

## **Optimizing the Big Heavies in Your Ensemble, *or*, Nobody Has Ever Won A Heisman Trophy Without a Great Offensive Line**

Professor David Zerkel will discuss how to get the most of your low brass section by having them recognize, accept and embrace their role in the overall mission of the ensemble. Strategies discussed will include time, foundation, resonance and, last but not least, musicianship.

1. What is the role of the Tuba (and to a lesser degree, the euphonium) in an ensemble?
  - a. Foundation
  - b. Time
  - c. Not especially sexy, but it is the work that must be done in any ensemble, on any team to have the whole work well. We are the foundation digger to the architect, the offensive line to a quarterback,
2. Lack of evolution in band and orchestra parts. As your kiddos get more advanced, your clarinet, flute, trumpet, sax parts are all going to start getting more challenging, so your players will have material in their parts that will help their technique evolve. Not so much for the low brass crowd. (Cycle through slides: Tuba part in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, tuba part in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, tuba part in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, tuba part in Wagner Opera.) More on this later.
3. So, let's get our low brass players all on the same page that the work that they do is vitally important to the overall mission of the ensemble. The greatest bands and orchestras will sit on a fat cushion of sound and will be driven by a beat that is informed by motion, well articulated and on time.

### **Time**

1. Tootsie Roll Factory analogy. The blade **MUST** remain constant. Pulse is not an accessory that tells us only how fast the piece goes but is a living breathing part of the music. If we have an irregular pulse as human beings, we scoot to the doctor, pronto.
  - a. Every piece of music has a progress bar, like in iTunes
2. Common perception is that tuba players are behind.
  - a. Back of the band
  - b. Bell pointed at the ceiling
  - c. Perhaps (only perhaps), a perception that because their parts are not as challenging that they may not be as dialed in as the rest of the band.
  - d. The real issue is that the tuba and euphonium speak with organically sloppy diction. The sound is round, dark, low... not qualities that lend themselves to great clarity.
  - e. To combat this, have students work on playing their very best sound at the beginning of the note. ToH, not fwaaAH. Just the idea of having them thinking about this will likely make them more conscientious and attentive in rehearsals. I always tell my students

that when I have an easy part, I do everything that I can do to make it “Hard” (Demonstrate Jacobs boing,)

- f. Articulations must be amplified, but within the boundaries of common sense. Articulations must happen with the tongue and not the air.
- g. Empower your players by letting them know that they have an awesome responsibility to optimize the rhythmic effectiveness in your ensemble. No running back ever won the Heisman Trophy without a GREAT offensive line. Would the offensive tackle prefer to be the guy carrying the ball and getting his name called for something besides holding? Probably. But the best know that they have a job to do: to make it possible for the skill players to perform to their potential.

## Resonance and Foundation

1. The goal of any wind player is to create a resonant sound. While we all know what resonance is, it is a term that most kids have a hard time defining in simple English. (It’s, like, when the sound, like, bounces off the walls and there’s, like, an echo.)
  - a. Ask audience members to provide a definition.
  - b. Sound is vibration. Resonance is simply an abundance of vibration. This is true for an orchestral brass player, or for the sub woofer in the trunk of that guy at the red light. An abundance of vibration creates a sound that can be felt. How do we create this on a low brass instrument?
    - i. An abundance of vibration can only be achieved by an abundance of energy (air)
    - ii. Spend air in quarts and gallons, not in tablespoons and cups.
    - iii. Slow Fat Air, blown a long distance.
      1. The temptation for students is to look at these big instruments and think that you have to blow hard to play them. Nothing could be further from the truth. The tuba is the brass instrument that requires the greatest amount of air volume, played under the least amount of pressure.
        - a. You tend to have two personality types as far as blowing goes: The Bull and the Mouse.
        - b. I tend to think of airstream in terms of diameter. (Go through images)
      2. Tuba uncoiled is about 15 feet long. Distance from lungs to mouthpiece about a foot and a half. Aim air for a spot that is two feet beyond the bell. Therefore, when the wind is whooshing past one’s lips , it has

only gone about 12% of the distance it needs to go. (demonstrate blowing to lips, bottom of mouthpiece, etc.)

iv. Why is this important?

1. Most directors have some sort of image of a pyramid when it comes to the sound that they would like to achieve with their ensemble. If the foundation is firm and full, the likelihood of the rest of the band succeeding is greater. If thin and unreliable, not so much. If the pyramid is inverted, the band will not have a pleasant sound. How many flutes and trumpets versus how many tubas and euphoniums? Can be an uphill battle!
2. I think that there are two great compliments that any low brass player can receive. I'll save the other one for later. Here is the first: "Your sound is huge!" This is always a compliment. The non-compliment version? "You play really loud!" Depending on the instrument that the person is holding, they just may very well hate your guts. (demonstrate loud v. big)

2. Breath Control

- a. There are many many theories about breathing and blowing. Some involve the abdomen, some don't. Some allow for motion in the upper body, others don't. Some espouse the idea of diaphragm support while exhaling, which is a whole other topic for another day. I have whittled my philosophy on breath support down to four words: Blow until you stop.
- b. Default exhale is the ideal.
  - i. Too many players try to control the sound with their lungs. My very own lungs are stupid. They have no ability to think or act or interpret. My brain, on the other hand is slightly less stupid. It is capable of forming and interpreting thoughts, can react to input and makes all of the meaningful decisions I make on a daily basis. Literally, tens of them. So, I give my lungs only one job to concentrate on: Blow until you stop. Every other communicative aspect of my playing is then handled by my brain.
  - ii. Demonstrate 8 count exercise. Concentrate on evenness of timbre, pitch and direction. This would be a useful exercise for the entire band.
  - iii. Once production is simplified and reflexive, it becomes much easier to make great music with your best sound. (Tell Dougie story about best sound)

## Why aren't my players getting any better?

1.Challenges- If the parts aren't getting harder, how will my players get better? How many of your states use online materials for district band and all-state band auditions? Relate story of growing up and ordering music.

- a. Why is it important for players to play things other than what's in the folder?
  - i. Your poor tuba player may graduate never knowing what it is like to play a melody
  - ii. Looking at the next page in an etude book encourages curiosity.
  - iii. Further reading will enhance the ability to sight-read. If one stays only with band or orchestra parts, they may never encounter material that is rhythmically or melodically challenging. Sight-reading will be a part of playing for the rest of their days... it would be good to have material to build these skills.
  - iv. A diverse set of materials will help to round your musicians in a way that the single sheet of XMEA audition material will not. One can only understand music if they have the opportunity to explore melodic playing. Nobody signed up for any instrument because they hoped to play really cool exercises one day!
  - v. In many ways, I think that having good materials available is every bit as beneficial as private study.

## 2. What are some good materials for developing players

Young Euphonium Players (grades 7-9)

- Brad Edwards- Simply Singing for Winds (medium bass clef)

Advancing Euphonium Players (grades 9-12)

- Brad Edwards- Lip Slur Melodies
- Rochut- Melodious Etudes for Trombone, v. 1
- Voxman- Selected Studies for Baritone

Young Tuba Players (grades 7-9)

- Brad Edwards- Simply Singing for Winds (low bass clef)
- Getchell- Second Book of Practical Studies

Advancing Tuba Players (grades 9-12)

- Bordogni- Vocalises for Tuba
- Blazhevich- 70 Etudes for Tuba, v. 1
- Kopprasch- 60 Selected Studies for Tuba

Some good manageable solo repertoire for high school students

Euphonium

Capuzzi- Andante and Rondo

Guilmant- Morceau Symphonique

Curnow- Rhapsody for Euphonium

Marcello- Sonata in F Major

Barat- Andante and Allegro

Sparke- Song for Ina

Vaughan Williams- Six Studies in English Folksong

Tuba

Haddad- Suite for Tuba

Capuzzi- Andante and rondo

Hartley- Suite for Unaccompanied Tuba

Marcello- Sonatas in C Major and F Major

Barat- Introduction and Dance

Vaughan Williams- Six Studies in English Folksong

Bencriscutto- Concertino

3. Help your euphonium players to be more versatile!
  - a. Get them reading in both clefs. Stuff their folders with both Treble and Bass clef parts. During moments of clarinet ennui, they can be comparing parts to see how it works.
  - b. If your kids memorize their marching music, after you are well into the season, give them the parts for their non-home clef. They know the notes... looking at it from this context will likely be less daunting.
  
4. Expose your students to great music and great playing.
  - a. This doesn't need to happen in class. If you put the following document on your band's webpage, your kids will have a jumping off point for Spotify and YouTube. I always tell my gang that if they want to be great musicians, don't listen to tuba and euphonium CDs, but instead listen to great musicians. Our goal is not to create good tuba and euphonium players, it is to create good musicians!

# Curiosity List

## Some Great Classical Pianists

Martha Argerich  
Glenn Gould  
Alfred Brendel  
Leon Fleischer  
Rosalyn Tureck  
Vladimir Horowitz  
Evgeny Kissin  
Immanuel Ax  
Alicia deLaroccha  
Arthur Schnabel

## Some Great Jazz Pianists

Art Tatum  
Thelonious Monk  
Oscar Peterson  
Bill Evans  
Marian McPartland  
Ahmad Jamal  
McCoy Turner  
Keith Jarrett  
Dave Brubeck  
Herbie Hancock

## Some Great Violinists

Joshua Bell  
Gidon Kremer  
Yehudi Menuin  
Janine Jansen  
Itzhak Perlman  
Gil Shaham  
Pinchas Zuckerman  
Jascha Heifetz  
James Ehnes  
Anne-Sophie Mutter

## Some Great Cellists

Yo Yo Ma  
Mstislav Rostropovich  
Pablo Casals  
Janos Starker  
Jacqueline du Pre  
Mischa Maisky  
Pierre Fournier  
Lynn Harrell  
Leonard Rose

Heinrich Shiff

## Some Great Double Bass Players

Edgar Meyer  
Eugene Levinson  
Gary Karr  
Oscar Zimmerman  
Teppo Hauta-Aho

## Some Great Guitarists (Classical)

Andres Segovia  
John Williams  
Christopher Parkening  
Pepe Romero  
Julian Bream  
David Russell  
Craig Ogden

## Some Great Guitarists (Jazz)

Wes Montgomery  
Joe Pass  
Pat Metheny  
Bill Frisell  
Kenny Burrell  
Grant Green  
Jim Hall  
George Benson

## Some Great Flutists

Emmanuel Pahud  
Jean Pierre Rampal  
Jeanne Baxtresser  
James Galway  
Marcel Moyse  
Ransom Wilson  
Carol Wincenc  
William Bennett  
Jeffery Khaner  
Julius Baker

## Some Great Oboists

Heinz Holliger  
Albrecht Mayer  
Alex Klein

Some Great Clarinetists

Sabine Myers  
Julian Bliss  
Martin Frost  
Richard Stoltzman  
Karl Leister  
Harold Wright

Some Great Saxophonists (Classical)

Tim McAllister  
Joseph Luloff  
Eugene Rousseau  
Donald Sinta  
Frederick Hemke  
Kenneth Tse  
Otis Murphy

Some Great Saxophonists (Jazz)

Charlie Parker  
John Coltrane  
Coleman Hawkins  
Lester Young  
Stan Getz  
Sonny Rollins  
Cannonball Adderly  
Phil Woods  
Wayne Shorter

Some Great Trumpet Players (Classical)

Maurice Andre  
Wynton Marsalis  
Phil Smith  
Adolph Herseth  
Gerard Schwarz  
Hakan Hardenberger  
Alison Balsom  
Ryan Anthony  
Allen Vizzutti

Some Great Trumpet Players (Jazz)

Dizzy Gillespie  
Miles Davis  
Clifford Brown  
Chet Baker  
Wynton Marsalis  
Freddie Hubbard  
Arturo Sandoval  
Louis Armstrong  
Clark Terry

Some Great Horn Players

Dennis Brain  
Barry Tuckwell  
Dale Clevenger  
Hermann Baumann  
Erik Ruske  
Doug Hill  
Alan Civil  
Gail Williams

Some Great Trombonists (Classical)

Joe Alessi  
Christian Lindberg  
Ian Bousfield  
Jorgen van Rejin  
James Markey  
Ben van Dijk  
Nitzan Haroz  
Randy Hawes

Some Great Trombonists (Jazz)

Wycliffe Gordon  
JJ Johnson  
Frank Rosolino  
Bill Waltrous  
Slide Hampton  
Carl Fontana  
Kai Winding

Some Great Euphonium Players

David Childs  
Bob and Nick Childs  
Demondrae Thurman  
Ben Pierce  
Thomas Reudi  
David Thornton  
Steven Mead  
Jukka Myllys  
Fernando Deddos

Some Great Tuba Players

Michael Lind  
John Fletcher  
Arnold Jacobs  
Oystein Baadsvik  
Walter Hilgers  
Gene Pokorny  
Les Neish  
Pat Sheridan

Some Great Orchestras

Belrin Philharmonic  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra  
New York Philharmonic  
Cleveland Orchestra  
Concertgebouw Orchestra  
San Francisco Symphony  
Boston Symphony  
Philadelphia Orchestra  
Budapest Festival Orchestra  
Vienna Philharmonic  
Dresden Staatskapelle  
London Symphony

Some Great Chamber Ensembles

Emerson String Quartet  
Juilliard String Quartet  
Gaurneri String Quartet  
Kronos Quartet  
Turtle Island Quartet  
Empire Brass  
Center City Brass Quintet  
American Brass Quintet  
Aurelia Saxophone Quartet  
Prism Saxophone Quartet  
Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet  
Dorian Ensemble

Some Great Wind Bands

The United States Marine Band  
Dallas Wind Symphony  
Tokyo Kosei Wind Ensemble

Some Great Jazz Ensembles

Woody Herman Big Band  
Buddy Rich Band  
Louis Bellson Band

The Bill Holman Band  
Thad Jones/ Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra  
Lincoln Center Big Band  
Stan Kenton Band  
Rob McConnell Boss Brass  
Toshiko Akiyoshi/Lew Tabackin Big Band

Some Great Singers (Classical)

Renee Fleming  
Kiri TeKanawa  
Jessye Norman  
Cecilia Bartoli  
Anna Nebtrepko  
Jussi Bjorling  
Luciano Pavoratti  
Placido Domingo  
Jonas Kaufmann  
Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau  
Bryn Terfel

Some Great Singers (Jazz)

Sarah Vaughan  
Ella Fitzgerald  
Diana Krall  
Dinah Washington  
Billie Holiday  
Kurt Elling  
Joe Williams

Great Entry Level Operas

La Boheme  
La Traviata  
The Magic Flute  
Tosca  
Barber of Seville



# Composers to Try

## Contemporary

John Adams  
John Corigliano  
George Crumb  
Jennifer Higdon  
Phillip Glass  
Gyorgy Ligeti  
Arvo Part  
Krzysztof Penderecki  
Steve Reich  
Joseph Schwantner  
Eric Whitacre  
Aaron Jay Kernis  
Henryk Gorecki

## Twentieth Century

Samuel Barber  
Bela Bartok  
Leonard Bernstein  
Benjamin Britten  
John Cage  
Aaron Copland  
Claude Debussy  
George Gershwin  
Alberto Ginastera  
Percy Grainger  
Paul Hindemith  
Howard Hanson  
Gustav Holst  
Charles Ives  
Leos Janacek  
Olivier Messiaen  
Darius Milhaud  
Carl Orff  
Carl Nielsen  
Francis Poulenc  
Sergei Prokofiev  
Sergei Rachmaninoff  
Maurice Ravel  
Ottorino Respighi  
Arnold Schoenberg  
William Schuman  
Dmitri Shostakovich  
Igor Stravinsky  
Richard Strauss

Michael Tippett  
Hector Villa-Lobos  
Anton Webern

## Romantic

Hector Berlioz  
Georges Bizet  
Johannes Brahms  
Anton Bruckner  
Frederic Chopin  
Antonin Dvorak  
Edward Elgar  
Gabriel Faure  
Cesar Franck  
Franz Liszt  
Gustav Mahler  
Jules Massenet  
Felix Mendelssohn  
Giacomo Puccini  
Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov  
Giacchino Rossini  
Camille Saint Saens  
Erik Satie  
Jean Sibelius  
Bedrich Smetana  
Robert Schumann  
Pytor Tchaikovsky  
Giuseppe Verdi  
Richard Wagner  
Hugo Wolf

## Classical

CPE Bach  
Ludwig van Beethoven  
Joseph Haydn  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
Franz Schubert

## Baroque

Johann Sebastian Bach  
George Frideric Handel  
Claudio Monteverdi  
Henry Purcell  
Alessandro Scarlatti  
Georg Philipp Telemann  
Antonio Vivaldi