

TEXAS BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION

BEGINNER INSTRUCTION SERIES



TUBA

JORGE AVENDANO
CLINICIAN

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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

JORGE AVENDANO

Jorge A. Avendano graduated from UTEP with a Bachelors and has studied with Dr. Ron Hufstader, Mike Sanders of the St. Louis Symphony and Sam Pilafian. He is principal tubist with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra and is the band director at Dr. **Hornedo** Middle School. Avendano has a private teaching studio and consistently has private students in the all-state bands.

TIPS ON STARTING BEGINNING TUBA

by
JORGE AVENDANO

RECRUITING

It is important that we choose our tuba players as carefully as we choose our French horn and oboe players. Frustration can be avoided if we select students with the better grades to play French horn and oboe. The same is true for selecting students to play the tuba. We must put “good kids” on every instrument. There are two physical characteristics to look for in the future tuba player: Fuller lips and bigger size. Even though, there have been outstanding tuba players who have been smaller, generally the bigger (not necessarily obese) student is more successful in producing louder volumes and longer phrases. Size is definitely an advantage when it comes to playing the tuba.

SWITCHING FROM OTHER INSTRUMENTS TO TUBA

Starting students on tuba can at times be discouraging to younger students, especially when we have larger classes and the clarinet and saxophone players are getting quicker results. The switching of students from other instruments to tuba is possibly the best way to increase your number of tuba players. You can switch a student from almost any instrument, but a brass instrument is recommended.

HOW TO SIT

1. Have the student sit tall, leaving a space for the bow of the tuba. This is usually the corner of the chair.
2. Hand the student the tuba by setting it on the chair. Tubas that are smaller and lighter may rest on the lap of the player, evenly situated on both legs.
3. If the mouthpiece does not come naturally to the lips, adjust the height of the student or the instrument. In order to adjust the height of the student have the student sit on a book. To adjust the height of the instrument, the student may need to either rest the tuba on some sort of commercial cradle, a pillow a block of wood.

The player's head or neck should never strain in an unnatural position to reach the mouthpiece.

HAND POSITION

The right hand should be in a flat “C” position. The left hand will be used later to move slides if the instrument lends itself to that.

BREATHING

This is probably the most important part in brass playing. Breathing exercises should be introduced slowly, and not past what is comfortable for the younger students.

1. Students should be told to “breathe to the seat of the chair”. This is just a mental picture.
2. The air should always be constant, steady, and even. It should always be in and out at the same speed.
3. As the student makes progress, the student should use a breathing tube to promote the correct breathing sensation, similar to yawning. A breathing tube can be made by cutting non-toxic 1 inch vinyl tubing into 6 inch lengths. For inhaling always use a smooth, even, warm moist breath.
4. Avoid tension, tightness, noisy breath and any other inefficient use of air. The syllable “ho” should be used for inhaling.

When exhaling the player should not expend more than three-quarters of his lung capacity, he should not squeeze to get the remainder of air out. Not only does this make it more difficult to take the next breath, but the tension in the body will cause a thin, tight tone.

Because the tuba is so large and it is played in the lower register, the player must move a greater amount of air under less pressure. Therefore, the young player cannot be expected to make the long phrases that are possible on trumpet.

EMBOUCHURE

1. The general placement of the mouthpiece for a tuba player is 50% bottom lip and 50% top lip, or where the rim of the mouthpiece meets the nose.
2. Have the student make a slight pucker as if pronouncing the syllable “poo”. The corners of the mouth should be firm, not tight.

EMBOUCHURE • cont.

3. Without the instrument or mouthpiece, have the student set the embouchure by gently pressing the inside of the lips against the teeth and gums. Not only will this help to set the embouchure, but it will help in preventing the puffing of the cheeks.
4. There should only be enough pressure on the lips to form a seal.

MOUTHPIECE

There are two basic tuba mouthpieces: the thick rim bowled-shaped Bach mouthpieces and the thin, narrow rim Hellebergs. The Bach mouthpieces are the standard mouthpieces for **BBb** tubas. The thick rim enhances endurance, and is an excellent choice for younger players. The Helleberg will enhance flexibility, but may require a stronger player. The recommended mouthpieces for beginners are the thick rim **Bachs**.

TONE PRODUCTION

1. Set the embouchure correctly by keeping the corners of the mouth firm.
2. Form a slight pucker, as if you were about to kiss someone.
3. Have the student blow into the instrument without having the student try to produce a buzz. The resistance of the instrument will produce the buzz and therefore the actual tone.

The buzzing of the mouthpiece is not strongly discouraged, but the teacher must be very careful that the student does not close his teeth in the attempt to produce a buzz. The closing of the teeth will produce what we call biting and produce a pinched, uncharacteristic tone. Because the tuba mouthpiece is so large, there is little resistance and it is not as easy to produce a buzz as on a trumpet or French horn.

ARTICULATION

Proper articulation is a combination of correct embouchure, and the tongue. As we articulate the tongue does not move back and forth, but up and down.

1. As the student starts a note he should pronounce the syllable “toh”.

ARTICULATION - cont.

2. The student should let the tongue fall where it does naturally when pronouncing the syllable “toh”. The student should not force it to do anything that is not natural. As the student develops a wider range, he will notice that the tongue moves up as he goes higher and comes down as he reaches the lower register.

DEVELOPING A ROUTINE

About mid-year, start developing a routine that includes long tones, articulation exercises, slurs and developing of range through scales.

By mid-year, most beginning books have taken the students through at least a fifth of the Bb concert scale. At this point the students should be instructed to follow this routine:

1. **Complete the Bb concert scale and introduce F Remington and Bb Remington.** These exercises in long tones are not only good for developing tone but will aid in the learning of fingerings and the chromatic scale. The students should be instructed to play all notes with a beautiful tone by matching all notes to the open notes. This exercise should be played at a good mezzo forte.
2. **The Remington articulation exercises adapted for the younger player.** This exercise should be played with normal articulation and then legato. Instruct the students to pronounce the syllable “toh” for regular articulation and “doe” for legato. Furthermore, instruct them to let the tongue strike where it does naturally, never forcing anything unnatural. Because we are all different physically, our tongues will strike at different places at different registers.
3. **Develop flexibility through lip slurs.** We begin the slur starting on second line Bb and down an octave to Bb2 “high-middle-low”. Once the student can do this on the open horn we go down the seven valve combinations (0,2,1,12,23,13,123). As the student progresses, I introduce the “high-middle-high” lip slurs and go down the seven valve combinations. Since the student should have developed a characteristic sound by this point, buzzing the mouthpiece is not as risky and should be done to aid in the development of the lip slurs. Through these two exercises, I emphasize the direction of the air stream, toward the bottom of the mouthpiece for high and straight through the mouthpiece for low.

DEVELOPING A ROUTINE - cont.

4. **Playing of scales.** This is probably the best way to develop range, both high and low. The scales can be played in any time value, but the students should be encouraged to play them in at least half-notes. I recommend that the scales be played in the following order: “**Bb,C, Eb, F**”. Once we get to “**F**”, the student may be asked to play “**F**” two octaves.

Finally, throughout the first year, you should always be asking students “how does it sound, look and feel?”. Remember, that producing a characteristic tone is a process. We must use daily exercises in our warm-up to develop beautiful sounds.

Remington Warm Up



