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**Recommended Citation**

Campora, Dominik and Brown, David (2019) "Recording of Marco Borogni’s Vocalise Etudes for Trumpet,"  
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jur/vol2019/iss2019/181

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Recording of Marco Borogni’s Vocalise Etudes for Trumpet

JUNE 20, 2019 BY ADMIN

Dominik Campora, Professor David Brown, Trumpet Professor

The experience of preparing, completing, and evaluating the progress of my ORCA project over the past twelve months has helped me grow exponentially as an aspiring orchestral musician. Specifically, preparing the Bordogni etudes has helped me achieve a heightened musical sense of phrasing, analysis, and musicality. Our musical and academic objectives of the project were to provide a reference for future trumpet performance students on vocalise studies (such as these,) and the concept of overall sound production, phrasing, and virtuosity. We were able to record a CD that will be documented and preserved in the trumpet studio for students to reference as a resource for these techniques in the coming years. Overall, we were able to meet and ultimately exceed our expectations of the academic outcome of this project as it benefited not only myself, but others as well.

Working with my mentor Professor David Brown was an especially rewarding experience as it was his last year here at BYU before his retirement. I was honored to be a part of such a project with him as he coached me not only in private lessons on a weekly basis, but also in the recording studio sessions as he told me what needed to be corrected or played again. He was an invaluable resource to me as a student, and always provided support in ways other than trumpet playing and coaching. He was an important asset and knowledgeable in the realm of recording, regarding microphone positions, musical coaching and editing takes after recording sessions. During times of discouragement he was understanding and helpful, and allowed me to see the potential success of the project and my other musical endeavors. Professor Brown always asked about what I wanted to accomplish, not only in the ORCA project, but outside of it as a trumpet player as well. This helped me place my trust in him as a mentor because I knew that he cared about what I wanted to accomplish.

The other students I worked with during this project were Forrest Howell (pianist) and Garon Brett (Commercial Music). Forrest, as my pianist, gained experience accompanying in a studio recording setting and transposing to accommodate the music I had. He was able to gain experience accompanying a brass instrument, which can be particularly different than other instruments such as strings or woodwinds in regard to blend and sound. Garon, as the studio producer, learned how to properly position microphones for brass instruments in order to obtain an optimal sound in the recording—a great majority of the first recording session was spent on this as well as which microphone produced the best results. We discovered there was an optimal distance away from the trumpet bell that produced the most clear and resonant sound for the recording, but it took time to find. Together, we all learned how to mix/cut different takes into a seamless stream of music in post-production with Garon’s direction.

The results and findings of this project helped me personally through the journey of learning and recording the Bordogni Vocalise etudes. Learning the studies helped my musical development. I was able to study and listen to different instruments demonstrate a singing style while playing, mainly Toby Oft, Principal Trombone of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, as he recently started to study these etudes and put videos up on YouTube of him playing them, while first addressing issues and tips on how to play in a singing style. This was a great resource to me, and one of the only ones I found available in regard to the Bordogni studies. I learned about the connection between the operatic, singing style and specific rhythms; that they would need to be exaggerated and precise, particularly the dotted-eighth sixteenth note figures.
as that was how it was sung during the time of Bordogni and operatic singing. Throughout studying the project my breathing and air control improved, as well as evenness of tone and sound.

We found that the only piano accompanist books for these studies—obtained from Dr. William Kimball, professor of trombone at Brigham Young University—came from a different publisher than the trumpet etude book and were inconsistent in which key each etude was written in, resulting in either me or the pianist having to transpose the etude a whole-step upwards or downwards, or not record it all together due to the fact that it would require rewriting either part. My main finding was that an early Brass scholar, Arnold Jacobs (Tubist for Chicago Symphony Orchestra), wrote a book on the singing approach for brass playing called Song and Wind, which helped me to understand more of how to apply the results of this project. The experience of learning, recording, and mixing these studies were rigorous, but rewarding in a musical and academic sense.

Lastly, the budget was mostly spent on studio recording fees, paying the recording studio personnel and giving compensation to my hired pianist, Forrest Howell. The generous offering of ORCA donors allowed me to complete my project with little to no worries of financial resources and made it completely easier to focus on the academic aspects of the project. I value highly the work and collaboration of my mentor David Brown and appreciate his support and wisdom to the fullest and realize the importance of mentors in any field. I am honored to have been able to complete such a project in the field of trumpet with the help of Brigham Young University and the generous ORCA donors. I grew as a student, a musician, and a person; and hope to continue to have experiential learning opportunities in the future that push me to become better and well-educated in my field.