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Switching Kids to 4 Valve Instruments: A Strategic Approach to Smooth TransitionWhen it comes to transitioning students from 3 valve to 4 valve instruments, it's essential to evaluate several factors and consider the most suitable approach for your program. Here are three options to help you plan a smooth transition.### Option 1: Begin with 3 Valve InstrumentsStarting all beginner baritones and tubas on 3 valve instruments has its benefits. Firstly, smaller students can easily handle these instruments, which also allows you to maintain two sets of instruments: one for beginners and another for advanced bands. This setup enables students to mature enough as players before being entrusted with the larger horns. However, this approach has some drawbacks. Students may experience a significant change in size when switching to 4 valve instruments, which can be overwhelming. Additionally, they might face difficulties transporting the instrument home, leading to resistance in taking it home for practice.### Option 2: Start with 4 Valve InstrumentsSwitching all baritone and tuba players directly to 4 valve instruments has its advantages. There's no size adjustment required, and students won't have to learn new fingering patterns. However, this approach may not be feasible if you don't have enough 4 valve instruments in stock. Another drawback is that the instrument might be too large for some students, particularly tubas, where adaptations like using a tuba chair can help. This option also requires careful inventory management to ensure all students have access to a 4 valve instrument.### Option 3: Transition in MarchStarting with 3 valve instruments and switching to 4 valves in March has its benefits. Students receive daily one-on-one guidance as they adapt to the new instrument, making the transition smoother. They're also more prepared for the larger size due to their initial exposure to the instrument. This approach requires having enough 4 valve instruments to accommodate all students, but it offers a more gradual transition and personalized support. If your program doesn't currently have 4 valve instruments, consider prioritizing inventory when funds become available.### Bonus TipWhen switching baritone players to 4 valves, encourage them to use the 1st finger of their left hand to play the 4th valve. This technique is stronger than relying on the right-hand pinky and can help young kids adjust more easily. As they progress to compensating euphoniums, this skill will serve as a valuable foundation. Using a three valve Eb in brass bands may be possible, but it depends on the number of other tubas in the band and the pieces being played. Short answer yes, but it's not enjoyable if you have to work hard for tuning and technical aspects. Some players find it doable with excellent false tones, while others struggle due to modern music requiring lower notes. At one time, 3-valve instruments were common in lower-section brass bands, but modern band music often takes advantage of the extended low range made available by 4 valves. If you're using an Eb and don't have control over your instrument's false tones, it can be challenging. Even with a 3-valve instrument having adequate training is essential. Some tuba players prefer using 3-valve instruments for specific situations, like marching band jobs that require less range. However, the lack of sound on smaller instruments can be a significant drawback. A comparison chart and more information on tuba valves are provided in a separate guide for those interested in learning more. by most people. Concert Pitch3 Valve Fingering4 Valve FingeringF bottom of bass clef staffOpenOpenE natural22Eb11D1-21-2Db2-32-3C1-34B natural1-2-32-4BbOpenOpenA 22Ab11G1-21-2Gb2-32-3F1-34E natural1-2-32-4When the tuba has no valves pressed (we call it open on the tuba), it hits the fundamental pitch and overtone series. If the tuba is a BBb tuba, the fundamental is a Bb and the overtone series includes the F, Bb, D, F, and Bb above that. Back before valves were used, these were the only notes brass instruments could play. In order to add different notes, they had to change out their main slides to lengthen the whole horn! Once valves were invented, brass players only had to push down a valve, which redirects the air to a different, longer tube or slide. This lowers the fundamental and gives the tuba access to more notes. Each valve adds a different length and therefore a different number of semi-tones. Notes: Semi-tones are also called half steps. The first valve brass instruments aren't actually the smallest increment. First valves add two semi-tones (two half steps or a whole step). This means the Bb you were playing before is now an Ab. Here is a translation of the overtone series after pressing down the first valve. Overtone Series With No ValvesOvertone With First ValveBbAbFebBbBbADCFEBThe second valve is the smallest incremental change in pitch. It lowers the fundamental by a semitone or half step. Overtone Series With No ValvesOvertone With Second ValveBbAbFebBbADDbFEThe 3rd valves are a combination of the first and second valves. It lowers the pitch by three semitones (three half steps or a minor third). On its own, this valve is somewhat out of tune. Its used mainly in the 2-3 valve combination or 1-3 combo on a 3-valve instrument. Playing 1-2 valves instead of this is a lot more in tune. Overtone Series With No ValvesOvertone With Third Valve*BbGFDBbGDBbFD*Notes shouldn't be played with only the third valve because its out of tune. The fourth valve is the same as the 1-3 combination. This means it lowers the pitch by five semitones (five half steps or a perfect fourth). This valve makes a huge difference in tuning for tubas and euphoniums. It replaces the out-of-tune 1-3 valve combination and allows for lower notes in the lower register too. Overtone Series With No ValvesOvertone With Fourth ValveBbLow FFCBbF*DA*FC*These notes are better played with a different valve, but it does work. Fifth valve on the tuba isn't a standard pitch alteration. It depends on the design of the horn. My wife and I are both tuba players, so we have two CC tubas in our home. We both have fifth valves, but they don't work the same way. The two most common fifth valves are: Lower by 6 semitonesLower by 7 semitonesIt takes some experimentation to figure it out, but they allow for more alternate fingerings to help with faster playing and lower range better intonation. There are also sixth valves on some professional tubas, but it isn't as common (and isn't needed in most cases). The extra valve comes in handy, but it's just that extra. Its played with the left hand while the main five are played with the right. Note: Most tuba players don't need more than four valves unless they reach the collegiate level and above or if they play in brass bands. Basically, they are just for the advanced player. If 4-valve models are available, I would start any player on it, even younger players. Learning the combinations with the 4th valve is easier if you do it right from the get-go. If one isn't available, I would make sure you switch from 3-valve tubas to 4-valve tubas by high school. For adult beginners, you should switch to a 4-valve tuba if you can play through a beginner-level book. It doesn't cost much more, but it'll help you play so much better in tune. While you certainly can use a 1-3 valve combo on any tuba, its always out of tune. Even if its new to you, take the time during practice sessions to replace the 1-3 combination with the 4th valve and the 1-2-3 valve combination with the 2-4 valve fingering. It may feel weird, and your pink finger is likely to be weaker because its not used to being used. But, its important to play better in tune. In-tune playing is better-sounding playing. When you look at tubas, especially nicer ones, you'll notice that most of them have four valves. Valves on Tubas ExplainedAdding a fifth valve to a 4V front-action piston tuba is an intriguing idea, but its feasibility depends on several factors. One possible solution is incorporating a rotary valve left-hand trigger mechanism, similar to those found in CC or F tubas. For a band/orchestra/light solo player with limited extreme range playing, the addition of a fifth valve might not be necessary. However, for more advanced players who require greater expressiveness, it could prove beneficial. A few individuals have successfully modified their tubas to include an extra valve. One example is a 5th rotor added to a Holton Eb tuba, with the right thumb controlling the actuation. This modification can provide additional tonal options. The consensus among tubists seems to be that 4 valves and beyond are primarily intended for serious players who can discern subtle differences in pitch accuracy. The use of both hands for fingering might require some adjustments, as it would necessitate accommodating the new valve mechanism. I recently came across a discussion on the benefits of using a tuning drone app to improve pitch accuracy on wind instruments. The consensus seems to be that four valves or beyond is ideal for those who can detect subtle differences in pitch, but I disagree and have found success with a more affordable approach. As an amateur player, I've used a tuning drone app (\$5) and headphones to markedly improve my pitch. By playing long notes against the drone I could hear via headphones, I was able to eliminate 'wobbles' and ensure that I was playing in tune. This method is not only cost-effective but also teaches one's ears rather than relying on visual cues. I believe amateur groups can greatly benefit from using modern tools like tuning drones. Instead of relying on traditional tuners, which can be limiting and may not provide accurate readings, a drone can offer a more comprehensive understanding of pitch accuracy. Regarding the debate about four valves or beyond, I think it's essential to consider one's skill level and playing context. While having additional valves can offer flexibility, they are often unnecessary for most situations. For those who play in smaller ensembles or have limited space, using a standard valve instrument may be sufficient. The limitations of playing on a 3/4 size tuba include difficulty in producing deeper sound and tonal differences compared to full-size instruments. While the smaller size may be sufficient for some players, others may find that their skill level does not translate well from one size to another. Many professional tubists argue that the standard size of tubas is preferred due to its inherent qualities, such as a richer tone and increased volume. However, it's essential to consider individual tonal preferences when choosing an instrument. Some players may sound better on smaller BBb tubas, but this is often due to practical considerations related to the instrument's size rather than any unique advantage of the smaller size. In certain situations, using a 3-valve tuba can be effective for common playing situations without slide pulling. However, some players may find that the fingerings are unfamiliar, making it feel like learning a new language. This is particularly true when transitioning to larger instruments with different fingering systems. For those looking to start playing tuba on a budget, purchasing one of Tom McGrady's BBb tubas can be an excellent option. These instruments offer good quality and affordability without the need for extensive adjustments or learning curve changes. Additionally, shopping for used instruments like King 2341 or Miraphone 186 can provide more affordable options. However, some players may prefer larger instruments with four valves or more, which can offer improved tone and playability. The price of these instruments, however, can be significantly higher than that of smaller BBb tubas. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the meeting tomorrow and discussing our strategies. For a little bit more \$, tubas might do more (5-valves and such). Sometimes, I wish I had made the switch to CC and bought one of Tom's CC 410 tubas when I got back into playing, but I didn't know his website existed (it was BRAND NEW when I bought my BBb from Tuba Exchange and I didn't hear about it until later). Thank you SO MUCH these links. I took a look and I think I'm already in love with some of these... I was really clueless about what was out there, hesitant to spend grants on a used horn without even knowing what I would be getting, or how it'd work. I nearly bought a plastic cool wind for \$1200, but just couldn't do it. Watching demo videos, those CC tubas really do sound amazing, especially in the low notes. I hear their fingerings are completely different though, and it's like "learning a new language"... would you say this is true? I never made the jump to CC, but I figure it would have been easier to do it right away when I got back to playing. Everything I've read here suggests that the 410CC tuba is good. For the past few weeks, I've been borrowing my dad's Mack 210 BBb while he's recovering from shoulder surgery. It's significantly a better instrument than my TE-2110. I might sell my TE-2110 and call Tom or Jonathan to get something else this summer. I know my dad will want his tuba back when he's approved by the docs to pick it up again. Edit- I just realized I didn't put the right link for wessux tubas in my original post- BBb Tuba with 4 Rotors - TE-2110 (2009) + TE Rose Mack 210 (2011) + Bruno Tilz NEA 310 M0 G. Schneider (Made in GDR, 1981?) + Conn Helleberg 120S I earn my living as an Electrical Engineer - Designing Power systems for buildings toobagrowl 5 valves Posts: 1525 Joined: Mon Aug 02, 2010 3:12 pm Location: USA Post by toobagrowl Wed May 29, 2019 2:44 pm @ Bloke regarding use of sousas in school band. My high school in the 1990s did that as well -- we used our King sousas for both marching and concert band, and they sounded great in the auditorium. I think sousaphones have an advantage over comparable tubas for such ensembles for the false tones and the more diffuse sound, which works well for large ensembles where the tubas (sousas) ARE "the basses". Also, every BBb sousaphone I've played has good or very good overall intonation that is malleable due to the response characteristics of sousas Radar 3 valves Posts: 303 Joined: Sat Dec 01, 2012 1:51 pm Location: Rochester NY Post by Radar Wed May 29, 2019 3:01 pm bloke wrote:Wandering off-topic, I'll go one further... Those rolling their eyes were not around when our section of four (fiberglass) 36K sousaphones was in action...and did not consistently have the "floor wiped with" the not-coached-by-anyone operators of those sousaphones in auditions for chairs in regional and statewide events - year-in and year-out. I love my 36K Fiberglass sousaphone. I can play just as loud as the other Tuba players in our Fire Department Band playing on metal horns that weigh a good 15 pounds more. My intonation and tone are just as good as theirs are as well. It would be a great all around horn for a Middle or High School on a budget. I really don't see why Fiberglass Sousaphones get such negative reactions. Retired Army Reserve 98th Div. Band; Euphonium, Trombone, Tuba, Bass Guitar Miraphone 186 CC Conn 36K Sousaphone Euphonium: Yamaha YEP-321 (modified with Euro-shank receiver with Lehman M mouthpiece) Trombones: Yamaha G12 Bass, Conn 88H The Standard 4th valve Here's a fingering chart for a 4-valve Non-Compensating BBb tuba or Euphonium with the fourth valve tuned to a perfect fourth, as in the original tuba patented in 1835 by Wiprecht & Moritz, starting from middle (open) F and going down chromatically: F.....open or 4 E.....2 Eb.....1 D.....12+ or 3- Db.....23 C.....4 or 13+ B.....24+ or 123+ Bb.....open A.....2 Ab.....1 G.....12+ or 3- Gb.....23 F.....4 or 13+ E.....24+ or 123+ Eb.....124- D.....234 Db.....134 C.....1234+ The "+" signs indicate that you will probably need to pull a slide out some or lip the note down. The "-" signs indicate that you will need to lip it up or push a slide in. I like to keep the 4th valve slide on my BBb tuba set to give me a ###The fourth valve on some brass instruments can be used alone to produce a specific note when played with other valves. This method requires adjusting the tubing length of the instrument to achieve the desired pitch. For example, on a euphonium, pulling the fourth valve about 2 inches can help produce a long low B or E.###ARTICLETubas are commonly found in Eb and F, often used as solo and chamber instruments due to their smaller size allowing for greater agility. To accommodate players of different sizes, tubas come in scaled versions like junior tubas, frequently utilizing 1/2 or 3/4 size tubas in schools. Tubas usually feature valves and rotors, sometimes with up to six valves to improve intonation and extend the low register. Beginners typically prefer 3- or 4-valve BBb tubas, which are more durable than rotor versions and allow for solid fundamentals development without extended fingerings. However, different manufacturers wind their tubas differently, affecting timbral and handling aspects. Two common variants found in schools include the sousaphone and marching contra. The sousaphone wraps around the player's body with a front-facing bell, providing a directional sound suitable for the marching field but less desirable for concert ensembles. The marching contra is carried on the right shoulder and has timbral aspects similar to the tuba, making it an alternative option for schools. Some schools use convertible contras with moveable lead pipes for both marching band and traditional seated posture. Characteristics of a 4-valve tuba include valves and rotors. Effective beginning tuba players should have lung capacity and be able to distinguish low pitches well. While player size is a concern, small students can still succeed on the tuba without issues if they have sufficient hand spread. Tuba is often a transfer instrument from other instruments like euphonium or horn for students with strong low registers. Woodwind players frequently make easy transfers to tuba due to similar air demands, while saxophone players can be effective transfers with great tone and dexterity issues. The characteristics that make for an unfocused saxophone tone also contribute to a full tuba sound. Establishing success on tuba requires addressing unique challenges such as tight embouchures, limited air flow, and specific hand positioning. Embouchure adjustments for reed instruments must be swiftly adapted to achieve optimal results on the tuba, with at least 4 valves. Students on a 3-valve tuba may be able to continue this chromatic line through the use of the false eb1, but it is not advised if there is a 4-valve option. The range notated is a rough estimate of the expected range of tuba players at various levels in standard ensemble and solo literature. Follow this link for a Tuba Fingering Chart. Instrument handling One of the initial challenges of the tuba is being able to handle it appropriately. Students need to be taught and reminded that their instrument takes up quite a bit of space, and be prepared to clear the area around them to avoid damage to the tuba or others. There is a temptation to set the instrument down on its bell, but this should be discouraged as the weight of the instrument along with the momentum of setting it down can cause the bell to buckle. Instead, it should be laid on its back with the valve slides facing up whenever possible. To effectively address tone production on the tuba, it is crucial to consider a few distinct aspects. Firstly, tuning is essential; each slide must be adjusted according to its relationship with open tuning pitches. Secondly, design considerations make certain adjustments straightforward, such as valve slide access. Lastly, articulation necessitates unique approaches due to the wide embouchure. For articulation, tuba players employ different techniques compared to other brass instruments. They flick their tongue to interrupt airflow across the mouth's front surface, and maintain an almost completely open oral cavity to accommodate air demands. Furthermore, mutes are used sparingly on the tuba, usually the straight mute which features a handle for convenient insertion and removal. Proper posture is vital; ergonomic issues resulting from tuba size often lead to difficulties in playing. The primary challenge faced by young tuba players is developing sufficient tone due to air limitations. Breath control is essential; a year or more may be required to achieve lung capacity necessary for sustained tones. Effective breathing exercises, along with regular practice in the middle register, can aid in building this capacity. Moreover, recognizing signs of weak tone such as thin tone and overtones is vital. This often indicates mouthpiece anchoring issues or uneven embouchure engagement, prompting a focus on proper lip positioning, full air support, and avoidance of anchoring techniques during practice. Cheek Puffing for Clear Tones and Muscular Development - A Guide to TubasTubists often struggle with maintaining a relaxed embouchure, leading to cheek puffing, which can affect sound quality. Practicing under the guidance of an instructor is ideal. Students must learn how to firm up their cheek muscles without losing tone in lower registers. This is achieved by focusing on directing air towards the center of the mouth while keeping the cheeks pulled in. A well-developed embouchure requires balance between relaxation and firmness, allowing for clear production of tones. Regular practice can help develop the necessary muscles. The choice of valves affects sound quality; piston valves generally produce a more flowing tone than rotary valves, which require less action to operate. With the tuba in its "open" state, it produces a fundamental pitch and overtone series. The BBb tuba's overtone series includes Bb, F, D, F, and Bb. Before valves were used, brass instruments relied on changing slides to play different notes. With valves, players could access more notes by redirecting air through longer tubes or slides. Each valve adds a specific length, resulting in different pitches. The first valve adds two semi-tones, shifting the Bb to Ab. The overtone series with one valve is: Overtone Series With No ValvesOvertone With First ValveBbAbFebBbADCFEBThe second valve lowers the fundamental by a semitone, changing it to AFeb. The overtone series with two valves is: Overtone Series With No ValvesOvertone With Second ValveBbAbFebBbADDbFEThe third valve combines the first and second, lowering pitch by three semitones, resulting in GDBbGDBFD. Notes should not be played with only the third valve, as it's out of tune. The fourth valve replaces the 1-3 combination, making a significant difference in tuning for tubas and euphoniums. It lowers the fundamental by five semitones, creating better intonation. Overtone Series With No ValvesOvertone With Fourth ValveBbLow FFCBbF*DA*FC*The fifth valve is not standard and depends on the horn's design. Some tubas have valves that lower pitch by 6 or 7 semitones, allowing for more alternate fingerings. However, most players don't need more than four valves unless they reach collegiate level or play in brass bands. For advanced players, fourth-valve models are recommended. Learning combinations with the fourth valve from the start is easier and can help beginners improve their intonation. Adult beginners should switch to 4-valve tubas if possible, as it will significantly improve their tuning. Replacing the 1-3 combination with the 4th valve and using the 2-4 valve fingering will result in better-in-tune playing. In-tune playing sounds better, and professional horns often feature piston valves or rotary valves. The type of valve system used in a tuba is largely a matter of personal preference, with no one system being inherently better than another. However, for beginners, the cost of a rotary system can be a significant barrier, making pistons a more accessible option. Pistons are often what come to mind when thinking of valves, resembling a button that's pushed up and down. When pressed down, it lowers the piston part, which has various holes directing air through different chambers. In contrast, rotary valves use a turning motion, similar to paddles, but work on the same principle. A key difference between pistons and rotary valves is their performance characteristics: pistons are generally faster, while rotary valves offer greater consistency. This is reflected in a comparison table.* Piston Valves: + Move up and down + Work quickly + Require regular maintenance + Can be noisy + Less expensive to manufacture * Rotary Valves: + Turn the chamber + Operate more slowly + Minimize maintenance needs + Produce a smoother sound + More costly to design It's worth noting that the type of valve system used in a tuba doesn't affect its fundamental functionality. Regardless of whether you have a BBb tuba, CC tuba, or any other variation, including those with piston valves or rotary valves, the basic principles remain the same. In fact, even smaller brass instruments function on similar principles. Understanding how these different valve systems work can help musicians appreciate the intricacies of their instrument and improve their overall performance.

Tuba 3 valve. 3 valve vs 4 valve tuba. 4 valve tuba. 3 or 4 valve tuba.

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