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**Interview with Don Renshaw – Principal trombone**

National Arts Centre Orchestra

*FOURTH STAGE*

August 7, 2002

Part 1 of video interview

**Q. What do you enjoy most about playing the trombone?**

**Don:** There are many aspects that I really enjoy about the trombone. I love the fact that you can produce such a pure tone on the instrument and that there are so many colours that you can achieve. There is a lot of flexibility in the instrument. I like the fact that there aren't too many moving parts and I enjoy using the slide, which many people think is quite difficult but actually for me it's a lot simpler than having to worry about the fingers on a keyboard, for example. I love being a supportive member of the orchestra with the other members playing the melody. The trombone is a gregarious instrument. We often work in groups and we harmonize in the background and I really enjoy that.

**Q. What is the toughest thing about playing the trombone?**

**Don:** The most challenging aspect of playing the trombone is not just where to put the slide, although a lot of people are fascinated by that - it certainly does take a lot of practice to develop a memory in your arm, but producing a really wonderful tone is a challenge. We have a number of exercises for this which I'll show you later, and these will help to develop the tone. Also, facility in terms of multiple tonguing, double and triple tonguing, can be quite a challenge. So, I'd say those are the two major aspects that are difficult.

**Q. What is your most memorable experience as a performer?**

**Don:** There have been so many wonderful experiences. Certainly it's always a joy getting to work with talented people over all, but if I had to choose just one – this is very difficult – I'd say that in my younger days, when I was at Tanglewood, Massachusetts -- I was actually sponsored by Leonard Bernstein to go there for the summer – and I got to work with him. We performed Prokofiev's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony with him conducting and words cannot describe how wonderful that was. Working together with a huge orchestra with Bernstein at the helm was really, really moving and I will never forget that.

**Q. What advice have you got for aspiring trombone players?**

**Don:** If I were to single out any particular things about pursuing a career in trombone, of course we all say – and it's true – that you have to practice. My highschool teacher used to say "It's preparation, not practice". We really have to learn to practice in the right way. That is something you are going to have to work at with your teacher.

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Additionally, we have to work on our tone and that is done with the mouthpiece using a technique, which I can show you in a moment. Another important thing is to play as wide a variety of music as possible. Get involved with community orchestras and explore the many different styles and types of music that are out there. That's the best thing I could say.

Part 2 of video interview

**Don demonstrates some trombone practice techniques.**

**Don:** Practicing should include a wide range or diet of practice fundamentals. One of these fundamentals is proper air movement. We have to ensure that we have efficient use of air and if I may demonstrate, I have with me a mouthpiece, we practice blowing into the mouthpiece. What we do is buzz our lips on it.

*[Don demonstrates without the mouthpiece; he plays the tune Happy Birthday. Next, he plays the same passage by buzzing his lips on the mouthpiece.]*

**Don:** If I were to suggest anything, it would be to play songs that have a melodic nature to them, any songs that you know well. Practice playing with phrasing on the mouthpiece, itself.

*[Don demonstrates with the mouthpiece, again to the tune to Happy Birthday.]*

**Don:** Make it sound like an instrument unto itself. That will help to develop tone and all sorts of wonderful things.

**Don plays an excerpt from *Elegy for Mippy II* by Leonard Bernstein**

**Don:** This piece I would like to play for you is only two minutes long and, speaking of Leonard Bernstein, this piece is written by him. It was for his brother Burton's dog. The piece is called *Elegy for Mippy II*. One thing about this piece that is interesting is that we have to tap our feet at the same time that we play. That is not something that we're usually in the habit of doing. Anyway, here is this wonderful piece by Leonard Bernstein called *Elegy for Mippy II*.

*[Don plays the piece]*