

# “Enter the Tone Zone: Developing Sound and Sustain in Your Low Brass”

presented by

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Featuring members of Mr. Smith’s private studio:

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## Attitude:

- Encourage low brass to not be apologetic for their instrument
  - o Reprimand for being too loud can discourage healthy sound production
  - o Young trombonists can easily believe slide is a handicap, rather than embrace it’s full potential
  - o **Confidence** begets results, which begets confidence, etc etc
- “*Chain is only as strong as the weakest link*”
  - o Individual work necessary
    - Not every issue can be addressed in ensemble/sectional setting
- Not all practice should/will sound great!
  - o Using different techniques can take students out of comfort zone
    - Educating them on the **METHOD** is important
    - Quickly going between methods to show results is key
- YOUR commitment
  - o Providing individual attention
  - o Getting specialized help when needed
    - Use professional clinicians
    - Refer students for lessons from professional
  - o Encouraging sound over “note-getting”

## Equipment:

- Practice mutes (resistance training)
  - o Limit time as it can create undesirable results, too
  - o An in-bell practice mute is great for travel!
- Breathing tube
  - o Keeps tongue low and throat open
  - o 1/2 - 3/4" diameter tube, 4-6" long
  - o Put on string so you can wear around neck
- Working, well-maintained instrument
  - o Spit valves can be suspect
  - o Valve/slide alignment paramount

## Physical:

- Posture
  - o Tall and confident without strain
    - Imagine giving a speech
    - Fake confidence if you must!
  - o Posture makes the first impression
    - *Look* like you know what you are doing!!
  - o Instrument
    - Bring instrument to YOU
      - No negotiating (ie. Meet half way by craning neck)
      - Use a mirror or video recorder
    - Trombones pointing out to audience, not at floor
      - Support with left arm
      - No "chicken wing"
    - Euphoniums supported and brought to face
      - Use towel/pillow/foam block
    - Tubas use tuba stands if necessary
- Breathing
  - o Breathing tube
    - Builds habit of full breath
    - Awareness of how a full breath *feels* is key
      - Inhale through tube, then let it drop to play
      - Excellent for personal practice and sectionals
  - o Inhale the word "HOME"
  - o Breathe the vowel or pitch you are about to play
  - o Rhythmic breath
    - Breath in time
      - Reinforces pulse
      - Less likely to miss first note
      - Makes attack *reactionary* to breath
        - o Eliminates guessing game
        - o Similar to a backswing in golf/tennis

- Engages ensemble listening
      - Have players close eyes
      - Conduct solely through breath
  - Capitalize on air falling out
    - Deep breath leads to exhalation
    - No need to push when you inhale deep!
    - **“Sound reflects Breath”**
  - Practice technique: moving air through the phrase
    - Imagine playing the instrument, but just move air
    - Do this seated: can make you light-headed!!
- Buzzing
  - Buzz THROUGH the mouthpiece
    - Students tend to buzz into cup
    - Project sound
      - Pick a target/focal point
      - *“push the buzz out of the mouthpiece”*
    - Capitalize on breath falling out
      - Excellent time to reinforce breathing tube and rhythmic breath
  - No tongue when buzzing
    - Less resistance in mouthpiece can confuse tongue
    - Distracts from establishing FLOW
  - Focus on air flow and continuous sound
    - Do not pulse to create articulation
    - Glissando *through* pitches rather than trying to “slot”
      - Vocalize with the lips
  - No “pulsing” of the air
    - Buzz on back of hand to feel the air
    - Presence of air should not change
- Articulation
  - Hesitant, slow, or TWAH articulation negatively impacts sound and sostenuto
    - Immediacy of attack yields immediate, full sound
    - Try “popping” exercise
      - No time to manipulate sound after the attack
      - It’s gold or garbage!!
  - Speak the articulation
    - We know how to announce – we’ve been doing it our entire lives!
      - Brass articulation is similar to speech
      - Practice by actually speaking your articulation!!
    - “tU” for marcato, “dU” for legato
      - Consonants may differ student to student based on physiology

- Quick strike regardless of articulation style or note length
      - Long notes tend to invite sluggish attack
      - Focus on the vowel being open
    - Ensemble exercise: attack points
      - Vary dynamic levels
      - Encourages keeping time/pulse
  - Slide/Valves
    - Move slide/valves ***rhythmically***
      - Rhythm determines when we move, just like articulation
      - Moving slide early or late allows time for *junk* to happen
      - “Fast” slide can create tension
      - Slide and tongue should be synchronized
      - **Rhythmic movement maximizes time on each note**
        - Establishes more tone and resonance
    - Practice slide/valves separately
      - Using metronome, just move slide/valves
      - Speak the articulation while moving slide/valves
        - Encourages synchronicity
        - Use simple passages or scales
        - Student must be aware:
          - Watch slide while speaking
          - Use mirror
          - Video record
        - Economical on chops!
        - The “Slide Brain” (or “Valve Brain”) must be programmed separately before expecting it to work in context

The above steps must all be taken before expecting results on the instrument!! Breaking down each of these elements creates excellent habits on which to build.

- On the horn
  - Flutter tongue
    - Sostenuito air necessary to flutter
    - Some students can’t do this – that’s OK!
  - Play with no tongue
    - Encourage sloppy slide and glissando
      - Maximize focus on **AIR** and **SOUND**
      - Trombone students are often (unfortunately) conditioned so that slide is a handicap
      - “Move slide faster” is said to avoid glissando, but often results in lack of sostenuto support

- Encourage soupy, continuous **sound**
- Whatever it takes to put focus on sustained air and sound, DO IT!!
- Imagine there are no partial breaks; blow!!!
- “Play the sound”
- Putting it together
  - Combine everything we’ve worked on and see the result!
  - Work in small passages so that steps can be repeated quickly and results realized along the way
    - Maintain focus by working in chunks
    - Student must acknowledge results to be further motivated
    - Results beget confidence, confidence begets results....



## Q & A

### S.E. Shires Company “Q Series” Trombone & Trumpet Introduction

Thank you for attending today. If I can be of service at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me via one of the methods below. I am always happy to further explain these concepts, and welcome questions. Remember, there are many different ways to achieve positive results. I have found the aforementioned methods to not only achieve desirable results, but also encourage students to be creative in their problem solving, while understanding how they did it!!

Should you be interested in having me visit your school, I would love to discuss. I offer one-on-one tutoring, group masterclasses, career development lectures, solo/chamber performances, and whatever else you might dream up!

Best wishes and enjoy your stay at NYSSMA 2017!!

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