

ETUDE CLINIC

1. What is an “Etude”?

“A composition designed to improve the technique of an instrumental performer by isolating specific difficulties and concentrating his or her efforts on their mastery. A single etude usually focuses on one technical problem; etudes are usually published in groups more or less systematically covering a range of such problems in a range of keys. In present-day usage, the etude falls between the exercise, a short formula not worked out as a formal composition and the concert etude, which can stand as a self-sufficient piece of music...”

--The Harvard Dictionary of Music

- The differences between Etudes and Exercises/Routines/Drills/Patterns
- Differences between preparing etudes and other compositions [solos, excerpts, ensemble pieces for performance]
- Choosing representative etudes for a brass instrument

2. Etude Preparation: Preliminary

- Determine the etude’s musical/technical focus [key/scale, intervallic, flexibility, phrasing, style, legato, velocity, rhythm, range, Bel Canto, endurance, odd meter, sight reading, lyricism, orchestral style, improvisational application, etc]
- Determine the etude’s technical requirements [tempo, range, single/multiple tongue, breathing map, alternate fingerings, endurance, wide/awkward intervals, “tongue-twister” articulation, extreme dynamic shifts]
- Develop a vivid mental/aural picture of you playing the etude, FULLY MASTERED [you can imagine sounding “like” someone else, or another instrument/singer. You should strive to hear each sound/pitch in your head. What is the overall effect you are trying create with this kind music and how will this etude serve that purpose in other musical situations?]

3. Applying Musical Fundamentals to the Etude

- Fixed Fundamentals [need to remain consistent through each passage of the etude]
sound, pitch, tempo, rhythm
- Variable Fundamentals [need to be varied to develop overall musicality]
Articulation, phrasing/style, dynamics, vibrato/timbre
- Trombone Fundamentals [can be removed to isolate on technically challenging passages]
air, buzz, slide [fingers], tongue

4. Allowing for “what if” questions...

====>The performer can/should improvise different scenarios to increase mastery in the process.

- What if I change the clef/key of the etude?
- What if I change/alter the tempo?
- What if I take any or some of the fixed or variable fundamentals to their extremes?
- What if I change the instrument I play this on?
- What would [insert favorite musician name] sound like playing this?

5. Creating Etudes

- Pulling passages from solos and excerpts and improvising etudes from them
- Key center [scale] improvisation
- Duets for ear training
- Creating etudes from Exercises/Drills/Routines/Patterns

6. Etude Drills

- Slow down for sound/technique
- Sing/Buzz passages
- Clap rhythms
- One Pitch for challenging rhythm/intervals
- Skeletal structures
- Subdivision Drills
- Octave Displacement
- Isolation Loops
- Backwards Practice
- ”10 times through” Rule

7. Tools and their uses

- Recording Device: for listening back to practice and for duet/sightreading practice
- Metronome: on the beat, up beat, anticipating beats, short and long subdivisions
- Tuner: to help develop sense of internal tendencies and to increase pitch consistency

8. HAVE FUN!!

- Pull out an old familiar etudes once in a while for a “brain quick start”
- Sight read new/challenging etudes with NO STOPPING.
- Steal etudes from all other instruments.
- Don’t be frustrated if a given etude remains far-from-perfect! You might have learned some of the most valuable lessons and grown as a player even if you haven’t mastered the entire etude!

