

TEXAS BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION

BEGINNER INSTRUCTION SERIES

"... STUFF THAT WORKS!"

TRUMPET

BOBBY BROWN
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

BOBBY BROWN

Bobby Brown is a graduate of Odessa High School in the Ector County Independent School District. While in Bill Dean's band, he studied trumpet with Dick Clardy and was an All-State performer. He went on to major in music at West Texas State University where he was a trumpet student of David Ritter. During his teaching career his bands have consistently received superior ratings. In 1992 his band performed at the Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. That same year they were named TMEA Class CCC Honor Band and performed at the annual convention. In 1994 the band received the prestigious Sudler Cup presented by The National Sousa Foundation. His brass teaching has been influenced by such outstanding teachers as J.R. McEntyre, Dick Clardy, Harry Haines, and especially Jack Nall with whom he worked in Abilene, Texas.

BEGINNING TRUMPET

Bobby Brown

The first step in setting up beginning trumpet players is explaining and demonstrating what I refer to as the "Brass Player's Face." Philip Farcas describes this in detail in his **ART OF BRASS PLAYING**. Of the elements he lists, two are the most significant in my teaching. The first is the "U" shaped valley in the chin from corner to corner. This insures the correct chin position or "flat" chin. The second is the apostrophes that appear above the corners of the lips. If my students can successfully achieve these two steps I believe they have the basis of a solid embouchure.

When class begins each day I ask them to show me their "Brass Player's Face." They then hold up their mirrors (they are each required to have one) and "flex" their face for 30 to 60 seconds. This isometric exercise helps the muscles begin to develop the high degree of muscle memory necessary to be a successful brass player. When the "flex time" is up we stretch the muscles out.

After the students have demonstrated mastery of the "brass face", we add blowing air between the lips. It is vital to make certain that nothing moves. It is also important the students keep their lips far enough apart that they do not vibrate. At this stage I do not teach the lip buzz, only the air stream. Again, all preceding steps are done while the students watch their mirrors.

At this point, it is time to begin mouthpiece work. I teach mouthpiece position in three steps: (*I start my beginning trumpets on BACH 5B*).

STEP ONE-Students place the shank of the mouthpiece between the teeth. This helps reinforce the idea that the teeth should be kept apart.

STEP TWO-Students pull the mouthpiece out from between their teeth (being careful not to close their teeth) and turn it around so that the cup is now facing their embouchure.

STEP THREE-Students place the mouthpiece on the embouchure. I teach a ratio of 1/2 upper and 1/2 lower lip.

Once the students can successfully execute these steps, we begin to blow air through the mouthpiece **without any buzz**. In my teaching I have found that this is a very important step for teaching a beautiful tone to young trumpet players. The challenge we all must face is how to avoid the classic "pinched" or immature trumpet sound. I have heard many ideas about what causes this undesirable tone. Some believe it is due to a constricted throat while others point to the teeth being too close together. Addressing only these symptoms never produced the results I was looking for. I have come to believe that while all these factors do come into play, the single most important factor is aperture size. The 'pinched' sound is caused by the aperture being too small for a particular note. The problem then is how to teach young players to produce an aperture that will produce an open, free, and resonant tone. The first step in this

process for me begins with the students blowing **air only** through the mouthpiece. It is important that the students blow a fast, vigorous air stream at this point. The lips will naturally want to come together and buzz and many will accidentally produce vibration. I explain to my students that the reason their lips are not vibrating yet is that we are using an aperture that is too big. The whole is so big that the lips are not touching. This will help later on when we start talking about “opening up” their tone.

Now the students are ready to begin blowing air only, but in a rhythmic pattern (with a foot tap). I use a Suzuki-like approach with my students. We use an “I play...then you...” pattern where I play a whole note with air only and they respond. Each time we play we go through the earlier steps (ONE, **TWO** AND THREE) to carefully and deliberately place the mouthpiece each time we play.

Once the students get comfortable with the concept of blowing the air stream without any buzz I teach what I refer to as an airy buzz. This is done by starting a note that is only air at the beginning and, as the lips come together, the lips begin to buzz only slightly. This buzz sounds airy if done correctly because the aperture is too large. This airy buzz helps lay the foundation for a mature, open sound from the beginning.

At this point I initiate a 5 step series that we use as our warm-up for the first several weeks of the year.

(These steps are used after using the previous 3 steps to set up the mouthpiece. The correct mouthpiece position must continually be reinforced).

STEP ONE-Blow air only

STEP TWO-Airy buzz (Mostly air due to the oversized aperture)

STEP THREE-Regular buzz

STEP FOUR-Airy Buzz

STEP FIVE-Air only

My goal with these exercises is to give the students a cognitive way to respond when I ask them to “open up”.

All of my exercises are done based on a Suzuki-like approach. I play four beats and the students respond. (At Hodges Bend we use the Breath Impulse technique but it is not vital to follow this approach).

When the majority of the students can play a concert F (second line G) I teach them to play a “siren”. This is simply a high buzz to a low buzz (vocalists refer to it as a sigh). I demonstrate on my lips (without the mouthpiece) to show that in the high buzz the lips are contracted and slightly tucked under. The high buzz vibrates farther forward on the lip (toward the edge of the lip). To create this buzz less of the lip vibrates

but at a faster rate, thus producing the higher pitch. As I buzz from high to low the students see that the lips roll out as the buzz moves farther into the “red” of the lip. Again I always play first and then the students respond.

As the students begin to develop the ability to create a pitch range of about a perfect fifth or greater we learn the “middle to low slur”. This is a slur from concert F down to concert Bb. I try to emphasize that the lips do slide from high to low just like the siren. To make a smooth slur you must slide **quickly** and **accurately**. Once the students can perform this slur with the open horn, we proceed down the valve series. This begins our first slur series. We play from the open down through the seven valve combinations (0,2,1,1-2, 2-3, 1-3, 1-2-3). As the students continue to develop the flexibility to comfortably complete this slur, I teach them what we call our “high-middle-low” slur. I spend several days prior to this working to the upper concert B-flat. We continue to do our siren each day in our warm-up. Over the days and weeks that they continue to do this exercise they will develop the range to comfortably play the high-middle-low slur. All new slurs are taught on the mouthpiece first and significant mouthpiece drill is done each day throughout the year.

Throughout their beginning year, I continue to add slurs to push them into their upper register. By February or March I try to be working on high concert F. I do this through the Suzuki-like “I play...then you...” approach. Very few beginning band books will push their upper register this quickly.

Other Ideas

Always insist your young players use their kick slide on all 1-3 and 1-2-3-combinations! Teach the fingering with the slide from the first time you teach it and be vigilante in your insistence that they always use it.

Push the students to play a full, supported tone. I have my students play extremely strong almost the whole year. I believe many teachers back their students off before they have the chance to learn to fully support their tone. Don't be afraid to have them really push!

Remember, learning to produce a beautiful tone is a process, not an event. Virtually all trumpet players can learn to play a characteristic tone by their second year. Be insistent that all players play with a beautiful tone. Use daily exercises in your warm-ups to reinforce your tone concepts.