

TUBA CLINIC NOTES

Prepared by

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I. BASIC POSTURE CONCEPTS

A. Performer posture:

1. Sit as you stand.
2. Sit erectly but relaxed with the feet flat on the floor.
3. It is recommended that baritone and euphonium players occasionally practice standing.

B. Position of instrument: Adjust the instrument to the performer, not the performer to the instrument. The fingers of the right hand should arch slightly with the fingertips resting on the appropriate valve stem caps.

Sousaphones:

- a. Sousaphones are balanced and supported primarily by the left shoulder.
- b. If sitting, sit as you stand.
- c. If a sousaphone stand or special chair is used, make adjustments to the holding device and gooseneck/bits to achieve ideal posture/position.

Tubas:

- a. Tubas are balanced and supported on the lap or chair (or pad on chair) depending on the size of the performer and proportions of the tuba.
- b. Sit as you stand, and position of the bottom bow accordingly.
- c. If a tuba stand is used, adjust the stand to achieve ideal posture/position.
- d. The left hand should be placed on left side of tuba, not over the top bow.

II. BASIC WIND CONCEPTS

- A. *Make the breath part of the music.*
- B. Maintain proper posture and playing position for optimum efficiency and ease of breathing.
- C. Be relaxed and natural -- avoid tension.
- D. Know the sound and feel of a proper breath.
"A breath that sounds good is good."
- E. Breathe quietly and fully: Speed in breathing develops through efficiency.
- F. Project the air **through** the instrument.
- G. Plan your breathing, and always mark your music accordingly.
- H. *Make the breath part of the music.*

III. BASIC EMOUCHURE CONCEPTS

- A. There is no perfect embouchure, but an "ideal" embouchure may have many of the following characteristics:
 - 1. The teeth are separated.
 - 2. The corners of the mouth are firm and do not "smile."
 - 3. The jaw is slightly extended, and it is almost motionless during articulation.
 - 4. The chin is firm and not "bunched-up."
 - 5. The lips are lightly touching and not pinched.
 - 6. The lips are shaped as if saying "emm" with some puckering for lower tones, especially on the tuba and sousaphone.
- B. Place the mouthpiece on the lips so that it is centered both vertically and horizontally with the embouchure. This placement is ideal and will normally vary somewhat depending on the dental-facial characteristics of the individual.
- C. Some mouthpiece pressure is necessary, but such pressure should be minimal.
- D. Wet, **moist** or dry embouchure, personal preference?

IV. BASIC TONE CONCEPTS

- A. Fine sound and tone quality must first be conceived by the performer.
Listen, remember, imagine and create!
- B. Excellent tone quality is dependent upon correct posture, proper embouchure, and efficient breath usage.
- C. Vibrato should be used appropriately to enhance your tone without distracting from the music. Develop the ability to turn vibrato on or off as you desire.
- D. Use long-tone studies in your warm-up and practice to help develop your tone.

V. BASIC ARTICULATION CONCEPTS

- A. *Tonguing* :
 - 1. Know how a tongued note should sound.
 - 2. Diction can be a helpful "guide" to correct tongue placement.
 - 3. The tongue does not normally end notes.
 - 4. Accurate tonguing is dependent upon precise pitch.
 - 5. The tongue should be relaxed, not tense, in action or at rest.
 - 6. The action of the tongue should be brisk and quick.
 - 7. The motion of the tongue is more "up-and-down" than "back-and-forth."
 - 8. Avoid "chewing" attacks.
 - 9. Use the tip of the tongue and avoid tonguing between the lips.
 - 10. The valves must be coordinated with the tongue and the *breath*.
 - 11. Master single-tonguing before learning multiple-tonguing.
- B. *Slurring*:
 - 1. Know precisely how a good slur sounds.
 - 2. Use no tongue after the first note of any slur or slur group.
 - 3. Use airflow to improve slurs, and avoid unnecessary embouchure manipulation.
Blow the air evenly through slurs!
 - 4. Accurate slurring depends on precise rhythm and good valve manipulation.

VI. BASIC TUNING CONCEPTS

- A. Listen all of the time!
- B. Know your instrument.
- C. Use the breath properly and avoid tension in breathing.
- D. Use a mouthpiece appropriate to your instrument and level of ability.
- E. Be aware of temperature variances.
 - When it is warm, lengthen the tuning slide.*
 - When it is cool, shorten the tuning slide*
- F. Use an electronic tuner to confirm what you hear.
- G. If you have a fourth valve, use it consistently and appropriately:
 - Use FOUR, not one and three.*
 - Use TWO and FOUR, not one, two and three.*

VII. BASIC PRACTICING AND PERFORMING CONCEPTS

There are five considerations for practice that produces *real* results and noticeable improvement:

- A. Imagination
- B. Goals
- C. Balance
- D. Regularity
- E. Concentration

RECOMMENDED READING:

Arnold Jacobs, Song and Wind, Frederiksen/Taylor, WindSong Press Limited

Arnold Jacobs, The Legacy of a Master, M. Dee Stewart, Instrumentalist Publishing Company

The Tuba Source Book, Morris/Goldstein, Indiana University Press

Practical Hints on Playing the Tuba, Donald C. Little, Belwin Mills Publishing Corporation

Practical Hints on Playing the Baritone Horn/Euphonium, Brian Bowman, Belwin Mills Publishing Corporation

ITEA Journal, the official publication of the International Tuba Euphonium Association

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