



Ben's

Ben van Dijk

Basics

for bass/tenor trombone
+ F attachment

Acknowledgements

This book would never have been created without the sensitive and big-hearted support of my family and friends.

Thanks for reading the manuscript and contributing valuable editorial commentary.

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Diana Beekvelt	Graphic designer
John Engelkes	San Francisco Symphony
Heinz Fadle	Professor Hochschule Detmold (retired)
Inoue Jumpei	Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra
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Bart van Lier	Metropole Orchestra Netherlands
Bill Reichenbach	Studio/Jazz bass trombone
Newell Sheridan	Freelance bass trombone
Max & Heinrich Thein	Creators of my beautiful instruments
Jiggs Whigham	Internationally acclaimed trombonist
Douglas Yeo	Boston Symphony Orchestra (retired)

The two persons who were of enormous help for this project are my sons Mark and Erik van Dijk. Without their efficiency and dedication this project would never have had a chance to succeed. Thanks boys! I am grateful to Aaltje, my dear wife, for her support, her critical ears, eyes and ever-lasting patience.

I like to dedicate this book, in love and deep respect to my mother Hetty van Dijk. Without her contribution this book would have never been there.

4th Edition 2022

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Biography

Born in 1955 in The Hague, **Ben van Dijk** received his first trombone lessons from his father, Piet van Dijk, who at the time was solo trombonist of The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra.

Ben earned his Solo Diploma in trombone cum laude in 1980 at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. In 1976, he was appointed to the bass trombone position in the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra.

He continued to study with Jeff Reynolds and Roger Bobo in Los Angeles. After 23 years with the N.R.P.O., Ben joined the Rotterdam Philharmonic as solo bass trombonist, retiring in 2022 after 23 years with that Orchestra.

Ben is currently Professor at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague.

He was invited as teacher and soloist to the International Trombone Festivals in Detmold (Germany) in 1992, in Cleveland (USA) in 1994, in Utrecht (Holland) in 2000, in Denton (USA) in 2002, Birmingham (UK) in 2006 and in Austin (USA) in 2010.

Ben has also given master classes and recitals in Korea, Japan, Greece, Hungary, Sweden, England, Scotland, France, Spain, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, the USA and many other countries.

In March 2014 he was elected First Vice President of the ITA (International Trombone Association) and in 2017 Ben was elected as President of the International Trombone Association, the most honorable position within the ITA, for a period of 3 years.

He has released six solo CD's, "**Nana**", "**First Song**", "**Melody**", "**Never Alone**", "**World Concerto**", and "**Brisas Andaluzas**", which all received praising reviews in all the major brass and trombone journals

In recognition of his contributions to the International Trombone Association and to the trombone community at large, Ben van Dijk was the recipient of the **2003 ITA Award**. This award is the ITA's most prestigious citation and it recognizes Ben's artistic achievements and his tireless efforts in promoting and improving global trombone performance standards, brass pedagogy, and instrument design. In 2017 Ben was awarded the **ITA Neill Humfeld Award** for his internationally acclaimed qualities as teacher.

Ben performs exclusively on Thein trombones.

Author's note

In this book I'd like to give you some guidance in various areas of trombone playing. Of course, there are many more topics one could address, but I have focused on three areas in this book.

- 1. Breathing**
- 2. Daily Routines**
- 3. Warm up**

It is my hope to give you some perspective and direction, but it is definitely not my idea to make you dependent on this book. On the contrary, I hope to encourage you to look for ideas yourself and be as inventive as possible.

Most of my ideas come from many years of playing and teaching combined with all the wonderful contacts I have had with different experts on these matters during my career. It's a combination of the ideas which have helped me to come to where I am right now. They also have proven to be of value to many of my students. During many of the master-classes I have given in the past years, students and colleagues have asked me to write down my ideas and bundle them into a book. Well, here it is!

There are already many good trombone books available. But I have noticed that many of these books don't have thorough explanations of their notated examples or they consist only of text. I have tried to explain all my exercises as clearly as possible with both text and notated examples taken from my own experiences.

As a little extra I'd like to pass on many of my "Tips of the week". They cover many topics which have to do with trombone playing in general. These are nothing but my thoughts and they are there just to give you ideas that may be useful in your playing.

I urge you to read all the text carefully and to please be patient. A good house is built on a solid foundation and accordingly you must construct your trombone playing skills in the same manner.

Have fun!



Pre- Warm up Exercises

The goal of these exercises is to assure that your **breathing** is functioning in a **relaxed** manner before you actually start playing the bass/tenor trombone.

Breathing

Try to achieve a natural method of breathing. Examples of when your breathing is most relaxed might be:

1. **Breathing in fresh air through your nose during a refreshing walk along the beach or in the woods.**
2. **Breathing in through your mouth during a deep sigh of relief.**
3. **The most relaxed way of breathing, though, occurs while one is asleep. When breathing in this manner, the stomach muscles are completely relaxed. The relaxation of the stomach while breathing is one of the greatest problems for many of us. Try to conjure up this feeling of relaxed breathing repeatedly while playing your instrument**

Explaining the Breathing Mechanics

I don't want to go into full detail on the organs and muscles connected with breathing. However, I think it is important to explain some facts concerning breathing. Your chest is considerably larger at the bottom than at the top, the lower ribs are not fastened to the breastbone; their forward ends are free. Obviously the greatest extension is possible at the lower part of the chest! Certain muscles play an active role in breathing. A very important one is the diaphragm, a strong, flat, sheet-like muscle stretched across the base of the chest. Attached to the lower ribs, the backbone, and the breastbone, it separates the chest from the abdomen; it might be regarded as the floor of the chest and the roof of the abdomen.

Now the diaphragm comes in action. During the first step of the inhalation it automatically flattens from its normal relaxed position. You can cause it to descend even lower than normal. Pushing forward the front-walls of the abdomen, will result in a pressure being felt against the belt buckle. Try it! This action of the diaphragm causes the lower part of the lungs to be filled; **this is step number one!!!**

The intercostal muscles come into play next, pushing out the lower ribs, breastbone, and chest. Since the diaphragm is attached to the lower ribs and the breastbone, it will be drawn down to an extent by this side-to-side and front-to-back expansion. The action of these muscles fills the middle part of the lungs. **This is step number two!!!**

The third and final step is to fill the higher portion of the lungs. The upper chest is expanded, thus lifting the rib cage. In this final movement, the lower abdomen will be slightly drawn in, giving the lungs a support and helping to fill the highest parts.

A complete breath consists of these three steps combined in one fluent movement. **Let us review the actions:** the diaphragm, in contracting, enlarges the lung capacity in a downward sweep: the lower chest is expanded outwards (side-to-side and front-to-back): the upper chest is protruded, expanding the chest upwards. The

For many of the exercises it is advisable to also play them on the mouthpiece only. For this I recommend using a “**Berp**” device. You’ll be able to hold the instrument in a normal position, have the mouthpiece on your mouth just like with regular playing and use the slide like you normally would. Using the Berp will help you to establish good breathing habits, build muscle memory and improve your intonation (focus of sound projection) significantly.

Long tones

Exercise no.1

Execute this exercise in *mf*, at a slow tempo, with a constant pulse. The attack should be done without tongue, (Ha). When you have a lot of time for a warm up, I recommend repeating every 2 bars and playing it the second time on the mouthpiece. Take an extra bar between the repetition to take out or put in your mouthpiece. Start the glissando on the second beat of the bar. This means that the last glissando (going to 7th position) will be the fastest, but still as slowly as possible, smearing between the notes. Inhale, in a very relaxed way, as if with a hot potato in your mouth. Feel your lips make the glissando synchronized with the slide and support the tone with the air until the very end of the note. Control the tone with the speed of the air. Make your sound as beautiful as possible, singing, full, round, dark, fat and always centered. Think as if playing a beautiful song!

exercise no. 1

The first time on the instrument,
the second time mouthpiece only.

Ha = attack only with air no tongue!



exercise no. 1a

Ha



exercise no.1b

Ha



Exercise no.13 – “More slide exercises”

These slide exercises are to be played at different speeds and varied articulations from “no tongue” to “staccato”. Watch the intonation carefully and use a clean, even articulations. We should not hear the slide in our playing. So once again, move it very gently and precisely. Also remember, when you play staccato, you have to blow through the phrase and let the tongue bounce on the air. In this exercise I have given some position- and valve-indications. These are my favorites, but I like you to look for your own favorite valve-positions but make the slide movement as easy as possible. Don't forget to think about your correct, open throat breathing!

exercise no.13a Make use of different dynamics,articulations and tempos.

The musical score for Exercise no.13a consists of four staves of bass clef music in 3/4 time. The first staff is in G major (one sharp) and features dynamics *p*, *mf*, and *f*. The second staff is in F major (one flat) and includes valve indications (V) above the notes. The third staff is in E-flat major (three flats) and also includes valve indications. The fourth staff is in G major (one sharp).

Warm up

In the following I would like to give you a selection taken from my daily routines and some new exercises which can be used together as a short warm-up session. In my opinion warm up sessions should be well balanced. Sometimes I hear people warm up and after their session they are totally worn out instead of warmed up. The purpose of warming up is to reduce risk of damage of the embouchure and raise your performance standard! I think we have 2 types of warm ups.

One is a warm up on a practice day. This can be a longer session taken from the daily routines, including exercises to explore the limits of our playing and to improve those areas. A sensible order could be: Breathing exercises, Long tones, Flexibility, Tone production, Scales and Arpeggio's, both in: Staccato and legato building range in both directions

The second warm up is the one we use before a rehearsal or a concert. Here we should use it to really warm up only and not to make ourselves tired. For this session I recommend: a shorter breathing exercise only, some long tones connected with glissandos, a bit of staccato and legato scales, and not too much flexibility. Don't go to the limits of your range. This is only to get your blood circulation and your lips ready for take off!!!

Here is the short version of a possible warm up.

Breathing exercises

Exercise no.1

Inhale in calmly through your mouth for eight counts.

Hold the breath for four counts.

Calmly exhale for eight counts.

Repeat this exercise four times!

Exercise no.2

Inhale in calmly through your mouth in one count.

Exhale one count in ffff.

Repeat this exercise several times!

Exercise no.3 – “Five Blows” exercise Jeff Reynolds.

Inhale one count . Exhale one count. ffff

Inhale one count . Exhale three counts. ff

Inhale one count . Exhale five counts. mf

Inhale one count . Exhale seven counts. p

Inhale one count . Exhale ten counts. ppp



Lip flexibility exercise

exercise no.11

first position

p *mf* *f*

“Tip of the Week”

On January 2001 I started placing a “tip of the week” column on my website www.basstrombone.nl . It contains hints concerning many different items of interest to trombone players. It compiles technical suggestions, hints on how to balance in a section, how to behave during your first gig, audition advices and much more.

I have put the tips into different categories to make them easier to find.



Ben van Dijk and Japanese students during a Tokyo concert.

Thein
Ubrass

BEN VAN DIJK

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Performing
Artist



My voice
Ben van Dijk plays THEIN

www.thein-brass.de

‘Bravo Ben! I am so impressed with your new method book. All trombonists will benefit from your words and exercises. I will recommend your book to all of my students!’

Joseph Alessi

Principal Trombone New York Philharmonic

‘Congratulations to Ben on a wonderful book. Congratulations to the rest of us for having such a great resource available to us! This is a truly musical approach to the daily routine of trombone playing. I will use this book for my teaching and I for my own daily practice.’

John Engelkes

Bass Trombonist San Francisco Symphony

‘This is a unique, highly practical work for every serious student of the trombone - no matter how advanced he/she might be. The author’s wealth of experience, insight and understanding is extraordinary.’

Heinz Fadle

Prof. Hochschule für Musik, Detmold/Germany

‘Dear Ben, cordial congratulations on the publication of your terrific book! I assure that this book is beneficial not only to the young generations aspiring to be trombone players but also to orchestra player like ourselves.’

INOUE Jumpei

Bass Trombonist Tokyo Metropolitan symphony Orchestra

‘Ben, thank you for writing this wonderful book. It is very important for the trombone world, that a great player like you shares this knowledge with us. The exercises are great and the text is very practical and helpful. I’m going to use it myself. My compliments and congratulations.’

Bart van Lier

Jazz soloist and principal trombone of the Metropole Orchestra

‘This book is great, not only for bass and tenor trombone players, but for brass in general. This material is going to put a lot of players on the right path.’

Bill Reichenbach

Studio (Jazz) Bass trombone virtuoso

‘Ben van Dijk is one of the great trombone masters of our time. Not only is he a great trombonist but he is also a superb ‘musician’! He has used his artistry and vast experience to create a work of significant importance.’

Jiggs Whigham

Internationally acclaimed trombonist, band leader and educator

‘Ben van Dijk has established himself as one of the finest performers and teachers of the trombone; with his new book, he shows himself to be equally adept as an author and his contagious love for the trombone and music making comes through loud and clear on every page.’

Douglas Yeo

Bass Trombonist Boston Symphony Orchestra

