the performer through types of articulation. This is done both through written words and articulation markings, as seen in the first few measures of the piece (Example 4.2).

Example 4.2. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 1*, mm. 1-3

In measure one, the word *léger* (lightly) is used to set the musical tone for the piece, while staccato articulation markings are used to instruct the trombonist on how to achieve the lightness in character. In measure two, we see a loss of the staccato symbols, replaced by the abbreviation of the word *staccato*, placed just before the first instance of an accent. For the remainder of the piece, we do not see any staccato markings, the exception being when the opening phrase returns at the recapitulation, as this musical material begins in the same manner as the opening. It can (and should) be implied that the loss of staccato and replacement of the word itself would take on the same meaning as if the composer or editor had used the word *similie*, and the previously stated articulation would continue for the duration of the piece. Additionally, one may choose to adjust the concept of other
articulations used in this etude, such as the accents and tenutos, in order to fit in with the context of the predetermined light, detached style.

In Bitsch’s first etude for trombone, the various articulations serve a variety of purposes. Traditionally, articulations are used to clarify the beginning of each note. The sound produced comes across as more immediate, and the definition of the beginning of the note helps to give energy and direction to phrases. This is not unlike how articulations are used in this etude, but the consistency of these articulations can be applied to rhythmic patterns in the etude (Example 4.3).

Example 4.3. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 1*, mm. 19-22

Not only do the articulations clarify the beginnings of individual notes, but Bitsch uses them to isolate separate musical events, often highlighting crucial rhythmic structures through his use of beaming. One can see that regardless of the organization of measures, the melodic line is beamed with three eighth notes at a time, even if that means carrying a beam into the next measure. In measure 19, we can see that Bitsch has composed melodic lines that uses pitch patterns that coincide with different rhythmic patterns. Through the use of accents, this pattern aids in effective communication of melodic and rhythmic ideas. When performing this pattern, the trombonist might choose to feel this section not as eighth notes in 2/4 time, but as an eighth note subdivision of dotted-quarter notes in 12/8 time (Example 4.4).
Dynamics often play an underrated role in the effective performance of many compositions. They help to establish the mood, character, and energy of the music just as well as any other musical feature. This is the case with *Etude No. 1*, despite the lack of variety in dynamic levels. Amongst the 86 measures in the etude, there are seven mentions of the piano dynamic and only two instances that are clearly marked forte. While there are other dynamic markings, such as the occasional crescendo and diminuendo, oftentimes, they lead back to the previously established piano dynamic (Example 4.5).

This presents an interesting challenge to the trombonist, as one must attempt to play each soft dynamic at a consistent volume while playing with little to no breaks. The farther the musician investigates this etude, the more difficult maintaining this soft dynamic
becomes, as playing at a louder dynamic might feel more familiar or comfortable. It can be easy for one to perform incorrect dynamics, (such as playing louder than what is indicated) due to the building of anticipation to the ends of difficult phrases or because of their own performance anxiety. At times, playing mindlessly in this manner can encourage bad habits to develop over time.

Maintaining a steady, quiet dynamic demands a great sense of control from the trombonist. Developing the muscle memory required to perform this Bitsch etude at the highest level requires careful, effective practice strategies from the musician. When studying dynamics in this etude, it can be an efficient use of time to determine the individual’s highest and lowest comfortable volume within their practice sessions. If the musician finds they are more comfortable in one extreme dynamic than the other, they may choose to slowly reduce or increase dynamic levels in this etude once security is reached, as they see fit. Then, as one practices playing the piece in its completion, the musician should stop themselves once they are playing outside of the realm of the acceptable dynamics in the written music. This will ensure they are not training their body and brain to recall incorrect information in performance!

Lastly, when practicing this etude, it is important to take the written range of pitches into consideration when trying to keep dynamics steady and even. In this manner, notes in the middle to low register will need more air and presence in order to sound as present as the upper register. The addition of slight crescendos and decrescendos as needed may feel like too much to the trombonist at first, but will help project a better sense of evenness across the phrases. Amongst all of the challenges Etude No. 1 presents
to the trombonist, this piece has a way of proving that supreme efficiency and control of technique will serve their musical and artistic endeavors.

**Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions**

The first etude in the collection of *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* portrays itself as an inviting, upbeat piece of music. Although the tempo is rather brisk, the harmony and rhythm work together well in order to allow for a greater sense of stability, making this piece well-rounded, enjoyable, and immediately accessible. The harmonies used are predominantly major in tonality, and even when these tonal centers move, it is often in a way that is structurally organized by phrase or rhythmic motif. These rhythmic patterns and phrases are almost entirely comprised of steady and lightly placed eighth notes. This projects a sense of brightness that aligns well with the major tonality, and the performer will see through to the end of this challenging work.

The opening phrase sets the tone and character of the etude, in the key of G-Major (Example 4.1). This is a key signature that works particularly well for the trombone, as it sits comfortably in the range of the instrument that allows for ease in the projection of sound and has the ability to easily extend the range of the instrument towards the upper and lower registers. For the first four phrases, the melody is composed within this key using traditional tonic, dominant, and predominant harmonies. Soon after, the harmony develops in a way that sounds and feels complicated at first, mostly due to the addition of wider intervalllic ranges and the inclusion of several accidentals. However, this section is composed in a very systematic, structured manner (Example 4.6).
The developmental section borrows harmonies from several other keys, switching from E-minor, E-flat Major, C-Major, A-flat Major, and D-Major. This may not seem transparent at first, but with a closer look, one can see in regards to note choices, there is a clear sense of order. As seen in Example 4.6, each brief tonicization includes six eighth notes, grouped as triplets, as if it was designed to have a 6/8 metered feel. Each note in the pattern either starts with the tonic of the scale, or in the note before or after the tonic, encapsulating the tonic of the scale being used. From there, the contour of the pattern is similar, as each grouping ascends. This leads to a brief cadence in C-Major, a perfect fourth away from the home key. Later, in measures 30 through 38, the development section continues with a similar pattern. However, this time the most important tonalities are A-flat and D-Major (the dominant, in relation to the home key). This is an important combination, as highlighting this tritone interval within the use of these scales builds suspense for the recapitulation that is soon to come.

Leading up to the recapitulation, we arrive in G-Major and continue the triplet feel as demonstrated in the beginning of the development section. This time, the subdivisions are extended to quarter note triplets and successive dotted quarter notes,
held over the bar. The rest of the form resembles the first half, but uses slightly different tonal areas, like the B-flat Major and E-Major sections, instead of the A-flat and D-Major sections. From then on, the tonal areas relax and return to a mostly G-Major tonality, but this time with a rhythmic spin. The final coda is in G-Major, but the previous ascending pattern starts at the tonic’s upper octave and leaps downward, alongside a rhythmic subdivision of 3+5 and 4+4. As the piece concludes, the same note durations that lead the music into the recapitulation ends with a steady stream of dotted half notes, continuing to emphasize the feeling of the triplet over the top of what is normally considered a standard duple meter.

There are several steps a teacher can take to make their student feel more comfortable when learning what is likely to be their first Bitsch etude. While any moment of this etude has the potential to produce anxiety in the mind and tension in the body, it is even more likely to occur during the development section, where not only the register and intervals change direction quickly, but harmonies also change rapidly. These can be intimidating and hard to hear if the student does not know what to listen for! In this case, the teacher can help immensely by acting as a tuning drone (Example 4.7).

Example 4.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,*

*Etude No. 1,* mm. 19-27, rewritten as tuning drones on the root of the chord

By providing a drone, the student will be able to correct intonation in relation to another stable pitch. Also, highlighting the various tonal centers will help demystify the creation
of the melody. With this developmental section, as much as it is important to play the passages at as high a level as possible, it is just as important to realize the music’s value. The student should aim to realize the notes that are written are not chosen at random, and they have a valuable function.

If the teacher hears that the student has an anxious or tense-sounding tone not just through the development section, but in the opening as well, they may choose to take a different approach (Example 4.8).

Example 4.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 1*, mm. 1-6, rewritten as an eighth-note subdivision on the tonic pitch

This may seem like a simple exercise. Once the student hears a very simple, stable, and predictable bass line underneath their active melody, they will be encouraged to play in proper time, so as not to beat the secondary part to each downbeat. Doing so will also affect their perception of the piece, as hearing this pattern in a drone will lead them to feel the etude in one, rather than in two, or in just eighth note subdivisions.

The teacher may also find their student struggles to play with expression when the rhythmic patterns are repetitive. In the early stages of learning this piece, the teacher may choose to play a pattern similar to the drone in Example 4.8, but with slightly more motion while providing a harmonic backdrop (Example 4.9).
Once the student is feeling a bit more settled with their technical ability to play this piece, the teacher may choose to encourage more melodic expression by playing very similar music in the form of a duet, such as with the same rhythm but with the melody in thirds (Example 4.10).

This way, each musician is an active duet partner, as their lines mirror each other. As duet partners, the student will be inspired to listen for the teacher for guidance with expression within the constant eighth note subdivision.

Besides learning how to subdivide *Etude No. 1* in variations of eighth, quarter, and half notes, it is also important to take good care of the triplet feel. As previously stated, there is an underlying triple feel within the duple meter, and this can be seen with eighth note triplets that cross over downbeats, as quarter note triplets within one full measure, and dotted quarter notes. To make sure eighth note triplets are steady, one could
simplify the eighth note subdivisions in measure 19 and reimagine them as dotted quarter notes in 6/8 or 12/8 time. This will help stabilize this section so the trombonist will naturally emphasize the compositional and metric pattern, while stabilizing their tempo. However, when the triplet subdivision begins at measure 39, the trombonist may be tempted to slow down (Example 4.11).

Example 4.11. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 1*, mm. 39-42, rewritten with a new meter

By feeling this section as if these three notes are part of one whole measure, they gain a greater sense of musical purpose. Without this motion, each note could possibly be played with equal weight and without a sense of motion towards the arrival of the uplifting main theme.
Chapter Five

ETUDE NO. 3

Performance Aspects

When most instrumentalists think of Bitsch’s compositional style, especially in regards to his rhythmic etudes, very rarely would one imagine the sound of his Etude No. 3 for trombone. This is one of the few beautiful, lyrical pieces featured in the collection of fifteen etudes. The melody is very tonal and accessible to the listener, while the trombonist appreciates its B-flat key signature, as the instrument can achieve optimal resonance in its home key. Meanwhile, the tempo is comfortable at 52 bpm to the dotted quarter note, and a friendly dose of rubato and other means of expression are encouraged by the direction Avec Souplesse (with flexibility). With permission to be freely expressive granted, this etude serves as a great exercise to improve one’s sense of fluidity of expression while still maintaining rhythmic integrity.

Arguably the largest reason why Etude No. 3 is so well-suited for the trombone is due to its vocal-like melodic style. Trombonists tend to naturally be drawn to vocal music because the smooth, scalar passages, often seasoned with romantic melodic leaps that are so widely found in vocal repertoire align with the trombone’s greatest mechanical strengths. Unimpeded by the limitations of valves, among the trombone’s greatest strengths is its ability to be played as smoothly as possible. This asset makes the diatonic passages in this etude rewarding to navigate, but with this comes the responsibility of making each note sound graceful and even in execution (Example 5.1).

---

34 Marcel Bitsch, Quinze Études de Rhythmme pour Trombone, Paris: Alfonse Leduc, 1956.
A clear demonstration of this melodic, vocal style can be found in the opening gesture. To the non-trombonist, there would be no reason why this passage wouldn’t be equally smooth across these notes. However, to the trombonist, the initial F to G can be tricky because these notes are a relatively far distance away from each other. On the slide, as they are located in first and fourth position. The notes that follow, B-flat – A – G all lie on the same partial, meaning that no unnecessary bumps in the sound can occur when changing partials, such as seen in the opening F to G. Therefore, the trombonist has to aim for not just making these melodic lines sound even, but making the challenging sections as smooth as the sections that naturally feel a bit easier.

To achieve this, the player should always remember that an even, continuously flowing output of air will directly relate to the evenness of sound produced. When applying this to the music in the first measure, the slide will need to travel from first to fourth position at the appropriate time. The most efficient way to improve on both of these factors at once is to play this line using a glissando. This way, the player is able to keep the air steady, untouched, and unaffected by articulation, while being able to hear if the slide motions allow for a timely arrival. Once the tone production on each note is even and the musician can demonstrate success in this exercise, they can move on to adding the necessary articulations on intervals that cannot be played by a natural slur.
Etude No. 3, with its romantic character, features many descending leaps in large intervals, presenting another challenge to the trombonist. As previously stated, some of the most rewarding passages on trombone are melodic lines that ascend or descend by step. This can arguably be a result of the shape of the instrument, since notes that move by step are usually closer together on the slide. On the contrary, wider intervallic relationships can be tricky to manipulate on the trombone because the slide positions can be far apart, as well as the distance between partials. The first instance of this compositional feature can be found in the introduction of the piece, in measures seven and eight (Example 5.2).

Example 5.2. Marcel Bitsch, Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone, Etude No. 3, mm. 7-8

This example features not only one, but two descending leaps by the distance of an octave. When performing these measures, the trombonist will likely encounter two obstacles: making the three G’s sound even in dynamic register and getting them to “speak” on time. In measure eight, Bitsch writes G’s in three octaves (G4, G3, and G2), with the last two pitches joined by a slur with a decrescendo. If the trombonist was to keep the quantity of air the same with all three notes, this decrescendo would be heard as a result of the higher register notes sounding more present than low register notes. The phrase following these descending octave leaps begins at a piano dynamic, coincidentally
the same dynamic as the beginning of the piece. To make these dynamics even, the trombonist may have to make the effect of the decrescendo less obvious and use more air on low register notes, so as not to let the dynamics disappear completely.

Attempting to play these three octaves within in a short duration of time also presents another challenge to the trombonist. For many experienced trombonists, this particular range from G2 to G4 is not challenging on its own but becomes more difficult given the context. To improve their tone on the instrument, it is first important to gain muscle memory when recalling the accurate placement of these notes. Mastering the technique of locking into the center of the pitch as soon as possible will prove to be helpful. This can be done using several methods, such as singing the pitches alongside a reference pitch, buzzing on the mouthpiece, and playing them as long tones over an extended period of time. When it becomes time to work on the response time of these notes, it will be imperative to switch between each octave as fast as possible, and if changing slide positions, to make sure this adjustment is completed rhythmically and in the same manner. If adjusting slide positions for the highest G is too problematic, the musician may choose to play it in the alternate position (fourth) along with the lower octave pitches.

The trombonist may also find the use of alternate positions to be a suitable solution to making these beautiful melodies as graceful as possible. Since the majority of this piece revolves around the modes relating to B-flat-Major, many of these preferred alternates lie in fourth position (Example 5.3).
Example 5.3. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 15-19, rewritten with additional suggested alternate positions

Example 5.3 shows a five measure excerpt from the etude with several additional markings. A few of these alternate slide positions are suggested by Masson, as seen in the original publication. However, the author has chosen to include several other options for alternate slide positions. These are notated with parentheses. If this passage was to be performed with the standard positions, there would be lots of unnecessary motion across a far distance on the slide. However, when incorporating alternate positions, one is able to play this passage smoother and more efficiently. For example, with the flat-fourth position D to flat-third position E-flat, keeping notes that are a half-step away in positions on the same partial allow for an even, glossy sound. This is a result of maintaining the air stream with minimal obstructions.

The last element to improve the performance of *Etude No. 3* can truly take this piece of music from an etude with the purpose of exercising one specific task to an etude with the expressive depth as those of Chopin is rubato. Rubato, commonly understood as a method of expression through the temporary adjusting of tempo, is not only musically appropriate with this piece, but is encouraged through the implication of the descriptive text above the the first few measures. At the top of the page, Bitsch guides the performer
to play *avec souplesse* (with flexibility). Although this can be applied throughout this piece, it may be easiest to first apply this in measure 31 to make a dramatic, relaxing effect before the recapitulation of the main theme (Example 5.4).

Example 5.4. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 30-33

While this could mean that an adequate level of flexibility in the lips is required to navigate the melodic lines, the mature musician would incorporate their unique sense of melodic expression through the pushing and pulling of tempi whenever it is appropriate to do so. It may take time and patience for the musician to discover the ideal individualistic expression of the music, but the process will be well worth the effort. First, it is of primary importance to internalize and master the music at the written tempo, with no adjustments. They may also find it to be beneficial to then play the same music at other tempos, both slightly slower and faster so they can feel equally comfortable with their technique when adjusting the tempos at will. Following this step, the player should then practice the music at their preferred, moderate tempo, and incorporate tempo adjustments intuitively, on the spot. Experimentation should be encouraged, as performing music in very different ways could lead to rewarding musical discoveries.
Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions

In some ways, Bitsch’s third etude for trombone is similar to his first. The tonality in both is accessible and easier to comprehend than others in this publication. It is also composed in the ideal key signature for trombones. The key of B-flat is well placed on the instrument and can best demonstrate a large range with the ability to satisfy the capabilities for optimum resonance on the instrument. One advantage to the performer in this etude is the tempo preference. For many, the written tempo of 52 bpm to the dotted-quarter note will feel neither too fast, nor too slow. There becomes a time when learning a piece of music that one realizes a composition is written in a way that projects the perfect balance between challenging material and comforting material. This leaves the performer in the ideal circumstances when performing, so they feel both confident in their abilities and focused to do what is necessary to do the job as well as possible in the moment. Bitsch’s Etude No. 3 for trombone is one of these pieces.

Harmonically, while this piece presents itself as tonally pleasant, the color palette used is much darker through the use of modes. While Etude No. 1 uses mostly Ionian mode, Etude No. 3 uses mainly Ionian, Aeolian, and Phrygian. These modes bring these darker shades to the forefront of the overall color palette and provide significantly more depth, rather than just relying on the bright, happy sounds of major tonalities. Melodically, the step-wise motion found in each of these modes can allow the trombonist to naturally stay in tune with oneself. However, in the interest of bringing out the complexity in Bitsch’s harmonic choices, the trombonist can improve their ability to be expressive and bring their musicianship skills to a higher level by emphasizing which notes are characteristic of its mode. Highlighting these compositional decisions in
performance will bring out the music’s intended character, resulting in a more honest depiction and engaging performance.

While the harmony in this etude is bound to feel accessible, so can the rhythm, for better or for worse. With such a reasonable tempo suggestion, the rhythmic choices of this piece can feel not only comfortable, but almost too comfortable. If the performer chooses to interpret and play with an intuitively-driven style, without subdividing with great care, certain passages can influence the tempo to adjust in either direction. For example, there are several passages that are composed using scales that contain many notes that lie in close proximity on the slide, and not only that, they are composed using smaller note values (Example 5.2). The player could then be tempted to speed up the tempo, and just the opposite, they can slow down the tempo that uses scales with intervals that are more spread apart. Overall, the harmony and rhythm work together to create a lyrical, fluid feel. They should feel they have permission to be flexible with time, as long as the music is played with a purpose and meaning.

The most recognizable and defining rhythmic element resides in the interpretation of rhythmic feel based on the placement of time signatures. This etude presents the alternating time signatures of 6/8 and 3/4. Therefore, the most ideal subdivision for the trombonist to use in preparing this music is the eighth note subdivision, as it provides an easy way to keep track of the larger subdivision (the dotted quarter note in 6/8 time, and the quarter note in 3/4 time). The musician may notice the smallest subdivision written in this music is the sixteenth note. While it may seem worthwhile to use this division of time as the method of subdivision, one may find this constant subdivision to be unnecessarily micromanaging the treatment of rhythm and could promote unnecessary
Regardless of the subdivision chosen by the performer, they will find keeping a steady subdivision promotes more equal treatment of the two time signatures.

When learning this piece for the first time, one must start practicing slowly, with rhythmic accuracy at the forefront. The student should be able to do this on their own with the assistance of a metronome, but to further help in efficiency, the teacher can join in the fun of music making (Example 5.5).

Example 5.5. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*, 

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 1-4, rewritten as subdivisions on the root of the chord

Here, the teacher can act as a melodic metronome, providing a constant subdivision, using pitches that create a comfortable bass line for the student to play alongside. With this example, the teacher’s main focus should be to play the subdivision as steadily in time as possible, with no expression. Hearing the steady backbeat with no accents will promote a sense of calmness and allow for lyricism to come out. Within this step, the player may find 6/8 time tends to slow, while 3/4 tends to increase the tempo unintentionally, likely because the duple meters could be commonly seen, used, and therefore, comfortable. Practicing with this predictable style will eventually help the musician focus on other tasks to improve upon.

While this etude could be subdivided into groups of six eighth notes for the entirety of this piece, the trombonist will eventually feel comfortable not only utilizing this subdivision, but performing with a different emphasis depending on the meter that is
implied. Throughout the piece, music is composed to feel both 6/8 and 3/4 time-feels, with the implied emphasis alternating equally. The teacher can help highlight these meter changes (Example 5.6).

Example 5.6. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 1-4, rewritten with subdivisions of meter changes on the root of the chord

Example 5.6 is of the same first four bars of the etude, with the teacher subdividing in eighth notes to the bass line. Each eighth note is grouped according to the accompanying meter, and should be performed with emphasis and clarity. This will continue to help the student stay in time with a gentle reminder of each downbeat. Along with the proper rhythmic and metric emphasis, expression markings (such as dynamics and slurs) are included, and tenutos are added. This will encourage the student to play with an open tone and the ability to glide through the partials and across the length of the slide.

As previously discussed, one of the main challenges with this etude is the ability to be rhythmically stable while still being expressive. To aid in this endeavor, the teacher can create a simple rhythmic duet. For example, they may choose to create a line that outlines the harmony of the etude besides using the bass line, while using a rhythm pattern that emphasizes the two meters in the opposite order (Example 5.7).

Example 5.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,
Etude No. 3, mm. 1-4, rewritten as a duet using subdivisions of alternate meter changes

A musician who is not yet secure with the written melody in the etude might struggle with this example. While it seems simple and not too different from Example 5.6, changing the metric emphasis could cause insecurity in some students, resulting in a sound that is no longer expressive, but instead relies on basic technique to get by.

Measures 26 and 27 feature a very different rhythmic feel for a brief time. The majority of the etude features rhythms that are straightforward, but these measures use more syncopations and use subdivisions of a 4 against 3 feel. Also, the melody is built from a descending Phrygian scale. This is the first time this is used in the etude, where all harmonies up to this point have been crafted from Ionian and Aeolian scales. The teacher can help the student execute this moment flawlessly through the use of drones with a simplified accompanimental rhythmic pattern (Example 5.8).

Example 5.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 3*, mm. 26-27,

rewritten to demonstrate rhythmic feel using the root of the chord

This hemiola is particularly exciting and provides a much needed energizing, passionate moment to the music. While it is fun to play and feels enjoyable, it requires significant
focus from the musician. One should be so well focused, the distraction from the 4 against 3 feel should not be an issue. The tendency with this moment may be to rush the descending eighth notes, especially those that follow a sixteenth note. The musician should aim to land each eighth note and sixteenth note in time. If one has trouble with this 4 against 3 feel, they should practice clapping or vocalizing the rhythmic example in 5.8 to a metronome set on an eighth note subdivision. Harmonically speaking, the player should practice playing each note of the G-Phrygian scale along to a tuning drone, such as in Example 5.8, while not shying away from intervals that are less consonant like the defining minor second interval. Small moments like these create a certain feeling, and they show us that there is not one certain way to play in any meter while also teaching the importance of harmonic tension and release. Once this is mastered, they should have a stronger idea of personal expression.

Finally, the brief musical direction of Avec Souplese (with flexibility) provided in this etude allows for the trombonist to be more expressive. One could interpret this as flexibility with time. There are several ways to go about adding this technique into one’s musical arsenal. One of the easiest and most standard places to start is to incorporate a slight ritard in Etude No. 3 at the completion of measure 31 (Example 5.9).

Example 5.9. Marcel Bitsch, Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,

Etude No. 3, mm. 30-33, rewritten as a duet using subdivisions
While Example 5.4 shows the written music at this moment, Example 5.9 shows a way for the teacher to guide the sensation of a ritard through changing rhythmic durations. Placing a ritard in measure 31 works musically because it lands on a half cadence at a moment of great suspense, right before the recapitulation of the main theme, soon to be played in a new key. This ritardando, as well as accelerandos, should happen gradually and at a measurable rate. The teacher’s suggested part in Example 5.9 contains notes that get smaller in duration, but do not sound out of place because the note values lengthen when tempos decrease. As the student continues to experiment with the placement of ritardandos and accelerandos, they should remember that gradual change often sounds the most pleasant. The balance of placement within the piece is important, too. Accelerandos, when coming out of nowhere, will feel too frantic unless it is prepared with a strong ritardando immediately before. Overall, the musician should aim to adjust tempos based on their artistic concept of the music. Should this sound like a sad love song, or one of mischief and mystery? They may find this expressive flexibility can be the final touch to making this music come alive.
Chapter Six

ETUDE NO. 4

Performance Aspects

Bitsch’s Etude No. 4 is a popular choice for many trombonists studying the collection of Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone. While the intervallic relationships between notes are the most challenging up to this point in the book, the musician is rewarded for their efforts by playing them within the confines of a fascinating rhythmic groove. With a tempo listed at a recommended 88 bpm to the quarter note, the trombonist will find the divisions of sixteenth notes that comprise this etude will move along at a pace that lands between the borders of comfortable and nearly unmanageable, making for a great lesson in mental strength and concentration in the execution of notes across a wide range. Aside from rhythmic interests, it is in this etude where the assortment of articulations makes what could be a quirky, eccentric groove of a melody into a graceful and powerful piece of music.

This etude also utilizes frequent and significant changes in articulation to continuously satisfy interest in the melody. The trombonist can take full advantage of the palette of moods that articulations can create that would otherwise be lacking in flavor. The three main types of articulations used in this etude are accents, staccatissimo, and tenutos. For the majority of the piece, in any one measure, these articulations are used either alone or paired with one other articulation. Finally, all three come together three measures prior the end, in measure 46 (Example 6.1)
The manner in which these three articulations come together is important to the overall growth of the composition. To understand the music in this etude at a deeper level, we must look at how each individual choice of articulation is used to develop the growth of phrases in this etude and how they can be approached when using the trombone.

The first articulation introduced in *Etude No. 3* is the accent. The accent is used to enhance the important pitches and structural elements in musical phrases. In this piece, and in any other piece of music that requires accents, its main function is to help these features stand out from the surrounding material. In measures five into six, accents are used to bring one’s attention back to the tonic pitch (G) after a brief harmonic diversion, providing stability in one’s aural understanding of the phrase (Example 6.2).

As the etude continues, the accent begins to fall out of favor, instead providing room for other articulations to help highlight the structure of the piece. The only other times the accent makes an appearance is at the recapitulation of this theme and in the last few
measures of the piece. Similar to its first sighting, the accents are used to reference other important pitches.

To play these accents effectively, it is important to understand how they function in regards to rhythm. In all cases (with the exception of one) in this particular etude, accents fall within a syncopation or off-beat. In terms of duration, while it may be appropriate to lengthen an accent in other styles of music, it should be avoided in Etude No. 4. Otherwise, the trombonist risks falling behind the beat. To keep rhythmic integrity a priority in this piece, it is best to approach these accents with more precision and energy at the front of the note by means of a high-quality, energized release of air.

One of the more common articulations found in this etude is the staccatissimo. Best characterized as being shorter in length and more separated than the usual staccato, but not used in an accentuating manner like the marcato, the staccatissimo is the articulation that best exemplifies the French style. Due to length being its strongest defining feature, this articulation is a helpful tool in maintaining a steady tempo. In Bitsch’s fourth etude for trombone, staccatissimos, while being an extreme depiction of shortness in length, are most often used in the extremes of the registers (Example 6.3).

Example 6.3. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4, mm. 16-17*
Measures 16 and 17 demonstrate the use of staccatissimo in the upper register. The application of the staccatissimo at the end of a gesture as it releases into silence brings attention to this particular motive.

Playing in the high register presents its own challenge to the trombonist, let alone needing to play these notes as short as possible while still producing a beautiful tone. For the best quality staccatissimo effect, approach with a small, concentrated stream of air through a slightly smaller embouchure. Following the articulation, immediately release the air. When imagining this sound prior to producing the note, it will be best to hear the sound as being mostly dry. However, once this staccatissimo is applied in the lower register, such as in the last four measures of the piece, the player might consider allowing these articulations to be produced with a slightly more resonant sound than in the upper register, otherwise the tone risks having a dull and lifeless quality.

Finally, one of the more frequently used articulations in this etude is the tenuto. Similar in purpose to the staccatissimo, the tenuto’s defining element also lies in its length, but in this case, the tenuto is best defined at the other end of the spectrum. In comparison to a normal, unmarked note, a tenuto is longer, has a broader sound, and at times may connect to another note. In this etude, it is often used when a motive uses the repetition of a specific contour, but later repeats the same contoured motive with slightly altered pitches, such as in a sequential harmonic pattern (Example 6.4).
In regards to Bitsch’s compositional style, each etude tends to have a developmental section which features some of the more active and awkward-feeling technical music. This section, which is often the main climax of the piece, is typically built from a stream of steady sixteenth notes. At times, these can also feature descending intervallic patterns. In *Etude No. 4*, this occurs through measure 28 and 29. In a musical passage such as this one, there is no need to overplay or work too hard in terms of dynamics or expression. This musical material is already constructed in such a contrasting manner from the opening theme that it is bound to stand out on its own! Therefore, when the musician encounters an area such as this one, they should just focus on playing the material with a style that is consistent and effortless so any unnecessary styling and shaping allows for the rapidly changing harmony becomes the highlighted feature.

One of several defining features in this etude is not only the unique rhythmic groove, but the abundance of large intervallic leaps. This is not a common feature of music written for the trombone since the trombone functions most effectively when used in a diatonic or vocal-like manner. Performing many consecutive large leaps such as those demonstrated in this etude can generate a large barrier to overcome. The first step in tackling this is to identify the troublesome intervals and be able to understand and reproduce these pitches at will. Playing these notes on piano while singing can be a
dependable tool in this process! Hearing the correct distance between notes can help the trombonist prepare for the adjustments that are needed to give each note the weight and space in time it requires. If the musician senses they are over or under-shooting this distance, it can also be helpful to buzz these pitches, then returning the mouthpiece to the receiver in order to play the same pitches on the trombone. If the musician is still experiencing difficulty with reaching the upper register from large ascending leaps, giving more weight and length to the preceding lower pitch will help provide the momentum and velocity in the air that the high register requires (Example 6.4).

**Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions**

*Etude No. 4* is just as enjoyable to listen to as it is exciting and exhilarating to play. It’s energetic, fast-paced, and has so much rhythmic and harmonic variety to keep the listener interested and engaged. However, this means the process of learning this etude could potentially be more time consuming and more demanding.

The form of this etude is less standard than in other etudes. The specific form is more difficult to define because the material is always moving and rarely stays static, both in terms of harmony and rhythm. There are a few main themes that are all rhythmically related to one another, and several times when a similar key signature will arise with familiar material, but there is no section that has a true, standard recapitulation that lasts for very long. However, for the musician’s intents and purposes, this etude could be understood as a piece of music in a general ABA form with several significant moments of developmental material throughout that the musician should aim to clarify for whomever is listening.
Measure one introduces a leaping, syncopated melody that becomes the main theme in G-harmonic minor, lasting for three measures. The consequent phrase begins with similar material as the opening, but then it acts as a melodic reaction to the opening, lasting twice as long. The key area here is in F-Major. While this seems less related to G-minor, it actually functions as the dominant of the relative major of the G-minor theme. From here, new material is introduced and the harmony begins to cycle around the circle of fourths. It lands on brief tonicizations of G-Diminished and C-Phrygian, as well as A-Aeolian and E-Diminished. More developmental material is included after this transition. After this action and commotion, the music begins to use alternating diminished and major tonalities with bass motion that moves in smaller intervals. In this developmental period, the bass motion moves between intervals of a minor second and a major third, while in the A section, the bass motion was mostly moving by larger intervals, such as by perfect fourths.

The first instance of E-diminished harmony in measure 18 is significant. While other melodic material begins to shift in other keys, it frequently will make a brief visit back to E-diminished, especially through frequent moments utilizing A-harmonic minor. The largest climactic moment occurs in measure 36 with a cadence in C-Major, and immediately following this is what could be considered the final recapitulation. Measure 39 contains melodic material in G-harmonic minor using the opening theme, with the rhythm off by one quarter note. Following this, the music slowly and gently prepares a decline in both pitch and rhythmic intensity. After this gradual drop-off, the piece relaxes into a familiar tonic to predominant to dominant harmony, completing the piece with a slower arpeggiation of the G-minor triad, in a manner similar to Etude No. 1.
Rhythmically speaking, this piece feels the most natural and comfortable when feeling the music with quarter notes. While micromanaging each note within the confines of a sixteenth note subdivision could help one stay metronomically in time, feeling the music in quarter notes will allow the musician to feel more relaxed, thus allowing the music to be released in a way that feels freeing, rather than uptight and anxious (Example 6.5).

Example 6.5. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4*, mm. 1-2, rewritten as a bass line using quarter notes

When playing this etude, the player should imagine the sensation and sound of a string bass pizzicato. This is the perfect moment for the teacher to demonstrate this sound and feeling to their student! Both musicians should aim to keep the articulation precise while releasing a warm, rounded sound.

There are many opportunities in this piece for the student to waver outside of a strict tempo. This can easily occur right from the first measure, as the student’s first note is off of the downbeat, and the second note is one sixteenth note after the next beat. If they do not feel entirely stable, they may be set up to feel many occasions of a shaky tempo that will only impede them from performing other technical tasks. While feeling a quarter note pulse is crucial to feel relaxed throughout this piece, if the player is too relaxed and is slowing down upon the completion of rests, it may be necessary for them
to begin understanding the rhythmic drive that can be found through an eighth note subdivision (Example 6.6).

Example 6.6. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,*

*Etude No. 4,* mm. 1-2, rewritten as a bass line using eighth notes

Situations may arise where the student will need to subdivide in sixteenth notes. This is, of course, always encouraged, as the goal with these rhythmic etudes is to always be in control of the divisions of time by whatever means are necessary. Some students may find subdividing at an even smaller level, such as a sixteenth, will be helpful, especially considering the number of sixteenth note passages in this etude (Example 6.7).

Example 6.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,*

*Etude No. 4,* mm. 17-18,

rewritten as a sixteenth note subdivision using the root of the chord

Example 6.7 shows a short exercise utilizing sixteenth notes. One may notice the addition of tenuto markings on first sixteenth note of every beat, aligning with each change in chord. While this is not written into the original music, this may be helpful when practicing. The frequency and consistent use of a tenuto in this exercise will encourage
the trombonist to play with more air and weight into the first portion of the beat, and this ability to begin each section with a healthy sound will provide the momentum that will be much easier to carry throughout subsequent phrases. When one is ready to return back to the written music, they should always keep the concept of steady, healthy air usage in mind. If this is not of a top priority, one could rely on creating an overly “pecky” and aggressive sound.

Measures 20-23 (like measures 13-16) are stunning moments in this etude. While much of the piece moves along and advances quickly, these few moments provide a much needed oasis from the busy hustle of the other surrounding musical phrases. When performing this composition, it is important that this contrast is clearly presented to the listener, as it makes the piece more well-rounded (Example 6.8, Example 6.9).

Example 6.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4, mm. 20-23,*

rewritten as quarter notes on beats one and three using the root of the chord

---

Example 6.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 4, mm. 20-23,*

rewritten as quarter notes on beats one and three using the root of the chord.
Example 6.9. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,*

*Etude No. 4,* mm. 20-23,

rewritten as a duet using a two measure pattern, with quarter notes on beats one and three,

followed by the inclusion of eighth notes on beats two of the following measure

![Sheet Music]

The exercises provided in Examples 6.8 and 6.9 are presented together in order to satisfy both rhythmic obstacles brought about by this short, pivotal phrase. Essentially, the phrase is built from two ideas: one measure that showcases the trombonist’s beauty of sound through sustained tones, and the other measure that showcases the technical skills needed to navigate through a wide range in a short amount of time.

To satisfy these demands, Example 6.8 shows quarter notes on beat one and three, with a tenuto marking on beat one and a light crescendo moving from beat three to the start of the following measure. Since the original music has these long notes occurring off of the downbeat, the tendency may be to slow down too much. By having an accompanimental pattern play right on the downbeats, the student will learn to respond quicker to the demands of the tempo, not allowing them to slow down so much that the music sounds out of place and out of context. Meanwhile, in the next measure, the music is much more active. The tendency here may be to speed up through these sixteenth notes, often times making up for time lost in the previous measure. To improve the performance of this measure, the accompaniment should simply play a quarter note
downbeat alongside the student, while subdividing solidly placed eighth notes through
the next beat when the student might have the urge to speed through, while waiting for
the right moment to finish the phrase.
Chapter Seven

ETUDE NO. 10

Performance Aspects

For many trombonists, Etude No. 10 might be the most intimidating. It presents itself as a pointillistic, atonal-sounding piece of music with no clear melody that lies in an uncomfortable time signature, giving no hints as to what the ideal subdivision would be. All of these details and more can discourage a musician attempting to work on this piece. However, one must always remember that notation is only a tool used to make music. Music does not lie in the notation itself. This chapter is especially dedicated to the trombonist that is not able to see the beauty in the composition of this etude, that they may discover the value of the music, the process, and their mind for allowing them to be on this particular journey. Accomplishing a strong performance of this etude will only strengthen one’s ability to tackle a wider range of styles in music.

It can be understood that the purpose of an etude is to act as a means of teaching the musician a skill through the practical use of music. With Etude No. 10, there are endless possibilities for areas of growth! The most visible lesson to the trombonist is learning how to play in this pointillistic musical style. In this style, notes are often presented in a more isolated, vertical manner, rather than the linear melodic lines one may be used to. Pointillism does not always lend itself to be easily idiomatic on the trombone. The trombone can often sound its best when melodic lines are composed with a vocal-like style, with connected, smooth scale patterns. Unfortunately, this piece has none of these things. Therefore, if one wants to sound their best, they should still aim to find those qualities in this piece, regardless of its immediate accessibility.
Example 7.1. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10, mm. 1-5*

Example 7.1 shows the first phrase of the etude. At five measures in length, one can see it is not composed within the most common phrase structure patterns, as the player may be more used to seeing melodic phrases of four measures in length. Also, one can see there are many instances of playing a single note followed by several rests. Oftentimes, the next note to follow is a large distance away from the note it came from. This is where hearing the pitch of the note before it is played is crucial! It is much easier to predict the pitches in scalar passages. When notes are separated (noting the term *staccato* in the musical directions) the musician must remain focused and rely on their aural skills to hear the intervallic distances between notes. When struggling to locate the placement or “slot” of a note when playing this excerpt, the trombonist should remember that these notes do not need to be too short, as *staccato* merely means *separated*, and these notes are inherently separated by the numerous opportunities for silence. The musician is encouraged to lengthen the target of these notes so as to increase accuracy.

With music that has so many rests, it can be difficult for the player to feel they are allowed to be musical and expressive. It may not look this way on the page, but this piece is actually composed with large, dramatic contour schemes (Example 7.2).
Example 7.2. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10, mm. 14-17*

In the case of this example, the contour is very clear. The previous phrase ends on measure 14 with sharply articulated high A’s, followed by a lighter, more easily controlled descent to a G-flat in the middle range of the instrument. An even more dramatic contour can be found in Example 7.1, where the shape slopes up slowly, followed by a quick descent in measure two, and continues to fall until the range shoots upwards towards the middle B-flat in measure five. Even though there are rests in the music, indicating silence, one might imagine the sensation of air still moving through the instrument. As a result, the articulation can be smoother and more precise due to the student’s effective preparation.

While the ability to hear each pitch is important, being able to recall the physical placement of these pitches on the instrument can be equally important. Playing scalar passages might feel much more normal to the trombonist than performing the frequent intervallic leaps and descents that is required in this etude. As one can imagine, all sorts of intervals are utilized in this composition, but the most frequently used is the perfect fourth. This is seen with immediacy from the first two measure of the piece, but also later on during the secondary theme (Example 7.3).
These perfect fourths have an important function. Each time a fourth is used in a melodic way, it often predicts a developmental change on some level. In measure 26, the G-D-A is a pattern descending in pitch. The resulting effect can temporarily calm and relax the listener before the sudden change of character on the downbeat of measure 27. Then, a few perfect fourths in the following measures introduce variation in the descending patterns, drawing out the relaxing descent gradually over a slightly longer period of time.

With knowing the importance of intervallic relationships comes the importance of keeping these intervals in tune. This responsibility is incumbent on the trombone player in this piece because there are no other musicians involved that could be used as a reference, nor is it simple to understand the harmonic devices being used. Knowing the pitch tendencies for each interval will be important here, as is knowing which notes act as leading tones to the more stable tonal areas. For example, in regards to perfect fourths, the trombonist may decide it is best to raise the pitch, even in circumstances with the high C in measure 27. While this pitch is usually sharp, it may be a good decision in this case to still lower the pitch but only at a smaller amount.

Aside from the odd-metered time signature, large intervallic leaps, and assymetrical rhythmic structure, the trombonist will also learn to tackle moving from pitch registers at a quicker rate. In the span of seven measures at a quick tempo, the
music demands the trombonist to play an intervallic range of two and one-half octaves with lots of silence in between (Example 7.4).

Example 7.4. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10, mm. 58-64*

In measure 58, the range is nearly an octave and in the upper register. To feel secure on this C (and maintain it into the next measure), the trombonist should use the B-flat as a springboard into the next octave, lengthening and providing more weight. The C should then be articulated with a pointed tongue and fast air through a slightly smaller aperture, with adequate support from the abdominal region. Luckily the trombonist will have some help when aiming for the low register in measures 63 and 64. This adjustment is better prepared, with more measures of time allowed in this period, with consistent descending patterns. With these scale-like patterns, the trombonist should take every opportunity to relax and fill up their sound, even through the written decrescendo. This decrescendo will happen naturally as the pitches descend.

Lastly, and possibly the most important quality of this music is its character. While so many aspects of this piece can promote insecurity and anxiety, the character of this music is rather playful. These intervallic leaps and sporadic, unpredictable rhythmic
patterns should be thought of not as passing a certain test of abilities but as having a spontaneous, playful, emotive quality. In order to perform with a more delightful sound, the trombonist must feel at peace with themselves and trust their muscle memory as deeply experienced musicians. The section of music that can promote this feeling with ease begins in measure 23 (Example 7.5).

Example 7.5. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10, mm. 23-26*

There are several reasons why this phrase is more idiomatic to the trombone, such as having the positions for these notes closer together and having the adjustments in partials be rather minor. However, one of the greatest reasons why this section of music feels more comfortable is simply because the music is more active, with less rests. It becomes much easier for the musician to keep track of each eighth note. Also, it is worth noting that this section does indeed have a pattern to the rhythm. The player may find this hemiola with a duple-feel to be satisfying at long last. It is widely acknowledged by musicians that a relaxed body and quiet, focused mind will help to promote a more pleasant sounding performance, and this section is no exception. As the trombonist practices *Etude No. 10*, they should always strive for their best sound, even amidst frustration, by taking the time to remind themselves of the potential of how beautiful they can sound when the obstacles in their way are resolved.
Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions

*Etude No. 10* is of an entirely different style than the other selections in this paper. While the placement of each note is spaced so far apart in proximity to the other notes, it can seem like each note is harmonically isolated, unrelated, and irrelevant. However, while this texture can come off sounding like an atonal composition, it is not. This etude has defined tonal areas and landing points that separate this piece from being classified as atonal. Rather, each tonal area lasts for a longer amount of time in comparison to other pieces, spanning over several measures rather than just one beat. When playing this piece, comprehending each tonal area is important in not only understanding where the notes line up in regards to harmony, but also in its relation to phrasing and form.

Upon listening to this piece, one can hear that there are many moments that are based on diminished scales and Phrygian mode, but many parts are not. In fact, this piece has many moments of Ionian tonality. The first major tonal area, as one may assume, is in B-flat Major. The consequent phrase, beginning in measure 6, is in A-Aeolian, but cadences on E-flat, which is a tritone away. While this interval can have a reputation for being the “devil’s interval” and sounding less than consonant, it still has the ability to sound connected to the B-flat Major tonality that was previously heard. Throughout this piece, one will begin to notice that intervals of a tritone are prominent notes, most notably B-flat and E, and A and E-flat.

This A section ends with a B-flat pentatonic scale moving to a diminished half-whole tone scale, indicating the end of one section and the beginning of the next. The B section is in A-Phrygian, and one can see the tonic gives a nod to the consequent phrase of the A section. From there, the piece continues into C-Phrygian and moves around the
circle of fourths, landing on F-Phrygian. This tonic area makes the dominant connection
to the home roots in B-flat Major, and the piece continues with a recapitulation to the
main theme. In this recapitulation, note values adjust slightly, tending to subdivide some
of the previously written eighth notes into two sixteenth notes. After the completion of
the consequent phrase, a coda begins. This coda features brief fanfare-like figures that
use the arpeggiations of suspended (sus) chords, alternating from E-flat to A. While these
tonicizations may not make sense in relation to each other, they are connected by the
relationship of the most important interval in this etude: the tritone. Thankfully, after
much harmonic turmoil, the piece finishes with a strong cadence in the home key of B-
flat Major.

Rhythmically, this piece tends to have the effect of stunning the trombonist. Each
measure appears to be an isolated event, because few measures are strikingly similar to
the next. Oftentimes, one can be used to hearing and recognizing rhythmic patterns
quickly, but with Etude No. 10, this becomes less of an automatic understanding and
more of a technique that needs to be developed. In the time signature of 5/8, each
measure is typically divided in parts of two and three. This helps to group and keep track
of the eighth note, as well as providing a certain motion or environment to the music.
Bitsch chooses not to provide this clarity to the musician (Example 7.6).

Example 7.6. Marcel Bitsch, Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,
Etude No. 10, mm. 1-5, indicating possible metric groupings
With Bitsch’s notation, there can be some moments that guide the musician toward either a two-plus-three feel or a three-plus-two feel. However, when the melody doesn’t clearly reflect any particular aspect of rhythmic organization, one can easily feel intimidated. If the trombonist needs to gain confidence in the execution of this music, they should consider self-assigning larger rhythmic groupings to each measure. In Example 7.6, a suggestion is provided. However, there is not “right” or “wrong” rhythmic grouping for this etude.

To sound more confident, assign these rhythmic groupings based on the group of audible notes in the measure. A trio of notes located at the end of a measure (such as in measure two), could be interpreted as a grouping of three, while the rests before it would make the measure a two-plus-three feel. One may consider making the first note provided in each measure as part of either the grouping of two or three. If these notes occur first in that grouping, the trombonist will sound stronger because it is functioning as a downbeat. With a stronger, more confident sound, the awkwardness of the rhythmic notation becomes a compelling musical statement.

If one is still having issues keeping track of the notation, they might consider keeping these eighth notes on track within a musical context (Example 7.7).
Example 7.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10*, mm. 1-5,

melody rewritten as an eighth note subdivision through each rest with tenutos on original notated pitches

Example 7.7 features the first phrase of the etude with every rest filled. The pitches of these extra notes were chosen based on its proximity to other notes in the measure. Oftentimes, extra pitches in this exercise are added to predict the pitch of the notation that was originally notated. Next, tenutos are placed on the original notes, so as to better keep track of one’s rhythmic placement in the original music. A teacher can especially be of help to a struggling student through their active participation in music-making. In this etude, extra support can be given to the student when the teacher provides rhythmic stability in not only a way that is metronomic, but through the use of creative musical additions that supplement the original notation.

In developing sections of this piece, Bitsch takes full advantage of the trombone’s triumphant, commanding sound by composing material inspired by fanfares. Each fanfare has a repetitive contour, but often the notes chosen are difficult to play due to their unsymmetrical intervallic relationships, let alone their rhythmic placement within a 5/8 meter. The final fanfare can be particularly challenging due to its wide range of interval and dynamics. There are several steps the trombonist and their teacher can take to improve the tone, intonation, and rhythmic consistency of this section (Example 7.8).
Example 7.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 10, mm. 65-68,*

rewritten as a sixteenth note subdivision with a tenuto on each downbeat

Several types of simple exercises can be done to improve technique. Here, each eighth note is subdivided into a sixteenth. The purpose here is to promote a steady, even sound while maintaining a steady rhythm. The student should be encouraged to produce an even sound by using a very steady airflow, playing this passage legato and then adding articulations to each note separately. To help the student maintain a steady tempo and even sound, the teacher could play the same passage alongside the student, but subdivide each longer syllable into shorter notes so the student can better measure its true value. However, if they are having trouble with the intonation of these intervals, the teacher may choose to show the student how this passage is built from the D-flat diminished scale. The teacher can then act as a tuning drone on the tonic, playing a steady stream of eighth notes as the student prepares the written notation, now both in time and in tune.

The new exercises described in Example 7.8 can be applied wherever sixteenth notes are found. Many times in this etude, sixteenth notes are written with a staccatissimo articulation, much like the one found in measure 68. If the player is careless, these can sound with more articulation than tone. One should always strive to play with their best sound forward. In the case of Example 7.8, a tenuto is placed at the front of each passage to remind the trombonist to play with a beautiful sound, connecting each tone, even through silence. This sound should be recreated on each staccatissimo note that follows,
just with more space in between. This articulation (among others) should be thought of as an embellishment of character, rather than the entirety of the character.

Staccatissimo is intended to be played as short as possible, in a way that exaggerates the meaning of the staccato. In a pair of staccatissimo sixteenths in the high register, the trombonist should aim to hear clarity, with as much space between the notes as possible. If the student is preparing these notes alongside a teacher, it is recommended for the teacher to play the same separated note pairings in a chord tone that is lower in pitch than the student. This way, the student will listen down to the lower, rounder tones. This will act as a friendly reminder to keep an open sound and connect these pitches, despite the intended lengths of these notes.

This same concept of connection between notes can be applied throughout this piece. One clear location in the music to apply this concept is in the B section (Example 7.5). Given that this section is not only separated, but at a pianissimo dynamic, it is easy for the trombonist to play these rhythmic values much shorter than what is called for. As an exercise, the teacher and student can both play similar material to rediscover the ideal length and tone quality of this passage (Example 7.9)

Example 7.9. Marcel Bitsch, Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,

Etude No. 10, mm. 23-26, rewritten with the melody in longer note values
Here, the teacher is encouraged to play the same pitches as the original passage, but to double their rhythmic values, while connecting each note smoothly and lyrically. Then, the student should play the original passage at the same time, with note values at half the length of the teacher’s notes. Listening down to the teacher will encourage the student to play with a controlled, even, relaxed sound, while attempting to perfect the placement of their own rhythms.

*Etude No. 10* is without a doubt, extremely difficult. At times, the music can feel like it is out of control, due to the frequent switching of register, dynamic, and rhythmic placement. As an effort to control these factors, the musician might be tempted to “muscle through” certain passages and apply unnecessary tension. Moving forward, this will train every player that encounters this piece to have superb focus and concentration skills. Having the opportunity to improve these skills with well-crafted music will hopefully turn this process into a joyful journey.
Chapter Eight

ETUDE NO. 14

Performance Aspects

There are many reasons why Bitsch’s Etude No. 14 for trombone could seem similar to Etude No. 10, but through thorough study, there are many key differences that make this piece incredibly engaging and rewarding to the performer and listener. This piece may appear to lie more on the technical side than the lyrical side, purely because there are not any slur markings, such as in Etude No. 3. However, as a technical etude, it will not strike the musician as being too complicated either, as the rhythmic patterns are clearly organized and easier to grasp at the visual level. The piece is entirely in the 7/8 meter with subdivisions almost always in 3+2+2. The character description, *Vif* (Bright)\(^{35}\), accurately describes the tempo of 200 bpm to the eighth note. However, it is not only the tempo that personifies the brightness of character, but it can also be reflected in the mental state required to take this seemingly easy “technical” etude to the next level. Despite its appearance, this etude demands the trombonist to be in complete control of a steady rhythmic pulse whilst providing harmonic stability, especially in regards to intonation.

*Etude No. 14* is composed with a clear melody, much of which is derived from arpeggiated chords. Hypothetically, this alone would not seem to be too difficult, but the angular nature of the melody is also used within the odd-metered time signature of 7/8. Both of these factors may present a challenge to the trombonist approaching this etude for the first time. Many musicians may find it is easier to practice one technique at a time,

then incorporating more elements of technique they would like to improve upon. In this case, it may be preferable to get acquainted with the rhythm, first by tapping or vocalizing on a neutral syllable alongside a metronome, set at a slow tempo. Then, the musician may increase the tempo by small increments until the goal tempo is reached. Once the rhythm is established, the trombonist can choose to play the melodies on one note in the range of the melody to the notated rhythms. Slowly and patiently, they should incorporate playing the etude as written with this methodical approach.

Many trombonists that are playing this etude may also find the frequent changes in clefs are more challenging than usual. While clef changes are a standard practice in the repertoire of classical trombonists, in *Etude No. 14* they occur more often than usual, with 17 clef changes (between tenor and bass clef) within the 52 measure etude. In the majority of Bitsch’s etudes, while changes in clefs are common, there is often more time spent playing notated music in one clef before the notation switches to another clef. In this piece, the clef changes are more rapid. Additionally, due to the arpeggiated nature of the melody, the leaps between intervals look very similar on the page and appear to have a similar contour, even when the clefs switch from bass to tenor clef. This makes it all the more helpful to practice this etude very slowly. Unfortunately, it can be too easy to play incorrect notes, simply because they appear to be in a similar range.

This piece can also prove to be challenging with regards to intonation. The B-minor tonal area in this etude is not unusual for most musicians. However, for the trombonist this means that depending on the octave, the tonic can rest in seventh, fourth, sharp-second, and flat-second position (when using the f-attachment valve). While the instrument’s capabilities have improved over the course of hundreds of years, many
trombonists would agree that tonic pitches starting in first position (as well as other flat keys) are much easier to play in tune. Additionally, each partial on the trombone has particular, individual pitch tendencies. Regardless of each note’s intonation in conjunction with A-440, as a melodic instrument, the pitch of each note also needs to be adjusted based on its position in chordal voicings. Throughout the course of this piece, both adjustments as the notes lie on the instrument and how they function in harmonic voicings need to be considered.

Alongside the angular melody and odd-metered time signature, the etude also requires frequent and drastic dynamic shifts that could be difficult to execute. Dynamically, the levels of range that are listed are piano, mezzo-forte, and forte. There are occasions when these dynamic changes are less drastic and are preceded by a crescendo or diminuendo, but unfortunately, that is not always the case (Example 8.1).

Example 8.1. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone, Etude No. 14*, mm. 40-43

Example 8.1 shows one instance in *Etude No. 14* where there is a sudden shift from a piano dynamic to a forte after a brief moment of silence. The struggle here does not lie in the dynamic or the range, but in maintaining a level of dynamic evenness across the remainder of the phrase. The B-natural in measure 42 will feel more stable to the trombonist once there is a substantial amount of air supplying the note. However, given the range and because it is the highest pitch in the phrase, the trombonist must be careful
not to overplay the dynamic at the start of this measure. In this section, the levels of pitch
decrease rapidly following the downbeat, so the trombonist must make sure the majority
of the air taken in is of good quality and can be sustained for the lower notes, as these
require more air to stay at the same level. The contrary can be said about measure seven
and eight, where the pitches are arranged in an ascending pattern (Example 8.2).

Example 8.2. Marcel Bitsch, Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,
Etude No. 14, mm. 7-8

Once the trombonist can confirm they have enough air to sustain each phrase, they should
focus on employing this technique of using specific and appropriate amounts of air
tailored to pitch registers to help inform their decisions regarding melodic contour.

This same technique should be applied to one of the most common motivic
devices within this piece. In Etude No. 14, Bitsch utilizes frequent octave leaps. These are
evenly spaced throughout the duration of the music, and they often occur in descending
patterns at the end of phrases (Example 8.3).
This pattern is established within the musical material in the first opening statement, with the cadence to B-minor in measure four. Throughout the piece, this same pattern is used as cadences in other tonicizations, such as A-minor and D-Major. While it is used most obviously in a descending pattern, one can also find ascending as well. In this same exercise, this octave leap occurs in the transition from measure two into measure three. In both cases, these octave leaps help to bring more drama.

While these octave leaps can add more interest in the music, they provide a certain level of difficulty to the trombonist. Due to the amount of space between the octaves, it can be difficult for the trombonist to feel the oral shift needed to accommodate moving from more than one partial away. It is crucial for the trombonist to hear these leaps with great accuracy so they can immediately lock into the center of the pitch. As stated in previous chapters, singing these pitches alongside a piano, and then singing without the piano will effectively resolve this issue. Hearing the pitch will naturally help the trombonist buzz the correct pitch. If after buzzing the right pitch the trombonist still struggles to play these notes accurately and without chipping, they must examine the placement of the slide. As an example, a B-natural that lies on the ninth partial, such as if the one notated in the downbeat of measure 3, is chipped, it could likely be due to the
slide being placed too high, as this note is naturally sharp on the instrument and requires a lower placement.

If the trombonist is reaching these notes with accuracy, there is still the possibility of slamming into the entrance of the note. When performed in this manner, it will ultimately draw more attention to the single note by using an articulation that is not cohesive with the style the trombonist sets up from the introduction of the piece. This is likely happening due to the quality of air used. Since the output of air is consistent with the intake of air, a note that has an articulation that sounds like an aggressive slam is due to air that is pushed or forced into the instrument. For a beautiful quality of sound, the trombonist should aim to draw a breath that reflects the sound they desire and simply release it through the embouchure.

Bitsch etudes not only focus on rhythmic aspects of trombone, but they encourage the musician to work on several other areas of their technique. Some of these etudes extend into the upper register, and this piece is no exception. The highest pitch Bitsch composes for the trombonist in his etudes is a tenth partial D. *Etude No. 14* is one of few that reaches this peak (Example 8.4).
Example 8.4. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 53-57

This instance of using the high register is particularly challenging. It is written after a series of rests, just following a note (B-natural) that lies in the partial below it. This high D is also short in duration, with only a short time to breathe and prepare. The first thing the player should do when working on this section is confirming the pitch in relation to the note that comes before. Next, they should practice the rhythm notated to make sure it feels stable and reliable. Once that is confirmed, they should mark the breath they are taking and of what length. This breath should be taken at a high velocity and released through a slightly smaller aperture. One may also find lengthening the note in question will provide for a larger target, allowing greater room for accuracy.

**Creative Harmonic and Rhythmic Solutions**

Thankfully, much of the harmonic choices in Bitsch’s *Etude No. 14* are relatively straight-forward and easy to comprehend. When tonal areas move to a new location, many times, it is to a closely related key, similar to the strategy Bach would use in his own compositions. As a result, this harmony can be easier for the trombonist to hear and predict than in other etudes in this collection. The melody is composed from the building blocks of standard harmony: in arpeggiations of chords, while important cadences use
diatonic scale patterns that move from the dominant to the tonic. The biggest challenge that presents itself to the trombonist may be intonation. This piece must be perfectly in tune, especially considering the harmony is much more straight-forward. Decisions regarding intonation should be based on the individual scale degree, or based on the pitch tendencies on the outline of a specific chord.

The opening A theme begins in E-minor and cadences on octave B-naturals. The consequent phrase then adjusts slightly to E-diminished and cadences in G-Major, eventually moving towards A-minor. Then, the B section, musically crafted by putting pitches where there were once rests, and vice-versa, begins in A-melodic minor, moving to G-melodic minor. Eventually, this section cadences in D-minor. From there, a new C section is introduced with some similarities to the B section, but with a more relaxed feel. This begins in B-flat Major, and through some common chord tones, moves to E-minor, and we are presented with a false recapitulation of the opening A theme. This moves to a coda featuring running eighth notes. Harmonically, because Bitsch tends to like to highlight the tritone, this moves quickly between C and F-sharp Mixolydian. Finally, the piece transitions back to E-minor, cadencing on octave B-naturals.

Visually, the rhythms of this etude will not look entirely complicated to the trombonist. This is mainly due to the lack of variety of note values. The only note values presented are eighth, quarter, and dotted-quarter notes. This lack of variety makes the entire page look uniform, and therefore quite unassuming, at least in terms of rhythm. However, while nothing on the page stands out as being particularly complicated or out of the ordinary, there are times when the placement of rests versus groupings of notes can
manipulate the performer to play with an unsteady pulse, often picking up speed unintentionally.

The most efficient and effective way to improve upon this task is to perfect one’s ability to subdivide. Throughout one’s journey with this etude, they should begin to practice very slowly. If the student pushes the tempo too fast before they are ready, they may play note values that are too short, condense rhythms, and go beyond the listed tempo. While there are many strategies to subdivide, for this etude, it is recommended to start from smaller divisions of the beat to larger divisions of the beat. In the case of Etude No. 14, one could begin by feeling sixteenth notes at a very slow tempo, eventually feeling them at all various tempos so the listed eighth notes will be of an accurate length. (After all, they are double the length of a sixteenth note!) However, if playing the etude in sixteenth notes seems too detrimental to one’s musical progress, they could attempt to feel the beat by patting on one’s chest or lap to feel the beat in a different part of the body, only returning to the horn with the intent to subdivide in other rhythmic values. For this reason, it may be best to start thinking in eighth notes.

In this etude, the trombonist should always be cognizant of one’s pulse. Since this piece relies on a steady eighth note pulse, it would only make sense that one’s primary subdivision would be the eighth note (Example 8.5).

Example 8.5. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*, Etude No. 14, mm. 1-4, rewritten as an eighth note subdivision using the root of the chord
In the process of learning this piece, it would be extremely beneficial for the teacher to play along with the student, incorporating a sense of steady time within certain harmonic boundaries. For example, while the student performs the written music (Example 8.3), the teacher could play music similar to Example 8.5. This highlights both the harmony that leads to the first cadence and the structure of the 7/8 meter. Since the melody features mainly arpeggios, the student will better hear inconsistencies with intonation when working alongside a drone. Meanwhile, this drone is constantly moving, which will help the student stabilize their sense of harmonic understanding. Also, the student will have the opportunity to gain stronger rhythmic understanding with the rhythmic consistency in this pattern. Many students will find patterns with several notes in a row, especially those following rests, will have the tendency to speed up. The student will then be able to measure the length of notes and rests in a more accurate way because they are simply introduced to the sound of proper note lengths. Overall, this will provide the much needed stability the trombonist will be craving during an etude that demands so much.

Once the student is comfortable with rhythmic aspects of this piece, it can be easy for them to focus more on execution than the physical realization of musical phrases. One strategy to overcome this is to simplify the rhythmic pattern and adjust the subdivisions from smaller eighth note beats to the usage of variations of quarter notes (Example 8.6).

Example 8.6. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 1-4, rewritten as a melodic bass line in variations of quarter notes
Thinking of music in longer note values often helps a student advance lyrically. While the time itself is not slowed down, the student will be less burdened with information and micromanaging this information and will have more time to contemplate the direction of the phrase. Also, longer note values tend to sound louder, and adding weight on certain beats, such as a tenuto on beats one and two, can help emphasize the harmony and time signature, giving more clarity to the motion of the music. If the student is accompanied by the teacher who is able to simplify the busy notation into a simpler melody, the student will feel more open to expression.

Continuing this method, one should always strive to maintain a consistent tempo while placing each downbeat in its right place (Example 8.7)

Example 8.7. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 13-14, rewritten with sustained pitches on larger metric beats

This example takes Example 8.6 to the next level, using only dotted-half notes and half notes to feel the motion in the melody. Example 8.7 uses this rhythmic pattern to stabilize the new melodic material beginning in the B section of Etude No. 14, located on the downbeat of measure 13. Imagining a simpler, less busy bass line will help this section sound mystifying, providing a translucent atmosphere to the listener. Using longer note values can also promote evenness of sound, allowing the student to imagine this passage with more connection of sound, despite the rests between every note.
Nearly all of *Etude No. 14* utilizes a 3+2+2 subdivision within the 7/8 meter. However, this adjusts only towards the end of the etude, where Bitsch specifies a 2+3+2 subdivision (Example 8.8).

Example 8.8. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone,*

*Etude No. 14,* mm. 30-31,

rewritten as a duet using chord tones and highlighting metric emphasis

![Musical notation](image)

This short passage has the potential to disorient the musician if they are not expecting this change in feel, where the downbeat moves quickly and there is greater emphasis in the middle of the measure. To familiarize oneself with this pattern, the teacher can simply play these measures with a simplified rhythm according to the phrase and harmonic structure. When performing this pattern, the musician should consider thinking of the group of three eighth notes (beat two) as having a tenuto so the sound becomes more expansive, with a greater weight and importance, and simultaneously promoting the peak of the written crescendo. Additionally, if the musician would like to incorporate more exercises for this passage into their practice sessions, they should always consider subdivision, with accents on the three main components of the 7/8 measure.

As previously discussed, one of the challenges of this piece is the maintenance of tempo. From the beginning, this can be difficult simply due to the placement and frequency of these rests. While it is standard and completely understandable for a
musician to practice the notes that are written, it is less common for the musician to practice the written rests (Example 8.9).

Example 8.9. Marcel Bitsch, *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone*,

*Etude No. 14*, mm. 1-4, rewritten with roots of chords placed on offbeats

![Example notation](image)

This final exercise removes the previously composed material and places new notes in the place of where the original rests would be. This same pattern nearly becomes the musical material in the new B section at measure 13. By playing on only these offbeats, the trombonist can take the time to notice the true, full duration of each note. They will be less tempted to play note values that are longer than necessary. This way, the player will learn how to hone the length of each rhythm so they will not be tempted to slow down or speed up. When practicing this exercise for the first time, it is very likely that it could feel confusing to play. They should feel welcome to practice in any way they find helpful, whether it is on the trombone, spoken on a neutral syllable, or patted and tapped on one’s body so as to improve the internalization of the rhythm.
Chapter Nine

CONCLUSION

As members of the trombone community, many of us would agree that we have much to owe to the musicians of the Paris Conservatoire. Not only do we have fantastic pieces of solo repertoire, but we have etude books composed with the purpose of strengthening and advancing the musical and technical abilities of trombonists for years to come. The *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* by Marcel Bitsch are an essential addition to the repertoire of modern trombonists. Composed by a truly remarkable musician, they are complete, high quality pieces of music just as they are.

The Bitsch etudes are pieces of music with such a strong character and aesthetic that they often demand a reaction or response. Now that these etudes have become a standard edition to the trombone repertoire, it is rare that one would find a serious collegiate trombonist who has no opinion of these etudes. It is evident why many have a love-hate relationship to these pieces. They are challenging because they ask more of the trombonist than is typical but are sincerely rewarding once one’s musical goals are realized. It is for this reason that the *Quinze Études de Rythme pour Trombone* have been one of the most trusted resources of its kind in the repertoire for collegiate trombonists. These etudes demand not only rhythmic proficiency, but countless other skills.

This study of five of fifteen etudes for trombone by Bitsch serves both the trombone student and the trombone teacher, so that the teacher can help the student to engage all aspects of the learning process and inspire the student to solve these musical obstacles and more on their own. These five etudes of contrasting styles were chosen to represent the entirety of the fifteen total etudes. They were then transcribed and
reformatted for clarity and readability for the player. Suggested harmonies were included by means of a lead sheet notation to encourage the cooperation and collaboration of the teacher and student in the learning process. These suggested harmonies were then combined with various rhythmic patterns to help stabilize the player despite the rhythmic demands of the etude. Further pedagogical guidance was provided to the player who seeks to teach themselves.

While many etude and methods book aim to improve just one type of musicianship (such as scale proficiency, technique, or melodicism) the *Quinze Études* are what many etude and method books strive (and sometimes struggle) to be: works that are educational in multiple areas of musicianship composed with a high level of artistic integrity. Each piece is carefully crafted to stretch the trombonist’s physical and mental abilities in the hopes they will grow. With a little technique and great patience, any trombonist with an open and curious mind has the ability to comprehend and master this music on the way to being the best musical artist they can be.
Bibliography


APPENDIX A
RECORDINGS

Recordings of the five Bitsch etudes discussed in this paper were recorded as a means to aid the reader as a reference in the understanding of this essay. While not definitive, they serve as a recording one can find to be helpful to the reader, true to the composer’s musical intent, and one of several interpretive possibilities for future trombone artists.

The recordings of Bitsch Etudes Nos. 1, 3, 4, 10, and 14 were recorded at Subcat Studios in Syracuse, New York by engineer Ron Keck during the course of a five-hour session on the afternoon of Wednesday, December 26th, 2018. Final edits were completed by engineer Bryan Kennard in Miami, Florida on Thursday, February 21th, 2019. The final mastered recordings were produced by Carlos Mata-Alvarez in Las Vegas, Nevada on March 7th, 2019. These recordings can be accessed at http://www.jessicahawthornetrombone.com.36

---

Etude No. 1

Rapide \( \frac{1}{4} = 160 \)

Marcel Bitsch

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{G} & \quad \text{stacc.} \\
& \quad \text{p léger} \\
\text{D} & \quad \text{C} \\
& \quad \text{cresc.} \\
\text{Em} & \quad \text{Eb} \\
& \quad \text{dim.} \\
\text{G} & \quad \text{C} \quad \text{G} \quad \text{Ab} \\
& \quad \text{p} \\
\text{D} & \quad \text{Ab} \quad \text{Am} \quad \text{G} \\
& \quad \text{f} \quad \text{p} \\
\text{G} & \quad \text{stacc.} \\
& \quad \text{p léger} \\
\text{F} & \quad \text{C} \quad \text{Gm} 
\end{align*}
\]
Etude No. 1 - Page 2

56

62

p cresc.

68

f

75

C\textsuperscript{#}\m

80

p cresc.
Etude No. 3

Avec souplesse $\frac{1}{4}=52$

Marcel Bitsch
Etude No. 4

Bien rythmé \( \sim 88 \)

Marcel Bitsch

\( Gm(maj7) \)

\( A^\circ \)  
\( D \)  
\( Gm(maj7) \)

\( A^\#7 \)

\( F^7 \)  
\( B^\flat \)  
\( A^\#7 \)  
\( G^7 \)  
\( C^\# \)

\( F^\natural7 \)

\( G^7 \)  
\( C \)  
\( F^\natural7 \)  
\( G^\# \)

\( F \)  
\( C^\natural(b9) \)  
\( F \)  
\( E^\natural7(b5) \)

\( mf \)

\( A^\natural7 \)  
\( C^m \)  
\( F \)  
\( E \)  
\( diminished \)

\( f \)  
\( dim. \)

\( A \)  
\( E^\natural7(b5) \)  
\( A \)
Etude No. 10

Très rapide $\frac{b}{c}=200$

Marcel Bitsch

B♭ minor

$\frac{p}{stacc.}$

6

Am

Eb

11

B♭ minor

Am

A♭

$\frac{f}{cresc.}$

$\frac{mf}{=}$

B♭

Db

$\frac{pléger}{=}$

B♭ pentatonic

B♭ half-whole dim.

$\frac{pp}{=}$

A pedal

A phrygian

$\frac{mf}{=}$

28

Am

Am7

F pedal

$\frac{p}{=}$
Etude No. 10 - Page 2

33

C phrygian

38

F phrygian
cresc.

43

Bb maj7
p léger

48

Am

53

Eb Ebsus(add3) Asus(add3) Ebsus(add3)

58

Ebsus(add3) Asus(add3) Ebsus(add3)
f mf

63

Gm(maj7) Dbº
p cresc.

67

F Bb
f f