

Phrygian mode scale routines for low brass instruments

Versions for:

euphonium in treble clef Bb, also applicable for brass band style reading tenor trombone and tubas in Eb or BBb

euphonium in bass clef concert, also applicable for tenor and bass trombones

tubas in F, Eb, CC, and BBb, all in bass clef concert.

The main ideas behind these routines have been presented in the other prefaces. Here a few considerations:

In 1981 I took part in a 2 weeks long Danish jazz camp with very good teachers. I had been playing scales classical style in two-octave patterns, which cover 3 octaves when playing around the cycle of fifths. Also played a lot of scales from Arban, who is not comprehensive key-wise, as he used cornets in C, Bb, and A to be versatile.

Another trombonist on the camp was a former section mate from a brass band. A really smart guy with PhD degrees in musicology as well as in modern literature. But he ran into problems when asked to play in different modes. I asked if he didn't know them from the Arban patterns, when the scales shift from step to step. He hadn't perceived these scales in their modal sense.

One of the teachers was a tenor player educated on Berkeley. I wasn't in her classes, but heard rumours about her having scale ideas, so I asked her. She outlined the idea about playing the scales and arpeggios to the ninth. I worked from that pattern on tenor and bass trombones for several years. As there is no true legato on trombones I played arpeggios in all of the various tonguing styles including the fake legato.

When I later took up the valved low brasses I didn't like doing the arpeggios slurred, but rather used the true legato to play scales at very high speed. That approach is reflected in my routines. But honestly: I never really played these routines from written music. Rather I have written down what I do.

In one way my approach has changed. I used to start playing all modes in the key related to the major scale starting on the 2nd partial of whatever instrument I played in a given situation (I have instruments in C, B natural, Bb, A, G, F, and Eb). But for the sake of my aging memory I now always start any mode on the 2nd partial.

I am not very original in dividing the modes in major types and minor types. Lydian is major with a raised 4th step. That is the mode troubling my ears the most in scales. Mixolydian is major with a lowered 7th step.

Dorian is minor with a raised 6th step. Phrygian is minor with b2. Locrian is minor with b2 and b5. Ascending melodic minor is a major tetrachord on top of a minor tetrachord. Harmonic minor is a special love of mine, but it takes much attention intonationwise, and it has some really odd fingering sequences. The dominant 8-note scale has leading notes to the third, fifth and minor seventh steps and a downwards-leading note to the tonic. It also is a funny mode as there really only are three different variants.

Every player should shape his/hers own scale concepts. I encourage doing scale work from memory or by ear. I also encourage keeping a diary over ones scale work.