



Etudes from the Silver Screen: French Horn Etudes Inspired by Music from Popular Film Scores

by

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Etudes from the Silver Screen: French Horn Etudes Inspired by Music from Popular Film Scores

Thesis title

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Abstract

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While the French Horn is an instrument with a rich history, the methods that are used to teach the instrument, particularly when it comes to the available selection of etude books, has not evolved to match the interests of many modern musicians. It is hard to find a standard or widely used etude resource for the horn that is not at least 50 years old. The following series of 12 etudes are an attempt to take the already established pedagogical concepts from standard horn etudes, and apply those ideas to a style of music that may be more engaging to younger students. Each of the etudes is inspired by a specific film composer, or style of film ranging from spy movies, action films, and fantasy epics to create a wide variety of musical styles for students to study. Basing the etudes in previously established pedagogical concepts will ensure that the etudes are effective as a teaching resource, while still being fun and relatable to the next generation of horn players.

Daniel Skib

DMA Pedagogy Project

Film Music Etudes - Etudes from the Silver Screen

Project Description:

For this project I have created a series of 12 new etudes all based on different themes from popular films. The etudes feature a variety of different composers and music from 11 different films. Each etude aims to challenge students and develop specific aspects of their playing. I also wanted to connect this series to Kopprasch's Sixty Selected Studies for Horn. These etudes are among the most important and foundational pieces of horn playing and learning. My goal is to take some of the musical elements from the Kopprasch etudes and apply them to my own etudes. By combining important horn standards with more modern musical material I hope that these etudes will be more engaging for a younger generation of horn players to work through.

Excerpt Selection Process:

There were several factors that I considered when deciding which films to feature in this etudes. First, I wanted to make sure that the vast majority of the selections were by composers that would be recognizable to a wide range of people. These etudes are intended to be a useful tool for musicians who may not be interested in working through some of the traditional repertoire, but still would like to gain the skills necessary to succeed as a horn player. All of these composers have achieved widespread critical acclaim. Collectively they have received 14 Academy Awards for Best Original Score from 102 individual nominations. It was also important that the music features the horn in some way. The excerpts represent a wide variety of styles and musical challenges.

Etude List:

The following is a short description of each of the 12 etudes featured in this project. Each etude is inspired by a specific film score and also connects pedagogically to one or more of the Kopprasch Sixty Selected Studies for Horn. There is also a short written description of the specific goals of each etude, an example of the original repertoire that inspired the etude, and thoughts about how to achieve the most success when working on the exercise.

1. Inspired by John Williams' *Empire Strikes Back*

- a. Kopprasch connection: #3, #4, #13
 - b. This etude works specifically on some difficult multiple tonguing. Students must support properly with enough air for each note to speak clearly.
2. Inspired by Hans Zimmer's *Inception*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #1, #2, #7
 - b. This etude is primarily focused on maintaining good sound and pitch at different dynamics. There are many perfect 4th and 5th intervals. Every note should be played full length and not decay at all.
3. Inspired by Bruce Broughton's *Silverado*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #6, #8, #15
 - b. This etude covers a few different topics. There are arpeggios that should be articulated very clearly and ask the student to center notes. There are also many rips that will be helpful for the student to blow through the harmonic series and use a consistent stream of air.
4. Inspired by John Williams' *Harry Potter*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #13, #17, #21
 - b. This etude is all about articulation and clarity. Every note should be well supported while still sounding dry and separated.
5. Inspired by Howard Shore's *Lord of the Rings*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #19, #40
 - b. This is another etude primarily concerned with articulation. Specifically this will challenge students to repeat the same pitch while maintaining good sound, clarity, and intonation. The repeated notes should all sound exactly the same.
6. Inspired by Henry Mancini's *Days of Wine and Roses*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #22, #49
 - b. This etude emphasizes the beautiful sound of the horn with long phrases. Students will be challenged to think carefully about how they want to express each phrase and plan out their breathing to best support their musical ideas. Trills and faster notes should be treated with care and not sound rushed.
7. Inspired by Jerry Goldsmith's *The Mummy*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #2, #7
 - b. Portions of this etude are built around the harmonic minor mode. This is an important element of many film scores and is used by composers to symbolize

non-Western settings. This etude is also an opportunity to practice maintaining good pitch and a big sound while playing stopped horn. Stopped horn is frequently used in modern film scoring, and playing stopped horn is an important skill for all horn players.

8. Inspired by John Powell's *How to Train Your Dragon*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #12, #38
 - b. This etude is concerned with playing smooth scales at a fast speed.
9. Inspired by John Powell's *How to Train Your Dragon*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #18, #24
 - b. This etude challenges the player with consistent leaps and returning to repeated lower notes.
10. Inspired by Michael Giacchino's *The Incredibles*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #23, #29, #48
 - b. This etude has two primary elements. The first is challenging students to play with a wide variety of dynamics and sudden changes in volume. The second is to be able to play short chromatic figures cleanly and with even sound throughout.
11. Inspired by Alan Silvestri's *The Avengers*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #15, #54, #58
 - b. This etude is to help the player with moving smoothly through running arpeggios. There are several glissandos written to remind the player to connect between every note with their air. The etude also offers a contrast with very snappy rhythms that still must be supported in a similar way to the flowing arpeggios.
12. Inspired by James Horner's *Braveheart*
 - a. Kopprasch connection: #1, #6, #46
 - b. This is a lyrical etude giving students the opportunity to practice blowing through longer phrases. Many of the phrases are built on pairs of melodic thirds.

Etude #1: Phrasing

The first two measures of this etude are the same as the following two but with every eighth note written out. This gives the player the opportunity to carefully plan out how they want to phrase the 3rd and 4th measure by giving each eighth note a slightly different emphasis. That approach should be carried forward throughout the rest of the etude. Use this etude to make sure that you are properly supporting your sound and blowing through legato notes the same way as you do slurs.

$\text{♩} = 60$

p sempre legato

cresc.

mf

cresc. *f*

mp

mf *p*

f

dim. *p*

The musical score consists of eight staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 60. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and the instruction "sempre legato". The first two staves contain the initial material, with a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking at the end of the second staff. The third staff starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The fourth staff features a crescendo (*cresc.*) leading to a forte (*f*) dynamic. The fifth staff is marked mezzo-piano (*mp*). The sixth staff shows a dynamic shift from mezzo-forte (*mf*) to piano (*p*). The seventh staff is marked forte (*f*). The eighth and final staff concludes with a decrescendo (*dim.*) and a piano (*p*) dynamic.

Etude #2: Lyricism

Try singing through this etude. I recommend planning out where you are going to breathe to best support your musical ideas. Continue to move your air consistently through the faster figures. The trills should be paced intentionally. Try starting them out a bit slower and speeding up through the trill. Unless otherwise noted, articulations should be very gentle and legato. Make sure to sustain your best sound through the end of each note to help achieve longer and more convincing phrases.

The musical score for Etude #2: Lyricism is written in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 60. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a series of notes with slurs and a trill. The second staff continues with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes a trill. The third staff starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a trill. The fourth staff includes triplets and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The fifth staff concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a trill. Dynamics are indicated by *p*, *mf*, and *f*. Articulations include slurs, trills, and accents.

Etude #3: Volume and Sustain

I recommend playing this etude with a drone set to concert B. The goal is to play with great pitch no matter the volume. In the louder section make sure to play full length and to blow through the end of each note before the slur. When playing any of the piano passages make sure to still support the sound with enough air to create your best sound. Dynamic variance should be dramatic. Any crescendo or decrescendo must be well paced and even. Try imagining each beat being just a little bit louder as you blow through the phrase.

♩=60

p

cresc.

ff

p

cresc.

f

dim.

p

Etude #4: Stopped Horn and Harmonic Minor

The harmonic minor scale is an important element of a lot of film music and is often used to represent non-Western settings. You will see this a lot with movies set in the Middle-East and parts of Africa. This etude features two distinct sections that should be played with very different styles. The opening section is more lyrical and should be very played with a sense of elegance. The second section (at the time signature change) should be more aggressive, loud, and lean into the stopped horn sound. Focus on getting a really big and buzzy sound while maintaining good overall intonation. Try alternating between playing sections stopped and open to make sure that you are still playing in tune.

♩=72
mf

stopped *open* *stopped*

open *ff* *mp*

stopped *mf* *open* *stopped*

open *mp* *f*

Etude #5: Glissando and Note Centering

When playing each glissando focus on the lower partials to make sure that you are using your air consistently. It is important to rely on the air rather than on using than trying to force the notes into place by pinching or squeezing the embouchure. It can also be helpful to think of the lower note as a kind of spring board to the top end of the glissando. Put more emphasis in volume and sustain the bottom note to its full value.

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 102. The piece is characterized by frequent glissandos, indicated by slanted lines and upward-pointing arrows. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) at the beginning, *mp* (mezzo-piano) in the third staff, and *f* again in the sixth staff. Accents (>) are placed over many notes throughout the piece. The score concludes with a double bar line.

Etude #6: Smooth Scales

This etude should be as flowing as possible. Blow through each longer scale and aim for the final note of each passage. The dotted eighth rhythm should be very snappy but still played long enough that all notes match in volume and resonance. In the two note slur groupings be careful not to cut the second note short. It should be played full value and lead into the following note.

The musical score for Etude #6: Smooth Scales is written in 12/8 time with a tempo of 126. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The piece begins with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The notation consists of ten staves of music. The first staff starts with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 126$ and a dynamic marking of *f*. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth notes, dotted eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, often grouped with slurs. There are also some triplet markings. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Etude #7: Dynamics and Chromatics

All dynamics in this etude should be dramatic and somewhat over the top. Work to maintain and make sure that the piano dynamics are still supported and played with your best possible sound. Strive for crescendos and decrescendos that do not alter the pitch or sound quality of longer notes. All chromatic lines should be as smooth and even as possible. Connect the first note to the last note with consistent air.

The musical score for Etude #7 is written in a single system with ten staves. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 146. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 5/4 and back to 4/4. The score includes various dynamic markings: *p* (piano), *f* (forte), *cresc.* (crescendo), and *+* (accent). The piece features several chromatic lines and slurs, with a focus on dramatic dynamics and consistent air throughout.

Etude #8: Smooth and Snappy Contrast

Play through this etude with a more articulate and martial sound. Every note should have a clear start and be played with full value. Written glissandos should emphasize the lower partials and work to hit every partial from top to bottom. Arpeggios should be as smooth as possible. Make sure to exaggerate the different styles represented in this etude.

♩=120

f

mp *cresc.* *f*

ff

Etude #9: Jump and Return

For this etude, work to play through each with only as much physical (embouchure) movement as is truly necessary. Try slurring through each passage to develop a better connection between each note. This will be especially helpful for some of the larger intervals in the etude. Make sure that you are still phrasing and thinking less note by note, but more of the larger shapes that are present.

The musical score for Etude #9: Jump and Return is presented in seven staves. It begins with a tempo marking of 112 (♩=112) and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The music is in 4/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped with slurs and accents. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The piece concludes with a final double bar line.

Etude #10: Repeated Note Articulation

Always lead to the following downbeat. This will help to keep your air moving through the shorter notes and improve the overall sound. In the section after the repeat work to make the octave jumps with minimal physical movement. Try slurring between the two notes to better understand the connection between each octave.

$\text{♩} = 66$

1x *f* - 2x *p*

Etude #11: Bouncy Articulation

To practice this etude I recommend playing through sections entirely slurred. Remember the feeling of connecting each note with your air. Then work to maintain that feeling when you switch to articulating the notes as written. It may also be helpful to change the printed dynamic. It may be easier to achieve the desired sound and clarity at a louder dynamic. It may be helpful to think of these notes as clear and separate rather than short. Don't let the articulation marking affect the way that you are using your air to create a beautiful and centered tone.

♩.=60

mp *cresc.*

f *dim.* *mp*

stacc.

Etude #12: Triple Tongue Articulation

This etude should have a character that feels menacing and I recommend playing this etude with simplified rhythms. Take the rhythmic motive and change to just 4 repeated eighth notes. When you then go back to playing the written rhythm, your air should feel similar to the simpler version. The faster notes do not need to be incredibly short, although they should all be clear and separate. The clarity can help to improve the character. Try aiming for the final note of each gesture to keep the air moving. When playing the longer value notes (in this case it would be anything longer than an eighth note), make sure that they are full value and lead directly into the following note. The sustain is important to help with character and overall sound quality.

♩=102

mf *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 102. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and features a series of eighth notes with triplets. The second staff continues with similar rhythmic patterns, including a piano (*p*) section. The third staff includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a forte (*f*) section. The fourth and fifth staves conclude the piece with various triplet patterns and dynamics.