

Hi trombone friends!

I am writing my bachelor thesis about learning bass trombone as a tenor trombone player and I wonder if there is someone out there who has gone through the same process and can answer some questions!

1. Does it affect your tenor trombone playing negatively or positively to play bass trombone?
2. Why do you play both?
3. Do you do any particular exercises or adjustments when you change between the instruments?
4. Has it given you more gigs?
5. Do you do other types of exercises on the bass compared to the tenor?

Best,
Kristine, student of Gothenburg Music academy

Hello Kristine,

- 1. Does it affect your tenor trombone playing negatively or positively to play bass trombone? - It depends on whether I am playing both on the same gig. If I am playing just one at a time, there is no problem. If I have to double, the best scenario is to play the tenor first and the bass second. I personally have more issues with my embouchure if I go from bass to tenor in the same gig.**
- 2. Why do you play both? - To enhance the opportunity to play more gigs.**
- 3. Do you do any particular exercises or adjustments when you change between the instruments? - When I go from tenor to bass, I just do some quick flexibility exercises and I'm good. Actually, the more tired my tenor chops are, the better my bass chops become, and more quickly. It does not work the other way around!**
- 4. Has it given you more gigs? - Yes, I played a regular bass trombone chair in a professional big band for several years because the lead, 2nd, and 3rd were filled.**
- 5. Do you do other types of exercises on the bass compared to the tenor? I just concentrate on flexibility and being able to center my pedal notes without rotating my embouchure.**

FYI, I am fully retired now and no longer play bass. I also rarely play my Yamaha YSL-697Z lead horn. I just play my Bach 36b as first chair in a community concert band.

Regards,

**John McVey
Lexington, TN**

Kristine,

I am an amateur, who is retired, and had stopped playing for 30 years, but took it up around my retirement, about 20 years ago. I am 74 years old. TMI alert? :-)

1. Positively. Helped increase my range, and of course...additional practice time helps overall.
2. Occasional Symphony sub on Bass.
3. I use a slightly deeper, and larger mouthpiece.
4. Yes, as mentioned on item 2.
5. Mostly low range stuff.

I am a trombonist in a relatively small town, population 60K with a fairly active music scene. 2 Concert bands, one in the summer, one in the winter, a Symphony, and a couple of smaller Dance Bands.

Phil

Good morning, Kristine. I don't know if you'd want to include my case in your study or not. I'd had a whole progression of added doublings, including adding bass trombone later on. The order went trumpet [5th grade], horn [6th grade], tuba [a little during HS, actually bought one after college], tenor trombone [post-college], bass trombone [couple years later], valve tenor trombone, valve bass trombone (i.e., no slide at all, sort of like a cimbasso).

Each has given me more gigs, and I'll play pit orchestras with multiple instruments. Seems like one has to practice switching between them in order to be able to do so in performance.

—Harlan Feinstein

You might try looking for previous work around the subject like Lawrence John Pearce's thesis while completing his DMA at the University of Oklahoma under Dr. Irvin Wagner. (found here: <https://shareok.org/bitstream/handle/11244/428/3040844.PDF>) While his is more about professionals' approach to doubling it could provide some nice insights... The thesis is focused around three interviews: 1) Charlie Vernon, 2) Donald Hildebrandt, and 3) Brian Rogers. Google Scholar and WorldCat are two places to start looking - or ask your institution's music librarian.

Best regards,

Anthony Parrish

Hi Kristine,

Have you looked at Micah Everett's recent book on doubling? That would be where I'd start. If your library does not have it, maybe your acquisitions librarian can get it for you. <http://www.mountainpeakmusic.com/content/Low%20Brass%20Player's%20Guide%20to%20Doubling%20Sample.pdf> Or, from Amazon.

Also, Micah also has given some of this freely in his blog, The Reforming Trombonist: <https://thereformingtrombonist.wordpress.com/?s=doubling>

Hope this helps!

--George Butler, Lasnamäe Muusikakool, Tallinn, Estonia

Hi Kristine,

I'm thinking this is more along the lines of a survey, rather than a request for resources?

To answer the questions:

1) Yes, it can have a negative affect on tenor playing in the short term, but this effect diminishes the longer you work on switching back and forth. Being primarily a tenor player, I find I have to do more work transitioning to bass to achieve a workable sound than I have to do when I transition back to tenor. Although it is possible to play both back to back with acceptable results, for optimal performance I find I need a day or two to make the transition.

2) I play both because I can. Same reason for doubling on euphonium and tuba. Would not apply to viola. The more things you can do, the more you will have opportunities to play. Also, it's fun!

3) I use the Six Notes as a foundation for locking in with the equipment. After that, the standard assortment of lip slurs and technical fundamentals that you would do in any practice session. I don't have a routine specifically tailored to "making the switch".

4) YES

5) Well, yes, I work on the low range! Lip slurs, Caruso excercises. It's not so much different exercises, but what I do with the ones I always use. Mostly, on bass I have to be very concious of not spreading the embouchure too much. I have also found that maintaining (or striving for) a solid low register on the tenor carries over to the bass. I don't do anything fundamentally different chop wise (at least that's what I strive for!) so it's mainly about getting comfortable with the different rim sizes.

Daniel Walker

Hi trombone friends!

I am writing my bachelor thesis about learning bass trombone as a tenor trombone player and i wonder if there is someone out there who has gone through the same process and can answer some questions!

1. Does it affect your tenor trombone playing negatively or positively to play bass trombone?

Positively

2. Why do you play both?

for fun, extract work, each instrument has a positive affect on the other

3. Do you do any particular excersises or adjustments when you change between the instruments?

No

4. Has it given you more gigs?

Yes

5. Do you do other types of ecxersises on the bass compared to the tenor?

Not really

Best,

Kristine, student of Gothenburg Music academy

// Steven Gamble

Kristine, there's one thing I always say --

After spending some time on the Bass Trombone, which takes more air than any other wind instrument that I know of, even tuba, a person feels like SUPERMAN when going back to the tenor trombone. It's just incredible.

Earl Needham
Clovis, New Mexico USA

I second that Earl. Doubling on bass has made me a better tenor player.

I can't recommend it for everyone since some can't switch mouthpieces that easily - which is why Doug Elliott found a niche with making and selling screw-on rims.

Price Taylor

If one is not careful, a bass trombonist can quickly overblow a tenor trombone. I also have to be careful when I switch to my tuba.
Roger Carmichael

I played mainly bass trombone from 1972 to 1990. Starting in the 90s, I got moved to first bone simply because 2 bass players joined the band during my leave of absence.

For many pros, doubling is necessary as many shows, and this allows the player to get paid more. Doubling does get me and others more gigs. Ironically, I am known in some circles as a tenor player, and others as a bass player.

Another important aspect is to understand your role in the section based on the horn and part you have. Bass bone is a different mindset and approach from playing lead, and being a section player is different again.

I try to play my best on both tenor and bass, and I do not compromise on equipment. I mainly play a medium bore .508 perhaps tenor with an 11C size mouthpiece (Yamaha 891Z with Yamaha Al Kay MP). My bass is a Yamaha 830 with a Griego .75. I can switch easily between the 2 horns. I also have my trusty old 42B if I need a large bore tenor.

Learning how to play easily, and subsequently to switch easily between bass and tenor has been a journey. But that's another topic, or perhaps several topics.

--Martin

Martin Hubel

I used to build and service pipe organs for a living and then turned to general administrative work as churches stopped buying them. Now, in the third stage of my adult life, I spend most of my time playing brass instruments and keyboards, orchestrating and arranging and conducting and, sometimes, writing music - sometimes even for pay. In short, an "amateur" - but a pretty good one.

I don't quite have the chops YET to play big-band lead trumpet but am working on it and sometimes do it anyhow, otherwise playing second (flugel included). Or cornet, for Dixieland. Or big band lead or bass trombone. Or tuba in a marching band. Or euphonium in a concert band. When my sister, in our youth, started learning F/Bb horn, I coached her and made sure I could play it, too.

James Morrison, the Australian soloist and bandleader, has been an inspiration to me but so are most school music teachers who teach brass technique in general and can demonstrate on any of

the instruments. I'm beginning to teach beginners of various ages in private lessons, and very much enjoy seeing them grow in their mastery of their respective instruments thanks to the tips each of these instruments has taught me through my experience in playing them.

There's no doubt my musical life is much more active because of proficiency on more than one instrument. I've found the advantages far greater than the cost of extra effort and having more instruments to keep track of, and I don't see any reason this wouldn't also be the case if I went more thoroughly professional (though I'm a bit long in the tooth to attempt that now).

About changing instruments when doubling: I need not only to be thoroughly warmed up on each of the instruments I'm going to play on any particular occasion, but also to practice moving from one to the other. Each has its own requirements for ranges of air velocity (involving both aperture dimensions and breath pressure) and of the volume of air needed to sustain phrases of various lengths and dynamics. A few long tones, flexibility sequences, bits of articulation studies and a phrase or two of a tune or excerpt often suffice to anchor in my system the parameters for each instrument.

Some of the more challenging things to remember are the idiosyncratic tuning adjustments each instrument requires for good intonation, particularly for the modes based on the odd-numbered partials (third, fifth, seventh and beyond). For instance, a well-tuned, 2nd-position G natural above the bass staff requires moving the slide of my Conn 78H almost halfway towards 1st position, whereas the King 2B and my bass trombone require much less adjustment. If I fail to remember that when playing an exposed, long-held G as part of a C major triad, I'll have egg on my face.

But I really love both the beauty and the challenges of brass playing, and I'm very grateful for these thought-provoking questions. Have fun with the thesis, Kristine!

Willard (Bill) Riley

Mostly amateur player but here goes...

1) positive effects on my tenor playing. Bigger horn/mouthpiece has taught my body how to play better down low as well as improved my breathing. My bass is an old king duo gravis that I mostly use for 4th trombone in big band.

2) I play several different tenors as well as the bass in order to best cover the parts I play in different groups, range/blend etc. Smallest tenor horn I play is an olds super that I use in a bar/wedding band to try to blend better with the trumpet. King 3B and Bach 42B are the other 2 regulars in brass quintet and concert band. 3B gets the most use in both. The tuba player in the quintet plays a small C tuba and the 3B is the best fit for me between the tuba and the horn.

3) No. Should practice more. Just blow a few notes for a few minutes and get on with it. What works for me is using an appropriate size mouthpiece for the horn I'm playing, 1.5 g on bass, 5g on bach 42, old king m21 on the 3b... whatever small olds mouthpiece came with the olds super. I use a bach 7 on my chinese alto.

4) Yes. Small market.

5) No but probably should. Don't practice enough in general, day job gets in the way.

//Partick Bates