

Blake A. Ryall

Exercises for Excerpts:

A Prescriptive Approach
for the Developing Orchestral Tubist

with additional insights from:

John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

EXERCISES FOR EXCERPTS: BERLIOZ SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE, MVT. 4

Exercise 1: Dynamic Direction Developer/Articulation Aid

The following passage outlines the rhythmic content of the excerpt with simplified harmonic vocabulary. In practice, strive to convey the same building intensity of dynamic and weight/distinction of articulations that you would perform the excerpt with. Focus on emulating the melodic line in an appropriate style.

Think directionally in regard to phrasing. Apply similar patterns to other sections of the excerpt.

Note: Parenthetical slurs are indicative of the articulation pattern of the excerpt in context.

$\text{♩}/\text{♩} = 60-80$

The musical notation consists of two staves in bass clef, two flats key signature, and common time. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *mf*. It contains a series of notes with various articulations, including slurs and accents. A dashed line labeled *cresc.* indicates a gradual increase in dynamics. The second staff begins with a dynamic marking of *f* and ends with a dynamic marking of *ff*. It also features slurs and accents over the notes.

Additional insights:

"I assign numbers to each repeating figure from the beginning to the high Eb to ensure that my crescendo over that time is smooth. Taking time to delineate your dynamic range is paramount in achieving a finished product. Style is another key component to this excerpt as it needs to be played like Berlioz-lighter and in a French style as opposed to feeling heavy on the eighth notes."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

"Obviously the gradual crescendo for a line and a half presents some challenges as it requires a good amount of patience and clear pacing. We need to make sure the articulations are different throughout. Not only do we have accents, but we have a handful of staccatos as well. All need to be clear and present as they accomplish Berlioz's goal. Keeping a slower march tempo with a march feeling can also pose some challenges as a common tendency will be to rush. Marches tend to have emphasis on 1 and 3 so we need to make sure that is achieved."

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

"Musically, this excerpt needs to be exciting and intense yet start at *mf*. How can we convey that? There's a long crescendo to the Eb and that needs to be the journey. There needs to be a persistence about the articulation that comes across."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

Exercise 2: Melodic Direction Developer

Perform the following exercise with phrasing and dynamic direction as your primary focus. Practice this both in a lyrical style with lowered relative dynamics and one closer in shaping to how you would perform the excerpt in context. Strive for connectivity and line across the entirety of the exercise. Aim for broad phrases with few but full breaths. **Note:** the dotted slurs are indicative of smaller subphrases - you may find benefit in isolating each of these in putting the full exercise together in a musically cohesive manner.

♩/♩=60-80

mf *cresc.*

f *ff* *ff*

dim. *p* *pp*

ff *ff*

Additional insights:

"If you have a solid mental picture of how you want this to sound it isn't a very difficult excerpt. I would record myself to make sure things are coming across like I intended them to. I would slur through it. I would also make sure my pitch is good."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

"This movement is called "March to the Scaffold." Take some time to think about that and see yourself rising the steps to the guillotine waiting for you as you rise in dynamic throughout the first part. It sounds sinister, but taking some time to really see the music and see the scene the music is trying to show changes how you approach and play the excerpt."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

EXERCISES FOR EXCERPTS: BRAHMS SYMPHONY NO. 2, MVT. 4

Exercise 1: Time and Response Training

Perform the following exercise with a metronome (recommendation: initially half of your target tempo). Let the notes at the end of each crescendo decay from the volume of the initial articulation while maintaining clarity. Remember to convey dynamic direction in the entirety of the exercise - keep your phrasing broad despite the frequency of attacks against offbeats. For added benefit, practice this exercise using breath attacks to further ensure consistency and immediacy in response. Lead with the air!

Note: Notes with an open marking above them are representative of the actual excerpt's rhythmic structure. This exercise emphasizes developing a strong internal pulse through rhythmic displacement. The parenthetical decrescendos are notated to indicate continued decay through the continuation of directional phrasing.

$\text{♩}/\text{♩} = 80-110$

The musical notation consists of two staves in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 80-110 and a dynamic marking of *fp*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with accents and slurs, and includes parenthetical decrescendo markings. The second staff continues the exercise with similar rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings.

Additional insight:

"In any excerpt, the style, when it was composed, and the composer inform a great deal on how a piece is to be performed. For example, the accents in this excerpt are played much differently than an accent in Mahler or Bruckner. Achieving the correct style of the excerpt is usually the final "cherry on top" to reach that polished final product... Again, coming back to the articulation point, I think that the way you play the different articulations and the over style of the excerpt is one of the most important informative pieces that can help the player in performance of this excerpt."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

"Due to the syncopated nature of this excerpt, I always encourage students (and myself) to add separation between the syncopated sections. Not only does this make the syncopation much clearer, but it also allows the tubist to be more on top of the beat and not late or early. With that in mind, we have to be sure that that doesn't carry over to the quarter notes AND we need to be sure to have a clear definition of the staccato quarters as well. There are 4 distinct articulations in this excerpt and all need to be heard clearly: syncopated half notes/tied quarters, quarter notes, accented half/ties quarters, and staccato quarters."

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

Exercise 2: Phrasing Flex Study

Perform the following exercise both freely and with a metronome. Play with a broad sound and connect each note - can you maintain a consistent tone and directional phrasing across the entirety of this exercise's range?

Note: the slur is indicative of the connectivity that this passage should be played with.

The dotted slurs are suggested points of sub-phrasing, but can be modified to suit the player's interpretation.

Additional insights:

"This isn't a hard excerpt for me, so I slur through it multiple times as my main practice technique. I want to make sure that I am hearing the overall line through the octaves and keep the line going."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

"I personally use F tuba on this excerpt as it provides the lightness needed to blend with the orchestra without me having to work too hard. As long as the rhythm is absolutely accurate you then just need to make sure to follow the musical line in addition to the written dynamics to go beyond just what's on the page."

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

"This is a really rewarding piece to play. It's not often we get to play Brahms but this piece is an absolute treat. I urge anyone playing the piece or the excerpt to really dive into some recordings to focus on that Brahms style and find true enjoyment in the piece. Playing along with recordings is another great tool to help you soak up that style."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

EXERCISES FOR EXCERPTS: BRUCKNER SYMPHONY NO. 8, MVT. 4

Exercise 1: Dynamic Direction Developer/Rhythmic Precision Routine

Perform each line of this exercise in isolation. Focus on conveying dynamic direction, immediacy of response, and distinct articulations throughout. Efficiency of sound production is crucial to achieving a consistent tone at the notated dynamics - if you encounter difficulties in stabilizing pitch or clarity in articulation, practice this exercise at a lower dynamic and/or a slower tempo respectively. In regard to the grace note in the third bar, place it as closely as possible to the downbeat by the final iteration of this pattern.

$\text{♩}/\text{♩} = 60-90$

The exercise consists of four staves of music, each in bass clef, 2/4 time, and B-flat major. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *ff* and ends with *fff*. The second staff begins with *ff* and ends with *fff*. The third staff begins with *ff* and ends with *fff*. The fourth staff begins with *ff* and ends with *fff*. Each staff contains a sequence of notes with accents and dynamic markings.

Additional insight:

"I usually interpret the grace notes as on the beat. So I'll practice them like that. I focus on getting forward motion throughout by imagining going from 0 to 0.1. Not necessarily a crescendo, but there's a forward motion there that keeps the phrase and the line moving forward."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba KC Symphony

Exercise 2: Phrase Length Expander/Rhythmic Precision Routine 2

Perform the following exercise with focus on maximizing efficiency of sound production at a full dynamic.

With each iteration, remember to convey direction in phrasing. Aim towards achieving broad sustain with as few breaths as possible. Use a metronome to ensure rhythmic clarity and immediacy in response.

$\text{♩}/\text{♩} = 60-90$

The exercise consists of three staves of music. Each staff begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic marking. The music is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is indicated as $\text{♩}/\text{♩} = 60-90$. The first staff contains 12 measures of music, followed by a double bar line. The second and third staves each contain 12 measures of music, also followed by double bar lines. The notation includes various note values (eighth and quarter notes), slurs, and accents.

Additional insight:

"Technically this excerpt has some problem with low register control and volume. Pacing this excerpt properly is important because you don't want to show that you are weaker in the low register. I recommend starting a bit softer than you think so that you can keep up the volume."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

Exercise 3: Dynamic Direction Developer 2/Organ Pedal Emulator

Play the following passage both freely and with a metronome. Focus on finding the "core" of every note - where minimum physical effort can meet maximum effective results in terms of openness, clarity, and resonance. Always strive for a beautiful and supportive sound - this exercise should not reflect your maximum dynamic. Strive for conveying harmonic direction across sustains. Challenge yourself - how long are you able to sustain each note before a breath is needed?

$\text{♩}/\text{♩} = 60-90$

The musical score is written in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *ff* and a tempo marking of $\text{♩}/\text{♩} = 60-90$. The music features a series of sustained notes with slurs and accents, moving through various intervals and octaves. The second staff continues the exercise with similar sustained notes and slurs, ending with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

Additional insight:

"Bruckner was an organist so it's always been my intent to try and achieve a full, organ like sound. Obviously that's easier said than done. With that concept in mind though, we know that the tuba has to be the foundation and we need to be more felt than heard. If the entire brass section has the pipe organ concept in their head, then the sound can be absolutely incredible."

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

EXERCISES FOR EXCERPTS: MAHLER SYMPHONY NO. 1, MVT. 3

Exercise 1: Sustain and Soft Dynamic Strengthenener

Begin this exercise at a comfortable dynamic and follow the scalar decrescendo into sustaining the final D indefinitely. Challenge yourself to diminish in dynamic to the softest sustain possible while maintaining your best sound quality.

♩=60-80

(Hold for as long as possible)

mf *pp*

Additional insights:

"We need to get our muscles used to playing soft so we have to force them to do so. Over time, your softest will gradually get softer and softer."

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

"Play at a more comfortable dynamic. If the student is struggling they need to work their way into the quieter dynamic. Air support needs to be there and corners need to be firm."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

Exercise 2: For the Sake of Smoother Slurs (and good intonation)

Perform the following exercise both freely and with a metronome. Focus your practice on achieving immediacy in response and evenness in sound across transitions between different intervals. For added benefit, practice this pattern using a drone on D. Pay careful attention to the intonation of the octave As in relation to the tonic.

$\text{♩} = 60-80$

pp

Additional insights:

"Buzz this [excerpt] on the mouthpiece at a dynamic that is soft but where you don't lose the buzz. This will help strengthen your muscles and help you play it at a softer dynamic."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

"The slur can be an issue so changing valves on the As might help. Also Pitch is VERY obvious if it's out of whack on this one. A needs to be high enough so an open A might not work. Use drones, use a tuner, use your ears."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

EXERCISES FOR EXCERPTS: PROKOFIEV SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN B \flat MAJOR, MVT. 1

Exercise 1: Phrase Building

Begin each phrase with a breath attack. Once a consistent and immediate response is achieved, continue to the next bar and work towards creating a fluid and cohesive phrase. Perform this exercise both in free time as well as with a metronome, and apply this to other sections of the excerpt that require smooth phrasing.

Freely, or $\text{♩} = 60-80$

Additional insight:

"In an educational setting, I focus a lot on the style between when you're playing with the basses and the rest of the brass... Lots of slurred work on this helps with the ending tiered dynamics and working on individual phrases makes this a more complete excerpt."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

Exercise 2: "The Sigh"

4 bars before reh. 4 (in most editions of this piece) requires the tubist to maintain a consistent sound and even response in navigating from a Bb to a low Eb in a dynamically intensifying context. This exercise is designed to address these demands through developing low register facility working towards and below the designated Eb. Perform this exercise in free time, utilizing a half-valve gliss to assist with connectivity and response. Once security is achieved in this manner, replace the glissando with a slur, and lastly, add a light articulation to the lower note.

Freely, or ♩=60-80

Additional insight:

"Do not start beyond your ability. The first slur can be hard for people, are you in a shift? You need to practice these things and iron them out. This will likely be in the first round and this needs to sound smooth - like a bass on one string.

The Bb to Eb can be difficult. Don't start the Bb too loud, the Eb needs to be the arrival."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

Exercise 3: Scalar Study

These patterns are constructed in regard to the tonal content of this excerpt. In performing each one, strive for consistency of sound across each scale's full range while conveying style as it relates to the work's full orchestration. Emulate/complement strings in slurred passages while maintaining defined attacks and broad sustains in articulated phrases.

Freely, or ♩=60-80

The image displays three staves of musical notation for Exercise 3: Scalar Study. Each staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first staff is in 4/4 time, the second in 5/4, and the third in 3/4. Each staff contains a melodic line with slurs and articulation marks, followed by a chordal accompaniment pattern.

Additional insight:

"The hardest aspect of this excerpt is being able to fit in with the low strings and the winds and brass with little to no time in between, as if it's a light switch we are turning on or off. The slurred passages need to fit in with the strings while the tongued passages need to fit in with the precision and clarity of the winds and brass."

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

EXERCISES FOR EXCERPTS: RESPIGHI FOUNTAINS OF ROME

Exercise 1: Vamp Void

Perform the following exercise as written. Strive for evenness in tone and immediacy in response as you descend into the pedal register. Practice this exercise at a variety of tempi and dynamics until consistent execution is achieved. Add articulations for added challenge. Think wide airflow, ease, and presence of sound throughout!

Allegro Vivace

♩=128-150

Additional insights:

"The E octaves need to be in tune, with a good sound, and the pickups need to be consistent. Right away simply going 5-1-5-1 etc. can show a lot. Is the B different going up than down? I think if you think more about tone, line, and ease of production, it'll make it easier to play this instead of thinking how you can articulate. Air needs to be #1."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

"If it's required that we need to play loud and low for a significant amount of time, then we need to work on that and make it a part of our fundamentals, just like soft playing. For the athleticism aspect, stay as relaxed as possible and focus on the air. Tension kills tone and air equals sound!"

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

Exercise 2: Phrase Lengthener/Line Luminator

Perform the following passage initially at a comfortable dynamic with careful attention to phrasing. Create the most musically directional/cohesive line possible in each phrase, always striving optimal technical facility and efficiency in sound production. When transferring your work here to the actual excerpt, remember that this section is indeed a musical line that we can shape. Consider how to distribute the weight of your sound through each phrase.

Note: the slurred markings are intended to indicate one possible approach to achieve broad phrasing. Giving attention to the dotted slurs may prove useful in breaking the phrasing of this exercise down for more isolated practice.

Andante; in the style of slow waltz, ♩=60-80

Additional insights:

"I stress this to every student: this is NOT a loud excerpt! The focus of this excerpt is phrasing. Many people have a tendency to play this one very loud, but it doesn't need to be played that loud. I'll have students play this at a softer dynamic to focus on all the other important aspects before adding the dynamics back in. Rhythm, especially the sixteenth-dotted eighth rhythm, is hugely important... Break this excerpt down into smaller sections so that you can focus on details in each section before you put it together. This will help you get used to the endurance needed in this excerpt."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

"You need to make it sound like its easier for you than anyone else. Going for line and excitement versus volume and speed will probably work better. Find a tempo that works for you and stick to that."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

EXERCISES FOR EXCERPTS: STRAVINSKY - PETROUCHKA

Exercise 1: Bearing Down on Articulation

Perform each iteration of the following exercise in isolation. Focus on conveying direction in each attack - what are you doing to make articulations sound distinct? Strive for immediacy of sound - use breath attacks in this context to develop added security in initiating each note. Develop control over articulation and sustain at a soft dynamic before progressing to the dynamic of the actual excerpt (line 3).

$\text{♩} = 60-80$

pp

mf

ff

Additional insights:

"In an educational setting, I focus a lot on the style between when you're playing with the basses and the rest of the brass... Lots of slurred work on this helps with the ending tiered dynamics and working on individual phrases makes this a more complete excerpt."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

"Tonguing exercises up high at all dynamics. We have to be comfortable articulating in the upper register or it will be a weakness. Similar to the dynamics, we also have to know our personal definition of accents and marcato so we can show the difference."

- Gabriel Sears, San Bernardino Symphony

Exercise 2: Phrase Building/Supplementing Shape

Perform parts 1, 2, and 3 of this exercise in an isolated and additive manner. Pay careful attention to the various articulations - make informed stylistic decisions as to how they relate to dynamic direction and distribution of weight/accents in regard to the expanding phrases.

Note: the parenthetical decrescendo is used to illustrate the difference in the tuba part in the 1947 version of this piece. The dotted slur to the final staccato D is a suggestion for purposes of practice.

$\text{♩} = 60-80$

(1) *ff* <

(2)

(3) *dim.* *dim.* *dim.*

dim.

dim. *pp*

Additional insights:

"I'm also a firm believer that music needs to always be moving, especially on long notes and repeated notes, which we have both of in this excerpt. Therefore, in order to add that direction on the long notes we need to add just a bit of crescendo all the way to the end of each note to keep everything moving forward and not letting the music sit. With the approach that music always need to be moving, the long notes and repeated notes should take care of themselves and no longer be stagnant."

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

"Make a line, this isn't just as loud as you can play. There are accents, crescendos, different articulations, diminuendos. Can the listener tell what you're doing?"

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony

EXERCISES FOR EXCERPTS: WAGNER OVERTURE TO DIE MEISTERSINGER

Exercise 1: Time Training (Marcato section)

Perform the following passage with decay on repeated pitches to convey the marcato style of this section of the excerpt. Use a metronome and internalize the written rhythm when transitioning back to the excerpt itself. In practice, focus on the following: maintaining a consistent and even tone throughout, achieving clarity and immediacy of response, and maintaining light, directional phrasing.

Note: The open markings above notes are indicative of the rhythmic content of the excerpt in context.

$\text{♩} = 90-110$

mf

Additional insight:

"I always practice this with a metronome, this excerpt has to be in time. I always have students play this with a drone as well to keep an eye on pitch as pitch is just as important. Singing is hugely important in achieving good phrasing in this one. In performance, you have to be more supportive than if you're playing this on your own, so just be aware of that need."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, KC Symphony

Exercise 2a: Trill Training

Initially practice each two measures slowly and in isolation from one another using both a valved and lip trill. Assess which yields more consistent results before progressing to successive rhythmic figures. Modify the written pattern so that it begins on the upper note and give attention to the direction it feels easiest in terms of technical facility.

♩=90-110

The exercise is written in bass clef, 4/4 time. It consists of three staves. The first staff shows a trill starting on a lower note and moving up to a higher note, with a slur over the notes. The second staff shows a trill starting on a higher note and moving down to a lower note, with a slur over the notes. The third staff shows a trill starting on a lower note and moving up to a higher note, with a slur over the notes. The tempo is marked as ♩=90-110. The first staff has a tempo marking of ♩=90-110. The second staff has a tempo marking of ♩=90-110. The third staff has a tempo marking of ♩=90-110.

Additional insight:

"I highly recommend a lip trill. It makes a smoother sounding trill and is quite effective. There are many different exercises to work on lip trills. One way I have my students do it is put the lip trill to a metronome trilling every quarter note, then every eighth note, then every triplet, etc. to where the trill is fluid."

- Joe LeFevre, principal tuba, Kansas City Symphony

Exercise 2b: Trill Training 2

This exercise can be used to supplement the skills developed in exercise 2a by placing the trill in a musical context that resembles a common approach to its realization in the excerpt. Focus on maintaining consistency of sound in ascending to the high E, and continue to sustain and maintain internal pulse through the notated trill. This exercise may be adapted to suit the performer's needs if he/she wishes to deviate from how the trill is notated below.

♩=90-110

3 3

6 6

Additional insight:

"I personally do not lip trill the trill, but I'm not against it... I recommend making the decision that's going to give you the highest possibility of success. In regard on how to work on it, I'd first suggest working on half step trills in that register. Once that gets comfortable, begin working on whole step trills. To exaggerate the whole step trill even more, start from the top note and trill down to the bottom note. Be comfortable with both so there's no issue going up AND no issue going back down. The other big thing to remember on this trill is to not back off on the air... Blow THROUGH the technique and not just into it. Air equals sound, so without air, there is no sound."

- Gabriel Sears, principal tuba, San Bernardino Symphony

Exercise 3: Legato Phrase Lengthener

Below is the molto legato section of the excerpt written 8vb. Perform this study at a full dynamic both freely (with consistent and temporally free breaths at first) and in time. Create long phrases while conveying dynamic direction and melodic shaping throughout. Challenge yourself to lengthen phrases with less frequent breaths as consistency and ease of sound production is achieved.

The musical score consists of four staves of bass clef music in 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth notes with slurs, marked *f-ff*. The second staff continues the eighth-note pattern, marked *più f-ff*. The third staff continues with slurs, and the fourth staff concludes with a final slur and a fermata, marked *ff-fff*.

Additional insight:

"[In regard to working on sustained passages] I would slur and make sure my sound is consistent and even throughout registers. Line cannot die here and the different sections need to be obvious."

- John DiCesare, principal tuba, Seattle Symphony