



**The Tuba Whisperer:
Tuba Recruiting, Fundamentals,
and All-Level Brass Pedagogy**

**CLINICIAN:
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HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
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The Tuba Whisperer

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Recruiting

- Intelligence (**insert joke here**)
- Stature (“How tall is Dad?”)
- Gender (Not a novelty to have a girl tuba player)

Beginner Equipment

- Mouthpiece (Investment)
- Euphonium (mouthpiece provided by school)
- EE 2000 Tuba Book

Beginner Class Structure

Euphonium until the November demonstration concert (through fast eighth notes)

- Easier to handle
- Class moves 10x faster
- Not as much air needed
- Reads tuba books
- Full range (low and high)
- Develops tuba players with euphonium player mentalities (not just Oompah)

TUBA WEEK!

- Tubas with Clear Kelly 18 mouthpieces (school provided)
- Buzz 2 days, Play 3rd day, take tubas home at the end of the week.
- Clear Kelly mouthpieces enable you to monitor the lips.
- Whole note – Whole rest at 70 BPM (for LONG periods), then 60 BPM
- Down to low Bb in 1 full week.
- Learn every song they learned in the book on Euph. by the end of week 2
- For combined class of euphoniums and tubas, put the euphoniums in practice rooms for the first week, then the 2nd week they all play. The octave reinforcement helps the tubas match pitch.

Late February with big sounds they can “earn” their Silver mouthpieces (Helleberg)

Posture

- Knees, paper ream, shelf liner, stand (DEG or K&M). Don't place on chair or towel
- Angle and mouthpiece placement (lips on lead pipe)

Air

- Breathing Exercises (2 beat breaths whenever possible)
- Breathe out, not up
- Fill up your Stomach, back, chest in one movement.
- Take in More air that you THINK you need
- Stomach out to touch tuba, then slowly in during playing (Deflating the beach ball)
- Keep face same shape after breaths – HO, HO, HO---> OH, OH, OH
- Get fat with air (No acorn lungs)
- Blacksmith Bellows
- Hold a \$20 Bill against the wall for 8 seconds
- Exhale like a String bass bow note (Pace the air)
- Play at least a measure at a time (not 2-3 note), then 6 beats

Embouchure

- Requires CONSTANT monitoring and feedback
- Anchor the mouthpiece and create a light gasket (no leaking of air)
- Breathe from the corners
- Center of lips NEVER TOUCH (Steamboat/Smoke Rings)
- 3 Kisses of Death  for Brass Players: Teeth too close, Smiling, "Poochy Lips"
- Hide the Cookie!
- Swallow the mouthpiece
- Round vowel sounds
- Keep lips close to face
- Low notes are NOT flabby lips, just OVAL (Gasket).
- Tongue LOW and FORWARD over bottom teeth.
- OH and AWE and the SAME time- "Bruce Lee"
- Popping mouth for Cavern (done right or it hurts!)
- Fish face
- Whistle: World War II falling bomb
- BO
- Teeth!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- The Lips decide what note you hit, but the teeth decide how the note will sound"
- Low Bb jaw for higher notes

Warm-up

- Buzz Everyday (BERP, or cover $\frac{3}{4}$ of the end of the shank)
- Buzz should remain airy, not a trumpet buzz
- Tension is revealed in the buzz
- Collection of buzzing songs

Tonguing

- Homer Simpson: Doh!
- Super slow motion "TOH" (Feel the pressure build up).
- Freeze face at the point of attack
- No Anchor Tongue, but slight top of tongue placement
- Air Assist (especially for very low notes)
- Don't just think of tonguing on the beat, think the sound coming out on the beat.
- Re-write notes below "C" in fast passages and marches

Ranges

- Functional range
- Corners in, not back (Rubber Band)
- Zip-lock bag
- Don't back off on air (scared), aim air down.
- Starting on Euphonium range is never an issue
- Two Octave Scale "Bounty"

Problems and solutions

- Respond, Respond, Respond!
- "Puffy cheeks": Students afraid to open mouth enough. Sound is fuzzy because air takes a

detour (not High Def). Feel your cheek against the inside of your mouth against your teeth. Think of an egg sitting on a table top.

-“Bubbles”- students not buzzing correct pitch or air too slow to hold aperture in place.

Poochy lips.

-“Accuracy” – slow air starts. Air must start instantly. Accuracy Exercise-“Teeth” keep bugging them until they are tired of hearing you whine. “CLEAN YOUR ROOM!”. You just have to be relentless.

Odds and Ends

-You would be amazed at what your band sounds like with 4 good sounding tubas

-If you recruit less than high achieving students for tuba you will reap what you sow.

-For a tuba player’s starting note, an Eb sets a little easier than an F.

-G is worst “setting” note of the BBb tuba. The G is closer to A than to F (2nd gear)

-High C & B tuning (1st slide) on Miraphone tuba

-High D 1-2 is better in tune, but not good for technical patterns

-4th valve, start with 1&3 until the pinky finger is stronger. Insist on 4th for anything not longer than a quarter note.

-Tuning problems on certain notes: “make your top lip softer”

-CC Tubas are for high school tuba players who “made” All-State (After, not before).

Mouthpieces

Beginner - Kelly 18 (Clear) or Bach 18

Advanced (late in beginner year) – Conn Helleberg 120S (not 7B), Bach 24AW

Professional – Helleberg like above, Schilke Standard, Perantucci, DEG

Instruments

Beginner Instruments- $\frac{3}{4}$ Tuba - King 1135BW and Jupiter 378L $\frac{3}{4}$ Tuba (home)

Advanced Instruments – Miraphone 186S or Miraphone 191 (storage issues)

Alternative Middle School Advanced: King 2341 or Tempest MUNICH (3/4 not 4/4)

CC Tuba – Meinl-Weston (various models -\$\$\$) or Miraphone 188 or 1291

NOT Recommended (in my personal opinion) – St. Petersburg, Cerveny,

Contact me if I can be of any help:

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