

Developing Your Middle School Euphonium Section

The Euphonium is more than a small tuba, a trombone with valves, a large trumpet, etc. Because the Euphonium is a relatively “young” instrument in the brass family it was not often implemented in orchestral scoring - similar in many ways to the saxophone. Unlike the saxophone however, it was not implemented in the developmental period of jazz. It did play a major role in the early 20th century concert bands and it is an extremely important instrument in today’s advanced concert band literature. This session focus specifically developmental issues that make the Euphonium unique in the family of brass instruments.

Euphonium or Baritone

Very few people in the United States know what a euphonium or baritone horn is. Very few musicians, from high school to college band directors, to professional performers know anything specific regarding the two instruments. In an effort to educate the intermediate band director I will give you a brief overview of the euphonium, the baritone horn, and the differences between the two.

-What is the difference?

- Conical vs. Cylindrical
- English Baritone
- American Baritone
- Euphonium

The Switch

When potential beginning band are asked which instrument they would be interested in playing, chances are “Euphonium” would not be their answer. Although in most beginning and intermediate band literature the euphonium is not essential, in advanced literature it is. Therefore, it is best to add players to the section while at the intermediate level. Most students who play Euphonium begin on Trombone or Trumpet. The middle school band director will need to address specific issue to assist in either of these transformations.

- Trombone to Euphonium
 - Developing Fingering Technique
- Trumpet to Euphonium
 - Learning to Read Bass Clef

Tone Production

The Euphonium has a characteristic sound which differentiates it from the rest of the brass family. Students should take their beginning steps in developing that sound during their intermediate years. The issue of “sound concept” can be developed using recordings; this will be discussed under the topic of resources. The foundation of sound production in all brass instruments is related to breath control. One of the cornerstones of breath control and an issue often overlooked when dealing with the euphonium is posture.

- Posture

Intonation

Most brass instruments have a mechanical method of fixing minor intonation that occurs naturally within the overtone series. Trombones have “sharp or flat” positions, trumpets and tubas have can move slides, French Horns can alter their hand position, etc. Although a limited amount of professional model euphoniums have slide “throws”, chances are, these will not be the horns used at the intermediate level. Students should be taught the basics of the overtone series and learn to “lip” notes into tune.

- “Lipping” to Stay in Tune

Equipment

As highlighted during the discussion about the differences between the Baritone and Euphonium, the intermediate student should know some information about equipment. There are several options in instruments and brands from which to choose from, as well as pros and cons for each. Factors such as size, quality, ease in performing, and cost should be considered when deciding which instruments are best for your student.

- The Baritone
- The Euphonium
- Three or Four Valves?
 - Fourth Valve on Top
 - The Compensating System

Resources

One of the keys to developing your middle school euphonium section is procuring the appropriate sheet music, recordings and educational information.

Music: Because most band programs need to adhere to strict budget restrictions, I would recommend that you purchase materials that commonly utilized in developing your trombone and trumpet sections.

Treble Clef

Arban's Complete Conservatory Method
Embouchure Builder - Little
From Treble to Bass Clef - Fink

Bass Clef

Arbans Complete Method - Alessi/Bowman
Remington Warm-Up Studies – Hunsberger
Practical Hints On Playing the Euphonium - Bowman

Recordings: Students will only be able to develop a “sound concept” if they are exposed to recordings of professional euphonium players. In addition, a recording can give a student an idea of what the instrument can do if practiced diligently for a long period of time. There are relatively few professional euphonium soloists in relation to other instruments in the brass family, but there are examples that can be an inspiration to students (this is not a comprehensive list).

Steven Meade

Brian Bowman

Robert and Nicholas Childs

Michael Colburn

Matteson, Rich (Jazz)

Roger Behrend

Matthew Tropman

John Mueller

Adam Frey

Information: Web Sites can be an economical, fast way to obtain educational information for students to obtain information. Many also offer sound clips in the event that you are not able to obtain recordings.

The Euphonium Net <http://www.euphonium.net/>

TubaEuph.com <http://www.dwerden.com>

Tuba Universal Brotherhood Association <http://www.tubaonline.org>