

TEXAS BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION

BEGINNER INSTRUCTION SERIES

"... STUFF THAT WORKS!"

HORN

**LELAND SHARROCK
CLINICIAN**

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Foreword

Teachers unselfishly helping teachers in a fiercely competitive setting is a tradition as old as Texas' school bands. In that tradition, the Texas Bandmasters Association is sponsoring a series of clinics on beginning instrumental teaching methods, presented by some of Texas' premier music educators during the 1995 and 1996 TBA Conventions in San Antonio, Texas. These master teachers, chosen from the ranks of superior music educators in the State, represent a wide diversity in geographic location, as well as, in teaching situations.

A session will be presented on six band instruments each with a companion handout. In these handouts, you will find teaching methods, and classroom organizational skills which are used successfully in today's schools. These clinics represent some tried and true ways of teaching, along with fresh new ideas, all with one common denominator: this is *'STUFF THAT WORKS!'*

We acknowledge the efforts of the clinicians who prepared these booklets and, who also presented a clinic session. In addition we acknowledge the help and advice of Past TBA Bandmasters of the Year, Mel Montgomery, of Nacogdoches, and J.R. **McEntyre**, of Odessa. We also thank the many teachers from around the State who have shared their "secrets" for this project.

This series is respectfully dedicated to the legions of band directors who have gone before us and who have built the music education program that is unique in history: TEXAS' BANDS. Representing the best of this tradition was the 1990 President of TBA, the late Malcolm Helm, whose example and teaching inspired and challenged all of us.

Jim Hagood, President, Texas Bandmasters Association

LELAND SHARROCK

Mr. **Sharrock** received his BME Degree from Oklahoma State University under the leadership of Hiram Henry. His MM Degree in performance is from Indiana University where he studied horn with Philip Farkas. He has performed professionally with the North American Defense Band, Evansville Symphony, Colorado Springs Symphony and the San Antonio Symphony. He was a member of the South Texas Brass Quintet and San Antonio Brass. He has taught 19 years in the public schools. His teaching positions have been at Churchill High School, as the Assistant Director, and Head Director at Roosevelt, MacArthur and Temple High Schools. During this period, he was the horn instructor at University of Texas at San Antonio and Temple Junior College.

**TIPS ON STARTING BEGINNING HORN
BY LELAND SHARROCK**

I. RECRUITING

- A. A student with good self-esteem and self-confidence, good grades, piano background if possible, and **VERY GOOD PITCH RECOGNITION**. Sing or play a pitch on the piano then ask the student to sing it back to you. For the physical part, have the student buzz on the mouthpiece (buzz low as possible then gliss as high as possible) check for a good buzz, mouthpiece placement and embouchure. If these things are demonstrated pretty well, the student will hopefully have few problems. A large overbite can be a problem especially if the student doesn't study privately to learn how to overcome this correctly. The size of body, hands or fingers are usually not a problem as the students get older.

II. INHALING AIR (NO MOUTHPIECE)

- A. **AIR** should be taken in by thinking **HO**. Keep the air in the lower area of the mouth by the tongue. If the air is taken through the roof area by arching the tongue, a restriction is produced, hence less air can be inhaled. If the air is taken in correctly, very little sound should be produced, if any. **SHOULDERS SHOULD RAISE VERY LITTLE. THIS CAUSES TIGHTNESS IN THE CHEST AND THROAT.**
- B. Have student place one hand on the stomach and the other hand on the kidney area. When breathing in, this area should expand. The lungs should be filled from the bottom up like pouring water into a bucket. Many students will raise the chest and pull in the stomach causing **SHALLOW BREATHING**. If they have problems breathing correctly, have them lay down, place some books on their stomach and breathe normal. Now, they can see and feel the proper way to breathe. You can have them place a bass drum beater against your stomach (in the presence of other students these days) to demonstrate how the mid-section, **THEN** the chest enlarges when you take in air. Taking in air is like blowing up a balloon, the mid-section, and chest area expands.
- C. Air should be taken in until the lungs are **FULL**, but the chest area should not be under stress.
- D. Once the air is taken in, it should be expelled without closing the throat or trying to hold it before a note is started. **CLOSING THE THROAT IS A MAJOR PROBLEM WITH MANY BEGINNERS AND CAN TAKE FROM HOURS TO YEARS TO CORRECT.**

III. EXHALING AIR (NO MOUTHPIECE)

- A. **DIAPHRAGM**-To demonstrate where the diaphragm is and how it works, have the students **COUGH**. The diaphragm is used for taking **IN AIR, NOT BLOWING IT OUT**.
- B. Now, have them breathe in air correctly, then blow the air across the room trying to project it as far as possible, by pushing with the respiratory muscles. The stomach should collapse inward, the back muscles should also support. The balloon is collapsing. Start each day projecting air followed by placing the teeth almost together and hissing loudly

to teach support. Hiss whole, half, and quarter notes. This practice identifies the respiratory muscles and makes them stronger.

- C. Now, blow the air through the mouthpiece trying to project the air across the room. (NO BUZZ YET).

IV. EMBOUCHURE

- A. To form embouchure correctly, think of spitting something off the tongue, with firm comers.
- B. Flat Chin (chin should be flat and pointed with no air pockets between lips and teeth.)
- C. Firm Comers, but not too tight. DON'T PULL CORNERS BACK, JUST FIRM THEM.
- D. Line up teeth so mouthpiece will sit on bottom and top teeth evenly and comfortably.
- E. All facial muscles should focus forward to enable mouthpiece to sit on cushion instead of against the teeth.
- F. Teeth apart by placing small finger between teeth. Most students play with teeth too closed. OPEN UP! !
- G. USE MIRROR.

PROBLEM: Chin not flat and pointed (Tone not open with weak low and high registers)

CORRECTION: Pull lips and comers against teeth firmly, not tight. This habit should be broken quickly.

PROBLEM: Comers pulled back before they set mouthpiece or they are smiling (Thin tone, endurance problems, upper register tuning problems)

CORRECTION: Bring comers forward (We only firm the comers against the teeth. We don't push them forward or pull them backward).

PROBLEM: Chin too far forward placing all pressure on the top lip. (Tone, endurance, tonguing problems) Many students wearing braces do this.

CORRECTION: Line up bottom teeth with top teeth so mouthpiece rests evenly 2/3rds on top and 1/3rd on bottom. Try to find a mouthpiece to fit braces so student doesn't have to play with chin forward.

PROBLEM: Air pockets (Lack of control of embouchure causing tone, tuning, and bending notes)

CORRECTION: Place lips and cheeks firm against teeth.

V. MOUTHPIECE PLACEMENT

A. Cup placement-Set bottom of mouthpiece in the red of lower lip first, then roll top of mouth piece on upper lip with lips slightly separated with the inside of the top rim hooking on the center of the lip above the red. 2/3rds of mouthpiece should be placed on the top lip. Check buzz (If buzz is difficult, pull out little top lip. Experiment until student gets a good buzz. Mouth piece should be centered if possible. Malformation of teeth and lip can make this impossible. Very young small students have a problem setting in the red of the bottom lip because the mouthpiece is too large for their small face. IMPORTANT: Make sure the mouthpiece is set correctly on the top lip (2/3rds of mouthpiece on top lip) then, as they grow move the bottom of the mouthpiece into the red of the bottom lip.

PROBLEM: Mouthpiece too low or **2/3rds** on bottom lip. (High register will be thin, out of tune with endurance problems. The low register will be very weak).

CORRECTION: Place bottom of mouthpiece in red on bottom lip and the other **2/3rds** on top lip where a good buzz is produced (High register fuller, better tuning, better endurance and better low register).

VI. MOUTHPIECE

- A. Medium Cup: Holton Farkas MC, **Conn 2**, Bach **7C**, Ring H-2
- B. Neil Sanders 16m or **17m**, **Conn 1** and very wide rims will sometimes help students with braces.
- C. Students who study privately with professional teachers may play larger mouthpieces when taught correctly.

PROBLEM: THIN RIMS and DEEP CUPS have high range and endurance problems. Farkas MDC is a (medium DEEP cup) and comes with the Holton Horns. I personally feel this mouthpiece is too large for beginner students.

CORRECTION: Medium rim and cup

PROBLEM: BRACES

CORRECTION: Larger Rim or try to place mouthpiece around points on braces by trying different size mouthpieces or different positions on the braces.

VII. HOLDING THE HORN-Because many beginners are so small, this can cause many playing problems.

- A. Place the bell of the horn across the right leg, not lined up with the leg, to keep it from sliding off. Move the right foot either forward or backward to change height of the leg. You can twist your legs or lower body to the right (especially girls wearing dresses) so you can play correctly.
- B. The weight of the horn should be on the right leg, with the horn leaned slightly to the left. For better technique and endurance the horn should not be supported by the left arm.
- C. Always place the music stand between student and conductor to avoid wrong mouthpiece placement. Each horn student should have a stand. They should - NEVER share a stand if possible.
- D. The horn should always move towards you NOT YOU TOWARDS THE HORN when preparing to play.
- E. To eliminate bell placement problems, many teachers have the students hold the horn off the leg. Single horns are not a problem for smaller students, but a double horn can get heavy fast for the beginning student.

PROBLEM: The bell is aimed towards the body (tone is very stuffy and muffled)

CORRECTION: Move the right leg more to the right or twist the lower body so the horn is beside the body not in front of it. You can remove bell from leg by holding horn off the leg.

PROBLEM:. Left arm is supporting most of the weight of the horn,
CORRECTION: The horn should lean to the left just a little so most of weight is on right leg.

VIII. HAND POSITIONS

LEFT HAND

- A. Fingers should be curved and the tips stay next to keys for best technique.
- B. Little finger may be removed from support ring to reduce pressure on the embouchure.
- C. Double Horn-Thumb key can be adjusted for small or large hands. Move thumb as fast as fingers for clean performance. Many notes are missed because of sloppy thumb technique.

RIGHT HAND

- A. Place thumb on top of right hand in the same plane as the straight fingers with no space between them. (NO SPACE BETWEEN THUMB BAND FINGERS)
- B. Insert hand into bell with the thumb and fingers against the side of the bell farthest from the body with the thumb being about the 2 o'clock position in the bell.
- C. Stand across the room and in front of your student. Have them play something to check the tone being produced. Experiment by closing and opening the right hand in the bell. When the best tone is produced, place a piece of tape where the knuckle of the thumb makes contact with the bell to mark hand position for that student. Because there are many different hand sizes, each student should be checked.
- D. For very small students who can't hold the horn with the right hand in the bell, I allow them to just grab on to bell in a comfortable manner until they become large enough to place the hand correctly.
- E. By holding the horn off the right leg, the right hand can be positioned correctly if the horn isn't too heavy for the student.
- F. CLOSE the hand to LOWER the pitch and OPEN the hand to RAISE the pitch.
- G. RIGHT HAND IS USUALLY COVERED TOO MUCH, OR TOO FAR INTO THE BELL CAUSING A MUFFLED SOUND. SOME STUDENTS WILL HAVE NO HAND IN THE BELL CAUSING A VERY SHARP, BAD SOUND. IT'S BETTER TO HAVE LESS HAND IN THE BELL THAN TOO MUCH.

IX. TONGUING

- A. Teach student to tongue with AIR not tongue. The tongue only releases the air.
- B. Teach legato tonguing first by saying DOO.
- C. Use very small strokes (The strokes are up and down NOT BACK AND FORWARD)
- D. Where the tip of the tongue touches in the mouth is different for everyone. I teach students to tongue where they get the best tone, attack and are comfortable. We never tongue between the teeth.
- E. After legato tonguing is perfected, we start STACCATO tonguing by saying TOO. THE TONGUE STROKE IS THE SAME FOR STACCATO AS LEGATO ONLY THE

VOWEL IS DIFFERENT. To check tongue stroke, place your fingers between your chin and throat area. There should be very little movement in this area while tonguing legato or staccato. If there is a lot of **movemen** in this area, the student is over stroking the tongue or moving it up and down too far. **REMEMBER SHORT STROKES FOR FAST TECHNIQUE!!!**

- F. The jaw should never move when tonguing.
- G. Faster notes should be played with faster air, not more tongue.

X. HORN MAINTENANCE

- A. Replace mouthpiece when it has lost plating or scarred rim. These problems can cause lip irritation. Also, you need to check the stem for splitting or dents. This can cause poor fitting in leadpipe, air leaks, or air flow interruptions which affects the way the horn plays and tunes. The dents in the stem can be fixed with a round punch but be careful not to split the stem and ruin the mouthpiece.
- B. Valves should be aligned correctly. Remove valve cap and check to see if the notches line up. If they do not line up, replace the cork. **MISS ALIGNED VALVES DOES AFFECT THE HORN.**
- C. All valve slides should be pulled to play in tune. Different brands of horns tune differently, so check with tuner. I feel beginner students should learn to play in tune, so the main tuning and valve slides should be pulled for tuning.
- D. **MAIN TUNING SLIDE**-To find the main tuning slide on all horns, start at mouthpiece and follow the tubing until you reach the **first** slide. That's it. It should always be pulled to play in tune.
- E. **DOUBLE HORN TUNING-THE MAIN TUNING SLIDE IS THE FIRST SLIDE FOUND ON THE LEADPIPE FROM THE MOUTHPIECE. REMEMBER THE MAIN TUNING SLIDE TUNES THE ENTIRE HORN (Bb and F).** To find the F horn main tuning slide, it is usually to the right of the main tuning slide. The Bb valve slides must also be pulled for tuning and are always the shorter slides underneath the F sides. **CHECK THESE SLIDES PERIODICALLY TO BE SURE THEY ARE IN THE CORRECT POSITIONS. YOU'LL BE SURPRISED!!!**

XI. SUPPLEMENTAL METHOD BOOK

- A. Robert W. Getchell-Book One

XII. FOR THE COMPLETE STORY

- A. PHILIP FARKAS (THE ART OF FRENCH HORN PLAYING)
- B. ARNOLD JACOBS (THE LEGACY OF A MASTER)