

COACHING THE BRASS QUINTET: DEVELOPING BETTER STUDENT MUSICIANS
THROUGH CHAMBER MUSIC

By

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Abstract

The brass quintet is currently one of the most predominant outlets for brass players to gain vital chamber music experience in the university setting. As a result, the role of applied brass instructors at universities has evolved into a role that is not entirely different than that of a conductor. The applied instructor plays the role of chamber coach, often without the skills necessary to provide the students with the skills they need for chamber music playing.

This document seeks to provide the novice brass chamber coach with a guide as to the role of the applied professor in the musical and extra-musical development of young players. It will provide vital information for the coach that includes rehearsal strategies as well as samples of common performance issues found in the repertoire.

While the amount of different rehearsal strategies and concepts is vast, this document aims to give the novice coach a primer for the instruction of student chamber ensembles. The scope of the document is not meant to firmly set out a standard for rehearsals, but rather to give suggestions as to how the instructor can prepare students for successful chamber music experiences without having ever taught chamber music before.

**Coaching the Brass Quintet:
Developing Better Student Musicians Through Chamber Music**

Albert E. Miller Jr.

Part A

Introduction and History of the Brass Quintet

Chamber music in the collegiate setting is an integral part of a well-rounded music education because it fosters essential extra-musical skills by allowing for democratic functions and collaborative artistic vision. Chamber music increases a young musician's musical and interpersonal skills by compelling them to determine and voice their musical opinion, a crucial skill that many students do not possess. As a result of its unique skill set, chamber music should be considered of equal importance as private lessons and classroom teaching in the music education sequence.

The purpose of this document and subsequent lecture recital is to explore how the young chamber music coach can effectively guide college-aged musicians through their own chamber music journeys. The chamber music coach is an integral and critical part of the young chamber ensemble. The coach is often seen as the "tie-breaker" when decisions need to be made and is often the outside observer that can be honest about the effectiveness of musical decisions. Chamber coaches should not coach a chamber ensemble in the same way a band director would conduct a band. Instead they should be a facilitator of students' skills as independent musicians and help the students learn interpersonal skills that cannot be gained through large ensembles.

Chamber music should be taught to students of all skill levels in order for students to develop certain technical, musical, and most importantly extra-musical abilities from a

young age. These essential extra-musical skills such as critical self-reflection, pro-active listening, and leadership, are a chamber coach's primary responsibility. These are not only essential skills in chamber playing, but also life skills that will benefit the student long after their musical career is finished. The question of how one fosters and nurtures young students' extra-musical abilities will be a focal point of this paper.

Brass musicians have relatively few chamber ensembles in which to gain these essential skills. Trombone quartets, tuba-euphonium quartets, trumpet quintets, and horn quartets are common within studios, but gain little notoriety among other musicians and composers. The primary and most highly regarded chamber ensemble for brass musicians is the brass quintet. It is important to know a bit of the history of this ensemble before exploring the specifics of the ensemble's pedagogy.

The brass quintet is a relatively new ensemble in the United States and has enjoyed a great increase in compositional output over the past seventy years. Thanks to a number of important ensembles such as the American Brass Quintet and the New York Brass Quintet, the ensemble's music has developed into an integral aspect of American chamber music. Recently, ensembles such as the Empire Brass and the Canadian Brass helped to spur growth in modern brass chamber playing by aiming to take their performances to a wider audience and secure the brass quintet as a serious chamber ensemble.¹

In the infancy of the brass quintet, the repertoire to choose from was limited. Many renaissance works, including pieces by Giovanni Gabrieli and Johann Pezel, were

¹ Matthew Dickson, "The Empire Brass: Its History and Influence on Brass Quintet Literature and

arranged by Robert King for a flexible instrumentation.² The tuba parts are often interchangeable with a trombone or euphonium part and trombone and horn parts are often interchangeable to accommodate two horns, two trombones, or one trombone and one horn.³

Ludwig Mauer and Victor Ewald were popular Russian brass ensemble composers from before World War II. It is believed that these composers were heavily influenced by the brass band and their compositions demonstrate this influence in their instrumentation. Both Mauer and Ewald originally scored for two cornets, E-flat horn, euphonium or baritone horn, and tuba, reflecting the more conical-shaped instruments of the brass band.⁴

The brass quintet as we know it today formed after World War II in New York City with the establishment of the New York Brass Ensemble.⁵ This group standardized the instrumentation of two trumpets, horn, trombone, and tuba/bass trombone. In 1954, the New York Brass Quintet was formed, laying the foundation for the brass quintet to become an integral chamber music genre of the 20th century.

As the first prominent ensemble of its kind, several mainstays of the brass quintet repertoire were composed for the New York Brass Quintet, such as works by composers

² William Lalverse Jones, *The Brass Quintet: An Historical and Stylistic Survey*. (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1998). (5-7)

Many of these works are based on renaissance instrumentation. Robert King scored for trumpets and trombones, with optional parts for tuba, horn, and euphonium.

³ Jones (6-10) The advent of the valve in the mid-19th century increased interest in brass music in general. This allowed more composers to explore the many colors that brass instruments can produce.

⁴ Daniel Wayne Kiser, *A Musical and Pedagogical Classification of Selected Brass Quintet Literature*. (PhD diss., University of Illinois Champagne-Urbana, 1987). (9)

“The original instrumentation of the work was two cornets, E-flat alto horn, tenor horn (euphonium), and tuba.”

⁵ Jones (6-10)

Charles Collier Jones, Eugene Bozza, and Malcolm Arnold.⁶ In 1960, the New York Brass Quintet went on a European tour, leading to the formation of several seminal works for brass quintet, such as *Bis* by Eugene Bozza, *Quintet, opus 79*, by Vagn Holmboe, and the second Malcolm Arnold quintet.⁷

In 1960, trombonist Arnold Fromme founded the American Brass Quintet with the intent of creating new, original music for the quintet. The New York Brass Quintet was heavily dependent on Baroque and Classical transcriptions, while the American Brass Quintet only played original compositions, creating an explosion of new music for this ensemble by many leading composers such as Eric Ewazen, Jan Bach, Gunther Schuller, Virgil Thomson, and Elliott Carter.⁸

These influential brass quintets standardized brass chamber ensembles in America. Many universities have faculty, graduate, and student brass quintets that are all based on the ideals of the New York and American Brass Quintets. For many brass students, the brass quintet is their first, and possibly only, chamber music experience, making it imperative that the coach fosters the student's needs.⁹

For many young applied instructors, the brass quintet is simply another ensemble on their resume. While they have the experience of playing in the ensemble, they do not necessarily have the ability to coach students in an encouraging and enriching setting. Young chamber music coaches often coach chamber groups from a strictly musical standpoint. Chamber music's role in a college music curriculum is more than just

⁶ Jones (8)

⁷ Ibid (8)

⁸ Ibid (9)

⁹ Adriana Teodoro-Dier, *A Guide for the Novice Coach of the Undergraduate Mixed Ensemble: Coaching Procedures and Interpersonal Dynamics*. (PhD diss., University of Miami, 2013). Pages 1-4

teaching students how to perform professionally or play a recital.¹⁰ Chamber music is one of the most crucial and formative experiences for young musicians because students learn to effectively rehearse, delegate, and compromise within the ensemble, skills which should not be easily overlooked.¹¹ Chamber music promotes important non-musical qualities such as citizenship, teamwork, and critical reflection through working towards a greater musical goal.

Teaching the skills necessary for great chamber music playing is something that needs to be discussed seriously in the music community. The coach needs to be aware of the tendencies of each of the instruments in order to successfully coach the ensemble. Thorough knowledge of the repertoire and instrumentation is a great starting point, but coaching chamber music is a much deeper skill that is often overlooked in a university's music curriculum. Chamber music coaching is a skill that requires development. We spend time practicing our music, conducting, and listening to music as part of daily practice habits in order to develop the necessary skills to become good musicians through thorough preparation. These habits are necessary for the novice chamber music coach as well. The primary purpose of this document is to demonstrate several methods of chamber music coaching and how these methods can be employed by a young chamber music coach.

The brass quintet will be the primary chamber music experience explored in this paper; however, all of these skills will most certainly apply to coaches of trombone quartets, tuba quartets, trumpets and horn ensembles, woodwind quintets, and other

¹⁰ Jones (8-10)

¹¹ Ibid

chamber ensembles. The skills needed to be a successful chamber music coach surpass the boundaries of instrumental genres. These skills are universal and will most certainly be of use to chamber music coaches of all skill levels.

Part B

Technical Aspects of the Brass Quintet

We must first define what a chamber coach is before discussing how they are utilized effectively. Webster’s dictionary defines a coach as a “tutor who gives privatized or specialized training.”¹² A chamber music coach is then defined as a specialized instructor that will guide the chamber ensemble in the training of chamber music.

The first obstacle that the chamber coach must address is seating. Setting up the brass quintet is up to the discretion of the members involved. Traditional set ups are shown below.

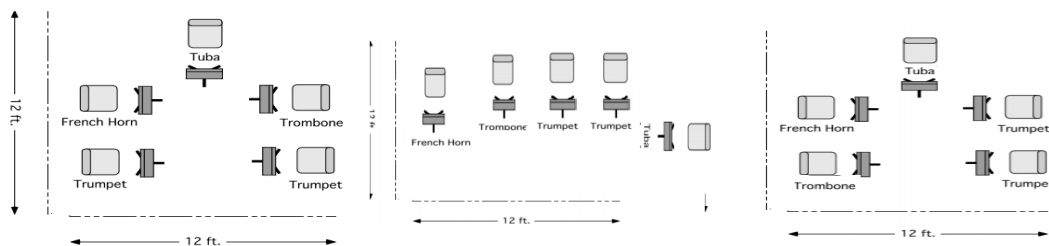


Figure 1: Several standard brass quintet setups¹³

The first and third setup illustrated above puts the tuba in the center making a “U” shape and is the standard configuration for many professional ensembles such as the American Brass Quintet. The biggest asset of this setup is its symmetrical nature, with the tuba in the center and the trumpets facing each other on the outside, allowing for excellent communication. This configuration has become standard for the ensemble and

¹² *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. 11th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003

¹³ Jones (24)

is appropriate for most pieces of music.¹⁴ The middle picture shows how the Empire Brass choose to position themselves on stage. Their setup provides good communication and more direct sound because each member of the ensemble has their bell facing out into the audience.

A chamber ensemble's arrangement is crucial to creating their ideal sound, but may vary as long as the communication is clear and the players are comfortable. The setup should enhance the music, and as a result should be handled with care. Some professional ensembles have chosen to vary this setup to suit their needs. For example, the Empire Brass often stands to perform, placing the tuba and horn on opposite ends of the group with their bells facing out to provide a more direct sound. A group should choose a setup based on what is comfortable for the musicians while easily facilitating their musical needs.

Instrument configuration is something that should be discussed between the coach and the ensemble and may change depending on the desired sound or instrumentation of the group. If an ensemble has a euphonium instead of a tuba, for example, they may want to consider moving the location of the lowest voice in order to facilitate appropriate balance.¹⁵

While flexible instrumentation can complicate the brass quintet's setup, it expands the musical possibilities for the group. Flexible instrumentation allows for students to still have chamber experiences even when certain instruments are not available. As previously discussed, Robert King arranged many works for a flexible set

¹⁴ Jones (11)

¹⁵ Patricia Ann Brown, *Complete Balance: Balancing the Horn Within Brass and Wind Quintets*. (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998).

of players, and this practice continues today with many publishers and composers producing pieces that have varying degrees of flexible instrumentation. Some modern pieces, such as Kevin McKee's *Escape*, replace the horn with an optional euphonium. Many arrangers of music for younger students, such as Bill Holcombe, use flexible instrumentation that can be of great use to coaches of chamber music at smaller schools where acquiring brass players to fulfill the standard instrumentation might be difficult.¹⁶

While instrumentation and setup are vital components of the brass quintet, they are merely the infrastructure of chamber music pedagogy. These technical aspects are necessary decisions before music making can begin, but are in no way the only objective of the chamber music coach. Developing musicians who can create and express musical ideas in a collaborative format is the ultimate goal of a chamber music coach, and fostering an environment in which these goals can be attained will be the focus for the rest of this essay.

¹⁶ <http://www.justforbrass.com/brass-quintet-111577.cfm?StartRecord=1> This is a link to Just for Brass' brass quintet section. This website offers a comprehensive description of each piece that it sells that tells the customer what the instrumentation is and whether it comes with a score or not.

Part C

Coaching and Rehearsal Strategies

Coaching a chamber ensemble is a requirement for many applied music instructors in the university setting, often without the tools necessary to excel. Many novice coaches of chamber music only have experience as a performer in chamber groups, which is a great asset, but does not necessarily equip them to teach the crucial goals of chamber playing. The next three sections will highlight these goals and make educational suggestions to attain them. By committing to this goal-oriented teaching strategy, chamber coaches should develop stronger musicians and well-rounded individuals that can function in both musical and non-musical careers.

Critical Self-Reflection

Many undergraduate students do not have any chamber skills due to a number of external factors such as youth and the strength of their high school's music program. It is important that the coach instills the correct autonomy in the students. In a chamber ensemble, the role of each member is equal, with no member more important than the other. It is not the role of the chamber coach to motivate the student to practice their part, but rather it is the responsibility of each member to take ownership of their own playing and hold themselves to the highest standards. Many students are not used to this level of thinking and may not be aware of their capabilities.¹⁷ A coach should teach students to

¹⁷ Louis Ryan Hanzlik, *Fostering Citizenship and Democracy Through Chamber Music Coaching*. (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2010). 5-13

hold themselves to high standards, a skill that is primarily taught through critical listening and evaluation.

When teaching students to reflect critically, it is important to help them establish their identity as a group. The individual members of the group need to understand their musical roles, which can change often with each piece of music. The coach should establish that the tuba is not always the bass and the first trumpet is not always the melodic interest. In many pieces, the trumpets take a secondary role to either the horn or trombone in terms of musical hierarchy. In Morley Calvert's *Suite from the Monterey Hills*, the tuba takes on a solo role while the trumpets provide accompanying figures. In this example, we see how each member of the group is responsible for musical ideas. The tuba player's role is just as crucial as the first trumpets and therefore should be treated as an equal.



Musical Example 1: Tuba solo (left) with accompanying trumpet fanfare (right) in the first movement of *Suite from the Monterey Hills*

The primary job of the chamber music coach is to ask leading questions to the students to enable them to draw correct and insightful conclusions themselves. Simple questions such as “What is your function here?” get the student to listen to their own part as a part of a whole, rather than an individual entity. When the coach steps back and enables the students to discover for themselves their roles in the ensemble, then the coach has helped to establish collegiality among the students by demonstrating that everyone has equal standing within the group.¹⁸

¹⁸ Hanzlik (11-12) “In addition to self-governance, democratic communities uphold a so-called

Once the roles have been established, then the students can begin to have productive rehearsals with and without the coach. Ideally, the coach is not present at every rehearsal. The amount of time needed to devote to coaching a chamber group should not be a burden to the applied professor, as the group should have a sense of autonomy.¹⁹ The coach's role is not to be a band director and dictate the group, but rather to serve as an infrequent consultant. Knowing that the coach will not be at every meeting, it is now possible more than ever to have the students monitor their progress and successfully prepare for rehearsals.

As technology has grown, it has become possible for students to utilize more resources to improve their musicianship. Many cellphones now have quality microphones that can be used to record rehearsals and performances. Sharing these recordings is also simple. Bluetooth, text messages, and email all make it possible to share the recordings, so that the students can listen to themselves outside of rehearsal. Recordings are wonderful tools because they give an honest representation of what the group sounds like without the filter of a coach. As a rehearsal strategy, listening to recordings can strengthen one's reflections skills by giving them an opportunity to hone in on their own playing as well as that of the other members of the group.

As a coach and teacher, it is important to guide the student in how they should be listening when they take their recordings home. The coach needs to provide appropriate listening strategies for the student so that they know how to listen critically and still

"democratic way of life," one that promotes the open flow of ideas, has faith in the individual and collective, uses critical reflection to evaluate problems or policy, shows concern for the welfare, dignity, and rights of others, and idealizes democratic values to guide and shape life."

¹⁹ Teodoro-Dier (89)

strengthen their chamber skills. Organization of the listening experience can be based on a macro to micro ideal.

On the macro level, the student is focusing their listening on the whole product of the group. It is important for the coach to emphasize this to the group in order for the students to focus on the overall product, and not just their part. On a macro level, the student should be listening for performance elements that are not specific to just one person such as balance, tempo, dynamics, intonation, and whether the group began and ended together. All of these macro concepts can provide specific ideas for the students to work on in the next rehearsal.

For example, if the group is working on the *Quintet No. 1* by Malcolm Arnold, they can listen for balance between the two opposing instrumental groups at the beginning. Leading questions such as “Are the two groups equal in dynamic intensity?” and “Does the group match articulation?” help attune students’ ears to the ensemble sound. This takes away any potential blame off one person and helps the students to focus on the overall product rather than an individual.

The image shows a musical score for two trumpets. The top staff is labeled 'Trumpet 1' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Trumpet 2'. Both staves are in treble clef, 3/4 time, and have a key signature of one sharp (F#). Trumpet 1 begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a series of eighth notes. Trumpet 2 enters later with a similar melodic line. Both parts feature matching articulations and dynamics.

Musical Example 2: Trumpet entrances at the beginning of the Malcolm Arnold quintet. The trumpets come in marked forte with matching articulations and dynamics.

Musical Example 3: Measures 8-10 in Arnold quintet. The horn, trombone, and tuba all enter together separately from the trumpets and require matching volume and articulations.

As the student listens to their rehearsals or performances multiple times, they can begin to narrow their focus on the micro parts of their ensemble. At this step, the coach must again pose leading questions to the students. These questions can be as specific as “Is the articulation uniform?” and “Did you overplay or underplay?” As the student begins to delve into detail about their individual parts, the coach needs to ensure that the student is listening critically and not just determining whether the individual played well or not. An example of what to listen for during micro-level analysis can be found in the third movement of the first quintet of Victor Ewald.

Musical Example 4: Trombone and Tuba parts three measures before rehearsal 11 in Victor Ewald's Quintet No. 1.

The tuba and the trombone share a background figure between rehearsal numbers ten and eleven. The articulations in this section should be uniform. Matching articulations in certain passages is an example of what to listen for in micro-level listening. In this specific example, the student would want to listen for articulation matching as well as intonation and balance. The coach can once again ask leading

questions to the students to increase their musical sensitivity. Is the intonation good or bad? How is the balance? Is the tuba too soft or the trombone too loud? Do the articulations match? As the student listens, they should focus on these questions and think about how they should adapt their playing.

A coach must guide the students through thinking on this micro level in order to become stronger chamber musicians. Eventually, this type of analytical thinking will occur during rehearsals, even without the coach present, helping the students efficiently learn difficult repertoire and produce a better musical product. The coach gives the students the tools to retain autonomy within a group to attain one musical goal. Now that you have engaged the students in active listening and critical self-reflection, the students will begin to foster a sense of ownership in their group.²⁰

Listening as a Rehearsal Strategy

As demonstrated in the previous section, listening is an important part of the chamber music rehearsal process. In this section, listening is used as a rehearsal strategy, rather than an action that is done in the individual's own time. Musicians engage in active listening constantly during large rehearsals, listening to the ensemble, conductor, and individual. Often times this skill is put to waste rather than fostered in a way that strengthens the skills of the student in a chamber setting.²¹ Students are not often taught the necessary skills to engage in active listening. Teachers sometimes say, "Listen to this person or to that person," but provide little direction in how to listen. It is important to

²⁰ Hanzlik (118) In an interview with a student after a coaching session, the student discusses the different personalities of the people in her ensemble. She discusses their strengths and weaknesses, but ultimately finds that because they are given autonomy, each student has a unique perspective and contributes to their fullest potential.

²¹ Teodoro-Dier (86-90) This section provides a brief description of different types of chamber coaches.

guide the students to listen for specifics such as sound, dynamics, articulation, and intonation in order for them to function without a coach.²²

In chamber music rehearsals, the coach needs to act as a listening guide by asking specific questions that guide the students to hear musical issues that the coach has in mind. Listening is proactive, not passive, and with that in mind the coach can begin to strengthen the listening skills of the students involved. When rehearsing, the coach should guide the students to the answer without divulging it and embrace that there may be more than one correct answer. At a certain point the coach may need to specify performance problems to the ensemble, but ideally the students should diagnose problems and fabricate solutions as a group.

When questioning, specific ambiguity is important. Asking questions such as, “Who has the melodic material in this section?” and “What role does the trombone have here?” can help open up the ears of the students by directing them to where they should be listening at a certain point in the work. For example, when working on *Escape* by Kevin McKee, a coach could ask, “In measures 42-51, are the trumpets matching their articulation?” or “At rehearsal E, who has the rhythmic intensity, and are they matching articulations?” By guiding the students to where or who they need to listen to at certain point in the music will help them to grow more sensitive to musical ideas and nuance.

²² Lenore Pogonowski, "Critical Thinking and Music Listening," *Music Education Journal*, 76, no. 1 (1989): 35-38, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3400897> (37) Listening without guidance can create issues in both the rehearsal and classroom settings. Guided listening, as Pogonowski suggests, can create ample room for problem solving and foster students' own musical ideas.

Musical Example 5: Measures 43-45 of the trumpet parts to *Escape* by Kevin Mckee, this figure continues until measure 51.

Musical Example 6: Rehearsal E of *Escape*.

If the coach is to get the students to a deeper understanding of the music, they must teach them to listen actively to the material going on around them. Posing these questions allows the students to become aware of their specific roles in the music at certain times. The coach can also offer musical suggestions by posing ideas that may be contrary to what is currently happening in the music.²³ Suggestions offered by the coach should not be considered a demand by the ensemble, but rather one of many options available. The coach should not dictate musical decisions, but make the ensemble aware of other musical options from which they can choose.²⁴

The coach can also help facilitate active listening by the use of a score. This is not always an option because some works are sold without scores. If at all possible, copies of scores for rehearsal purposes should be made available to help the students have a better understanding of their surroundings. Learning to read a score is another crucial

²³ Hanzlik (118-121)

²⁴ Ibid

aspect of university curriculum and can be utilized effectively in chamber music settings, not just in large ensembles or conducting classes. If a work is contrapuntal, it can be helpful to use a score for performance to help facilitate coordination. If scores are not available, then writing in cues acts as a suitable alternative to help the group keep their ears open to the important musical ideas around them.

Musical Leadership

Musical leadership is a skill that must be taught. As stated earlier, each member of the chamber ensemble carries equal weight in regards to the musical contributions that can be made. Not only does this give the individual student a responsibility to learn their music, it also gives them an obligation to express their musical ideas to the group. No member of the group is superior, and each member must have their own ideas in order for the group to create the best product possible. The ensemble should communally decide which member takes a leadership role at a given time in the music.²⁵ These decisions rely on the members' roles being clearly defined, as discussed earlier, in order for the group to make informed decisions on who should lead, cue, or play dominantly in the music. The coach should offer suggestions to resolve these issues, but ultimately all musical decisions are based on the group's ideas and identity.

A major role of the chamber coach is to foster this democratic ideal. The coach cannot simply take a backseat in the group's deliberations, but must instead be an active member without crossing the line between offering suggestions and making decisions for the group.²⁶ The coach can help facilitate student ideas by helping the students to

²⁵ Hanzlik (39)

²⁶ Hanzlik (41) "...although the terms "leader" and "leadership" are often used interchangeably in common language, a singular leader's presence is linked to a *group* characteristic, while leadership is more

understand the music they are preparing and coax them into making decisions based on certain criteria.

An example of this can be found at the beginning of the third movement of Victor Ewald's first quintet. Stereotypically, the first trumpet act as a leader of a quintet as the first trumpet gives cues, dictates tempo, and often has the melodic interest, but when they are not playing, other members in the ensemble must fill these roles. Young groups may struggle with this idea because they have not had the experience of being in an ensemble where each member is equal, much less where they are required to lead. The physical demands required of the students can also be a challenge. Having the students move more is often counterintuitive to what they have done throughout most of their young careers. In the Ewald, we can see that the third movement begins with the tuba, horn and trombone.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Horn in F, Trombone, and Tuba. The tempo is marked 'Allegro Moderato'. The Horn in F part begins with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The Trombone part also begins with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The Tuba part begins with a piano (p) dynamic. The score is in 4/4 time and shows the first few measures of the piece.

Musical Example 7: The horn, trombone, and tuba parts that begin the third movement of Victor Ewald's *Quintet No. 1*

applicable to team processes. In other words, leadership refers to a process, while the term leader refers to a specific person viewed as occupying the dominant role (Shaw, 1981). Tannenbaum and Massarik define leadership as "interpersonal influence, exercised in situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (cited in Shaw, 1981, p. 317). In addition, Carter (cited in Shaw, 1981) recognizes the paradox of singular leaders within teams that advocate shared responsibility, and notes these designated leaders can present difficulties for teams if the following characteristics exist as part of their behaviors: an individual who is the focus of group behaviors (p. 317); an individual who has strong influence on the performance of their group (p. 318). Key to this paradox is the idea that if an individual consistently influences group behavior, and those in the group consistently look to the individual for influence, this is not a collaborative *team* process."

As a coach, you must now ask the question, “Who will begin this movement?” This can be difficult for younger, timid groups.²⁷ A strategy for making this decision is to have each one of the three members try to begin the movement with a preparatory breath and cue, then having the group decide who makes them feel the most comfortable. The chosen instrument could be different for each ensemble that performs this piece.²⁸

When utilizing this strategy, the coach should take care to avoid statements such as, “When person A did it, it was better,” instead posing the question to the group. “Which cue made you feel more comfortable?” Rather than singling out an individual, the coach has now given members an opportunity to explore their own leadership skills. The coach should avoid eliminating the decision process by making statements such as, “I have done it this way and it worked, so you should do it that way.” Concrete statements do not work in chamber playing because individuals in each chamber ensemble are different.²⁹ What works for one group may not work for another, so the choice should be left to the discretion of the group.

²⁷ Teodoro-Dier (57-60) Cueing members of the ensemble is a gesture that young students are not always familiar with. In Teodoro-Dier’s essay, she outlines a number of different strategies for helping students develop this skill. She discusses how to move in time and how to properly breath to ensure everyone in the ensemble is playing with the same pulse.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Hanzlik (62) “The notion of socialized intelligence had significant meaning for Dewey, and as mentioned previously, the school is the environment where it is experienced, nurtured, and where it potentially flourishes. Teachers are not to teach students *what* to think, but *how* to think, presenting their classroom as a place to test the students' potential for reflective inquiry. According to Dewey the classroom is an embryonic environment where "teachers are authoritative but not authoritarian," using the expertise of past experience to help children adapt old knowledge to new settings.”

Part D

Common Issues and Methods with Examples of Repertoire

It is important to explore different methods of teaching for different pieces of music. The varied styles and genres of brass quintet music demand that the students and the coach have command over different ways of playing their instruments and teaching strategies. In this next section, we will explore a small amount of standard repertoire and certain difficulties that each piece can present. The repertoire chosen represents many different genres and styles and can aid the young coach in choosing music for their students to perform.

Starting a Piece of Music and Cueing

Beginning a piece of music can be difficult for many players, especially younger players who may not be physically comfortable with starting a piece of music. As a coach, it is necessary to encourage each student to explore appropriate body movements and discuss the necessity of these movements for clear signals of tempo and style.³⁰ For very young groups, it may be necessary to start them with a conducting gesture during their coaching sessions, but this should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. The students should experiment with different ways of cueing and may discover for themselves a good way of starting pieces.³¹ A good exercise for this is to have the students each conduct the beginning of the piece without their instrument. Some students have not had experience conducting before, and this exercise can help them to develop

³⁰ Ibid (137)

³¹ Teodoro-Dier (22)

basic conducting skills. By doing so, the skill can then be translated to body motion when starting a piece of music.

The *Capriccio* by Karl Pilss, published in 1977, contains several tempo changes and is a great example of necessary cueing. The work begins with a fanfare melody in the first trumpet and homorhythmic eighth-notes in the other four voices.

Musical Example 8: The opening measures of *Capriccio* by Karl Pilss.

The potential for tempo discrepancies in this first measure is great. It is up to the first trumpet player to determine the tempo and firmly hold that tempo for the group. If the tempo and cue are not properly given, then the other four members of the quintet may not be successful in their entrances.

As a coach, there are a number of strategies that can be employed to help the students to play together. One strategy is to take the first trumpet out, and just have the other four members play together with a different person cueing. This ensures that the other four members are actively listening to each other and not just the first trumpet. It also allows the first trumpet to know what the other four players are doing at that time. This strategy can be employed with or without a coach. During coaching sessions, this

can be an effective method to aid the students if they have not come to their own conclusions on how to fix the problem.

Releases and Cutoffs

Just as in beginning a piece, the end of a piece provides ample room for error amongst the players of the ensemble. Younger players who find themselves having difficulty with cueing may also find it difficult to cutoff or end pieces of music. Many times, the default is to have a trumpet control the cutoff, but this is not necessarily the case all of the time. In the Malcolm Arnold Quintet, for example, the horn, trombone, and tuba must cutoff together in order for a clean end to the first movement.

Musical Example 9: The last five measures of the first movement of the first Arnold quintet.

In this example, determining who will cutoff the three members can be approached in a few different ways. This example does not contain a fermata over the final note, so a logical step would be to cut off in time together, but younger groups may find this difficult because of discrepancies in their personal time. It is then necessary to determine who will give the cutoff to end the piece to ensure that everyone ends cleanly together.

As a coach, it is helpful to take an active role in helping the students determine who will cutoff the end of a piece. A strategy for developing this skill is to have each member practice a cutoff motion, allowing the students to feel comfortable with the

notion of ending a piece. For a work such as the first movement of the Arnold Quintet, it is necessary to determine who will end the work with a release gesture. This way, each member of the group is focused on one person who will lead the end of the work and alleviate any discrepancies in individual tempi. When a work ends in a fermata it becomes much simpler to finish a work. Determining who is the clearest at releasing is at the discretion of the ensemble, and the ensemble will be lead by whomever they nominate to end the work.

In order to develop this skill, each student can take a leadership role by practicing ending a piece of music. The same exercise that was discussed above for beginning a piece can also be used for ending a piece. Doing so will increase the students awareness of what the ensemble needs to see and how they can communicate that information effectively with their instrument.

Balance

Achieving appropriate balance is crucial for all ensembles, but is especially important in chamber music where each member is essentially a soloist on their part. Chamber music can be difficult to balance appropriately in young groups, especially if there are certain players who are not as strong as other members of the ensemble. When working to achieve balance, the coach can act as an honest listener and help the students to focus on important musical passages. In the second movement of the Arnold Quintet, the trombone is featured prominently as a solo voice, with the horn scored below it. When this occurs, it can be difficult for the horn to be heard, due to its lower tessitura. To achieve appropriate balance in passages that are similarly scored, it may be advisable to use a different setup, such as the Empire Brass setup described above. In this way,

each member can provide a more direct sound and the horn will be able to be heard more clearly.

In certain pieces, such as *Escape* by Kevin McKee, the tuba is featured as prominently as the other members of the ensemble. In measure 44, the tuba and horn share a melody. In this passage, the tuba must play up to the volume of the horn in order to successfully balance the horn.

The musical score shows five staves. The top two staves are for Trumpets 1 and 2, both in treble clef. The third staff is for the Horn, in treble clef. The fourth staff is for the Trombone, in bass clef. The fifth staff is for the Tuba, in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 43 shows the Trumpets playing a sixteenth-note pattern. In measure 44, the Horn and Tuba play a melodic line marked 'hauntingly' and 'f' (forte). The Horn part has a slur over the notes, and the Tuba part has a slur over the notes. The Horn part has a 'hauntingly' marking above the notes and a 'f' marking below the notes. The Tuba part has a 'hauntingly' marking above the notes and a 'f' marking below the notes.

Musical Example 10: Measures 43-45 of *Escape* by Kevin McKee.

As a coach, it is important to help the students facilitate balance here by helping the other members to understand where the melodic material is. It may be easy to hear the horn, but not as easy to hear the tuba. The trumpets have a sixteenth-note pattern repeating at the same time that could easily bury the tuba due to their higher tessitura. It is vital that the coach help the students to understand their role and help them to be more aware of what is happening at a given moment in the music. The coach can do this by asking leading questions to help the students gain awareness of their particular roles at a given moment. This way, the trumpets will know that their sixteenth notes are not the important motivic material, but rather the accompanying material.

Articulation Matching

In the brass quintet, articulation can be an outstanding expressive tool. The ability of brass instruments to achieve fanfare-like articulations as well as flowing legato

phrases has led to the development of some fantastic and unique repertoire. Coaching chamber ensembles to emphasize their articulations is important to help the students gain the skills necessary to successfully express themselves.

Certain pieces of music can make articulation difficult. Composers such as Eric Ewazen enjoy using the full spectrum of articulations that a brass quintet can employ. For example, in Ewazen's *Western Fanfare*, he uses the trombone and the tuba as a driving staccato bass line.



Musical Example 11: *Western Fanfare*, mm's 1-2 in the trombone and tuba.

Matching articulations here is crucial to have the driving quality that the music calls for. When coaching this work, it is vital to try and get the students to match articulations at much as possible. In this particular example, it is not as easy for the tuba to play with separation as it is for the trombone. Working with the tubist to keep a firm embouchure in the lower register can help them have better articulation in the low range.

The same issues can arise when working with legato passages. In the second movement of Ewald's first quintet there is a legato passage in the trombone that must be as smooth and connected as the rest of the instruments.



Musical Example 12: Ewald Quintet No. 1, Mvt. 2, trombone (bass clef) measures 7-9.

As discussed previously, this work was originally composed for an ensemble of all valved instruments. When playing with the modern instrumentation, the trombonist needs to work diligently to have the same smoothness of articulation as the valved members of the ensemble.

It is important to help your students match articulation in order to facilitate ease and clarity in making music. If the students are able to listen and match appropriately, then the amount of time spent making music can be increased. Articulation is a musical device, and can be used to enhance a piece of music if there is clarity of articulation in musical phrases.

Contrapuntal Playing

Many pieces of Baroque and Renaissance music have been arranged or transcribed for brass quintet. Articulation and intonation are two of the most important and difficult issues that can arise when performing this type of music, which can pose difficulties for younger groups. The challenges facing the ensemble are great when playing this style of music because it requires each member to be exactly the same in terms of articulation and intonation.

When working on music from this era, a coach needs to be especially aware of phrasing in order to make the ensemble correctly match each other. For example, the *Little Fugue* by J. S. Bach, arranged by Ronald Romm, presents the fugue subject in every voice at one point or another. It is difficult to make the tuba phrase the same way as the trumpet due to the physical differences between the two instruments.



Musical Example 13: Opening statement by the E-flat trumpet of the fugue subject in the Little Fugue.

The trumpet may have an easier time making the phrase here, due to the physical make up of the trumpet. The trumpet presents the initial statement of the fugue subject in this arrangement and thus sets the tone for how each statement should sound after the original statement.



Musical Example 14: Fugue subject in the tuba part at measure 17 of the Little Fugue.

When the tuba has the fugue theme, the difficulties in breathing become very apparent. The tubist may not make the phrase as easily the trumpet, and if this is the case, the coach can help the student by being an extra set of ears and helping the tubist to find where it can be appropriate to take breaths in order to not interrupt the phrase. By doing this, the coach can aid the group in creating unity in the musical idea that is presented in the first statement by the trumpet.

An exercise that can facilitate matching of style and articulation is to have each member play the fugue subject together, even if they present the subject in different keys. Doing so will allow each student to be able to play and match what the other members of the ensemble are doing. This can also be useful in determining where phrasing and breathing can occur for each member of the ensemble. In the Bach example mentioned above, it would be helpful for the trombone and tuba to play with the trumpets and horn in order to find where they can breathe without disturbing the phrasing that the group determines.

Jazz Style

The brass quintet is a very versatile chamber ensemble. The quintet contains instruments that are common jazz instruments and because of this, jazz is a common style for the ensemble. This can be an issue because while trumpets and trombones are common in jazz bands, horn and tuba are decisively absent. This means half of the ensemble has probably never had the opportunity to play jazz, and the trumpet and trombone players may not have capitalized on such opportunities. Learning the language of jazz is something that takes a great deal of devotion and is certainly beyond the scope of this document, however, developing a working knowledge of swing patterns and different styles of music can be a huge benefit to the young brass player.

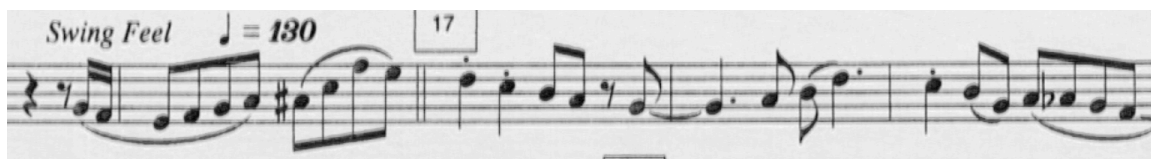
To create a general knowledge of swing style, the coach and students should be well versed in the articulations that make up swing eighth-notes. Swing eighth-notes are characterized by their uneven rhythmic subdivision. In normal rhythmic terms, eighth-notes are even, but in swing eighth-notes the first of the two subdivisions is long followed by a shorter note. This gives swing and jazz music it's characteristic sound and rhythmic interest.³²

When coaching a brass quintet, the coach should have a basic knowledge of jazz and swing styles. The coach should be aware of how to approach jazz music and help the students to understand the difference between straight and swing eighth-notes. The coach can accomplish this by working with the students on their off-beat articulation. This idea takes the swing eighth-notes and puts them into a triplet-based rhythmic pattern that has

³² Mark C. Gridley, *Jazz Styles*, (Prentice Hall, 2010).

the second eighth-note subdivision as a tenuto note on the third subdivision of an eighth-note triplet.³³ In order to effectively teach this rhythm, the coach can engage the students in an exercise where the eighth-notes are turned into triplets, as if it were a 12/8 passage. The rhythm then would be a quarter-note followed by an eighth-note in 12/8 time. This helps to simplify the swing feel for the students who may not have had jazz experiences prior to being in a brass quintet.

This can be of great use in such pieces as Jack Gale's arrangement of *Fly Me to the Moon*, by Bart Howard. This arrangement for brass quintet has swing eighth-notes throughout, and if not done properly, the tune will not be as successful.



Musical Example 15: Measures 16-19 of *Fly Me to the Moon* arranged by Jack Gale.

In this example, the eighth-notes in measure 16 need to be swung in order to facilitate appropriate style. The proper use of off-beat articulation will help the student to play with the appropriate style and make the arrangement sound more accurate to the style. As a coach, it is important to help the students understand how to swing, and to assist in learning triplet-based swing so as not to have the student play in the incorrect style.

³³ Hal Galper, *Forward Motion: From Bach to Bebop, A Corrective Approach to Jazz Phrasing*, (Hal Galper, 2003) www.halgalper.com

Conclusions

The student experience in chamber music is vital to the growth of any young musician and begins with the chamber music coach. The coach needs to be an encouraging mentor that is open to varying ideas of musical expression, fostering leadership and encouraging individual expression while working as a group.

The coach is not a director and does not need to insert themselves into every rehearsal, making musical demands based on their own life experience.³⁴ Rather, the coach needs to encourage the members of the chamber ensemble to embrace their experience and encourage musical exploration. When done properly, the student chamber ensemble can produce exceptional musicians who think independently, are encouraging, and work well with others. When the coach fosters these skills in the young chamber musician, they send student musicians into the world with a set of skills that contribute to their success, such as time management, independent learning, and collaborative participation.

For applied professors of brass instruments, it is my hope that this document provided some brief insight into the instruments of the brass quintet and the brief history of the ensemble. The brass quintet can be a rewarding chamber music experience for young brass players at the university level. The information contained within this document can help the novice brass quintet coach to effectively coach a group of young students by understanding the instruments of the brass quintet and by proactively participating in effective chamber coaching. Combined with the coach's own real-world

³⁴ Hanzlik (83) "...Why did we instruct a democratic medium in an autocratic manner?"

experience, it is my hope that this document can serve as a brief guide for the novice coach and can help to encourage the next generation of brass musicians to take ownership of their own musicianship.

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