

# EXPERTS' EXCERPTS for Euphonium

by Matthew Shipes

## *Toccata Marziale* by Ralph Vaughan Williams

When approaching a military band audition list, it is important to create a clear set of goals based on different aspects presented by each individual excerpt. These goals may be formed by questions like: "What is challenging about this excerpt?" or "What might the audition committee be looking for in this excerpt?" In planning a practice regiment, it is beneficial to separate the audition list into several different categories based on those goals. These categories may depend on how technically challenging the excerpt is, what lyrical opportunities are presented, or range requirements.

Some excerpts are more difficult to categorize as there may be nothing about them that sticks out particularly as a challenge. *Toccata Marziale* by Ralph Vaughan Williams represents one of these excerpts, and is certainly one that I personally overlooked as a younger musician taking auditions. The challenges with this excerpt lie behind the technical and lyrical difficulties, and are hidden within the phrasing, breathing, dynamic contrast, style, and range requirements. A successful performance of this piece will show the audition panel that not only does the performer have a characteristic tone, flawless technique, and consistent time in their playing, but that they have also done the research into the music, understand how their part fits into the whole of the ensemble, and can illustrate these ideas clearly despite the awkward use of meter and phrasing in much of this excerpt.

<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1**

## TOCCATA MARZIALE

Baritone ♭

R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

*Allegro maestoso.*

1 *f simile*

2

3 *f p cresc. f*

4 *f ff simile*

5 *p*

6 *f ff marc.*

During my time at the University of Georgia, I was able to participate in a residence by Tim Reynish during which I performed *Toccata Marziale* with the UGA Wind Ensemble. Reynish is currently on the staff of the International Chamber Music Studio at the Royal Northern College of Music, and is considered to be one of the leading conductors of wind bands and wind ensembles in the world.<sup>1</sup> He discussed many different approaches and techniques relating to this piece, and several of these approaches, specifically dealing with phrasing and meter, can apply directly to how one performs this excerpt at an audition. To help make sense of the phrasing, there are several instances where a meter change is implied.

In measures 9-11 (Figure 2), the implied meter can be changed to two measures of 7/8 time, followed by one measure of 2/4 time.<sup>2</sup> This emphasis is clearly heard in the music, and helps the performer have something to latch onto rhythmically, instead of the guesswork implied with having ideas beginning on up-beats. Immediately after this section, in measure 12, a lyrical idea is presented that also does not conform to the 3/4 meter. These three measures (Figure 3) imply a 5/4 meter instead of the printed 3/4 and are immediately followed by eight measures of 3/4.<sup>3</sup> The phrase here (mm. 15-21), however, begins on beat two instead of beat one. Finally, the pick-up notes into the last phrase of this excerpt in measures 26-30 can be heard as in 6/8 instead of 3/4, but this change is less clear than the other two (Figure 4).<sup>4</sup> Each of these metric changes are confusing the way they are printed, but in understanding the different meters implied by the music, a more convincing and natural product can be achieved.

Figure 2  
mm. 9-11



Figure 3



Figure 4



<sup>1</sup> Tim Reynish, "Tim Reynish Biography," <http://www.timreynish.com/biography>, (accessed May 24, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Reynish, "Ralph Vaughan Williams - Toccata Marziale," Lecture at World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio, January 6, 2009, <http://www.timreynish.com/conducting/interpreting-specific-works/vw-toccata-marziale2.php> (accessed May 24, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

The first few phrases in this piece present a challenge when it comes to breathing. A unique quality of the transitions from measures 4-5 and measures 7-8 is that the phrasing leads right into the next measure. In order to make it through these ideas, I suggest breathing in the spaces marked below (Figure 5), and possibly sneaking a quick breath after beat two of measure three. To help keep the line moving along, add crescendos in measures 4 and 7-8 to emphasize this transition. From here until the end of the excerpt, one should only breathe in the rests. The other questionable phrase in terms of breathing is measures 24-30, which do not contain any rests. Take a breath after the first eighth-note in beat 2 of measure 26, if needed, and then breathe after the dotted-quarter notes as indicated in Figure 4.

Figure 5  
mm. 1-8



While I do not usually recommend breathing this often, it is important to keep a full tank of air in the *forte* sections of this excerpt to enable one to truly play at that dynamic comfortably. I always recommend marking *every* breath in music that is being performed, especially in band or orchestral excerpts. The last thing one needs to be worrying about during a possibly very stressful performance is “Wait, did I decide to breathe there?” By the time that thought occurs it will always be too late.

Perhaps even more important than possessing a clear sense of phrasing and breathing is the sense of style in this piece. The title by itself, “*Toccata Marziale*,” likely brings to mind a particular style of playing. James Hicks of the US Navy Band presents several ideas concerning the meaning of this title in his article about the tuba part of this piece from the Experts’ Excerpts column in the Summer, 2014-15 edition of the ITEA Journal. Most important of these is that the term *toccata* implies that there are “several musical elements going on at the same time,” and that *marziale* encourages the player to be “steady and deliberate [in time] while still being energetic and exciting.”<sup>5</sup> What someone should not do, however, is treat this particular excerpt like a march where many of the note attacks will inherently lean toward an accent. The key to performing the euphonium part of this excerpt successfully lies in understanding the different stylistic markings (or lack of markings) and what they each imply.

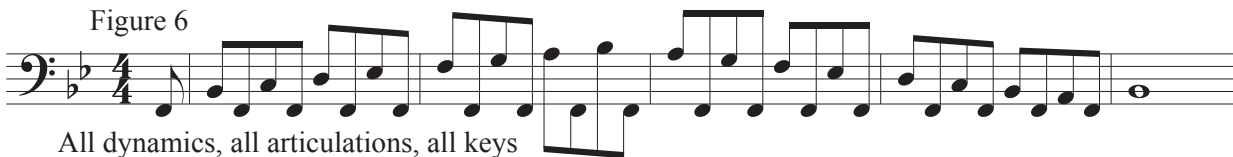
From the very beginning of the excerpt, three different types of notes are presented: those with no markings, staccato markings, and tenuto markings. A general rule of thumb in this piece, as well as many others, is that the staccato markings should never be interpreted as “short.” An attempt to shorten eighth-notes at this tempo, and especially sixteenth-notes, will create a very choppy style. Think of these as being merely “separated,” and equivalent to roughly 75% of the length of an unmarked note. In reality, the staccato sixteenth-notes will be

<sup>5</sup> James Hicks, “Experts’ Excerpts: Tuba Excerpts from First Suite and Toccata Marziale,” *International Tuba Euphonium Association Journal*, 42, no. 4 (Summer, 2014-2015), <http://www.iteaonline.org/members/journal/42N4/42N4expertsexcerpts.php> (accessed May 24, 2017).

Due to the lyrical aspects of much of this piece, unmarked notes should be played long in this excerpt; this length is especially true in the unmarked eighth-note pick-ups into the first, second, and third measures. I hear these notes as leading into the downbeats of each subsequent measure, pushing the phrase forward. There are very few notes that lack markings in this excerpt. While measures 6-8, 20-21, and 27-30 appear to be sparse, there are actually implied markings in music created by writing “*simile*,” “*simile*,” and “*marc.*,” respectively. Remember to sustain unmarked notes for their full value, especially when they are shorter notes followed by a rest, as in measure 11.

Finally, the use of accents does not occur until the end of this excerpt in measures 26-30. This style is presented in a potentially conflicting way, with the accent marking being used above the notes, while “*marc.*” is printed beneath them. I believe this is meant to further distinguish these accented notes from the tenuto notes earlier in the excerpt by encouraging the performer to give a harder, more marked articulation. Do not play in a truly *marcato* style, as these notes should still be full-value and sustained.

Figure 6



<sup>6</sup> Jean Baptiste Arban, *Complete Method for Trombone and Euphonium*, edited by Joseph Alessi and Brian Bowman (Michigan: Encore Music Publishers, 2000) 139.

Despite the seemingly innocuous nature of *Toccata Marziale*, there are many challenges presented in this excerpt that give the performer a chance to distinguish themselves musically in what may be off-handedly considered to be an “easy” excerpt. Using the examples presented with meter, phrasing, breathing, dynamics, and style, a more comfortable and meaningful product can be achieved.

## Bibliography

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Dr. Matthew Shipes is the Clinical Assistant Professor of Tuba and Euphonium at the University of Idaho where he teaches the tuba-euphonium studio, conducts the tuba-euphonium ensemble, and also teaches aural skills and music appreciation courses. He was previously the low-brass instructor at Shepherd University in West Virginia, and the euphonium instructor at Towson University in Maryland. He also served as a euphoniumist and tubist with The United States Air Force Band in Washington DC. Prior to his work in the DC area he was the instructor of tuba and euphonium at Georgia College & State University.

Shipes received a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Baylor University, a Master of Music degree in euphonium performance from the University of Arkansas, as well as a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in tuba performance with a minor in trombone performance from the University of Georgia.