

## Dr. Davidson's Recommendations for Trombones, Mouthpieces, and Accessories

Disclaimer - I play an M&W 322 tenor trombone, an M&W 322-T tenor trombone, and a Courtois 131R alto trombone. As of 2019 I am an M&W Trombone endorser/artist. I think the M&W and Courtois trombones are the best instruments for me. I play Bach mouthpieces. Disclaimer aside, here are some possible recommendations for you.

### Large Bore Tenors (.547 bore)

- **M&W Custom Trombones:** See above. Two former Greenhoe craftsman/professional trombonists formed their own company after Gary Greenhoe retired and closed his store. M&W Trombones are amazing works of art, and are, in my opinion, the finest trombones made today. The 322 or 322-T (T is for "Tuning-in-Slide") models are the tenor designations. Consider these. These horns will be in-line, price-wise, with the Greenhoe/Edwards/Shires horns – they're custom made, and will take a while to make and for you to receive them. That said, they're VERY well-made.  
[www.customtrombones.com](http://www.customtrombones.com)
- **Yamaha 882OR:** The "R" in the model number is important here – this is the instrument designed by Larry Zalkind, professor at Eastman, and former principal trombonist of the Utah Symphony. It is, in my opinion, the best horn available today that is not made by a custom instrument company. Ko-Ichiro Yamamoto (principal trombone, Seattle Symphony) and David Finlayson (New York Philharmonic) also play these instruments. Read more here:  
<http://usa.yamaha.com/products/musicalinstruments/winds/trombones/tenorbasstrombones/ysl-882or/?mode=model>
- **Bach 42BO:** This is an open-wrap F-attachment horn. I'd get the extra light slide, which I believe is a bit more durable, and, if possible, a gold brass bell. The Bach 42B was and is "the gold standard." Read more here:  
<http://www.conn-selmer.com/en-us/our-instruments/bandinstruments/trombones/42bo/>
- **Courtois AC 420BOR:** This is an open wrap F-attachment trombone similar to a Bach 42BO in my opinion. Courtois makes fine instruments. The 420 comes in a variety of valve possibilities (rotary, Hagmann, Thayer). Read more about Courtois here: <http://www.courtois-paris.com/en>
- **Brass Ark/Sawday vintage Bach 42 trombone restoration/upgrades:** This is what it sounds like – they take old Bach 42Bs and retool them, add new valves, open wrap the F-attachment tubes, and give you leadpipe options. You can read about them at: <http://brassark.com/arkupdatedtrombones.html>

- **Brass Ark “Vintage Orchestral” model trombone:** Also from the Brass Ark and Noah Gladstone, these look like very interesting instruments. They feature a wide hand slide (42B width), an open wrap with an oversized rotor like the ones first designed by master L.A. brass craftsman Larry Minick in the 1970s (I think) and later seen on some Yamaha trombones in the 1990s, and a thin bell. Read more about this instrument here: <http://brassark.com/brassarktrombone.html>
- **S. E. Shires trombones:** Steve Shires is a master craftsman. Make sure you get a horn made in the USA. You’ll pay more, but it’s worth it, in my opinion. These are modular instruments that give you many bell/slide/valve combination possibilities. Read more here: [http://seshires.com/trombones/large\\_bore\\_medium\\_bore/large\\_medium\\_bore\\_tenor\\_trombones.html](http://seshires.com/trombones/large_bore_medium_bore/large_medium_bore_tenor_trombones.html)
- **Greenhoe trombones:** These are now marketed by Schilke instruments, but made to Greenhoe specifications by the former shop foreman at Greenhoe. Read more here: <https://www.greenhoe.com/>
- **Getzen/Edwards Trombones:** These are made in Elkhorn, WI, and the parent company is Getzen. They are essentially modular designed instruments, with lots of valve/slide/tuning slide combinations, unless you buy the Edwards Alessi model trombone (T396A). The Getzen Custom series trombones (3047AFR) are the most popular Edwards bell/slide combinations – you can buy these horns a bit cheaper than an Edwards, since you have only two possible choices instead of hundreds of choices for Edwards horns. Read more about Getzen trombones here: [www.getzen.com](http://www.getzen.com) then read more about Edwards trombones here: [www.edwardsinstruments.com](http://www.edwardsinstruments.com)

**Valve advice:** Try them out! I have students that play on Hagmann, Thayer (AKA Axial Flow), regular, and oversized rotary valves. It all depends on preference, and how much resistance you want. Generally, in my opinion the Thayer valves seem to offer the least resistance, followed by the Hagmann, oversized rotor, and regular sized rotor. Hagmann and rotary valves seem to require less maintenance than Thayer valves, in my opinion. Try them out. See what you like.

## Bass Trombones

- **Bach 50B3OG:** The biggest thing to watch for in bass trombones, in my opinion, is to make sure you don't go larger than a 9.5-inch bell. Anything bigger is too large a bell, in my opinion. This has an option for a 10.5-inch bell – the 50B3L. Stay away!!!
- **Getzen Custom 3062AFR:** This horn features dual Thayer valves, open wrap, and a dual bore slide as standard. I'm not a fan of the dual bore slide, but they will sell you one that does not have dual bore slide – you have to call and ask. This is a great horn at a great price. If you want a little less expensive instrument with traditional rotary valves, check out the Getzen 1052FDR. Read more about Getzen horns here: <http://www.getzen.com/>
- **Courtois AC502B:** This instrument is a more affordably priced bass trombone from a well-respected instrument maker. Courtois makes a full line of trombones; they are the choice of the best trombonists in the world, including the section of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Read more here: <http://www.courtois-paris.com/en>
- **M&W, Shires, and Greenhoe** make bass trombones as well. They're great. They're custom, and cost a bit more than the other bass trombones I've listed. In general, I'd personally stay away from dual bore slides, bells larger than 9.5 inches, and bells that are too heavy. I like gold brass alloy in my trombone bells. Websites listed above will take you to the bass trombone pages.

## Small(ish) Bore Horns (.500 - .525 bore)

- 500 bore slides: **XO 1632:** This is a pro horn from Xeno, designed and endorsed by jazz great John Fedchock. This would be fine for your jazz band, obviously; **Bach 12:** This is a .500 bore horn comparable to the Xeno listed above; **King 2B+**
- .508 bore slides; **Getzen Eterna 1050; King 3B** (I really like the 3B, as it has a slightly bigger (8 inch) bell – I think this is a great “jazz” horn for an orchestral player/doubler, as it give you a little more “room”.)
- 525 bore slides: **Bach 36:** This is a .525 bore instrument (medium large bore, bigger than a beginner, or most jazz horns, but smaller than a .547 large bore tenor trombone); **King 3 B+**

**It's important to have good, reliable equipment (horn, MP, etc.). While these will help you improve (and, if you have only a beginning model trombone, they are necessary for improvement) you will make improvement (change) permanent only when your concept of sound (and/or technique, breathing, etc.) changes. For that, you'll need an open mind, great examples, a good recording device, and a good private lesson teacher. Good luck!**

### **Mute Recommendations**

You need a straight and a cup mute for high school playing. For college and beyond you'll need a harmon (AKA "Wah-Wah"), bucket, and perhaps different types of straight mutes that include different metals/wood; plunger mute for jazz/pops work. My basic mute suggestion is to buy Denis Wick straight and cup mutes, as I think these are the best one on the market. Jo-Ral straight mutes are more expensive, and will give you a choice of metal in the mutes (brass, or copper bottom). I'd go with Jo-Ral bucket and harmon mutes, but that's just my opinion. Again, my opinion, stay away from Humes and Berg fiber mutes, as I think they play really stuffy. If you want a good fiber mute, Denis Wick makes one for about \$20.00 that plays really well. Other good mute makers out there include, but are not limited to, Tom Crown; Wallace; Best Brass; TrumCor. Humes and Berg makes a solotone mute (as popularized by Tommy Dorsey) that is pretty good (I think they call it a clear tone mute), so if you need one of these, by all means get one. A practice mute is helpful as long as you don't use it all the time!! It's for pros to play when they're stuck in a hotel room, or for warming up back stage. Best Brass, Dillon, and Faxx make fine practice mutes that "nest" in the bell. All of these can be purchased at Hickey's Music, [www.hickeys.com](http://www.hickeys.com), and most likely at your local dealer.

### **Mouthpiece Recommendations**

Large Bore Tenor Mouthpieces: Bach 6.5 AL, or 5G; Schilke 51 (NOT 51D – this is a euphonium mouthpiece!) or 52; Griego 5; Denis Wick 5BS, 6AL, 6BL. Gold plating feels better and may be necessary if a student is allergic to silver plate.  
Bass Trombone Mouthpieces: Bach 2G, Bach 1.5G; Schilke 58, 59; Griego 2. Be careful not to get too large too soon – the bass trombone plays in the tenor range a lot...

### **Trombone Cleaning Necessities**

- Nylon Mouthpiece Brush (use every day after practice) – I'd get a mouthpiece pouch, too, put your MP in the pouch and avoid damage to the rim, shank, etc.
- Cleaning rod and cheesecloth (for slide), or, better yet, Slid-O-Mix Cleaning System, which includes a rod, a bendable nylon brush attachment, and a cloth sleeve for the rod. This come in small and large bore slide sizes.
- Slide-O-Mix Multi Wiper – will safely clean most of interior of your horn, including slide crook – no metal parts! It is made of plastic, and has a swab on one end of the snake. Recommended.
- Put horn in bathtub with lukewarm soapy water – disassemble horn, clean, put back together (don't pop the rotary valve out !!!). Then reassemble, lubricate! Use Hetman synthetic lubricants (I recommend #8 for the tuning slides, #11 for the F-attachment rotor, #14 for the bearing, #15 for the ball joints in the trigger linkage, and Yamaha Trombone Slide Lubricant (this is different than Yamaha Trombone Slide Cream, and similar to Slide-O-Mix, but much better, in my opinion) - REPEAT THIS EVERY 2 WEEKS!

### **Maintenance Suggestion**

Have a repair technician professionally clean and “PC” your horn twice a year. This should include getting the slide aligned. If your slide is dented, sticky, and hard to move, you will develop bad playing habits.