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Arranging 2

Lesson 3:
Arranging for the Trumpet

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There are trumpets in several different keys, some of which are mostly used in traditional music. We will concentrate on the most common trumpet in jazz and popular music: the Bb trumpet.

To begin our exploration of the trumpet, let's look at its range. Note that in example 1, there are two ranges on the first line or system. The range in the first measure, the "concert pitch range," is the full range of the instrument, as we hear it, as if it were played on piano. If the player is experienced enough, it is possible to play much higher. For our purposes, with a limited number of instruments, we will want to keep our top note a little lower. This is where the "abridged concert pitch range" comes in.

As you can see, the abridged range fits inside of the full range (concert pitch range). It reduces our working range to two full octaves: from low Bb to high Bb. This is done mostly to guarantee that our trumpet parts don't get too high and disrupt the blend with the other horns in our ensemble. Also, even within the professional world, it isn't easy to find players that can consistently hit notes above the abridged range with accuracy.

Next, below the concert pitch range, is listed the "transposed (or "written") pitch range" and its corresponding "abridged transposed pitch range." Notes in the transposed range are a major second (whole step) higher than those in the concert range. Also, the key signature is moved up by the same interval.

In the cases of bass and guitar, transposition by an octave eliminates ledger lines. Transposition therefore makes it easier for the player to read his part. With the trumpet, however, and also some other instruments, transposition of a particular interval is necessitated by the construction of the instrument. The concept dates back to a time before valves were invented. The short story is: if you want the pitch C to sound, you have to write a D on the player's individual part.

Ex. 1. Trumpet Range[⬅️ Previous Page](#)[Next Activity: Practice Exercise 3.1](#)

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Practice Exercise 3.1



Practice your knowledge of trumpet ranges by completing the exercise below.

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Trumpet with Concert Pitch Melody



Example 2 illustrates a melody as played by a solo trumpet. When listening, note how the timbre or sound of the instrument changes as the pitches get higher or lower. Also, observe that the player has to take a breath of air from time to time, in order to continue sounding the pitches.

Ex. 2. Concert Melody

In example 3, the music sounds the same, but the player is reading pitches a whole step higher. Note how the timbre of the instrument changes as the pitches go higher or lower.

Ex. 3. Transposed Melody

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Breakdown of Ranges by Area



Example 4 illustrates how the timbre, or sound, of the instrument changes, as the notes get higher. All instruments' tonal characteristics change as the pitches get higher.

In the the very lowest range (A), the trumpet sound is not particularly clear and the projection of the note (the ability to be heard easily above other instruments) is not good. This area might work well, however, as an effect for a soloist in a small group that is not playing loudly.

Suggested dynamic range is soft (*p* to *mp*).

Range (B) is the area of most clarity and projection for the lower end of the trumpet. It has a nice round and clear sound. Blending capabilities with other instruments is also very good in this area. Suggested dynamic range is *pp* to *ff*.

The next range (C) can be thought of as an upward added area to (B) or a lower extension of the next area, range (D). The trumpet really begins to brighten in tone in this area, but also can still play softly. Suggested dynamic range is *p* to *ff*.

Range (D) is generally considered the upper end of the trumpet for most small ensemble writing. This is particularly true when the writer is trying to maintain a good blend with a combination of horns such as the one we are exploring. As the trumpet goes higher it begins to take over the overall sound of the group. Suggested dynamic range is *mf* to *ff*.

The remaining areas (E, F, G) are generally used in larger groups, such as big bands, which may have anywhere from three to five trumpets. These areas are also reserved for the best players. Endurance and control of pitch are problems that are difficult for the average player to control. The dynamic marking is *ff* or louder.

Ex. 4. Range Areas


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Practice Exercise 3.1b



Practice your knowledge of trumpet and key signatures.

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