

ORCHESTRAL TUBA AUDITION PREPARATION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
THREE SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS

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ORCHESTRAL TUBA AUDITION PREPARATION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
THREE SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS

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Daniel Perantoni, Warren Deck, and Mike Roylance have played significant roles in developing students that have won orchestral tuba positions in recent decades. These three instructors are representative of the past 30 years in that the success of their students are tiered chronologically over that time period; Perantoni has had students winning orchestral positions since the 1980s, Warren Deck's studio began flourishing in the 1990's, and Mike Roylance's students have been emerging since he began teaching in Boston in 2003.

The purpose of this study was to determine commonalities and differences between the three of these teachers. Their effectiveness was measured on three spheres of competency: interpersonal, musical, and pedagogical.

All three pedagogues were strong in all three spheres of competency, although each instructor favors a specific sphere. A student that needs a lot of emotional support might consider a teacher like Perantoni who is especially charismatic and enthusiastic about seeing their students win jobs. Someone who desires someone to spend a lot of time on the final detailed refinement and seeks more musical ideas should study with someone like Deck, who is a master of helping students refine excerpts to the level they

need to be to be attractive to an audition committee. A student that needs structure in the pedagogy of their teacher should study with someone like Roylance who prescribes a specific audition preparation routine for all of his students.

One final finding of note is that while an effective teacher plays a crucial role in a students' journey to audition success; it ultimately comes down to the ability of a student to apply their teacher's counsel, their ability to effectively improve their individual weaknesses, and their ability to have the patience and emotional stamina through numerous failures that ultimately results in the aspiring orchestral tubist to win a major symphony job.

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PREVIEW

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PREVIEW



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

The goal of many collegiate music students is to obtain a professional performance job with a full-time symphony orchestra. Studies have been conducted on preparing for orchestral auditions, but none are specifically for tuba players. A small number of tuba instructors are responsible for producing students that have won performance jobs in this country in the last century. Three of the most successful tuba instructors of the twentieth century are William Bell, Arnold Jacobs, and Harvey Phillips. These pedagogues have been studied and analyses have been done on what made them effective teachers. No studies have examined the premier tuba instructors of the generation that followed them. Likewise, no studies have considered pedagogy specifically relating to audition preparation for the tuba.

### Purpose of the Study

Three of the most successful instructors in the last 30 years are Daniel Perantoni, who taught at Arizona State and is currently teaching at Indiana University; Warren Deck, who taught at Julliard and is currently teaching at the Aspen music festival; and Mike Roylance, who is currently teaching at the New England Conservatory of Music, Boston University and Yale. These three teachers are representative of the past 30 years in that the success of their students are tiered chronologically over that time period; Mr. Perantoni's students have been winning orchestral positions since the 1980s, Warren

Deck's studio was flourishing in the 1990s, and Mike Roylance's students have been finding success since he began teaching in Boston in 2003.

The purpose of this study is to determine commonalities and differences in how these teachers prepare their students for orchestra auditions. Their effectiveness will be measured based on three spheres of competency: interpersonal, musical, and pedagogical. The interpersonal competency is based on an analysis of how the teacher motivates and demonstrates confidence in the student's abilities by balancing compliments with criticism. The musical sphere is measured in large part by the supplemental repertoire and musical exercises that they use to help their students approach and perfect the orchestral excerpts. Finally the pedagogical sphere is addressed by finding out the instructor's lesson strategies as an audition approaches. What do they do to help their students to be able to perform optimally under the high stress circumstances of auditions? Through this process what do they choose to say and what do they choose to show; how much of their teaching is verbal, and how much of their teaching is demonstration?

The goals of this research are two-fold: formulate decisive conclusions that show the most important aspects of a teacher who prepares students for auditions, and create a resource for current and future studio teachers of the tuba with a variety of supplemental repertoire and approaches to help their students succeed as orchestral musicians.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

There have been few large-scale studies published on the pedagogy of tuba. While journal articles have been written on the subject, only a few in-depth studies on any area of tuba pedagogy exist. These studies have focused on various areas of pedagogy including method books, rudimentary aspects such as articulation, embouchure, vibrato, and trends in college teaching, but no studies have specifically examined pedagogy specifically relating to preparation for orchestral auditions. Furthermore, pedagogical techniques and the expectations of audition committees have changed over the last century. There are no texts that examine current pedagogy in orchestral audition preparation for the tuba. This literature review focuses on documents relating to orchestral audition preparation and then briefly on tuba pedagogy.

#### Orchestral Audition Preparation for Other Instruments

There are no published studies that examine tuba orchestral audition preparation, however there are similar materials written for other instruments. The string bass, flute, violin and trumpet all have publications that focus on preparing for auditions.<sup>1</sup> Of these works, the publication for the trumpet appears to be the most similar to my study as it

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Buck, "The Orchestral Flute Audition: An Examination of Preparation Methods and Techniques" (DMA document, Rice University, 2003); Joan Griffing, "Audition Procedures and Advice from Concertmasters of American Orchestras" (DMA document, The Ohio State University, 1994); Heather Rodabaugh, "Preparation for Orchestral Trumpet Auditions: The Perspectives of Three Prominent Orchestra Players" (DMA document, University of Oklahoma, 2008); Christopher Rose, "An Orchestra Audition Preparation Handbook for Bass Players" (DMA document, Arizona State University, 2011).

focuses on the perspectives of three prominent orchestral trumpet players.<sup>2</sup> These studies collectively suggest that there is a growing desire to understand orchestral audition preparation and that a study on such relating to the tuba is essential.

In 1994 Joan Griffing published a document on audition procedures for the violin from the perspective of three prominent concertmasters.<sup>3</sup> Griffing specifically wanted to identify the pedagogy of concertmasters. She felt there were materials for violin but the opinions and advice from prominent orchestral players was lacking. She utilized two methods to collect information from current professionals. First, she sent questionnaires to about 40 concertmasters. Next, she interviewed the concertmasters. Griffing acknowledged that she was able to gain a better and deeper understanding of the training and procedures for orchestral violinists from those concertmasters with whom she held personal interviews. This suggests that this might be a more effective way to gain information from music professionals. She collected information relating to three major areas: 1) advice on training and preparing for auditions, 2) audition procedures in the subject's orchestra, and 3) views on the audition process in general and tips for novice auditionees.<sup>4</sup> From a pedagogical standpoint, the first question regarding training and preparation is probably the most relevant and thus questions in the present study related more to those in this particular category.

Many of the audition preparation questions in this particular study related specifically to the violin including which concerto to choose or which movement of a Bach piece should be performed. However, one question of possible relevance to other instruments was "When first learning the orchestral repertoire, what regimen would you

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<sup>2</sup> Roadbaugh, "Preparation for Orchestral Trumpet Auditions."

<sup>3</sup> Griffing, "Audition Procedures."

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

suggest a violinist undergo?”<sup>5</sup> In answer to this question, most concertmasters suggested to study the repertoire with an orchestral violinist closely followed by suggesting listening to recordings of the repertoire. The least common response was to study with *any* violin teacher (meaning that the expertise of the teacher was unimportant).<sup>6</sup> These results suggest the importance of teachers who are well versed in the orchestral repertoire. If the teacher is important to learning the pieces required by audition committees, it stands to reason that the advice of teachers whose students are winning orchestral jobs would be of critical importance quite probably for any instrument. In examining tuba audition preparation, it seems that advice from prominent teachers would be critical information; therefore, three prominent teachers were selected for the present study.

Elizabeth Buck wrote a DMA document describing preparation methods for orchestral flute auditions.<sup>7</sup> She sent questionnaires to various professional flutists asking about commonly asked excerpts and preparation methods for auditions. A good portion of Buck’s work addressed which excerpts were most important and the performance practice of those excerpts. Of more relevance to my study, advice on general preparation for auditions was asked from professionals who had successful auditions. Orchestral performers strongly recommended the use of metronomes and tuners in audition preparation, but not to overuse them as this can decrease the musicality of the excerpts. Another theme among the recommendations was that of the importance of listening and the study of recordings. The flutists recommended that students listen to recordings of professional orchestras, attend live performances as often as possible, and record themselves and listen to their own recordings. Two other general recommendations were

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Buck, “Orchestral Flute Auditions.”

to create mock audition settings and to take care of the physical body through exercise and diet. Finally, Buck discusses the use of visualization, meditation, and other similar techniques to help performers prepare for auditions and deal with anxiety.<sup>8</sup> It would seem that these preparation techniques could be used across various instruments and would prove valuable for the tuba student. This general advice can be compared to advice given by the teachers involved in my study.

Christopher Rose took a different approach to studying audition preparation. He created an audition handbook for string bass.<sup>9</sup> Rose's document does not specifically interview those with current jobs, but rather serves as more of a how-to guide. He provided a CD of excerpts he performed to accompany his written handbook. The handbook covers how to find jobs, apply for them, and some basic preparation advice. Rose discusses specific excerpts as well as the audition procedure. The major goal of his work was to fill what he felt was a hole in collegiate education in music in how to obtain a professional music position in performance.<sup>10</sup> While the handbook approach may be important for students, this document does not seem to have in-depth information from a pedagogical perspective in how to help students win jobs. My study examines effective pedagogical techniques that help students prepare for jobs rather than just describing procedures.

Finally, Heather Rodabaugh wrote a document examining the perspectives of three prominent trumpet players on preparing for auditions.<sup>11</sup> She sent a questionnaire prior to the interview to help the players to think on the questions before answering. She then completed in-person interviews with each of the players. Players were asked to talk

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Rose, "Orchestra Audition for Bass."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Rodabaugh, "Preparation for Orchestral Trumpet Auditions."

about their backgrounds, their views on general audition preparation, and their opinions about the best performance practice of specific excerpts. In the scope of my study the most relevant information is that on general audition preparation. Rodabaugh found that all of the interviewed musicians seemed to stress the importance of attentive practice, mental preparation and focus, personal health, and focus on musicality of the performances. These findings seem to correspond with those found by Buck and Griffing in their interviews with flutists and violinists respectively. More specifically, Rodabaugh found that the trumpet experts stressed being familiar with the excerpts and practicing them on a routine basis rather than just before an audition.<sup>12</sup> Trumpet players also suggested that those seeking to audition for professional orchestras practice mental toughness by performing regularly and practicing visualization. Lastly, the musicians spoke at length about maintaining musicality even to the point of essentially creating one's own brand of sound. They stressed that making the music sound the way the player wants it to sound is one of the most important elements when preparing to audition.<sup>13</sup> Overall, this study compares to my study in that Rodabaugh selected three prominent musicians to interview about audition practices. Furthermore, this document discusses a brass instrument and therefore there may be more crossovers with ideas relating to the tuba.

These documents collectively represent a growing trend in research to better understand audition preparation. Each of the discussed documents aims to help students of the selected instrument to find ways to be better prepared and focused when a position becomes available. On the other hand, none of these documents discusses the pedagogy

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.