

DMA Brass Dissertation Prospectus – Jason M. Johnston
Proposal for Performance Major Project (TMUS 8329) – Final Project

- I. **Timeframe or specific date:** Fall Semester 2015, October 1, 2015; Defense on November 17, 2015.
- II. **Working Title:** A Cognitive Approach to Droning and its Application to Horn Exercises, Etudes and Excerpts
- III. **Proposed Topic:** I propose to create an online tool dedicated to intervallic studies designed to improve the quality of pitch in collegiate horn students.
- IV. **Purpose/Justification:** This will be accomplished by applying the constant use of the drone through exercises dedicated to drone practice, applying the drone to common horn etude examples, and creating a significant audio resource to students to apply a drone click track to major orchestral excerpts. This audio resource will be available on my website www.johnstonhorn.com.
- V. **Methodology:** There are several intonation exercises intended to help improve pitch: The Intonation Repair Tool, X, Y, Z... Although these resources contain valuable information regarding the physical properties of intonation and examples of several types of intonation – Just, Equal, Pythagorean, etc – but they do not provide a focused approach on the need of flexibility when it comes to performing with large ensembles, chamber ensembles, small chamber ensembles, percussion, and piano through the use of Just Intonation.

The first section of the project will revisit the historical significance of Equal Temperament and Just Temperament. It will also be dedicated to describing the cognitive process of interpreting sound, an in depth description of absolute pitch, and how the brain develops strong relative pitch.

The second part of this project will include the reintroduction of the Christopher Leuba and Jack Herrick Droning Method. Christopher Leuba is the former Principal Horn of the Chicago Symphony who developed several extensive methods for horn highlighting the importance of droning. Jack Herrick is the former Professor of Horn at the University of Northern Colorado and a protégé of Christopher Leuba. Herrick developed an alternative view of the Leuba method, which I will rearrange for this project. I will also write other exercises dedicated to intervallic intonation training.

The third part in continued intervallic study is to apply basic training to popular horn etudes. The etudes used in this project will involve very little root movement in order to allow a student to focus on one particular key and the intervals within that key. The

etudes will not be limited to major keys; they will involve minor and the 5 other five common modes (same etude, different modes?).

The fourth part of the project will focus on the most common excerpts found in most horn auditions. An audio resource including a click track will be developed to adjust to the root movement found within the excerpts maintaining the intervallic necessity of the moment within the excerpt.