TEACHING THE BASS TUBA: A SURVEY OF CURRENT TRENDS IN THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY APPLIED STUDIO IN THE UNITED STATES

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An investigation of current practices in the teaching of the bass tuba in the applied studios of U.S. colleges and universities as determined by survey. Survey recipients were low brass teachers at American colleges and universities who were members of one or more of the following professional organizations: International Tuba Euphonium Association, College Music Society, National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors. Topics examined are: general practices among teachers, including performance usage and literature, pedagogy and equipment. The survey instrument as well as a list of the respondents is included.
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The bass tubas, specifically those tubas which are pitched in F and Eb, have risen to occupy a significant place in the palette of the modern tuba player over the last twenty years. In 1985, the university I attended did not possess a bass tuba nor were bass tubas owned by any of the other state universities. The “one instrument fits all” philosophy of some teachers and the opinion of financially minded administrators that bass tubas - in either F or Eb - were specialty instruments often contributed to this problem at many institutions. My own study of the bass tuba began when I entered graduate school. The university I attended owned a single bass tuba: a Mirafone F tuba. Seven years later, in 1999, I began my doctoral work at the University of North Texas, a school which now owns five bass tubas: three in F and two in Eb. Graduate students are now generally expected to possess their own bass tubas and upperclassmen are encouraged to obtain one as soon as possible. Some of today’s freshmen enter the university setting having already obtained their own bass tuba in F or Eb in addition to their contrabass tuba. Clearly there has been a change in the perception of the importance of the bass tuba in F or Eb.

One issue which became apparent during the gathering of data for this project was the confusion among respondents as to what constituted a bass tuba. This appeared mainly in the replies of instructors whose primary instrument was not the tuba but occasionally with tuba players as well. It was usually evidenced by the respondent’s recommendations of instruments for school purchase, which included BBb contrabass
tubas, and recommended literature. This confusion may arise as a result of names often used in reference to the tuba. In early band literature names such as “bass horn” (not to be further confused with the English bass horn) and “basses” are often encountered. Also, the tuba family does not follow the same conventions of family naming such as the saxophone family. In the saxophone family, the bass saxophone is pitched one octave below the tenor saxophone, which is an octave below the soprano saxophone. The tuba family is the lowest group of the conical bored brass instruments which includes the cornet in Bb as the soprano voice and the horn in F as the alto voice.

As the tuba family developed, the bass tuba was the first to be invented (1835), followed by the tenor tuba (1838) and then the contrabass tuba (1845). The tenor tuba, which is comparable to the modern euphonium, is pitched one octave below the soprano voice of the Bb cornet. Since the bass tuba had already been established in F, the instrument sounding an octave below the tenor voice was termed the contrabass tuba. Thus the bass tuba, which is an octave below the horn, actually functions as a baritone voice.

(Figure 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soprano</th>
<th>Cornet</th>
<th>Bb</th>
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<tbody>
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Fig. 1. Voice function - instrument - key relationship.

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The bass tuba has long been a staple instrument in the European tuba tradition. The bass tuba in F was, in fact, the “original” tuba – patented in 1835 by Prussian bandmaster Wilhelm Wieprecht. The genesis of the bass tuba was a need for an instrument with greater clarity and depth of sound than its predecessors. Bass instruments such as the English bass horn, serpent and ophicleide lacked clarity due to the use of tone holes and keys and, as they were pitched in C and Bb comparable to the modern euphonium, lacked the depth of range desired. The invention of the valve in 1831 made increased clarity and the possibility of a longer instrument, for deeper range, a reality. While the F tuba has remained the predominant bass tuba on the European continent, both the Eb and F bass tubas are often employed in England. The Eb tuba continues as the traditional bass tuba of the British brass band movement, but the F tuba retains a stronger presence in the orchestral genre. Thus, it is not surprising that the first concerto for the tuba as a solo instrument, Ralph Vaughan Williams’ Concerto for Bass Tuba and Orchestra, was conceived for this instrument. It received its premiere performance on June 13, 1954 by Philip Catelinet and the London Symphony Orchestra.

In the United States, the bass tuba – usually pitched in Eb - was the principal bass brass instrument in ensembles of the mid 19th century. This is evidenced by a wealth of band music in which the lowest written parts were for either bass saxhorn - a type of tuba - or bass tuba, each in Eb. Photographic records of bands from the mid to  

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late 19th century depicting the use of the bass tuba present supporting evidence of this practice. This appears to be largely due to the influence of the European band tradition, specifically the British connection, as instrumentation of the bands on both continents was virtually identical. Symphony orchestras were practically nonexistent in the United States during the first half of the 19th century until the New York Philharmonic appeared in 1842.5

The latter half of the 19th century would see the introduction of the contrabass tuba into the United States as it had in Europe. During the period immediately preceding the turn of the 20th century, this instrument began to supplant the bass tuba as the lowest brass voice in instrumental ensembles. The bass tuba would continue for some time as a color instrument in the concert band’s low brass section as well as in some orchestral playing but featured soloists with the great bands of the time appear to have preferred the contrabass tuba. Reasons for this preference remain open to speculation. With the increasing use of the contrabass tuba, the bass tuba’s role gradually changed to that of a young player’s instrument. A student would remain on the smaller bass tuba until their physical stature could accommodate the larger contrabass tuba. This practice continued until the introduction of 3/4 size and compact 4/4 size contrabass tubas in the last half of the 20th century, although the resurgence of interest in the bass tuba and its attributes has caused some to suggest a return to the prior practice.6 Method books from the first half of the 20th century, such as Rubank’s Method, Fred Geib’s Method for Tuba and others routinely included instruction and fingerings for both Eb bass and BBb

5 Bevan, The Tuba Family, 352.

contrabass tubas. However, by the late 1960’s, school band textbook instruction for the bass tuba had slowly dwindled.

The second half of the 20th century saw a renewed interest in the bass tuba as both an ensemble and a solo instrument. The move toward multiple instruments from the “one size fits all” concept began to take hold. This gradual change in attitude was fostered by the desire to perform works on the instruments for which they were originally conceived as well as the increasing demands from composers exploring this “new” instrument. Changes in instruction at colleges, universities and conservatories followed as this movement progressed. Proficiency on both the bass and contrabass tubas became the norm rather than the exception. Today, it is unlikely that one would find a serious candidate for an orchestra or band position who was not playing both bass and contrabass tubas. Therefore, as it is the purpose of all college/university applied teachers to prepare students for this environment, teaching the bass tuba has become a necessity.

Thus far, there has only been one published study concerning the subject of teaching the bass tuba at the college and university level. In 1989, the late Dr. David Randolph published a series of articles in the T.U.B.A. Journal detailing the results of a questionnaire he had presented to college and university instructors who were members of the Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association. In the questionnaire, Dr. Randolph focused specifically on the F tuba. In the years since the publication of his articles, a new generation of tuba instructors has entered teaching positions throughout the United States. Many of these current instructors are students of the professors originally questioned for Dr. Randolph’s 1989 article. A great quantity of new teaching material
and solo literature has since been published and entered the mainstream of university instruction. As the expansion of interest in the bass tuba has grown, manufacturers have followed suit with a greater variety of improved instruments from which the student and professional can choose. Also, in the period since Dr. Randolph’s articles, there has been a resurgence of interest in the Eb tuba as a performing medium in the United States which was not addressed in his original study.

The purpose of this study is to identify and document current trends in the teaching of the bass tuba in F and Eb at the college/university level in the United States. The study presents information on the initial learning experiences of current tuba faculty members as well as comparing them to practices these teachers employ with their own students. Areas examined include teaching/performance philosophy, literature and equipment. It is my intention that this information will be made available to a wide range of instrumental instructors who would use the findings, which may be outside their particular area of expertise, to strengthen their collegiate programs. Furthermore, the ability to document these trends at the national level may assist the instructor when approaching administrators concerning expanding their program of instruction.
CHAPTER 2
DATA COLLECTION

To begin this project, I referred back to Dr. Randolph’s series of articles in the *T.U.B.A. Journal* in 1989. For his research, he surveyed the members of the Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association (T.U.B.A.), now the International Tuba Euphonium Association (I.T.E.A.) to examine the growing interest in the F tuba. Sixteen years later, I was curious to see how this trend had progressed as well as the renewed interest in the other bass tuba, the Eb tuba. Knowing that many colleges and universities have a single low brass teacher who is not always a tuba player and often not a member of I.T.E.A., I sought to expand my pool of prospective survey subjects. To accomplish this, I assembled a mailing list derived from the rosters of three professional music organizations: the International Tuba Euphonium Association, the College Music Society and the National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors. Persons who were selected for inclusion in the pool were those listing themselves as a college tuba instructor or low brass instructor and all three rosters were cross referenced to eliminate any duplication between the separate lists. Teachers whose listed instrument was one other than the tuba were included when a specific tuba instructor at their institution was not included in any of the lists.

After the three lists were compiled and cross referenced, a master list of 183 names was created. A cover letter detailing the nature of the project, a copy of the following survey and a stamped return envelope was then sent to each person on the list. Six of the surveys were returned due to change of address of the recipient without
forwarding instructions or incorrect address information from the source list. Six of the respondents contacted via e-mail – three were now retired but had retained their professional affiliations, two had changed positions and were now teaching only trombone and the last one had been incorrectly categorized in the source list and had never taught the tuba. Of the original surveys sent, a total of forty-eight usable surveys were returned (26%).

Each of the respondents to the questionnaire seemed more than willing to share their experience for this project and each indicated a willingness to be contacted if there were any questions regarding their responses. Information regarding the size of their institution/school/studio was requested to better understand the particular environment in which bass tuba instruction is occurring. The full survey questionnaire is found in the appendix.

The survey is divided into four sections. The first focuses on the background of the respondent and their applied studio. Information sought includes:

- The respondent’s institution(s) of higher learning
- Major teacher(s)
- Current teaching position
- Size of their institution
- Size of their school of music
- Size of their studio

The second section focuses on the respondent’s personal use of the bass tuba in F, Eb or both. Questions are directed towards the percentage of time they spend on the
bass tuba, ensemble types in which they prefer the bass tuba and factors which influence their decisions. Teaching philosophy and sound concept were also examined.

The third section of the questionnaire centers on pedagogical issues relating to the bass tuba. The survey questions how the bass tuba is being taught today and then compares that with how the respondents themselves were taught. Much of this is comparison of materials such as methods, etudes and other pertinent literature.

The final section of the questionnaire focuses on equipment issues such as instruments and mouthpieces. Respondents were asked about their own equipment as well as that of their institution and their students. In addition to documenting what instruments are currently being used, I asked the respondents to identify issues and ideas which led them to these decisions.

Once the surveys were returned, the information received was compiled and comparisons made between instruction at the time of the respondent’s education and their current teaching practices. The effects of a variety of influences, both musical and technological, were considered. From this, the trends affecting the teaching of bass tuba in the college/university teaching studio should become clear.
CHAPTER 3
GENERAL PRACTICES AMONG TEACHERS

When asked to indicate their principal instrument, nearly two thirds of the respondents indicated the tuba, with the remainder being evenly divided between the euphonium and the trombone. Knowing that many players perform on multiple instruments, 67% answered positively when asked if they performed on the bass tuba. Of the respondents who replied that they did perform on the bass tuba, 69% indicated they used the F tuba while 22% preferred the Eb tuba and 9% used both the F tuba and the Eb tuba depending upon the circumstances. This “instrument key of choice” question was posed in each of the genre questions and the percentages showed little variance each time, indicating that most performers seem to settle into the one particular key they have chosen. The F tuba remains the predominant instrument of choice but the use of the Eb tuba is increasing with renewed interest and the availability of better instruments.

The approximate total playing time the respondents spend on the bass tuba is divided fairly evenly across the range with the largest percentage indicating 20% or less of the time and the smallest in the 61-80% range. (Figure 2) There was no overwhelming majority indicating great contrast in the usage of the bass tuba by the respondents and this result also indicates that most performers still do most of their playing on the contrabass tuba. But when compared to Dr. Randolph’s earlier findings there is significant growth in the use of the bass tuba – the size of the group indicating the least usage dropped from 37% to 26% while the size of the group with the greatest
usage increased from 3% to 19%. The results of the next question, directed toward the respondent’s solo playing, show the bass tuba’s favored stature as a solo instrument. 61% of the respondents who answered the question indicated that they use the bass tuba in more than 80% of their solo playing. Furthermore, a total of 81% of the respondents use the bass tuba at least half of the time.

![Bar chart showing percentage of respondent’s total playing time spent on the bass tuba.]

Fig. 2. Percentage of respondent’s total playing time spent on the bass tuba.

The varied answers to the question: “What solo literature is representative of what you most often perform on the bass tuba?” is indicative of the volume of music being composed for the tuba, often with the bass tuba in mind. It also demonstrates the great variety of styles the respondents like to perform - after all the recommendations were tallied, a list of eighty-nine separate works emerged. While there were several

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commonalities, the largest portion of the list consisted of works which received only one mention. This suggests widely varying preferences of the performers and further indicates that there is an open marketplace available for new compositions. By a large margin, the principal work identified by the respondents was the Vaughan Williams *Concerto for Bass Tuba* and with a 68% response rate it is evident that this first major solo work for the instrument has not lost any of its historical popularity. Following the Vaughan Williams *Concerto* by a considerable margin was a quartet of works – Bruce Broughton’s *Sonata*, Paul Hindemith’s *Sonate*, Anthony Plog’s *Three Miniatures* and Edward Gregson’s *Concerto*. The primary transcription identified by the participants was *Sonata No. 2 in Eb* by J.S. Bach while Penderecki’s *Capriccio* was the most often mentioned unaccompanied work. Works mentioned by more than 10% of the respondents are shown in the accompanying chart. (Figure 3) While the Vaughan Williams has remained at the top of both this survey and Dr. Randolph’s earlier study, there has been a great shift in the recommended literature. Works such as Kellaway’s *Morning Song* and Barat’s *Introduction and Dance* have given way to John William’s *Concerto* and Koetsier’s *Sonatina*.

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8 Ibid, 38.
Fig. 3. Solo literature representative of that most often performed by respondents on the bass tuba.
The bass tuba is also equally at home in the chamber music genre with 44% of the respondents indicating that they prefer to use it in 80% or more of this type of performance. With different types of chamber music a staple for many college and university teachers, and the fact that the tuba is a principal voice in the brass quintet, it is not surprising that 97% of the respondents indicated that they perform in the brass quintet medium. When assessing the bass tuba’s use in the brass quintet it was revealed that while 45% of the respondents use it 80% or more of the time, 29% prefer the contrabass tuba by the same margin. This is very likely due to the stronger low register of the contrabass tuba, a naturally weak area for the bass tuba. Representative literature performed by respondents on the bass tuba in the chamber music/brass quintet genre is indicated in the following chart. (Figure 4)

![Chart](image)

Fig. 4. Quintet and chamber music representative of that most often performed by respondents on the bass tuba.
The next subject to be addressed in the survey was the use of the bass tuba in the orchestral setting. As was expected, the bass tuba is very much a secondary instrument in the American orchestra and the contrabass tuba retains the predominant role. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents answered that they performed in a symphony orchestra but, of those, fully 73% replied that they use the bass tuba in less than 23% of their total orchestral playing. Representative orchestral literature receiving at least a 10% response is displayed in Figure 5.

Though originally written for the ophicleide and later edited for the small French tuba, both of which were pitched similarly to the modern euphonium, Berlioz’ *Symphonie Fantastique* is now a staple of the bass tuba orchestral literature as are many of his other works. In practice, the music of Berlioz is now virtually synonymous with the bass tuba. The combination of high tessitura along with the lighter texture and brighter timbre make the bass tuba a much stronger choice in the performance of these works. Other composers will often indicate a preference for either the bass tuba or the contrabass tuba in their works. Mahler’s Second, Third and Fifth Symphonies specify the contrabass tuba but the Sixth Symphony is indicated for the bass tuba. Likewise, Bruckner and Wagner often specify either the bass tuba or the contrabass tuba in their scores. The works of Strauss indicate the bass tuba but these works stretch the bass tuba to its limits, especially in the low register where it is the weakest. It could be argued that he intended the contrabass tuba based on range alone and this shows that the confusion between the bass tuba and the contrabass tuba is by no means a recent dilemma.
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<td>Mahler</td>
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<td>Berlioz</td>
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<td>38%</td>
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<td>Stravinsky</td>
<td>Petrouchka</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berlioz</td>
<td>Corsaire Overture</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussorgsky/Ravel</td>
<td>&quot;Bydlo&quot; from Pictures at an Exhibition</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Midsummer Night's Dream</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berlioz</td>
<td>Benvenuto Cellini</td>
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Fig. 5. Symphony orchestra literature representative of that most often performed by respondents on the bass tuba.
After discovering when the respondents decided to use the bass tuba and in what circumstances, I sought to find out what factors influenced their decision to select the bass tuba as a performing medium. Twenty-five percent of the respondents referred in some manner to sound considerations which included concepts such as clarity of sound, tone colors, sonority and projection. The second most important topic was that of range: the bass tuba as a shorter instrument - twelve to thirteen feet versus the sixteen to eighteen feet of the contrabass tuba - lends itself better to compositions written in a higher tessitura. Technical considerations such as how the piece lies, flexibility, dexterity and endurance were the third area of concern with compositional and performance practice issues following. The last major area of choice for the respondents examined ensemble considerations such as blend with the section, the size of the ensemble and the type of playing. These factors show very little change during the intervening years between Dr. Randolph’s study and the present one.

While the bass tuba in F has been the most widely used in recent years the bass tuba in Eb has been staging a comeback. A major factor contributing to this has been the availability of newly designed instruments with better intonation. Intonation problems have long plagued the Eb tuba and this alone has driven many players away from it and caused its decline here in the United States. With the arrival of the new instruments, performers have been given the opportunity to revisit and reevaluate this instrumental option. The survey asked the recipients to give some of the factors which caused them to choose either the F tuba or the Eb tuba as their instrument of choice and their answers, though different, reflect merely different points of view.
Both groups stated sound as a primary area of preference but their concepts of sound were quite the opposite. The F tuba camp showed a preference for a lighter, brighter character of sound – a different tonal color in the tuba family. This is a marked contrast to the preferred contrabass tuba of most professional players in the United States, the CC. Those who prefer the Eb tuba seem to prefer a sound which is very similar to the contrabass tuba but simplifies the extended upper register – as one respondent stated: “The Eb sounds more like a tuba, less like a baritone.” Tradition also seems to play into the choice of instruments – the F having typically been used by orchestral players, especially in the European tradition, while the Eb is regarded as a band instrument as it was for many years in this country. But there is a ray of hope for the Eb tuba as many of the respondents who currently perform on the F tuba indicated that they would be willing to try the Eb tuba if they did not have to choose financially between one and the other. With considerable investment having been made in one instrument, and additional investment being required to obtain another, the risks could outweigh the benefits if one were to have to part with one instrument to obtain another. The college/university setting and school owned instruments may be the way to allow students to explore the pros and cons of each type of bass tuba before making the financial commitment to either.
CHAPTER 4

PEDAGOGY

To understand the changes influencing the teaching of bass tuba in the college and university setting, it was necessary to discover when the persons now teaching the instrument themselves began learning the instrument. As can be seen in the following chart, the majority of the teachers surveyed began their study of the bass tuba during graduate school or after leaving the college and university setting. (Figure 6)

Fig. 6. Point at which respondent began playing the bass tuba.
This would seem to indicate that instruction in the bass tuba would have been available at institutions large enough to support a graduate school and therefore have available resources to purchase a school owned bass tuba, or, in the case of post graduate study, when the performer was able to purchase their own instrument. The question regarding the age of players when they began their study of the bass tuba corroborates this – 49% of the respondents fall into the twenty to thirty year old category which would encompass that last year of undergraduate study, graduate school and the first years after graduate school. I also wanted to know who, if any, could be credited as being the mentors of today’s teachers. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents credited specific teachers with introducing them to the bass tuba and of those teachers the highest percentages were: Daniel Perantoni – 20%, Arnold Jacobs – 10%, Ed Livingston – 10% and Donald Little – 10%.

Pedagogical materials used by the respondents when they began their study of the bass tuba parallel those used in the instruction of the contrabass tuba. (Figure 7) By a significant margin, the studies most often cited are those derived from the Vocalizes of Marco Bordogni with a focus on singing style and tonal quality being the most important aspect. The Blazhevich Progressive Etudes, with a combination of lyrical and technical components, were recommended about half as often as Bordogni. Technical studies such as the 60 Selected Studies by Kopprasch and J.B. Arban’s Complete Method followed.
The time at which the respondent’s students began their study of the bass tuba shows a marked shift when compared to the time at which the respondents themselves began their study of the bass tuba. (Figure 8) Whereas the greatest concentration of instruction for the teachers happened in their graduate school years, the greatest concentration in their students is occurring in the sophomore year. It is also noted that more of the students entered the college/university studio having already been exposed to the bass tuba than began their study in graduate school. In fact, three times as many freshmen as graduate students entered the respondent’s studios having already begun

Fig. 7. Specific pedagogical materials representative of those used when respondents began study of the bass tuba.
their study of bass tuba. The largest concentration of bass tuba instruction at the time of Dr. Randolph’s survey was during the junior and senior years and none of his respondent’s indicated that they had any students who had begun study of the bass tuba before college.\(^9\)

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 8. Beginning point of current students.**

It is no surprise that the majority of these current students are at an advanced playing level. Sixty percent of the respondent’s students were classified as advanced while 27% were classified as intermediate level. Given that most of the teachers began bass tuba study in graduate school or after, there seems to be a trend toward

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introducing the student to the bass tuba earlier in their playing career. This would be especially beneficial for students who intended to major in performance as the bass tuba is the preferred instrument for most solo performances. In solo competitions such as the Falcone Competition, the bass tuba predominates among the competitors even at the student level. There were also a small percentage of students who were classified by the respondents as young players, with indications that interest in the concept of using the bass tuba, in this case the Eb tuba, as a younger or beginning student’s instrument may be returning.

The answers received to the question: “How do you introduce a student to the bass tuba?” showed that there is no single rule as to how this should be accomplished. Familiarity with materials seems to be the predominant guiding factor as the largest portion of the respondents concurred that the student should begin with etudes/studies/solos that they are familiar with on the contrabass tuba and then prepare them on the bass tuba. Also, most of the respondents lean toward lyrical etudes and solos which focus on the sound properties of the instrument rather than technical demands. If the student learns to make a good characteristic sound on the bass tuba they are more likely to pursue it further. Material should be moderately technical in nature but not shy away from the difficult ranges – both high and low – which pose the greatest challenge on the bass tuba. From the standpoint of the teaching process, modeling was the most often mentioned technique – demonstrating for the student what this new instrument is supposed to sound like.

The next question in the survey asked the respondents to rank four types of pedagogical materials in the order that they would use them to start a student on the
bass tuba – etudes, solos, scales/technical exercises and orchestral excerpts. A fifth category, simply called other, was added for those instructors who use materials outside of those previously mentioned with the request that they specify what other materials they use. Items which were in this category included: melodies/songs/ballads, methods for other instruments, band excerpts and self prepared materials. Each respondent ranked the categories on a scale of one to five with one being the first item to be used and five being the last. Several instructors indicated using two or more of the categories at the same time, ranking them both at the same level, and this was tallied accordingly. Each numerical position was then given a number of points to show relative weight in the same manner as a grade point average. Number one was given five points, number two was given four points and so on. For each item, the point value was multiplied by the number of votes in that placement arriving at a weighted value. The weighted values were then added together and divided by the total number of votes returned resulting in a raw score for each category. These raw scores were then averaged, placing each category in the percentiles shown in the following graph. (Figure 9)
Fig. 9. Rank the following pedagogical materials in the order you would use them to start a student on the bass tuba.

As can be seen here, etudes and scales/technical exercises are in a statistical tie with solos following closely behind. Of the categories listed, these three were the most likely to be ranked as being of equal importance by the respondents. Owing to the fact that we teach what we know and will always go with what works, it comes as no surprise that the pedagogical materials used by the respondents with their students looks very similar to the materials they themselves used. (Figure 10)
Fig. 10. Specific pedagogical materials representative of those commonly used by respondents in teaching the bass tuba.

As was the case in their own study, the vocalises of Marco Bordogni were overwhelmingly recommended for instruction by the respondents, indicating a preference for the melodic singing style when introducing the new instrument. Likewise, the Blazhevich *Progressive Etudes* and Kopprasch *60 Selected Studies* followed in the second and third positions respectively as the materials shift toward a technical aspect. Another collection of vocalizes, by Concone, is being used more as new transcriptions for the tuba are becoming available.

When it comes to solo literature used in the teaching of the bass tuba, the Vaughan Williams *Concerto for Bass Tuba* is still the prevailing favorite. Listed by 60%
of the respondents, this first concerto to be specified for the instrument and to stand the test of time in such a manner should rightly be held in high esteem. Other works strongly recommended include Gregson’s *Tuba Concerto* (40%), Plog’s *Three Miniatures* (20%), Barat’s *Introduction and Dance* (12%) and Ewazen’s *Concerto for Bass Trombone* (12%). The remainder of the list was quite varied, with works such as Bach’s *Sonata No. 2 in Eb*, Muczynski’s *Impromptus*, Penderecki’s *Capriccio* and Halsey Stevens’ *Sonatina* and others, but these received less than 10% of the votes. This shows that there is a great diversity of musical works being used to teach the bass tuba.

Similarly, there were no surprises in the respondent’s choices of works to introduce the bass tuba student to orchestral literature. The works of Hector Berlioz are still the most likely to be used for this purpose as they are the most likely to be performed on the bass tuba. As can be seen in the following chart, there is less than a 10% variance between the top five works and all responses were indicative of what is commonly performed on the bass tuba. (Figure 11)
Finally, the respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the importance of study and playing ability for differing levels of students. As can be seen, study of the bass tuba is regarded as “very important” to “crucial” by the respondents. Similarly, the student’s developed playing ability is “crucial” for the advanced player and “very important” for the intermediate player. This is a marked contrast to the respondents own experience when bass tuba instruction often did not begin until graduate school or after they had left the college/university setting. (Figures 12,13,14)
Fig. 12. Importance of bass tuba study for advanced and intermediate level students.

Fig. 13. Importance of playing ability on the bass tuba for the intermediate college student.
Fig. 14. Importance of playing ability on the bass tuba for the advanced college student.

Half of the respondent’s to Dr. Randolph’s survey indicated that the study of the bass tuba, specifically the F tuba, was “of little consequence” to the intermediate level college tuba student. The majority were about evenly divided between bass tuba studies for the advanced level student being “of some consequence” to “very important”. The number of respondents to this study identifying instruction of the bass tuba as very important or crucial defines a major shift in teaching philosophy related to the tuba.

\[10\] Ibid, 27.
CHAPTER 5
EQUIPMENT

One of the greatest results stemming from the increased interest in the bass tuba is the availability of improved instruments and accessories. Instrument and mouthpiece manufacturers are constantly refining existing designs or creating new ones to give the performer the greatest possible array of options to suit their own musical style. Once, not so long ago, tubists had few choices and everyone usually ended up with the same equipment - but now the possibilities seem almost endless. It could take full-time study just to keep track of everything that is now available.

For the performer or teacher to decide what instrument/mouthpiece combination is best for them, or that they would recommend for their student, they must first have arrived at some concept of how the combination is going to sound and this will probably be compared to their contrabass tuba sound. The question was therefore posed to the survey subjects asking them to describe their preferred sound characteristics on the bass tuba as compared to the contrabass tuba. While the variety of responses was as individual as the people making them, a few trends did appear. The most significant was that the majority of respondents indicated they preferred a lighter, cleaner and more compact sound. A brighter projecting sound with a strong core, more soloistic in nature, was desired. Only three of the respondents indicated that they preferred a sound concept which was the same as, or similar to, their contrabass tuba. This shows an evolution of the concept of treating the bass tuba as a specific instrument with its
own colors and timbres rather than an extension of the contrabass tuba to make certain passages or genres more playable.

As can be seen in the following chart (Figure 15), the instrument most often performed on by the respondents is the Yamaha YFB-822 bass tuba in F and this reflects an expansion of the use of piston valves on bass tubas. While Eb bass tubas in England and the United States have utilized piston valves for quite some time, the F bass tuba tended to remain with the continental European tradition of rotary valves. Indeed, of the instruments on this list, only the B&S PT-10 and the Alexander utilize rotary valves – though the PT-10P (the piston valve equivalent of the PT-10) was indicated in limited numbers elsewhere in the results. It seems that the use of piston valves on the bass tuba has a profound effect on the response and clarity of the lower register. Yamaha was one of the first makers to really seize upon this and has only produced piston valve bass tubas. The other constant in bass tubas has been the B&S PT-10, a rotary valve bass tuba in F which has been around since the early 1980’s. It addresses the low register issue through the use of a conical valve section, rather than a cylindrical one, which gives the instrument a more constant taper throughout its length. Though these instruments represent the greatest use of a particular bass tuba, it should be noted that these instruments represent only 63% of the instruments used by the respondents. The remaining 37% was comprised of seventeen other models of bass tuba. The greatest change in instruments from Dr. Randolph’s earlier study was the status of Alexander and Yamaha bass tubas. In 1989, the Alexander tuba was the second most often selected instrument receiving 32% of the total response and is now
used by only 7% of respondents. Conversely, the Yamaha bass tuba, then selected by 3% of the respondents, has risen to a most favored status today.

Fig. 15. Bass tubas owned or regularly used by respondents.

As teachers have great influence on what instruments their institutions purchase, it is logical that there is a parallel between the instruments the teachers perform on and those which are owned by their respective schools. Since a teacher has chosen a bass tuba which produces the particular sound concept they desire, and they are familiar with its tendencies, it make sense that they would try to have those same instruments

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12 Ibid.
purchased by their school. It would be easier for the student to duplicate the teacher’s sound concept on the same type of instrument. As with the respondent’s personal choice of instruments, the Yamaha YFB-822 and the B&S PT-10 are the predominant F tubas in U.S. colleges and universities while the Willson 3400 and the Besson 983 top the list of Eb tubas. (Figure 16)

![Graph showing bass tubas owned by respondent's college/university.]

There is a greater variety of instruments owned by students because they are more likely to be able to take advantage of the latest changes and innovations in instrument development. (Figure 17) Again, the B&S PT-10 and the Yamaha YFB-822 hold the top two positions while the third position is held by the relatively new offering from Miraphone – the 281 “Firebird”. Meinl-Weston has three offerings in this top list:
the rotary valve model 45, its piston valve counterpart - the 45SLP and the newly
designed 2182. Incidentally, all of these instruments are F bass tubas. The great
variety of available instruments shows that the manufacturers are working with the
artists and constantly striving to provide the best instrument possible.

![Bar chart showing bass tubas owned by students in respondent’s studio.](image)

**Fig. 17.** Bass tubas owned by students in respondent’s studio.

When presented with the question: “Which instruments would you recommend
for purchase by a college/university?” two dominant factors need to be evaluated. The
first must always be: Is the bass tuba a quality instrument capable of allowing the
student to reach his or her full musical potential? The second always seems to
gravitate toward the financial question: value. In this light, the B&S PT-10 clearly rises
to the top (Figure 18) because, as has been seen through its usage by teachers and
students, it is a very good instrument and it is one of the least expensive of the recommended examples. To be able to teach the instrument, you must have an instrument for the student to play and must therefore be able to convince administrators that it is good quality for the dollar as an investment.

Fig. 18. Bass tubas recommended for purchase by college/university.

As with the question regarding the respondent’s particular sound concept, the question about bass tuba mouthpiece characteristics was just as individual. A broad range of suggestions was provided by the participants with very little exact duplication between them. The two most common responses indicated a preference for a slightly shallow, bowl shaped mouthpiece as this combination would tend to bring out the
warmth of the upper overtones. These preferences were further confirmed by the respondent’s comparisons between their bass tuba and contrabass tuba mouthpieces, with the greatest difference being the bass tuba mouthpiece was both smaller and shallower. (Figure 19) The respondents seem to match the size of the mouthpiece to the size of the instrument. Thirty-two percent of the respondents use the same mouthpiece or a similar one, whereas the last 5% make a compromise. This usually involves something like using a shallower cup but mating it to the same rim as their contrabass tuba mouthpiece, thus simplifying the transition from one instrument to the other in situations where both instruments were being used.

Fig. 19. How respondent’s bass tuba mouthpiece differs from contrabass tuba mouthpiece.
Just as with the performer’s choice of instruments, the choice of mouthpieces becomes very personal. Ultimately, it comes down to whichever mouthpiece works for the performer and enables them to create the sound they desire. The following chart is a list of the most suggested mouthpieces out of a field of 34 different models tallied in the survey results. Some of these are of stock availability while others are of a custom/semi-custom design. (Figure 20) Trends in this list can be seen: the top six mouthpieces demonstrate a bowl shaped cup and are generally smaller in size – mouthpieces that would be used on bass tuba or at most a small contrabass tuba when a smaller, more compact sound was desired. The Conn, Laskey and Monette are of the “American” funnel shaped cups and work for those players who are more likely to use one mouthpiece for most or all of their playing on both the bass and contrabass tuba.

![Mouthpiece Comparison Chart](image)

Fig. 20. Mouthpiece most often used by respondents on bass tuba.
When considering the intonation or response tendencies of the bass tuba, the respondents indicated no particularly constant pitch or range problem. Most answered that they either had no problems or that the problems were personal rather than instrumental. The issues that were mentioned by the respondents tended to center on stuffiness and/or instability in the low register – from C below the bass clef staff down to the fundamental. This has usually been a problem for the bass tuba, but the number of respondents reporting no problems seems to indicate that this particular issue is being resolved by instrument manufacturers. Likewise, fingerings commonly used by respondents which incorporate the 5th valve, 6th valve (if available) or both on the bass tuba are now fairly evenly agreed upon. (Figure 21) For each pitch which shows more than one recommended choice, one of them appears to be preferred by a sizeable margin. The others can usually be attributed to performers using older instruments as the tonal and intonation issues in newer, improved instruments are becoming more stable.
### F tuba

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1-2-5</th>
<th>100.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2-3-5</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-3-5</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>2-4-5</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3-4</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3-4-5</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2-4-5</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>2-3-4-5</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-3-4-5</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2-3-4-5</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-3-4-5-6</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5th valve tuned to a flat whole step.

6th valve tuned to a flat half step.

### F tuba

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4</th>
<th>100.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>2-3-5</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>1-4-5</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1-2-4-5</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gb</td>
<td>2-3-4-5</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5th valve tuned to two steps.

### Eb tuba

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4-5</th>
<th>100.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>2-3-4</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F#</td>
<td>3-4-5</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2-3-4-5</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1-2-3-4-5</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-3-4-5</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5th valve tuned to a flat whole step.

Fig. 21. Common fingerings utilizing the 5th and 6th valves on the F and Eb bass tuba.
The bass tuba is being taught in the college and university applied studio more than ever before. Though its instruction is mainly crucial for the student aspiring to a career in performance, there is still merit in teaching all tuba players this instrument as it opens new venues and literature to them, providing a greater understanding of how their instrument fits into the musical world. The greatest portion of bass tuba instruction still tends to happen in the larger colleges and universities but, as interest in the instrument continues to increase, many smaller institutions are making the effort to open this opportunity to their students.

In contrast to their teachers, today’s students are being introduced to the bass tuba earlier in their undergraduate careers and sometimes even begin before their entrance into the college/university setting. Teachers are meeting this challenge with the tried and true materials from their own experience and with an expanding list of new materials as they become available. Likewise, composers are exploring the soloistic abilities of the bass tuba and there is an increasing flow of new works which will continue to grow as long as there are capable players seeking to perform them.

This trend is also pushing instrument and mouthpiece manufacturers to provide players with the greatest number of options to create their musical ideal. In the days when there were only a few players performing on the bass tuba, there were only limited options, but as the interest in the bass tuba has expanded, the number of instrument
and mouthpiece options has increased exponentially. If a tubist can not find a mouthpiece that fits their need, they are more likely than ever to be able to find someone to create one that will.

At this time, the F tuba is still the predominant bass tuba in the United States but the Eb tuba is steadily gaining lost ground. Players who would never have even considered trying the Eb tuba twenty years ago are taking a second look, sometimes replacing their F tuba, or just using it to augment their musical palette. This is due, in large part, to manufacturers listening to the Eb tuba stalwarts and working with them to develop more consistent, improved designs capable of the best musical qualities. Gone are the days of the Eb tuba being considered a second rate instrument.

The role of the bass tuba in the college and university applied studio has been established and must be viewed as an important facet of the student tubists education which should be explored and developed. A saxophonist’s undergraduate education would never be considered complete if they had only performed on the alto saxophone and not experienced the other members of the saxophone family. The same holds true for the clarinet family and should as well for the tuba family. The era of “one tuba fits all” is at an end and it is the responsibility of the college and university establishment to provide the most comprehensive experience possible for the student tubist – whether they major in performance, education, composition or any other branch of our art.
APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE
A Survey of Current Trends in the College and University

Applied Studio in the United States

PERSONAL:
Name: __________________________________________________________
Telephone Number: ______________________________________________
E-mail Address: _________________________________________________

May I contact you if I need clarification? Yes ______ No ______

Present Teaching Position/s: ______________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Former Teaching Positions: ______________________________________
________________________________________________________________

EDUCATION:
Degree Year Institution Major Teacher/s
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

TEACHING POSITION:
What is the approximate student population of your current college/university? _____________

What is the approximate student population of your School of Music? _________________

What is the student population of your applied studio? _________________

Tubas? __________ Euphoniums? _______________

Do you currently have, or have you had students who play bass tuba? ______

Of the tuba students in your studio, how many have their own contrabass tuba?
FR ______ SO ______ JR ______ SR ______ GRAD __________

Of the tuba students in your studio, how many have their own bass tuba?
I. GENERAL

1. What is your principal instrument? ____________________________________________
2. Do you perform on the bass tuba? ______ If no, please skip to section II.
   If so, do you perform on: F ____   Eb _________   Both ________
3. What would you say is the percentage (approximate) of your total playing time spent on the bass
tuba? _________
   F tuba _________   Eb tuba _________
4. What percentage (approximate) of your solo playing is done on the bass tuba? _________
   F tuba _________   Eb tuba _________
5. What solo literature is representative of what you most often perform on the bass tuba? (Please
   indicate whether you are using the F or Eb tuba.)
   __________________________________________
6. What percentage (approximate) of your chamber music playing is done on the bass tuba? _________
   F tuba _________   Eb tuba _________
7. Do you perform with a brass quintet? __________________
8. What percentage (approximate) of your brass quintet playing is done on the bass tuba? _________
   F tuba _________   Eb tuba _________
9. What quintet/chamber music is representative of what you most often perform on the bass tuba?
   __________________________________________
10. Do you perform with a symphony orchestra? __________
11. What percentage (approximate) of your symphony orchestra playing is done on the bass tuba?
    __________
    F tuba _________   Eb tuba _________
12. What symphony orchestra literature is representative of that which you most often perform on the bass tuba?

13. What factors influence your decision to use the bass tuba as a performing medium?

14. What factors influence your decision to use either the F tuba or the Eb tuba over the other?

II. PEDAGOGY

If you have not studied on the bass tuba, please skip to number 19.

15. When did you begin playing the bass tuba? Before college _ FR ________ SO ________ JR __ ________ SR ________ GRAD ___________ POST GRAD ______

16. What was your age when you began studying the bass tuba? __________

17. Can you credit a specific teacher with having taught you to play bass tuba? ________
   If so, whom? __________________________________________________________________________

18. What specific pedagogical materials are representative of those you used when you began your study of the bass tuba? (Etudes, studies, solos, etc.)

If you do not teach the bass tuba, please skip to section III.

19. Of your current students, how many began study of the bass tuba: Before ________ FR ________
   SO ________ JR ________ SR ________ GRAD ___________

20. At what level of playing are these students? Advanced ________ Intermediate _ Young ______

21. How do you introduce the bass tuba to a student?

__________________________________________________________________________
22. Rank the following pedagogical materials in the order you would use them to start a student on the bass tuba.

_____ Etudes
_____ Solos
_____ Scales/technical exercises
_____ Orchestral excerpts
_____ Other (please specify) ____________________________________

23. What specific pedagogical materials are representative of those you commonly use in teaching bass tuba?

______________________________________________________________

24. What solo literature is representative of what you most often use when teaching a student the bass tuba?

______________________________________________________________

25. What orchestral literature is representative of what you most often use when teaching the bass tuba?

______________________________________________________________

26. In your view, how important is the study of the bass tuba for advanced and intermediate level students?

_____ Of little importance.
_____ Somewhat important.
_____ Important
_____ Very important.
_____ Crucial.

27. How important do you consider playing ability on the bass tuba for the advanced college student?

_____ Of little importance.
28. How important do you consider playing ability on the bass tuba for the intermediate college student?

- Of little importance.
- Somewhat important.
- Important
- Very important.
- Crucial.

III. EQUIPMENT

*If you, your institution or your students do not own bass tubas please skip to the end of the survey.*

29. How would you describe the sound characteristics you are looking for when playing the bass tuba as compared to the contrabass tuba?

30. What bass tubas do you own or regularly use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th># of valves</th>
<th>tuning of 5th/6th valve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

31. What bass tubas are owned by your college/university?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th># of valves</th>
<th># of instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

32. What bass tubas are owned by students in your studio?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th># of valves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
33. Which instruments would you recommend for purchase by a college/university?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th># of valves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

34. What physical characteristics do you look for in a bass tuba mouthpiece?  

35. How does this differ from your contrabass tuba mouthpiece/s?  

36. What mouthpiece/s do you most often use on bass tuba?  

37. From a response standpoint, is there any particularly problematic range or problematic pitches for you on your instrument?  

38. What valve combinations incorporating the 5th/6th valves do you commonly use on your bass tuba?  
   (Please indicate the tuning of the 5th/6th valves.)  

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

This work is an extensively researched history of the development of brass instruments. Baines clearly documents the evolution of the brass instruments family and augments the text with many illustrations depicting instruments at various stages of development. Instruments from the simple ram's horn to modern orchestral instruments are covered. This is an extensively revised and updated version of his original 1976 work.


The second edition of Bevan’s 1978 text has been extensively revised, updated and expanded. It is the quintessential reference work on the history and development of the tuba family of instruments. Bevan documents the history of the family from the serpent of the 1500’s through modern instruments of today, discussing technical, acoustical and musical development, supplemented with many diagrams, illustrations, photographs and musical examples. He also covers national trends and the tubas role in different performing venues.

This is the most exhaustive reference work of the tuba to date. The greatest portion of the book consists of annotated guides and indexes to literature available in which the tuba is the primary solo instrument, books, dissertations and other research works concerning the tuba, discographies and educational resources for the teacher. Also included is historical information excerpted from Clifford Bevan’s *The Tuba Family*, articles from composers on writing/arranging for the tuba, information on instrument makers and biographical material on professional tubists.


This is a commercial publication of Whitehead’s Doctoral dissertation. In it, he formulates a curriculum for the University level teaching studio based on his observations of Mr. Phillips’ and Mr. Perantoni’s teaching styles and the recollections of students of all three named professors. He examines not only study, performance and ensemble literature but also the daily functioning and maintenance of the studio. Professors Bell, Phillips and Perantoni have been the only tuba professors at Indiana University since the creation of that position.

This text presents all brass instruments and is often used as brass methods course text. In the sections pertaining to the tuba, it presents all of the instruments of the tuba family and common uses of each. It serves as an example of how the role of the bass tuba is being presented to non tuba majors.

**Dictionary Articles**


This article provides a general overview of the history and development of the tuba and related instruments.

**Periodicals**

This article is the seventh installment in a series of articles concerning the various background brass instruments. Bevan discusses the history of the bass tuba and how its role has changed over the years.


In this article Cummings discusses the various aspects involved in selecting a particular key or type of tuba for personal or school use.


Cummings article focuses on the practical application of the F tuba. Roles in band literature, solo and tuba-euphonium ensemble are discussed.


Cummings article deals with the revival of the Eb tuba and provides some hints as to teaching, application and instrument selection for it.

The first in a three part series by Dr. Randolph, this article covers his background, methodology and presents his findings in the area of general application.


The second article focuses on pedagogy and literature for the F tuba.


This final article addresses equipment used by the respondents.