

C H R I S C O L E T T I

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T O N E B A S E B R A S S



A B O U T T H E L E S S O N

Using excerpts from the orchestral literature, Chris Coletti demonstrates how to subdivide to play in time and where to tastefully use rubato to play out of time. He also shares why our articulation can make us late.

C O N T E N T S

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If you have any corrections, comments, or critiques relating to this workbook, please send them to marek@tonebase.co. We strive to deliver the highest quality enrichment experience. Thank you!

T O N E B A S E B R A S S



SUBDIVIDING

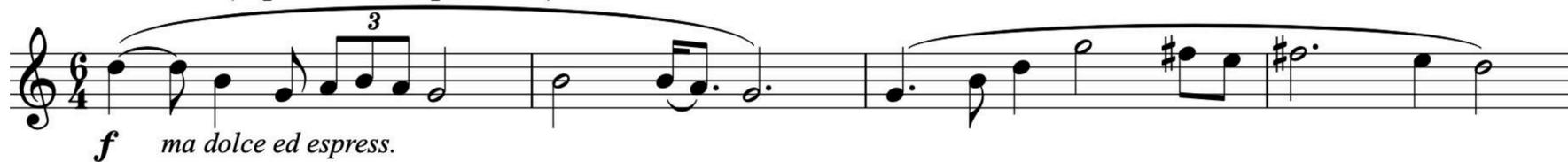
Pines of Rome

One of the most important elements in a professional audition is your sense of pulse. Many great trumpet players can play the Pines of Rome offstage excerpt beautifully, but it takes a mature player to be able to play it beautifully and in time. The best way to approach this excerpt is through subdividing. But beyond subdividing, we need to **feel** time and not **think** about time.

Subdividing is a thinking activity, which is unhelpful for us, as time changes as we think. In a way, time is quite malleable to your mind, like when a class takes forever to finish or your break seems to fly by quickly. Your feeling of time is super accurate; otherwise, your heart wouldn't change as perfectly as it does when you start to run or get up and walk around. Your heart is constantly measuring against a basic grid, and the process of developing a good sense of time is just learning the habit to feel the time you already have.



Tromba Interna in C
Più mosso (il più lontano possibile)



Physically moving is more reliable than tapping your foot or toe. This solo is in 6, and it is important to feel the big pulse. As it is played offstage, the player often can't see the conductor well and is disconnected from the orchestra.

Action item: Play through the excerpt in subdivisions. It is a great way to develop stronger chops and get a good sense of pulse. It also helps with endurance, as it is much more tiring to play it subdivided instead of as written. If you do it enough, you will internalize the subdivision so you don't have to think about it, you will simply feel them.

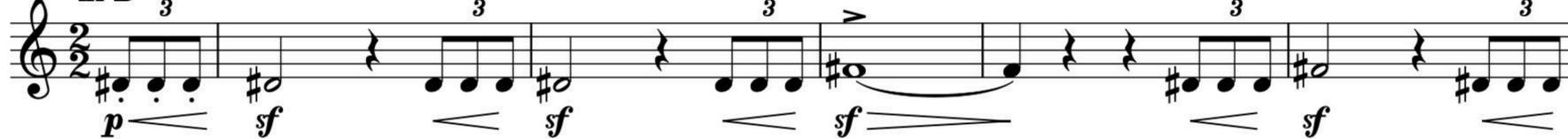


Mahler 5, opening solo

Another example where subdivision is key is in the opening solo for Mahler's Fifth Symphony. It is very sparse and is performed unaccompanied. The part asks to rush the triplets, but in an audition setting, the invisible pulse is incredibly important. When working and playing this excerpt, don't be afraid to move and feel the time.

In gemessenem Schritt, Streng. Wie ein Kondukt

in B Solo



For a solo like this, the pulse is the best teacher. You don't need any outside input if you are learning the habit of tapping into the feel of it. A lot of this has to do with picking a tempo that works throughout the whole piece.

Before you practice the solo, try other moments in the piece and find the tempo that makes sense for all of these sections. There is not a large range that this tempo can be in, but finding the one that is just right for you will help. Let the pulse tell you exactly what you need to do.

When working with a metronome on this solo, set it to the full measure, not the beat. This will help you not rely on the click but learn to align your inner pulse with something rigid. As the triplets are supposed to be rushed, players tend to stumble on them. It is rushed, but still based on a specific rhythm; the triplets should not be forced into sixteenth notes.

You can think of the opening in 6/8 or in 4/4 with sixteenth note pickups. Take care not to play faster than the subdivision.

Action item: *If you are playing faster than the subdivision, record it with the metronome clicking the subdivisions, and then listen back. Check if you are really following the subdivision or if you just think you are doing it correctly. Playing it faster than the actual pulse will make it harder on yourself than it needs to be.*

Check it out: *Listen to Phil Smith's: Orchestral Excerpts for Trumpet Album to go deeper into these excerpts.*

Petroushka: Ballerina's Dance

The challenge with this excerpt is that the time doesn't change at all. This means you must stay rigid when playing it; the audience can hear if you speed up or slow down.

The image shows a musical score for the 'Ballerina's Dance' excerpt from Stravinsky's 'Petroushka'. It consists of four staves of music in treble clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 116 beats per minute. The first staff begins with a 'Sostenuto' section at 96 bpm, marked 'in Bb' and 'senza sord.' (without mutes), followed by a triplet of eighth notes marked 'mf'. The second staff starts at measure 134, marked 'Solo' and 'mf', and features a sequence of notes with a crescendo leading to a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The third and fourth staves continue the melodic line with various articulations and dynamics. Measure numbers 134, 135, 136, 137, and 138 are indicated in boxes above the staves.

1. The first note should be the loudest. You want to play through the gesture with the sixteenth note pickups leading into the first notes. A good way to practice this is to just play through the circled notes in a sequence. Less experienced players often don't hit the center of the note right away, giving cracks or dips.
2. Loop it until it feels like a groove. It should feel like a dance.
3. Don't get too fancy with the slurred section. It is a silly part of the piece. It will help to give it direction by making the peak the concert E.

Let the pulse and groove be the teacher for this excerpt. The goal is for it to feel like a dance, not just sound like one. If you can develop the habit of really tapping into how it feels, it will distract you from playing and thinking too much. Once you have tapped in, you will know immediately if it is in time.

RUBATO AND ARTICULATION

It takes a long time to internalize what is stylistically appropriate when using rubato. It is great to listen to musicians use it, but there is a large variety in how pianists, singers, string players, and others approach it. This can make it difficult to figure out how to apply it to your playing. The best time and way to use rubato is when something harmonically or rhythmically interesting is happening.

Mahler 3rd Symphony, post-horn offstage solo

The post-horn offstage solo in Mahler's 3rd Symphony requires rubato. When playing it, you need to find the balance between being followable and keeping the rhythms intact, but not being strict with the time. It needs to be able to stretch gradually and make sense to the listener.

To work on this solo, conduct, or snap and sing it. When playing, there isn't a steady pulse, but you can't ignore the pulse either.

in B \flat 14 Sehr gemächlich. (♩. etwas langsamer wie Führer.)
ppp (wie aus weiter Ferne.) Frei vorgetragen. (Wie die Weise eines Posthorns.)
, portamento

Bitsch Etude 4

In the Bitsch Etudes, some call for rubato, and yet the rhythms are complex with shifting subdivisions. With that in mind, it should be thought of as the rubato changing the pulse, rather than losing the pulse entirely.



The first step when working on this etude is to figure out the rhythms. There are thirty-second notes, sixteenth notes, sixteenth-note triplets, and eighth-note triplets. Before playing it on the trumpet, conduct, or clap and sing it to learn the rhythms. Once you have that, you can start implementing the pitch. As with all things trumpet, being able to sing it is helpful, as the trumpet plays what we hear.

These etudes are tonal, but they shift almost as rapidly as something atonal. Once you are solid on the pitches and the rhythms, you can mess with the pulse. This is all before playing it on the trumpet.

If you are being gradual with the speed up and slow down of the pulse, you can pretty much get away with anything. One way to consider successful rhythm placement is to imagine the listener transcribing it and notating the correct rhythms despite the rubato.

Working out where to slow down and speed up might feel daunting at first. Let the tonality influence these decisions. When you are in a pleasing space, it is easier to hear how the notes interact with each other, but if you don't, you can create a pretend reverb.

Action item: To create a pretend reverb, record yourself using GarageBand or any DAW. Put a reverb plugin on, turn the dry mix down all the way (to avoid feedback), and set the wet mix all the way up. This allows you to hear how the pitches interact, even if you are practicing in a dry space.

A space with reverb will allow you to toy with bringing out the moments with odd tonality. When tuning things, almost any combination of odd intervals can be made pure (meaning there are no beats). With equal temperament, even the most in-tune intervals have interactions because they are not based on the harmonic series. But with a drone, you can tune it.

One way of figuring out where the center is tonally is to use intonation. The key here is to figure it out or find it. You aren't making it up; it is there to be discovered. These etudes are not truly atonal music; there are tonal centers, and you can use them as a guide.

It can be challenging for performers of contemporary classical music to make an impression on the listener on the first listen. As the performer, you should be thinking about how to highlight the structure, form, and tonality to help guide the audience towards a better understanding of the piece. Intonation and rubato are tools that can paint a clear picture of what exactly is happening. If a weird chord stacked up is treated like equal temperament, it might just sound interesting, but if you tune those intervals as pure, there might be another layer that the audience can come away with.

Casta Diva

For a piece like *Casta Diva*, the accompaniment (in eighth notes) from the orchestra is meant to add groove, but it is quite unstable. As the performer of the melody, you want to have a strong sense of that subdivision through the changing pulse. The freedom should not ignore the pulse, but move with it.



You will gain a better understanding of changing pulse by listening to great opera singers. Make sure you are not just listening to them because someone said that they were great; find one that you personally think is great and that you naturally want to copy. The moments that speed up and slow down are moments where something interesting happens harmonically or rhythmically.

As this piece was originally written for voice, it makes sense to stretch the subdivisions. The breath is part of the music, and so anytime there is a breath is a good moment to stretch it. Test it out by singing and conducting it while remaining very followable. Practicing with subdivisions should not feel like you are waiting, and time is standing still; it should feel like you are singing with the long notes.

Check it out: *Miroslav Petkov and Maria Callas have both recorded wonderful interpretations of this piece.*

Articulation

In a large ensemble, brass players are often told that they are late by the conductor. Often, what is happening is that they are blooming into the sound. At a distance, like in an orchestra, the audience and the conductor only hear the peak, which arrives late, even though the entrance was on time.

Our goal in all styles is one of instantaneous sound. Some professional trumpet players like Maurice Andre put more ping in the front, and others like Mattias Hofs blossom the sound, but regardless of the articulation, it is instant resonance. The act of articulating is not what makes the sound. It is the unarticulation that makes the sound. It can be helpful to think of it like plucking a string; it is the release of the string that creates the sound.