Arban Technical Routine

This routine is excellent for acquiring and cultivating a quick, reliable and virtuosic facility. The patterns repeat within themselves, enabling you to go over predictable patterns and sequences many times in the course of each exercise. Through your practicing, you are programming note-groups, patterns and sequences for future use. Don’t program messy or inaccurate data! Also, when doing such thorough exercises, make sure all of your technique is in good order: posture, breathing, right hand and arm, etcetera.

Practice these exercises also in tenor clef (i.e. up a 5th) in order to apply these skills in the tenor register. Bass trombonists: transport these exercises downward, e.g.: tenor clef down an octave (i.e. down a 4th).

Note: This routine has three sections, and should take about 12-15 minutes.

In order to accommodate different editions, all references will be “Section Name”, Exercise Number. This should be consistent among the most common Arban editions.

1) “Studies on the Intervals”, No. 13 and onward
(Subtitled “Exercises on Triplets” in some editions)

This is technical facility, incorporating an advanced “mix-and-match” articulation, as studied in the Arban Multiple Tonguing Routine.

Play cleanly, making sure the triplets are in perfect ‘triangular’ time. (Don’t let them tend toward two 16ths and an 8th.) Blow freely. Toss the slurs (ask about this concept in lessons). Since these exercises stay in ‘friendly’ key signatures, try moving them up and down a half step. After you have gotten comfortable with No. 13, go on to 14. Continue in this manner through to No. 27.

2) “Studies on the Intervals”, No. 28 and onward
(Subtitled “Exercises on Sixteenth Notes” in some editions)

Can you play all the way to the half note in one breath? Not yet? Then ‘divide and conquer’: Play measures 1-3 (plus the first note of measure 4), then measures 4-6 (plus the first note of measure 7), 7-9 (etc.). Then work toward m.1-6 and 7-13. The many repeats will enable you to play quicker and lighter. You should be on your way to playing 16 measures in one breath. Speed is a result, not a goal.

You are going over the same notes again and again. Play cleanly. Exaggerate the slur: make sure you are blowing confidently on the first note of the slur, and also “tossing” the slur. (Ask about this concept in lessons. It is important.)
When comfortable with No. 28, go on to 29. Continue onward in this manner to No. 47. Apply the same transposing as in 1) above.

3) “Studies on the Intervals”, No. 48 and onward
(Subtitled “Major and Minor Chords” in some editions)

You should be able to easily play each line in one breath. (If not, divide and conquer, as above.) Most editions have different articulation models. Apply them, always using the slur to your advantage. Try multiple tonguing these, as well. Play the page in tenor clef (tenor clef down an 8va for bass trombone) to work on extended register.

After becoming fluent in major chords, go on to No. 49, minor chords. Continue on in this manner to No. 61. You are programming harmonies into your repertoire. Arban doesn’t go beyond major, minor, dominant 7th and diminished. You should. Try applying the same patterns to more advanced harmonies.

No. 62, “Cadenzas”, is one of the most delightful pages in the book. After the above pedantic and thorough routine, have some fun with the cadenzas. Try making up your own! You should have plenty of figures and patterns to do so by now.

Carl Lenthe