FRENCH HORN

Performance Notes for 2010-2011 All-State Band Auditions

by

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JUNIOR BAND: Melodious Studies for French Horn by Miersch (Carl Fischer), p. 7, #7, start at measure 5 and end at quarter rest in measure 24. Quarter note = 84.

To begin with, think in terms of four-measure phrases. Remember to start measure 5 at a forte volume since the original indication in measure one (which you are not playing) was marked with that dynamic level. In measures 6, 7, and 8, play the slurred notes long, so this articulated grouping of two and two slurred notes does not get choppy. I usually say “tah” for the first tongued notes and then “dah” for the second tongued notes while imagining a tenuto marking on each slurred note. This helps the passage sound more connected. In measure 11, drop the jaw quickly to execute the octave interval. Remember to change the dynamic at measure 13 to a slightly softer sound, but still keep it strong. Mezzo-forte is not that soft. Breathe at all of the places that have rests except in measure 22. If you breathe on that eighth rest, you will probably be late in playing the up beat. I breathe at the end of measure 20 and then play to the end with that one breath. As with any breathing, consider timing the intake to insure that you are always involved with the rhythm of the piece and therefore on time with a controlled amount of air.

CLINIC BAND: Lyrical Studies for Trumpet or Horn by Concone (Brass Press, 1972), p. 13, #15, play to the dotted quarter note in the second measure of line 4. Dotted quarter note = 72. [In the most recent edition of this book, copyright 1999, this etude is on p. 14, #15; play to the dotted quarter in the fifth bar of line 4.]

If you have a double horn, you might want to explore using the Bb side in the low register on certain notes for greater clarity of response. In measure eleven, the low A# (fingered first valve), and in measures twelve, thirteen, fourteen and fifteen, the low D (third valve), will produce a quicker response. Be careful about the pitch; the tendency will be to play high (sharp), so you may have to adjust your hand in the bell accordingly (close it slightly, but not too much or you will play stuffy). In measure fifteen, the accents that occur within the slur should not be tongued; merely emphasize these notes with a slight gust of wind taking care not to short change the eighth notes. I would breathe in measures four, eight, ten, fourteen, and sixteen during the written rests. I would not breathe in measures two, thirteen, or twenty to avoid chopping the piece up or getting behind the beat. Dynamics are important, but more significant is rhythmic flow - cohesiveness between measures, as well as a secure feeling of triple meter.
SENIOR BAND:  *Lyrical Studies for Trumpet or Horn* by Concone, #20, page 20.
Stop at the eighth rest in the third measure of line 6.  Quarter note = 100.  [If you have the most recent edition of this book, copyright 1999, you should stop at the eighth rest in the second measure of line 7.]

The main emphasis in this study is on efficient breathing and dynamic expression. There are no major technical difficulties and therefore no specific recommendations for alternate fingerings to simplify things. The one issue that I found to be paid the most attention to is the articulation. Beginning in measure two, a rhythmic pattern is stated that will permeate the work. Quarter note tied to an eighth followed by three different eighth notes, sometimes tongued, other times slurred. Measures 2, 3, 4, and 5 are identical rhythmically and have the ending eighth notes tongued, marked staccato. Measures 11, 12, and 16 are identical rhythmically and the first of the ending eighth notes tongued followed by the remaining two eighth notes slurred. Measures 14 and 18 are identical rhythmically and have the tied note slurred to the first ending eighth note. Finally, make sure attention is paid to measure 20 and the slight difference in the rhythm. You must make a difference to all of these articulations. Be careful to play g flat on the third beat in measures 22 and 26. To prepare for the long note ending the etude, make sure that a good breath is taken in measure 27. You can breathe in measure 30 between beats two and three, but I find that disruptive to playing the B natural suddenly soft. Taking a breath there can lead to too heavy an attack on the *subito* piano. Don’t forget the definition of crescendo and decrescendo – GRADUALLY loud then GRADUALLY soft. Time your hairpin and do it gracefully, not forced.