The Bordogni-Ericson
Low Horn Boot Camp

Selections from the Vocalises of
Marco Bordogni

Edited by
Ferdinand Gumbert and John Ericson
Horn Notes Edition
Foreword

It is not a secret; every horn teacher knows that developing tone and facility in the low range is the key to everything for an advancing hornist. Also, difficulty in low range production is the leading problem with incoming students.

Part of the challenge is having materials to teach from, as the materials used most commonly for advanced low horn study (the etudes of Neuling and Pre) are difficult. I felt there was a clear need for some easier low horn materials, and in order to meet that need in 2011 I published a collection under the title Ultimate Low Horn. The key portion of the book (now out of print) was a version of the classic vocalises (vocal etudes) by Marco Bordogni (1789-1856). They are very well known today in a version for trombone by Johannes Rochut (1881-1952), published in 1928. However, the model for the present edition is an older, vocal edition by Ferdinand Gumbert (1818-1896 -- no relation to the horn teacher Friedrich Gumpert). While similar to that of Rochut, it has more articulations and fewer slurs, giving a bit more musical variety to the treatment of the original Bordogni melodies.

Using of the standard Bordogni-Rochut trombone studies is a common tactic to try to teach low register on the horn, but it fails as they are simply not low enough. What I found was that those same etudes a fourth lower than the standard version really gets horn players in the right place. But I quickly also learned this range is so low that it can be really difficult for someone new to the low range to play, in part because they can’t really hear the pitches. To facilitate learning the etudes, I soon began to pair each low etude with the same etude one octave higher. Besides aiding the learning of the low range version, this section also puts these studies in a range that effectively works on the “break” range, and as such they are also very useful for working through embouchure problems in this range.

I would encourage students to approach these etudes as musical, lyric studies, but I also realize this is a considerable challenge as the range is so low. This collection, with the paired etudes, only goes to number 11; for further study in this range see the Low Bass Clef version, sold separately. To get an even better idea of these studies as music, I also encourage players to perform the same etudes from the Standard Treble Clef edition, also available from Horn Notes Edition.

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Moderato

No. 1a

Moderato

No. 1b