

OUCHP®

DIVISION of EDUCATION

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A Note from Dr. Tim

Greetings. In this edition of *Touchpoint*, **Wayne Downey**, brass arranger for the Blue Devils Drum and Bugle Corps and owner of XtremeBrass.com. Utilizing his wealth of experience and knowledge, Wayne breaks down the process of selecting a brass instrument in an easy-to-follow systematic approach.





Welcome to our newest

V.I.P.s

Tom Bracy

Merit School of Music, IL

Scott Casagrande

Hersey High School, IL

John Casagrande

National Band Association, VA

Our Next Issue Featuring: An article by Mark Lane, the associate Director of Bands, Central Washington University.

In Our Last Issue: Part of the Team by Rick Ghinelli *click here for full article*

How to Buy a **Brass Instrument**That Fits Your Needs! By Wayne Downey

If you've ever gone to a music store or done a Google search to purchase "the brass instrument that's right for you" you've probably realized that there are instruments available in all shapes, sizes, colors, bore sizes, bell sizes, tapers and price ranges made by all sorts of manufacturers all guaranteeing that their products are the best in the world. It's quite befuddling to be honest with you, not to mention intimidating. What should I do?... What should I do?... I know!!... I'll pick the brass lacquer plating because it produces a warmer sound... No, the silver plating will give me the brightness I need in the upper register... No, the large bore will give me the volume I'm looking for... Yikes, my head's going to explode!!!!

OK, rather than dealing with splatter, let's take a look at this step -by-step and see if we can make the selection process easier for

First things first, here's a list of some simple decisions you'll need to make before twisting your brain into knots.

Level 1 Decisions:

Budget - Before you start looking you have to know how many rubles you or your band parents have to spend.

Comfort and Feel-Is the instrument comfortable for your students to hold in their hands? Can they grasp it comfortably? How is it balanced? Can they make contact with the valves?

Size and Weight - Do your students find themselves struggling to hold the instrument up? Does the weight affect how their mouthpiece makes contact with their face? Is it possible for them to grip it correctly? How freely do their fingers depress the valves? Can they extend all slides to their full throw? **Here are some important marching band questions to consider: Could they march an eight minute show holding it? Does the strument limit their physical motion or ability to march?

Indoor, Outdoor Playing or Both - Does the instrument provide your students with the volume or projection that their playing

requires? Is the sound as "warm" or as "bright" as it needs to be for the type of playing they do? Is the instrument sturdy and durable?

Level 2 Decisions

Tone & Intonation — Does the instrument allow them to produce the quality of sound appropriate for the style of music they play and does it play well in tune?

Each instrument ahs its own unique tone (quality of sound) and pitch (tuning) tendencies that are a direct result of design and manufacturing decisions made by the company who produced it, but rest assured, there are differences galore from one instrument to another. Check out each and every instrument carefully that you are interested in buying.

Student or Professional Model - Do you have the financial wherewithal to purchase a professional model horn?

Musical Styles Performed-What type of playing will you be doing?

Determine the type of playing you're going to be performing in your school ensembles and pick an instrument that best fits the character of sound, tone color, volume and projection that is required of your students each and every day. For example, are you looking to produce a dark warm sound for symphonic band or will you need to produce a brighter quality of sound with a little more sizzle for jazz band.

As you will find, each color of sound (tone) requires a completely different instrument design. Click here to go to the full article where I hope to demystify why different models of the same instrument type, made by the same manufacturer, can create very different tone colors. In doing so, I will supply you with more information that might help you choose the instrument that's right for you and your program.