

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF TROMBONE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF MOUNT OLIVE COLLEGE UMUNYA, ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

Music is among the most beautiful courses that anyone should learn. However, this has been referred by many as a subject which is somewhat difficult to learn. The reason behind this is that certain aspects of music education particularly those that involve theory and history seem somehow boring at certain times. Instrument playing can increase the desire for music learning among the students. Trombone can be one of the instruments students can learn. One benefit of learning the Trombone instrument is the fact it can improve your fitness and health. In the western countries, trombone instrument is a well-respected instrument. It's a brass instrument which can feature in an orchestra, big brass band etc. Both male and female can play this instrument. However it is not well known in Nigeria among the students and the youths etc. People seem not to indicate interest in the instrument, which could be from the sound of the instrument, the size, the teaching method or the learning method. This researcher therefore exposed the challenges and prospects in learning and teaching of the trombone instrument.

Keywords: Music education, Musical instrument, Trombone, Teaching and learning method.

Introduction

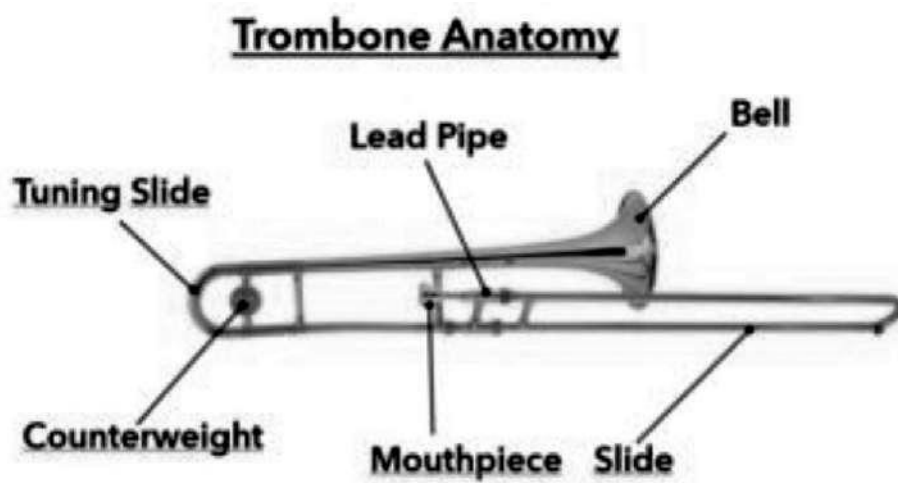
The trombone is a versatile musical instrument that is used in a variety of settings and ensembles around the globe. Its modern history can be traced back at least 500 years (T. Herbert, 1987). There is contention that there are many biblical references to the trombone that may indicate the instrument has a more ancient history as well. It is also a musical instrument in the brass family. It produces its sound by blowing of air into the instrument.(DM,Guion, 1996) states that all brass instruments sound is produced when the player's vibrating lips (embouchure) cause the air column inside the instrument to vibrate. Unlike most other brass instruments, which have valves that, when pressed, alter the pitch of the instrument; trombones instead have a telescoping slide mechanism that varies the length of the instrument pitch. The trombone was the development of the trumpet in the 15th century and was the called sackbut until around 1700 when the name change. The most common form is the tenor trombone in B ♭ (that is, the root sound is B ♭) which is one octave lower than B ♭ trumpet. However, music for Tenor Trombone is usually noticed in concert pitch (that is the C on the trombone is the same note as the C on the piano). In fact, the trombone can even be said to be unique because its perseverance and adaptability in the music industry are almost unmatched. In instrumental music, only the guitar can rival the trombone with regard to versatility and longevity of use. (DM, Guion, 1996).

With the trombone's rich history and widespread current use, it is no surprise that the education and pedagogy of the instrument is equally strong and healthy. Teachers at colleges, universities,

and conservatories are training performers of the trombone to enter the professional music community especially in the western part of the world. In public schools across Nigeria, the trombone is featured in a few ensembles, and few students take private lessons, apart from the one learnt in school. Many students preferred drums, saxophone, flute, trumpet, violin, clarinet or cello, to trombone, euphonium, and tuba etc. Some people believe that the trombone is too hard to play and for this reason, they don't want to play the instrument. They fail to understand that in every instrument there is an ideal sound, evenness of tone throughout its range (low or high), wide range dynamic, soft and loud sound that one must try to achieve. Regardless of the volume range or speed of the music, the exceptional sound of the trombone is always warm, rich and pure. For this reasons, in addition to listening, it is important to work hard to improve sound quality every day. It was discovered that every year, nearly 100% of public and private school students begin learning musical instrument through their school's music program but after one or two years, more than 50% of the students will drop out from learning the instrument. Trombone is one example of the instruments students quit a lot. Learning to play a musical instrument should begin with the right foundation. Without the proper habits of learning, students will eventually become frustrated with their progress and stop learning. The first step to take on learning trombone is to understand the various parts of the instrument.

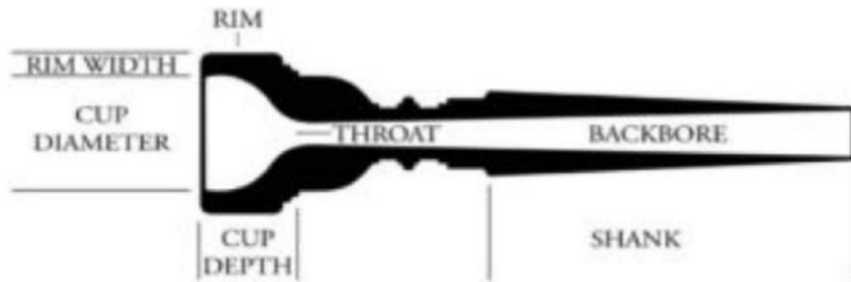
Anatomy of the Trombone

As a beginner, looking at a trombone can be overwhelming, especially when seeing the amount of available part options. And so in order to sort through all these features and ultimately decide which ones you need or not, we must first look at how a trombone is made.



The image above shows parts of the trombone and their names.

1. The Mouthpiece – probably the most important part of the trombone. Choosing the right one is essential
2. The Slide – which is used to change the pitch of what you're playing
3. The F Attachment – which refers to a sort of switch you can use to play some notes more easily
4. The Bell – which varies in size, thickness, shape (rate/taper) and material
5. The Tuning Slide – which is used to tune the trombone
6. The Lead Pipe – which can be interchangeable on some models.



The mouthpiece is the direct link between you and the instrument, so needless to say playing on a good, comfortable mouthpiece is essential. One big rule of thumb is: the bigger the spaces inside the mouthpiece, the less resistance it is created, and the more effort it requires.

- The Shank – Do not get the shank wrong, as your mouthpiece won't fit your trombone if you do

- The Rim – This is the edge of the cup
- The Cup – This varies in depth and diameter
- The Throat– This can be big or small
- The Back bore – This is the part behind the throat

The Slide



The slide is the trombone's “signature” mechanism, which is built to change its pitch. The reason the trombone is a unique instrument is precisely because of the slide. It turns the trombone into the only brass instrument able to play glissandi, and to go from one note to the other gradually, as opposed to abrupt movement for others, such as the trumpet.

The Bell

The bell is the **amplifier of the trombone**



Cost

Cost is the amount paid to acquire goods and services. Instruments can be expensive; the cost of the trombone now is ranged from 70 thousand naira and above. Looking at the cost, most secondary schools sees it as an opportunity not to buy the instrument for the school. This hinders the learning and teaching of the instrument. In teaching and learning of the instrument, it is expected that both the teacher and the student should have the instrument; and because of this, both might end up with the inferior trombone. Learning a trombone is a challenge and playing with inferior trombone makes learner to play the instrument with more difficulty because the inferior instruments are often poorly built. The setup of a inferior trombone often doesn't accommodate the fact that new students don't have good technique or strong fingers. You'll probably find yourself struggling against the instrument's design, when the instrument should actually be designed in a way to make your job easier as a teacher and as a learner. Inferior trombone also doesn't sound very good. Even making a sound on it can be more difficult than it would be on a higher quality one. These inferior trombones tend to be less responsive and the materials used in their creation don't make for a pleasing sound. So the cost of it makes students to go for the cheaper ones hereby making it even more difficult to learn. Trombone cost as of now is at 159 US dollars above which is 65 thousand naira above. Many schools today don't have trombone instrument as part of their musical instrument. In the cost of this research, only one trombone was used. However it makes the learning to be slow and also reduced the number of the students that indicated interest on it.

Passion

According to oxford dictionary, passion is a strong and barely controllable emotion. According to Day (2004) passion is identified with hope, loyalty, care and enthusiasm, which are key features of effective teaching and learning. Hamdi Serin (2017) implies that “passion is seeking for the new and experiencing new ideas “However, this passion is applicable to both the teacher and the student. Most times, students seem to develop a sign of laziness over the learning of their instrument but if the student knows that the teacher has a high level of interest in the instrument and put a high standard on them, they will become more serious. At this point, teaching and learning will be easy and fun. Trombone is not like every other musical instrument. Greg Simon (2019) avers that trombone isn't just an instrument - it's a character of its own. To make a good sound from it, it requires a serious attention and this can only be achieved if there is a passion attached to it. Without having passion for the instrument, the student must not be able to meet up with his/her daily rehearsals. One of the hardest things to achieve from the students is getting them play soft; low sound on the trombone (volume control). There is no automatic ways to adjust the volume of the trombone apart from having a constant rehearsal on the instrument, and this requires a maximum attention. If one does not have this passion on the instruments, you might be discouraged with the sound and drop the instrument. The researcher tries to let the students see his passion for the instrument which makes the students to develop interests in trombone rather than those familiar instruments like sax, violin etc.

Age

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, age is “the time of life at which some particular qualification, power, or capacity arises or rests”. Not everyone has the capacity or power to play the trombone instrument. Even though it of different sizes but considering that there are not enough readily available trombone instrument in this country, it will be better to start learning the trombone in secondary school at the age of 12 and above. The instrument is big, long and requires a good amount of lung capacity as well as physical strength with the muscles around the mouth and the ability to maneuver the instrument's sliding valve. One of the techniques of the trombone

instruments is the slide techniques. Most times the students find it difficult to pitch some notes correctly because of the position of the note. And this can be as a result of the student hand not long enough to get to the slide position. Again to get a higher pitch, it requires some serious handling. Not all students can get to such a high pitch. Most pupils in primary schools can't really play it because of its size, it is usually not recommended for pupils of that age, although, there are some workarounds.

Image of the students holding the trombone



He can hold and play some middle range notes but cannot get to the 6th and 7th positions because of his hand.



He can hold and play some middle range notes and also note on the 6th and 7th positions because of his age and height. He can walk through it at ease.

Good ear perception

The greatest asset a musician must have is an 'ear'! Hawkins (2020) states that human ear, organ of hearing and equilibrium detects and analyzes sound and maintains the sense of balance. It is a big challenge getting a student who is new to music to play the instrument and enjoy the melody coming out from it. First the researcher started by introducing a familiar tune that will register in their memory "Twinkle little Star" in a solfa notation, which will help in locating the sound on the trombone. Knowing when you are in tune and when not requires a good ear. Though, in playing trombone there are positions made available for the keys and tones but as a student, you must have the ear to know when to slide to the perfect position. It's always a big problem between the teacher and the students. A good way to start is for the student to have a good background of the tonic solfa. It will go a long way to improve the ear. The trombone is more difficult to learn and play; it requires dedicating extra time to ear training in order to gain accuracy in pitch with the slide.

Rehearsal

It is expected that every trombone player should practice at least three times a day. Lehmann and Gruber (2006) describe practice as a “systematic activity with predictable stages and activities” (p. 461). According to Proverbio (2015) learning to play a musical instrument is a demanding process requiring years of intense practice. By prolonging the lifespan of constant practice (music expertise), the ability of music is considered to increase regardless of an individual's musical talent (which naturally affects attainment). Most students don't rehearse and this makes the learning difficult thereby affecting the teaching. That's why most times teachers spend two months teaching one piece of music that will take only a week to learn. According to Ericsson et al. (1993), “Many features that we once believed to reflect talent are actually the result of intense musical practice that lasted for at least a decade.” Because of this, daily exercises (simple melodies from familiar tunes) were given to the students to enable them learn faster and be committed.

Physical fitness

Anyone having health issues especially issues with lungs should not try the instrument as it will cause more damage. The researcher ensured that the students were physically balanced and also let them know some of the benefits of playing the trombone as a way of encouraging them. One of such benefits is confidence. The courage to start playing a new instrument is a great way to build confidence. This confidence is especially heightened when you let them choose an instrument that is not as popular as many other instruments like guitar or drums. When you choose brass instruments like the trombone, you see the world of making music that produces notes in the traditional way. By making this beautiful and unheard sound heard by everyone, you can break free from your own shell and feel confident.

Functions of the trombone instrument

The trombone plays the important role of balancing the high sounds of the trumpet with the rest of the musicians in modern orchestras, concert bands, and brass ensembles. Their mellow tenor voice also helps add a lower intonation without the boom of the tubas.

The trombone is the quintessential parade instrument; no marching band would be complete without it. It's a powerful low brass instrument. In sacred music, the trombone's role was to support the lower vocal lines, which were often difficult to hear.

In Dixieland, the trombone, when playing background figures, outlines the changes (playing the note that signals what the next chord will be). If there is a key change, the trombone will often play a gliss, going into the tonic of the new key. The background can often include rhythmic riffs that are not melodic, but keeping the time. The trombone also plays the “response”, echoing the melody, played by the trumpet or clarinet. In most Dixieland tunes there is space for the trombone to solo. So it also serves as a solo instrument.

Findings/ Recommendation

Do not go for an inferior trombone, because it will make the learning to be hard. Do not say let me buy first and start, then later I will upgrade. You will be frustrated and this might kill your interest in learning the instrument.

There are so many things to master in the learning of the trombone before one can get to the professional level. And to achieve this you have to practice. Practice makes perfect. Play a note every day. Work on your slide speed and the position of your lips and embouchure. Listen to trombone music, songs. This will make you familiar with the trombone sounds. It will also help in developing the ear as the ear is one of the vital tools one must have before learning the

instrument.

There's a new health warning every trombonist should be aware of. Brass instrumentalists are at a higher risk for developing a lung condition known as hypersensitivity pneumonitis – or HP. Many assumed it was caused by a rare allergic reaction to brass metal, because the symptoms are similar to people who have allergies. They include shortness of breath, coughing, and sometimes fever. But there are ways to prevent it. First: You must clean your instrument, every day. Avoid tooting your horn after eating. That's because there's more bacteria in your mouth after chewing – even if you're just chewing gum.

It is hard to play – because of the way it's built, the trombone is a difficult instrument to master, and there are indeed few trombone “virtuoso”.

One of the most difficult techniques on the trombone, even for advanced players, is the slur. ... If two slurred notes lie on different partials, a player may connect them without tonguing, producing a natural slur.

Trombonists rest a lot. You spend years honing your craft and making sure you're nimble enough to deal with even the most impossible, and after all these, when it gets to orchestra playing and any other music gathering, you spend hours resting waiting for when you will be asked to sound. Sometimes it's annoying.

Summary /Conclusion

In general, trombone is a unique instrument different from other bass instrument. What makes the trombone unique from other brasses is its method of changing pitch. ... This effect is called a glissando, and its unusual 'sliding' sound is one of the trombone's most recognizable techniques. The learning of the Instrument is generally not friendly like every other instrument. It takes one's passion and interest to make it to a professional level. Although Trombones can be expensive, it won't break the bank. Just save up money and go for the good ones. Trombone is great to learn. Yes, it will sound a bit 'rough' and rasping, for a few months, until your lips and mouth muscles get used to the position and pressure, but with more practice, the tone will improve, and before long you will be playing great tunes. Playing trombone has benefits also and one of the benefits of learning the Trombone (and many other woodwind & brass instruments) is the fact that it can improve your fitness and health.

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