

**TEXASBANDMASTERSASSOCIATION**

BEGINNER INSTRUCTION SERIES



**TROMBONE**

GREG ROSE  
CLINICIAN

49TH ANNUAL CLINIC  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

1996

## Foreword

The Texas Bandmasters Association for the second year continues to sponsor a series of clinics on beginning instrumental teaching methods, presented by some of Texas' premier music educators during the 1996 TBA Convention 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 with a companion handout. In this handout, you will find teaching methods, and classroom organizational skills which are used successfully in today's schools.

We acknowledge the efforts of the clinicians who prepared these booklets and, who also presented a clinic session. In addition we acknowledge Jim Hagood, TBA Immediate Past President, whose vision provided us with the many benefits we gain through this series of clinics. Jim Hagood's foresight, and diligent efforts in laying out the ground work for these series is very much appreciated.

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.

Bob Brandenberger, President, Texas Bandmasters Association

## GREG ROSE

Greg Rose is presently the band director at Pittsburg High School, where he has taught for four years. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from Stephen F. Austin State University in 1985, and taught in the Nacogdoches ISD for four years, one year as high school assistant and three years as middle school director. He also taught for three years at New Diana High School before moving to Pittsburg. His bands at New Diana and Pit&burg have all been UIL Sweepstakes winners. Phi Beta Mu selected him for the Outstanding Young Bandmaster Award in 1991. Greg is a member of TBA, TMEA, ATSSB, and TMAA, and is an active adjudicator and clinician throughout the state.

BEGINNING TROMBONE  
Greg Rose

INSTRUMENT SELECTION CHART

Some people are able to play certain instruments more easily than others because of the shape of their teeth, jaws, and lips. This general guide can help in the instrument selection process.

TEETH

1 -even

2-uneven

CHIN

3-large, round, or square

4-pointed or sharp

LIPS

5-full or large

6-medium

7-thin

RESULTS

1-3-5 TROMBONE, baritone, tuba

1-3-6 comet, baritone, TROMBONE

1-3-7 comet, horn, flute

1-4-5 clarinet, saxophone, flute

1-4-6 clarinet, flute

1-4-7 clarinet, horn, flute

2-3-5 clarinet, saxophone, bassoon

2-3-6 clarinet, saxophone, oboe

2-3-7 clarinet, saxophone, oboe

2-4-5 clarinet, saxophone, bassoon

2-4-6 clarinet, saxophone, oboe, bassoon

2-4-7 clarinet, saxophone, oboe

Physical Requirements

TROMBONE-Search for students with a broad, wide jaw and a healthy chest cavity. Tall, slender players with a long upper torso can be suitable, and be sure the beginning trombonist will be able to reach sixth position. There needs to be a considerable distance between the student's nose and top lip.

\*\*Trombone players need to be physical, aggressive, and ready for lots of action and accepting challenges.

Equipment and Supplies

New instruments are most desirable. If student is going to start on a used instrument, make sure the trombone has a slide lock, and that the outer and inner slides are almost frictionless. Check the bracing, and make sure that if the horn has a first position spring mechanism that it is quiet and efficient. The student needs to realize that the slide is his/her gateway to technical skill; if it is not lubricated and cared for carefully and constantly, the slide will be holding him/her back.

The First Few Lessons

The importance of getting a good start:

Within the first ten days of teaching, you will begin to set many long lasting standards. The children are eager, curious, and very impressionable. Set standards for the children to measure **themselves by** from these days forward.

1. Conduct

- a. Remain steady from the beginning
- b. On the first day have a seating chart set and assigned spots for instrument cases

2. Standards of Care for the Instrument
  - a. Assembly, disassembly, and cleaning of the instrument
  - b. Things not to do when cleaning and lubricating
3. Beating Time and Conducting
  - a. Do not give beginners beats and beats of preparation
  - b. Make them watch you from the outset
4. Set Standards for TONE QUALITY
  - \*\*a. Strive for constant tonal improvement. Stress this constantly, every day!!
5. Set Standards for Posture
  - a. Check this daily
  - b. Teach how to pat foot correctly**
6. Set Standards for Articulation
  - a. Staccato
  - b. Legato (THIS demands much attention on Trombone!)
  - c. Slurs (Lip and Natural on Trombone)
7. Set Standards for Breathing
  - a. Deep inhalation
  - b. Controlled, intense exhalation

#### Standards for First Weeks of Instruction

1. Set Standards for Hand Position-do this from the outset (trombone players will need reinforcement on holding the slide correctly and bringing the instrument into comfortable playing position)
2. Set Standards for Hearing or Listening
  - a. Students must first listen to your instructions
  - b. They need to learn to match pitch by listening, then singing or humming, and playing on the instrument
3. Set Standards of Thinking
  - a. Work to develop individual thoughts and musical independence
  - b. Develop the ability to think before, during, and after actual playing
4. Responding Standards
  - a. Teach and encourage your students to ask and answer questions in class about music and individual playing
5. Set Standards of Cooperation
6. Set Standards of Enjoyment and Enthusiasm

#### Classroom Management

1. Teaching
  - a. Use the period for work and have good order and discipline
  - b. Do not talk too much
  - c. Make corrections as quickly as possible
  - d. Call attention to good points as well as bad points, but do not praise mediocrity
  - e. Do not make students too fearful of making errors
  - f. Expect Progress Every Day!!

## SPECIFICS

### I. Assembling the Trombone

- a. Hold locked slide in l.h. resting bottom of slide on floor
- b. Take bell in r.h. and carefully fit into the slide (bell to left of lead pipe)
- c. Adjust angle-this depends on size of student and student's hands-generally leave from a thumb's width up to one inch of space
- d. Screw parts together snugly (but not too tight)
- e. Insert mouthpiece with a slight twist-do not force in
- f. SLIDE is fragile and must be taken care of!!

### 2. Holding the Trombone

- a. Player sits tall on edge of chair, feet on floor with weight slightly forward, not back from waist
- b. L.H. thumb around bell brace nearest mouthpiece, index finger rests on slideshank just behind the mouthpiece, lower finger fit between slide braces below mouthpiece (pinky can hold unlocked slide if student has large enough hands)
- c. Entire Weight of instrument handled by left hand and arm
- d. Right Hand grasps slide brace lightly between the thumb and first two fingers. Right hand and arm must be relaxed and loose. If hand, wrist, or elbow is tense, flexibility will be limited.

### 3. Embouchure

- a. Do not worry about playing the instrument until an understanding of embouchure has been established and students have been exposed to buzzing on mouthpieces and matching pitch.
- b. Center mouthpiece on lips (mpc can be on or slightly above the vertical center of the mouth)
- c. Flat, pointed chin
- d. Firm comers, but not too tight - pull lips against teeth and comers firmly
- e. Teeth slightly apart - various ways to remind students of this. Most students play with teeth too closed or throat too constricted. The concept of open throat and teeth slightly apart must eventually be mastered to overcome pinched, closed, nasal tone qualities.
- f. Free buzzing - not strained, with strong air support and proper breathing
- g. Work on matching pitch in a comfortable register with intense air . Then introduce sirens to expand range gradually

### 4. Tone Production

Beginning trombone players are notorious for their lack of characteristic tone quality. Do not believe that because a student begins with a small, thin nasal tone that they must play that way forever. Trombone is an instrument that students can make tremendous strides on in terms of tone quality as the students Grow and Mature if they and their teachers continue to work for improvement. Continue to work on breathing, air support, and try to eliminate any problems in basic embouchure during the first year. Sometimes it can take several years before a student is able to really play with a quality sound, and there is no substitute for hard work and good habits on the part of the student and the teacher.

### 5. Articulation

Legato tonguing on trombone can be difficult for some students to learn. Try to establish the concept of tonguing involving light and delicate releases of air. The tongue action is soft (dah or doo) and the slide must move quickly. Alternate positions can also be useful in certain passages. Trombone players must learn to play a singing legato and not chop and bump notes when playing in this style. Just like tone quality, legato playing can improve surprisingly over an extended period of time. Staccato tonguing is not as

difficult of a concept for most trombonists to learn. Remember to use short tongue strokes for fast technique, and that faster notes should be played with faster air, not with more tongue.

## 6. Intonation

The trombone has the greatest potential for good intonation of any of the wind instruments, but this potential often goes unused. The cause for failure is the failure to listen. Because the trombone slide can be moved to the exact pitch, the player should learn to play each tone as well-centered as possible and adjust pitch by moving the slide. Other brass players adjust pitch by embouchure changes, but this is incorrect for the trombonist. Students will want to grab the bell at times when they are in the vicinity of third and fourth position. This hinders technique and intonation-the slide must be held so that it can move freely and instantly to adjust and match pitch. Students should be shown what it means to match pitch and play a note together with good intonation. For example, pick two players who are off to a good start and have the first player play a 3rd position Ab in the middle register. Have the second player start on 4th position G and slowly move to Ab while the first player sustains his Ab with a steady, full tone. Have the other students listen and raise their hands when they hear the two players matching pitch and playing exactly in tune with each other. It also can be a good idea to incorporate into the warm-up time an F chromatic warm-up so that you can check individual positioning habits daily-young players often do not listen as carefully as they should and can develop habits of playing certain positions consistently out of tune. This area will require constant supervision just like tone quality and legato playing-but stay after it!

## 7. Daily Warm-up

- a. Rote exercises can be used to develop listening skills and understanding of the instrument
- b. Lip slurs in comfortable registers should be introduced to develop flexibility and embouchure control
- c. F chromatic warm-up to work on long tones and intonation (check slide positions)
- d. Major scales and chromatic scales in appropriate ranges can be introduced

## 8. Problemsolving

Teachers are problemsolving every day-but don't expect students to master all of the facets of playing at one time-do push them and set high standards, but be aware that some areas of musicianship simply need time and nurturing to develop. Try to get opportunities to hear beginners on trombone (or any other instrument) in programs that are well established, and this will also provide you with new ideas and information.

If a player has an obvious problem with tone or tonguing early on, try to give them specific instructions on how to fix it. Don't hesitate to consult other teachers for ideas or techniques to help your students.

## 9. Other Thoughts

Teach students from the start to play full and supported and to use lots of air. Find good recordings of the instrument or players to model for the students. Keep your students actively involved in the process of improving themselves-they always can get better! Reinforce ideas that you have already presented.

## References:

Methods and Materials Notebook for Mel Montgomery

The Teaching of Instrumental Music-Richard J. Colwell

A Reference Book for School Band Directors-American School Band Directors Association