

TEXAS MUSIC EDUCATOR'S ASSOCIATION

6:30 PM SESSION on Thursday, February 14, 2013

"CHUNKS OF CHOCOLATE"

presented by

KEITH MEEK

Founder & Conference Director
BLAST OF BRASS Summer Music Conference

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"Man, we're blowing chunks of chocolate now!"

H. Dennis Smith 1937 - 2011

Former principal trombone Los Angeles Philharmonic
and professor of trombone at the University of Michigan

I was playing a gig with H. Dennis Smith, myself on principal, Dennis on second, and Barney McCollum on bass trombone. When Dennis suddenly turned to me, with a big smile, and said the above quote. At first, I wasn't exactly sure what he meant. In fact, I was a bit concerned. I then realized just how much fun he was having. In other words, this older, wonderful trombonist was having a ball playing massive chords, in tune and in time...in Dennis' words "Blowing Chunks of Chocolate." As a long time teacher, performer, and musician contractor, I have aggressively tried to help students and professionals alike enjoy their work. For example, at the BLAST OF BRASS conference, we incorporate a balance between *Education*, and what we feel is even more important, *Inspiration*. Every year we bring in International Artists to teach, but more importantly to model the performance and rehearsal standard. The Featured and Guest Artists teach master classes, perform recitals, coach ensembles, and perform with the BLAST OF BRASS ensemble as a soloist and ensemble member. The students are taught directly by the artists and also get the opportunity to watch the artists in action, in both performance and rehearsal settings. The students get to see...the good, the bad, and the ugly. The students learn how to approach growth, which will include successes, mistakes, challenges, even total failures, and yet still enjoy the ride.

In today's session we will share concepts mainly intended for the younger trombonists. We want to teach from an extremely logical and common sense standpoint that helps everyone progress quickly. It is this creative element of discovery and exploration that inspires the heart and soul of musicians to practice. Creating wonderful musicians with gorgeous sounds and accurate time, who love making music...and who love the journey!

CONCEPTS FOR TEACHING YOUNGER STUDENTS by Keith Meek

Today I would like to give you a tour of what I call the TROMBONE HOTEL, along with a few KEYS for access to various floors and rooms.

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|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. SOUND | 4. FLOORS = PARTIALS | 7. NATURAL vs TONGUED SLURS |
| 2. ESCALATOR = GLISSANDO | 5. ROOMS = SLIDE POSITIONS | 8. SLIDE TECHNIQUE |
| 3. ELEVATOR = NATURAL SLUR | 6. ARTICULATIONS | 9. HIGH SPEED ELEVATOR = FLEXIBILITY |

SOUND is the most important part of music and **AIR** is the most important part of sound.

| BREATHING EX. | INHALE | EXHALE | REPEAT |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Sit, bend over and let your arms and head hang down. | 3 beats | 3 beats | 3 times |
| 2. Sit, lean forward and place elbows on your knees. | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 3. Sit up with your shoulders relaxed directly over hips. | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 4. Stand up, bend over with arms and head hanging. | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 5. Stand up straight with shoulders over hips. | 2 beats | 2 beats | 3 times |
| 6. Continue standing. | 1 beat | 1 beat | 10 times |

EMBOUCHURE SET-UP The embouchure, used correctly, is the **KEY** that will unlock every note. Have your students say these words to help set their embouchure: Ahmm, Mahmm, Pahmm, Ehmm, Hehmm. The corners of the mouth will be slightly firm, chin will be flat, teeth will be slightly apart, and their lips will be lightly touching.

STARTING on the HORN

Teach your students how to hold the instrument correctly and then begin with the following exercises. Start by blowing a full, warm, and steady airstream through the horn...without making a sound. There is **NO NEED TO TEACH BUZZING** or **COUNTING** at this time. We are not concerned with anything other than the quality of the **SOUND**. Have your students imitate your playing with a simple game of Follow-the-Leader. Start moving the slide in measure two, from 1st to 6th, and then in measure four, from 1st to 6th and then stopping the sound and move back to 1st to play the lower note. In measure five use a natural slur to from F to Bb, thus no slide change required.

Each exercise 3 times:

ESCALATOR = GLISSANDO

ELEVATOR = SLUR

The following exercises can be added as the student improves. Please note that these exercises are a modified version of Scott Hartman's "Glisslurs". Mr. Hartman is the Lecturer in Trombone at Yale University.

CONCEPTS FOR TEACHING ADVANCED STUDENTS by Brent Phillips

A logical and accessible approach to beginning trombone pedagogy is the foundational key to shaping our future artists. All of my students at Baylor come from highly successful band programs that stress private study and focus on these "core" teaching principles. I have found that if these basic precepts of tone, range building, articulation, and flexibility are explored and discovered early in their development, the desire for continued learning will remain throughout their playing career.

As educators, it is our goal to create an environment of fearless exploration that allows young trombonists opportunities for explosive growth and calculated failure. The competition, in the Texas band programs, is partially responsible for healthy growth in our trombone craft. However, competition alone will not truly sustain and engage the hearts and minds of our youth. I believe that we must first cultivate an innate desire and passion to seek out new music, listen to great recordings, study a phrase and otherwise "create" before we demand results from our young musicians. I will discuss how these fundamental elements of beginning trombone pedagogy easily transition to the serious high school trombone student and perhaps college music major, or ultimately professional artist or teacher.

Philosophy of Teaching:

- Trombone is so fun and cool! It is completely worth our energy and effort and is paramount to building life skills
- Quick/fast slide technique that is smooth and relaxed (indexing)
- Core training: Developing a solid core to the tone, that is compact and not diffused, round and not a "laser beam"
- Legato: Natural slurs between partials when possible as opposed to legato tonguing everything
- The emphasis is more on blowing (producing sound) rather than breathing
- Embouchure --- corners down, chops anchored, very little pivot, no air pockets, chin "flat"
- I teach airflow studies that encourage students to move a steady column of air throughout all registers
- I am opposed to "pulsing" and "sizzle" techniques
- I would like to see students working on tenor clef early in their development
- I teach young players to adjust their slide for each partial from day one
- I incorporate singing and buzzing exercises from the first lesson
- Listening to great trombone playing is the fastest way to develop a young players' concept of sound (All of the great players grew up surrounded by great tones).