

Special thanks to Don Harry for his musicianship, beautiful playing, and encouragement over the years.

Thanks to Bryan Edgett for technical assistance, and to Dr. Norman Peercy, who edited the text.

Jack Robinson is a tubist, bass trombonist, and bass singer. He teaches in the School of Music at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado.

Contents

Preface	5
Introduction	6
Open harmonic series for Tubas	7

Part One

CC and BB^b Tubas

<i>Tuba Intonation Tendencies and Solutions</i>	8
"The Root, Third, Fifth Business"	8
CC Tuba Open Notes	8
A Few Other Notes	9
Tuning Valve Combinations	10
Tuning Fourth Valve	11
Producing False Notes with Definite Pitch	12
Developing False Notes	14
Method for Checking Tunings of Low Notes on Four-Valved CC Tuba	15
Checking Four-Valved BB ^b Tuba Tunings	16
<i>CC Tuba Warm-Up and Tuning Study #1</i>	17
Goals and Procedure	17
<i>CC Tuba Warm-Up and Tuning Studies</i>	18
<i>BB^b Tuba Warm-Up and Tuning Studies</i>	23
Five-Valved Tubas	27
<i>Musical Requisites</i>	28
Musical Styles: Correct Use of the Air Stream	28
Musical Requisites: Concluding Thoughts	30
<i>Playing: Rest and Recovery</i>	31
<i>Embouchure and Breathing</i>	32
<i>Uniform Tongue Placement</i>	34
CC Tuba Study # 1	34
BB ^b Tuba Study # 1	36
Procedure for Study # 2	38
Triplets for all Tubas	43
Low Register Response	46
Styles	49
Single Tonguing Speed On Fixed Pitches	54
<i>Lip Slurs</i>	56
<i>Major Scales and Diatonic Modes</i>	75

Part Two

The F Tuba

General Considerations	84
Intonation	84
Tuning Fourth Valve	86
The Fifth Valve	86
<i>F Tuba Warm-Up and Tuning Study #1</i>	87
Goals and Procedure	87
<i>Excerpt from Bill Adam Trumpet Warm-Up</i>	90
<i>Tonguing Studies-Mueller</i>	94
<i>Four Styles-Robinson</i>	96
<i>Major Scales and Diatonic Modes</i>	99
<i>Lip Slurs</i>	107
<i>Security in Performance</i>	114
<i>Byllo</i>	114
Summary	116

PREFACE

One summer when I had less than enough time to practice tuba, I learned an important lesson about tuba playing. While spending most of my time memorizing an opera role, I became concerned that my tuba playing was falling behind. Therefore, I interrupted my study of the opera to put some much needed time into tuba practice. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the embouchure was quite stiff, and after about thirty minutes of frustrating playing, I decided to study the opera by playing my vocal part and everyone else's on tuba. Something very surprising happened as a result. After only ten minutes of concentrating on Puccini's beautiful melodies, along with the words of those melodies, the tuba playing took on a great change. Things were relaxed and "singing," and an impossible sounding tuba had been transformed into an instrument of music. The lesson learned was this: One can only "do" so much, often too much, to play the tuba. Many times the beautiful sounds of music in one's mind can dictate a more reasonable employment of physical skills. To put it another way, one should allow the tuba to adapt itself to the sounds of beautiful music instead of trying to adapt music to a kind of tuba playing that might be ill conceived or out of balance.

The example given here is not meant to imply that one can abstain from practicing tuba and expect to achieve an increase in playing ability. For without a doubt, we certainly do need to practice in order to develop and maintain playing techniques. This is made easier, however, if we approach playing in an uncomplicated manner, while keeping musical thoughts foremost.

INTRODUCTION

We want to have a strong opinion about the nature of sound we produce on tuba, and this "sound" we should never forget to listen for. As Thomas Beversdorf was quick to point out when I was playing several tubas and bass trombones for him to hear, "People make sounds, horns don't!" Granted, the better instruments make our job easier. But great players pick up less than desirable instruments, not their own, and play beautiful sounds on them.

Our concept of sound should come from listening to beautiful music and great performers. By listening not only to great tuba players, but also to a number of other great instrumentalists and singers, we form our ideas of sound. If we think "tuba" along with the best ideas we have about what a beautiful sound is composed of, then we are on the right track.

At this point, it could be beneficial for the reader to stop and consider one's own concept regarding the properties of a beautiful sound. While different players will provide a variety of descriptions of beautiful sound, what is important is that one is *listening* for certain things as he plays, with a very strong preconceived opinion of how he wants to sound. And, if it is to be of any value outside of one's own private practice room, it must be beautiful to other listeners, all of whom may individually describe it differently.

Even though descriptions of sound differ, I will essay some of my own thoughts concerning sound: Beautiful tuba sound has good pitch and a centered, rather than spreading quality. It is characteristic; informed listeners do not think they are hearing a euphonium or a contrabass trombone. A great range of dynamics is possible and, furthermore, the sound can blend or prevail when needed. Vibrato is not present where it should not be present. Beautiful sound is free rather than forced, and it possesses a singing, resonant quality.

Before we begin playing tuba for the day, we want to pause and hear in our minds the most beautiful tuba sound we can imagine. Having done this, we want to produce the same sound immediately as we begin to play our easiest notes on the instrument. We are establishing our best sound model which we shall recall throughout the day.

On CC tuba, for many players, the easiest notes might be second partial C or third partial G. On F Tuba, the easiest note on which to establish the best sound might be second partial F. At any rate, having now once again produced our most beautiful sound, we want to take that same sound up and down the entire range of the instrument as we proceed with playing.

Like the operatic bass who does not become a baritone when he sings high, our tuba "voice" does not change its essential character as we change registers. Listening to the wonderful bass voices of Ezio Pinza and Boris Christoff will demonstrate this point for us.

This, then, the production of a beautiful sound, constitutes the essence of tuba playing. For certain, we have to be able to do a lot of different things with musical styles, technical skills, and range as demanded by the music we play. We must, however, always listen for our most beautiful sound as we fulfill these requirements.