

Locrian 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 Babb

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

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

The main ideas behind these routines are these:

Being able to read and play all Locrian scales all over ones instrumental playing range is very good for ones evenness, sound, intonation, sight-reading, and any other aspect of ones playing, as the ability to do musical analysis on the fly also is enhanced. The Locrian mode is special by being the only diatonic mode with a diminished fifth. It is played over chords of this type: Bmi7b5b9.

These scale routines come in three octave versions for each instrument. In the midrange the progression through the keys follows the cycle of fifths in the “dominant” direction, which represents a clear musical logic. All of these scales would be within the range of most players beyond the elementary stages.

The upper and lower ranges are introduced in ascending respectively descending chromatic increments. This is done to accommodate limitations in individual embouchures. As with all parts of these routines it is more productive to play the few or not so few keys/scales, which one masters more or less securely, than it would be to give up totally on doing scale routines because they are considered being too difficult. One should work on stabilising and improving already conquered skills and also on the expansion of these skills. In the outer ranges this expansion should happen key-wise as well as range-wise.

The experience of this editor tells, that scales should be practised tongued as well as legato. Legato is good for smoothness and flexibility. Tongued playing is very revealing, if the co-ordination of the embouchure/intonation/air-support with the tongue/rhythm is faulty. Tonguing shall be mastered in all shadings from the cleanest staccato through the smoothest tenuto. However, staccato practising should not be overly emphasised, as doing so would counteract the achieving of a full sound and a free flow of air.

The tempo can be set *ad libitum* by the student/teacher. It is much more productive to start out in a slower tempo, which allows for a well controlled steady playing, than it is rushing through a bad execution of the scales. The latter modus actually is counter-productive to good playing. Of course the increase in speed also is a parameter to be worked on in the longer run.

These routines are distilled from my own learning and teaching. This edition is based on material made for my Danish students. Hence the bilingual text in the music pages. I strongly encourage the use of practise diaries. The “(” and “•” simply are my suggested short-hand signs for legato and tongued playing respectively. Very effective used together with measure ###. I have kept diaries in paper form as well as in a computer spreadsheet.

This approach to scale routines is one among many others. Hopefully some brass players may benefit from it. Comments are most welcome.