

# **Cleaning Out the Basement**

**Low Brass Techniques for the Ensemble**

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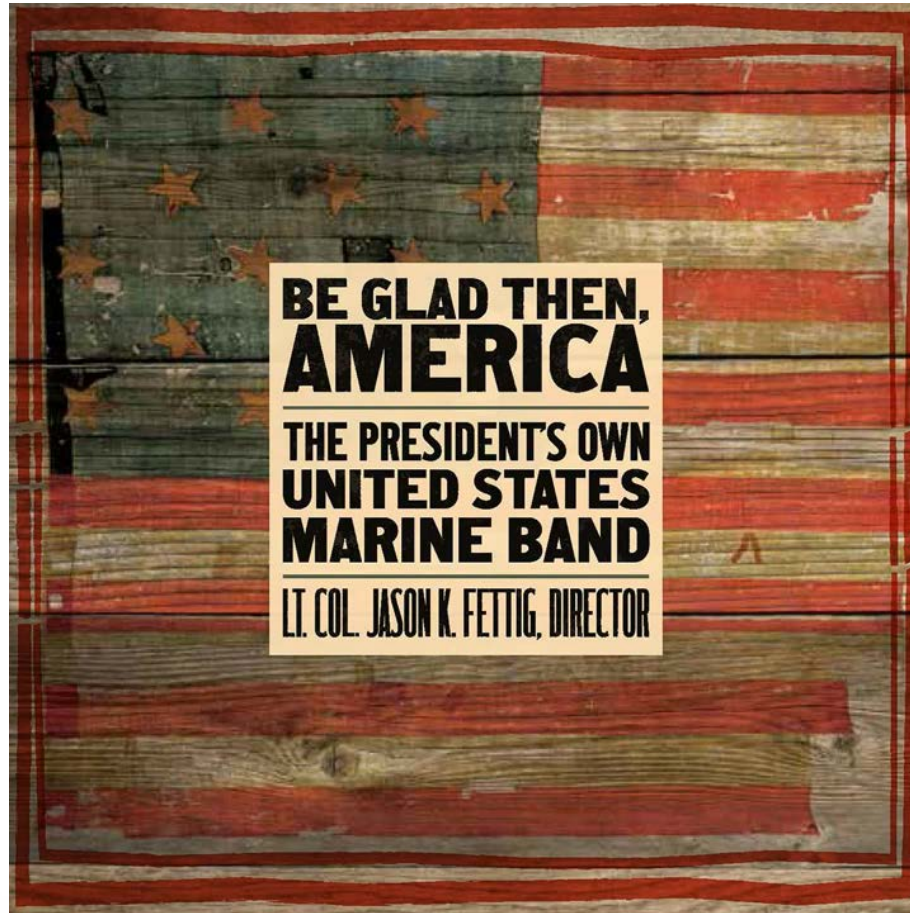
# My background

- 25+ years of performing (Tuba, Euphonium, and Trombone)
- 12+ years of conducting community, High School, and collegiate ensembles
- Currently...
  - Director of Bands at Basha High School (Chandler, AZ)
  - Conductor with the Phoenix Youth Symphony Wind Ensembles
  - PhD student at Arizona State University
  - AZ State Chair - National Band Association
  - VP of HS Band Activities – ABODA
- Who are we today?

# Why we're here

- The tone quality of the Low Brass instruments can vary significantly
- Blending this section into a cohesive sound character can significantly affect the ensemble sound
- We'll discuss some “tips & tricks” on finding the right sound for your ensemble (and how that may change over time)

# Perspective



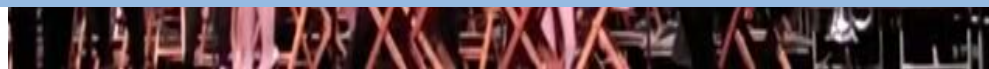
**"Symphony No 3"**  
**Copland**



# Perspective



**“Fanfare for the Common Man” -ish  
Copland**



# The keys to success

- PRESENCE
- ORAL CAVITY
- LISTENING

# Presence

- It IS NOT about the volume of your Low Brass Section... it's about their PRESENCE in the ensemble sound.
  - Walmart vs Bose
- Wider is better than louder
- Darker is better than louder
- Felt is better than heard (or louder).

# Oral Cavity

- Balance between space and direction.
- Ping Pong Ball – Gumball – Wings
- “old school” Eraser
- The Keys
  - Tongue
  - Teeth
  - Throat



# Listening

- “Listen to the Tubas!”
- “Listen down for balance!”
- Who do the Low Brass listen to?
- Blend outside the box...
  - Flutes or Picc(s)
  - Alto Sax
  - Snare Drum... huh?

# The keys to success

- **PRESENCE**
- ORAL CAVITY
- LISTENING
- Bring them forward towards the audience
- Conceptualize Trombone 1-5 or Tuba 1-5 or...
- Size over volume

# The keys to success

- PRESENCE
- **ORAL CAVITY**
  - Open shape (front to back)
  - Teeth are the enemy
  - Tongue is a muscle
- LISTENING

# The keys to success

- PRESENCE
- ORAL CAVITY
- **LISTENING**
  - Low Brass needs to know where their reference is
  - Emulation is the greatest form of flattery

# Recommendations

- "How much air can my instrument handle?"
  - wind THRU the leadpipe
- "How do I get confidence in my buzz?"
  - Half-valve phrases and pitch matching
- "How do I keep the aperture open?"
  - Straw thru the mouthpiece
- "How can I strengthen the embouchure muscles?"
  - Pencil test



# Remember

- Experimentation is better than guessing
- Different blends fit different settings
- Your foundation determines identity
- Listen for reality...take your time



Questions?!

# Thanks!

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...or...



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