

# Partnerships for Success

Lee Hipp

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In the busy world of professional musicians it is often difficult to balance schedules and take time out to teach. As with many other worthwhile endeavors, you realize that teaching and mentoring promising young students is just as rewarding for yourself as it is for the student. Finding that perfect balance between performing and teaching is a challenge that the San Antonio Brass has worked very hard to achieve for ourselves. One of the key elements has been developing partnerships with individuals, institutions and funding agencies.

Made up of some of South Texas' finest brass musicians members of the SA Brass occupy the principal chairs of the San Antonio Symphony as well as teach at St. Mary's University and San Antonio College. With a busy schedule of performing with the symphony as well as presenting chamber music performances in San Antonio, Boerne and Kerrville the SA Brass offers no less than three separate educational programs which allow students to study the art of chamber music performance throughout the year. This is just one way in which we honor those who taught and inspired us to achieve the highest goals of music making.

The skill set for becoming a fine chamber musician is not exactly the same as that needed in a large ensemble. There is much more independent thought and musicianship required in chamber music and we have found that this is a part of students' development that we as professional chamber musicians can definitely help them improve upon. Most students do not get enough opportunities to perform "one-on-a-part" and experience the dynamics that this situation presents. Through our programs students get the chance not only to be coached by a member of the SA Brass but also hear us perform what they are trying to achieve.

Establishing the right partnerships has been very rewarding for our educational programs. Having a good line of communication between the band director, the student and the SA Brass is also very important to the whole process. Our first educational partnership was established at the Beacon Hill Presbyterian Church out of which our oldest program still operates, the "Brass Ensemble Summer Training (B.E.S.T.) Program. Through this partnership we have had eight consecutive summers of Sunday afternoon chamber music

coachings and performances. The B.E.S.T. program is offered to brass musicians of all ages and consists of six different ensembles all coached by our Trumpeter/ Executive Director, John Carroll.

The second of our educational programs came about through our partnership with the St. Mary's University Department of Music. It had been a long time dream of the SA Brass to offer a summer camp where local students could spend an intense week of chamber music study and perform side-by-side with members of the SA Brass. This dream became a reality in 2005 when we decided to pursue grants and fundraising in order to present the SA Brass Camp at St. Mary's University in June of 2006. Thanks to a generous challenge grant from the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation we were able to raise the money necessary to make the camp a success. The focus of the camp is to teach students the skills necessary to perform chamber music. We focus on basic skills as well as how good communication and good ensemble skills play into a great performance. Our hope has been that this will result in students becoming leaders and role models for their fellow students when they return to school in the fall.

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After the success of our first summer camp the SA Brass searched for a way to stay in contact with the students we had worked with during the following school year. This became a reality through a partnership with the City of San Antonio's Office of Cultural Affairs and their Neighborhood Arts Program (NAP). The NAP offered us the opportunity to continue working with many of the same students we had developed relationships with during our summer programs. This program became known as "Brass in the Class" (BIC) with sessions taking place on selected Saturday mornings at St. Mary's University. By continuing the same process of learning during the school year, we are now in the position to have constant contact with the students helping to guide them through the very important developmental stages of maturing as a musician.

By focusing on schools in the vicinity of St. Mary's University we have been able to develop partnerships with both the San Antonio I.S.D. as well as the Edgewood I.S.D. These are schools where we have discovered many talented young students over the years, but these are also students who come up against many challenges outside of the musical ones we present them with. The rewards from helping these students gain the confidence to succeed in life are impossible to count and it is our hope to continue to develop long term relationships with the students and band directors of the San Antonio area.

Founded in 1981, the SA Brass developed a strong reputation for performing large ensemble works under the direction of Gordon Hallberg, retired bass-trombonist with the Boston Symphony. Not long after that, the players decided to incorporate the group and gained 501c3 Not for Profit status. In 1993, John Carroll, principal trumpet of the San Antonio Symphony, became Executive Director and began developing an educational program for school concerts funded by the City of San Antonio. Over the years our focus has moved more towards the brass quintet as our main performing ensemble as well as our main educational tool.

Current members of the San Antonio Brass Quintet include; John Carroll and Andrew Gignac, trumpets; Jeff Garza, horn; Amanda Stewart, trombone; and Lee Hipp, tuba. Along with being members of the San Antonio Symphony you will find us performing with other local organizations such as the Olmos Ensemble, Camerata San Antonio, the Mid-Texas Symphony and the Cactus Pear Music Festival. During the summer most of us spend a short time away from home in places like the Cabrillo New Music Festival in Monterey, California, the Sunriver and the Britt Music Festivals in Oregon and the Eastern Music Festival in North Carolina.

If you would like to learn more about the San Antonio Brass and the wide variety of programs we offer throughout the year, visit our website at [www.sabrass.org](http://www.sabrass.org) or contact Lee Hipp at 210/372-9041.

*Lee Hipp is the Instructor of Tuba and Euphonium at St. Mary's University and Principal Tuba of the San Antonio Symphony and the San Antonio Brass. He has taught tuba and euphonium at the University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of Utah as well as private instruction including the Texas school districts of Klein, Spring, Richardson, Garland, Dallas, Carrollton and Irving. Lee is a native Texan and received his B.M. in Education from Texas Tech University studying with David Payne. He earned his M.M. in Tuba Performance at Southern Methodist University studying with Everett Gilmore and Sandy Keathley. Lee has also studied with David Kirk of the Houston Symphony, Dennis Miller of the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal and Donald Little of the University of North Texas/ Dallas Opera. Lee spends six weeks every summer as the principal tuba of the Eastern Music Festival in Greensboro, North Carolina where he performs with the Eastern Philharmonic and teaches gifted, young musicians from across the United States. Along with his many performing and teaching duties, Lee is also the tuba and euphonium consultant for Orpheus Music and in 1996 was a contributing editor of The Tuba Source Book published by Indiana University Press, compiling a comprehensive listing of tuba manufacturers from around the world. He conducts educational clinics across the country as well as for the TMEA and TBA.*