

Sonata for Unaccompanied Euphonium or Trombone

Fred L. Clinard, Jr.
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Pat Stuckemeyer

One of the most difficult topics to teach any young musician is “internal pulse”. Rhythmic stability should be at the forefront of any musician’s palate, but is often an afterthought. Rhythmic pulse is directly related to internal pulse, and this pulse is a byproduct of your heartbeat. So, why is this seemingly simple concept so difficult to put into practice with a young musician?

When performing with accompaniment, which is another topic in itself, musical forces create an ensemble. This ensemble gives the performer a sense of security (which can be false in some cases), but this generally makes the rhythmic pulse settle somewhat. A great collaborative artist can make even the weakest performer play with expert time and sensibility. Why is it that once the performer is alone time goes out the window? Oftentimes we as musicians, myself included, get lackadaisical with our time. When performing with an ensemble or collaborative artist, we rely on them to keep the time straight. Surely there is point where we have to take ownership of our own metronomic pulse.

One of the most difficult types of music to perform well is a piece without accompaniment. A complete musical experience has everything

from intricate harmonies, to sweeping cadences, and lush marvelous texture. An unaccompanied piece has to create the same feeling without any of those tools. All that you have is yourself and your ideas to create the entire musical picture. This can be extremely difficult to do, especially for a young performer.

There are many types of unaccompanied pieces. Most musicians don't think of etudes as performance pieces, but they are. Also, technical-characteristic studies can be extremely musical to the listener. The performer needs to think of these as musical pieces, and not simply as exercises. The moment either the student or the teacher thinks of them as merely exercises, they instantly become less effective.

In solitude, some of the most important leaps in our playing are achieved in the practice room. Here we as musicians sit and learn our craft, trying to take it to the next level. We succeed and fail through our trials, but we keep pressing forward in search of being 'better'. My motto with my students is pretty simple: You are never alone in the practice room. You have your two best friends: your tuner, and your metronome.

As teachers we want our students to succeed at all costs. We as educators become so focused on getting our pupils to articulate correctly, shape phrases, and play in tune that we don't hold our students accountable for their own rhythmic stability or pulse. It is merely an afterthought to most. While it is important to articulate correctly, shape

phrases musically, and play in tune, we must also look for a broader scope of musicality from the student or else none of matters.

Background

Fred Clinard wrote the *Sonata for Unaccompanied Euphonium or Trombone* while he was a student at Tennessee Technological University.

The first movement was written as a single work for his friend and euphonium player, Alan Clark. The second and third movements were written for the composer's own performance of the work on his senior graduation recital. While at Tennessee Tech, Mr. Clinard was a composition student of Robert Jager, and studied euphonium with R. Winston Morris. He was a band director in Tennessee, Florida, and Virginia for nearly 15 years. Currently Mr. Clinard is actively involved with his own interests, mainly being a father to his three sons and enjoying life to the fullest.ⁱ

Headlines for the Teacher

Unaccompanied music can be some of the most challenging music to play well. There is no pianist to keep you on track, no ensemble to give you support, there is only you – none of your usual musical “crutches”. You must use every facet of your musical being to convey a story – one without words or pictures. Being this type of storyteller takes preparation and intricate practice.

What makes unaccompanied pieces a great learning tool is the same thing that makes them so difficult: the composer is unrestricted.

When writing for a combined force, like euphonium and piano, the composer must make a concession for the greater ensemble. With unaccompanied works, this is not the case. They are free to write what they want, when they want to write it.

A true performance of unaccompanied works are not only difficult to perform, but can be incredibly difficult to teach. We, as musicians, add many musical ideas that are not necessarily written on the page. There is a fine line between being expressive and musical while still maintaining the intention of the composer. We all have instances where we would have liked more information from the composer, and of course where we would have liked just a little less guidance. The beauty of unaccompanied works is that we are free to make these choices ourselves – with the only consideration being the music itself.

Pedagogical Considerations for Performance

Clinard's *Sonata for Unaccompanied Euphonium or Trombone* is a wonderful unaccompanied piece for the younger player. Unfortunately, there are few contest or recital works for euphonium that were intended for soloist alone. I never had the chance to work on this piece during my formative training, but many fine teachers recommended the piece to me when I was gathering material for *Stepping Stones for Euphonium, Vol. 1*. Through further investigation, the piece appears on almost every state solo and ensemble contest list, and is a great option for any performer wishing to contest without a collaborative artist.

The range of the work is F2 to C5, which makes this piece acceptable for an advanced high school player or a beginning collegiate performer. The piece is divided into three movements. The first movement is the most expansive, and the only instance where the piece travels above Bb4. The second movement, *Song*, is a slower more lyrical movement. The third and final movement, *Finale*, takes the listener on a rhythmic journey complete with several jumps through mixed meter. On several high school state contesting lists, the performer can choose two contrasting movements. If the student has trouble with high range, you as the teacher might consider having them prepare the second and third movements to alleviate the repeated high-C's.

Guided Practice

Introduction and Allegro

Preparing these works with a student can be very challenging. The beginning *Introduction* of the piece gives the performer room to experiment with an opening quasi-cadenza section. Most unaccompanied pieces have some aleatoric (chance) music included. Hopefully, this will not have been the first time that your pupil has seen this. Even the youngest musician can bring his or her own musicality into the mix to create something wonderful. Experiment with this on a simple exercise, and let them create something. I often will give my students a string of notes, upon which they need to improvise their own rhythm. Don't even give them note-values or stems – make it as vague as

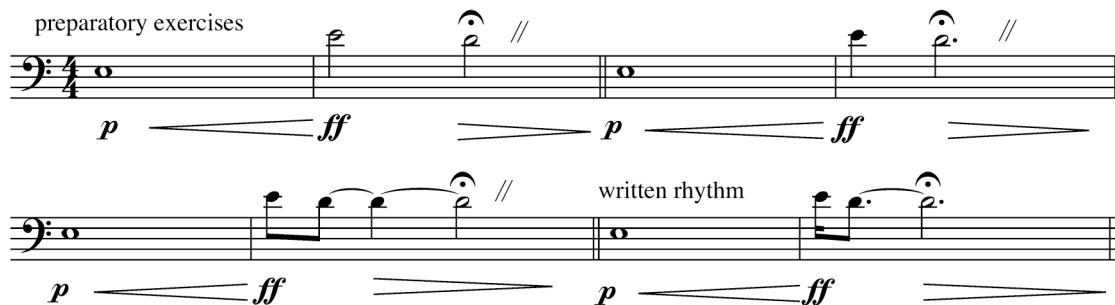
possible. Don't test their range, or give them wide leaps, but let them succeed with this exercise.

(Figure 1.1)



The opening section of the *Introduction* should not be forced. The gradual shift from piano to forte should be smooth and without bumps. Young students will often have problems with the stability of the notes in m. 1-2 because of the wide leap. Isolate this into an exercise for them, making the rhythmic value of the top note slightly longer and then shortening it up later.

(Figure 2.1)



Take caution in this opening section that the student does not rush through the multiple fermatas. The *Introduction* should have breathing room in its phrases. Musical silence can be just as effective as musical noise. Repetition should never be simply stagnant. When repeating a

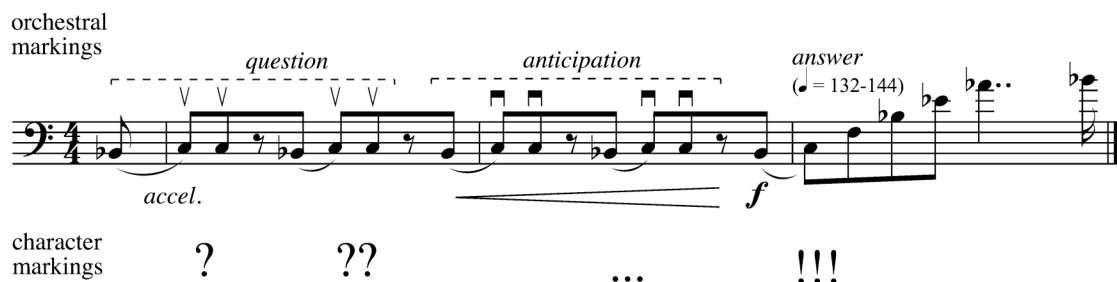
phrase or rhythm, the composer is attempting to draw the attention to it. The repeated sections in m. 13–14 are written in the music like this:

(Figure 3.1)



The repeated sections bridge the two parts of the movement. The slow accelerando into the faster tempo should be steady and not rushed. Allowing this section to have more than one face is ideal. There are many ways that you can get this concept across to the student. Using the concept of an up-bow and down-bow is extremely effective for a more experienced performer, however various characters (? , ! , ☺ , ☹) or helpful emotional words like ‘fun’ and ‘singing’ are also quite effective. Taking something that already has an ingrained meaning and applying it to music is a quick way around most any barrier. Here is how I would mark the music teaching both of these concepts:

(Figure 3.2)



The headline for success after m. 15 is rhythmic stability. The various sections should be prepared slowly at first, and then sped up after the student maintains tempo and rhythm together. In m. 23–24 take careful notice of the accents inlaid in the melodic material. These accents should have power and be very sharp in comparison with the rest of the material. The climactic point of the first page would be m. 33–35. Have the pupil practice this section down the octave to solidify the audiation, before moving it up to where it's written.

The *Introduction and Allegro* includes a short narrative *Legato* section beginning at m. 37, which is a great chance for the soloist to sing through the instrument. The tessitura of the excerpt is low at first, so suggesting the soloist play a bit louder than marked will help him or her in their rendition. While shaping and cultivating this phrasal section, make the most out of the music. Take care not to play the entire section too soft, as there is a high singing point at m. 48, which should be brought out.

The ending section is a return to the *Allegro* thematic material, and should be identical in tempo to the first statement. The last two measures should be declamatory in nature, and practicing this with a one-note version will help the student get this concept before adding in the problematic range issues.

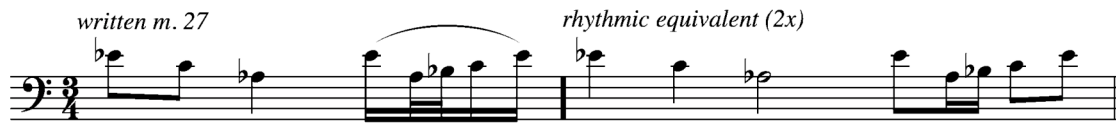
Song

Musical phrases can be especially long in this movement. Most performance problems of unaccompanied music come from long drawn-out phrases. This is not because the composer is intentionally making it difficult for us, but because there is a desired result within phrases. Without the aid of a collaborative artist, the only one available to make these long phrases is the soloist.

The phrases in the middle movement of Clinard's *Sonata* can be somewhat challenging, but with a little preparation are not too difficult. Have the student prepare the manuscript with their breath marks (with little help from you initially) and then go over them together so they can understand why they should or should not breathe in a particular spot. If you teach the pupil various spots in the music to breathe, and why, they will be much more apt to doing these on their own in the future. Simply marking the music for them is not acceptable – make them have ownership!

I once had a teacher tell me that, “You have to play in time, before you can play out of time.” This section of the piece has many intricate rhythms that need to be performed precisely. That is not to say that the soloist cannot emote and make the movement his or her own, but a steady rhythmic foundation must be present. I often find that some more dense rhythms tend to look ‘weird’ to some students, and can be a little easier to digest if the duration value is doubled. The rhythm in m. 27 is an example where this method could be used.

(Figure 4.1)



Finale

The final installment from Clinard's *Sonata* is a fast ride that never seems to let up. This movement, while technically the easiest in my opinion, seems to give performers the most trouble. This movement is perfect for auditions and contests, because it affords the performer a chance to either show rhythmic perfection, or a serious lack of time and tempo. There are so many places that the musician can step into a hole, it seems like it was written with that in mind. Once the performer becomes comfortable with the melody, the movement is actually quite simple.

One of the most difficult aspects of this movement is the mixed meter. In my experience, it is not the rhythm that challenges younger pupils, but feeling the time throughout those sections. All mixed meter is a combination of 3's and 2's. To feel these sections with more ease, I will often have my student's hold the first note of a 3-group, and play the 2-groups as written. This gives the young performer a chance to succeed on the latter half of the measure, while giving stability to the time. Developing the student's inner pulse will help them with stability of their time, and make this entire movement more concrete. Measure 6-10

would be an example of using this method. Here is how the music is written:

(Figure 5.1)



Now instruct the student to let the first note of each 3-group fill the entire length of a dotted-quarter. This will let the student feel the time, and let them concentrate making “internal pulse” their headline while being able to perform the latter beat(s) in the bar.

(Figure 5.2)



The two contrasting sections of the *Finale* consist of the driving mixed meter dance, and the flowing lyrical passage. While tempo stays constant, the two sections should have divided energies. While this edition of the *Sonata* is fairly error free, there is one erratum in the third movement: measure 42 should have a G-flat on count 1, not a G-natural.

Although there is not much thematic material in the *Finale*, there are a lot of musically driven rhythmic ideas. These ideas are presented many times, and should match. Careful planning with the student will ensure that these sections match when performed as a total package.

The ending of the piece needs to have flash and panache, while still maintaining a steady and focused sound to the final note!

Musical Gains Through Performance

When I recorded *Stepping Stones for Euphonium, Vol. 1*, there were many musical challenges for me. While some of the repertoire was more challenging on paper, I believe that Clinard's *Sonata for Unaccompanied Euphonium or Trombone* took the longest for me to record. I would be lying if I did not say that this piece frustrated me in the recording studio. There is a lot of music contained within these five minutes, and anyone who undertakes this piece will definitely learn and grow as a player from it. This is an excellent unaccompanied piece for any beginning student. It is one that is deceptively difficult, but not so challenging it cannot be overcome with a little work.

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ⁱ Stuckemeyer, Pat. *Stepping Stones for Euphonium, Vol. 1*. CD-recording. Tempe, AZ: Potenza Music, 2006.

Fig. 1.1: Adapt. Stuckemeyer from Pilafian, Sam & Sheridan, Patrick. *Breathing Gym & Brass Gym* pedagogy. Chandler, AZ: Focus on Music, 2004-6.

Fig. 2.1: Adapt. Stuckemeyer from Droste, Paul. *Pedagogical Ideas and Routines*. Columbus, OH: Manuscript, 2002.

Fig. 3.1: Clinard, Fred L. *Sonata for Unaccompanied Euphonium or Trombone*. Nashville, TN: Shawnee Press, Inc, 1978.

Fig. 3.2: Ibid. Pat Stuckemeyer, ed.

Fig. 4.1: Adapt. Stuckemeyer from Clinard, Fred L. *Sonata for Unaccompanied Euphonium or Trombone*. Nashville, TN: Shawnee Press, Inc, 1978.

Fig. 5.1: Clinard, Fred L. *Sonata for Unaccompanied Euphonium or Trombone*. Nashville, TN: Shawnee Press, Inc, 1978.

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